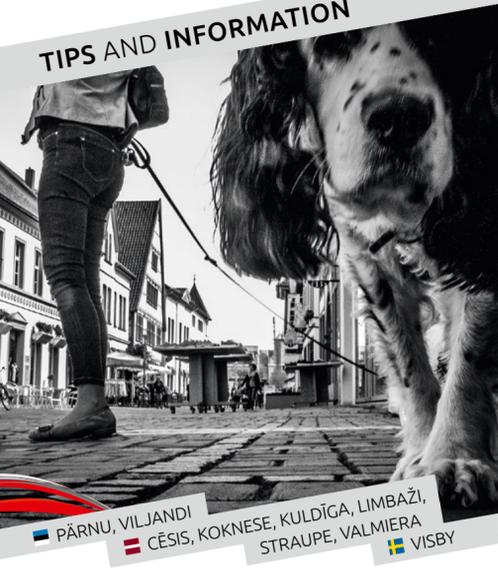


# 9 ENCHANTING HANSEATIC CITIES

## TIPS AND INFORMATION



🇫🇮 PÄRNU, VILJANDI  
🇩🇪 CĒSIS, KOKNESE, KULDĪGA, LIMBAŽI, STRAUPE, VALMIERA  
🇸🇪 VISBY



## ABOUT THE HANSA PROJECT

The HANSA project unites 9 small and enchanting Hanseatic cities, rich in heritage and tradition, – Visby in Sweden, Pärnu and Viljandi in Estonia and Cēsis, Koknese, Kuldīga, Limbaži, Straupe and Valmiera in Latvia.

The cities are real hidden gems, worthwhile to experience and explore. Make your choice:

- A cosy weekend to enjoy local specialities
- Active holiday by biking, walking or trekking
- Exciting authentic Hanseatic Festivals
- Splendid scenery for nature lovers

The HANSA project is part of the activities of the modern Hansa network (die Hanse), established in Zwolle in 1980, and their label as Cultural Route of the Council of Europe, awarded in 1991. The HANSA project is implemented with support from the European Regional Development Fund Central Baltic Programme 2014–2020.

[www.hanse.org/en/ExploreHansa/](http://www.hanse.org/en/ExploreHansa/)  
[/ExploreHANSA](https://www.visitvisby.com/)

Photos: Andres Pütting, Artis Gustovskis, Imants Urtāns, Indriķis Stūrnieks, Silver Tõnisson, Baltic Pictures, Dikļū pils (Dikj Palace), From the archives of the project HANSA partners  
 Maps: SIA „Karšu izdevniecība Jāņa sēta”



## VISBY

Visby – Manhattan of Middle Ages

In 1161 Gotland signs the Artlenburg Treaty with the German Duke Henry the Lion. The Hansa was born. German merchants used Gotland as important trading point within the Baltic Sea region. Visby was founded and became the first commercial centre of the Hansa. Merchants came from far and near to trade. Magnificent churches, convents and impressive warehouses gave the city its character. The architect Corbusier has in modern times called Visby the medieval Manhattan – nowhere else so many imposing buildings were to be seen. Some of them are still impressive landmarks,

especially the Cathedral St. Mary. Visby remained a Hanseatic centre for 200 years. In 1361 the island was conquered by the Danish king Valdemar and slowly fell into a slumber of ages. Since 1645 Gotland belongs to Sweden. Today Visby is a flourishing town where the Hanseatic heritage is present everywhere. The Old Town of Visby, listed as UNESCO World Heritage, is the venue of several festivals all through the year: the Medieval Week and the Gotland Art Week in August, the Food-Festival Gotland Gastronomy in April and the Truffle Festival in November.



### 9 HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Park Almedalen, originally the Hanseatic harbour
- 2 The Cathedral St. Mary
- 3 The Botanical Garden, an oasis all year round
- 4 Stora Torget, dominated by the ruins of the Franciscan convent
- 5 Klinten, hill from where you have a wonderful view
- 6 Gotlands Museum, get to know Gotland's rich history
- 7 St Hans Café, situated in the ruins of St Per and St Hans churches
- 8 Fiskargränd, the most beautiful alley of the Old Town
- 9 Restaurant Lindgården, taste local specialities



## 5 INSIDER TIPS

1. Enjoy a rest for body and soul and visit St. Mary's Cathedral, built in 1225 by merchants from Lübeck. Unique organ from 1599.
2. Explore the impressive City Wall. The 3,5 km long City Wall started to be built in the middle of the 13th century to protect the medieval Hanseatic city. It belongs to the most complete and best-preserved fortifications in Europe.
3. Enjoy the Black Truffle. What almost nobody knows – Black Truffle grows on Gotland! The real highlight is the Truffle Festival in November.
4. Biking tours around Visby. Rent a bike and make a tour in the surroundings of Visby and enjoy the breath-taking nature.
5. Enjoy the Medieval Week – an authentic Hanseatic festival in August. Medieval market, tournaments, concerts and much more.



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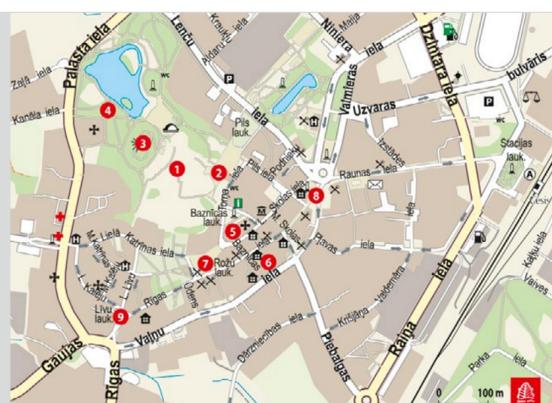


## CĒSIS

Cēsis (Wenden) – Where Past Meets Future

Cēsis was founded in 1206 and is the third oldest town in Latvia. In the 14th century Cēsis became a member of the Hanseatic League. Thanks to the city's favourable location on the trading route to Russia, Cēsis rapidly developed into an important trading post for all kinds of merchandise. A mint was built towards the end of the 15th century and Cēsis got its own currency: the Cēsis Schilling. This brought an even higher significance to Cēsis and the city became one of the most important Hanseatic junctions in the whole Baltic region.

Today Cēsis belongs to the most important Latvian centres for art and culture. Sights of interest are the medieval castle, the Old Town with its completely preserved street-net, the oldest brewery in Northern Europe and the wooden villas built on the banks of the River Gauja.



### 9 HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Cēsis Medieval Castle and its garden
- 2 Cēsis New Castle, History and Art Museum
- 3 Riekstu (Nut) Hill with 11th–13th century fortifications
- 4 Cēsis Castle Park, created by Count K. G. von Sievers
- 5 St. John's Church
- 6 "Vēverīšas", a weavers' workshop and exhibition of ethnographic costumes
- 7 Rožu (Rose) Square, the main square of the town in the mid-13th century
- 8 Rauna Gate, one of the 5 gates in the medieval fortifications
- 9 Līvu Square, the first marketplace of the town



## 5 INSIDER TIPS

1. Visit Cēsis Castle Complex. The Medieval Castle and the New Castle make an interesting ensemble, which reflects 10 centuries of history.
2. Explore Cīruļi Nature Trails by the River Gauja. The River Gauja served as an important trade route in the Middle Ages. Today the river is perfectly suited for recreational activities.
3. Experience the Hansa Market and Cēsis Town Festival. In the 3rd weekend of July, history comes alive at a sparkling medieval festival.
4. Take a themed tour "Cēsis – Hanseatic Town".
5. Participate in a medieval feast at Cēsis Castle. An opulent medieval meal in the splendid castle, shared with the most famous personality of the Livonian period – the Master of the Livonian Order, Wolter von Plettenberg.



### Contacts

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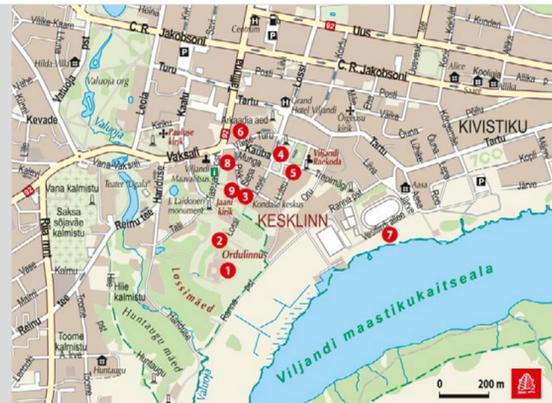


## VILJANDI

Viljandi (Fellin) – City of Festivals

The oldest settlement findings at the Viljandi Lake date back to the 5th millennium B.C. In the 12th century the first permanent settlement around the Viljandi castle emerged, which later developed to an economic centre in the Sakala District. In the early 13th century, the Sword Brethren besieged Viljandi. Where a wooden stronghold was situated, the construction of a powerful Orden Centre was initiated in 1224. It was supposed to be the biggest one in the Baltic region. During the next 200 years

it was permanently extended and modernized. In 1283 Viljandi got town privileges. In the beginning of the 14th century, the town became a member of the Hanseatic League and an important trading point to and from Russia. Viljandi is a bit remote place in the south-eastonian forests but is anyhow a very beloved tourism destination by the Estonians. In the small charming city, a wide range of popular thematic festivals take place, from Viljandi Folk Music Festival to authentic medieval markets.



### 9 HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 The ruins of the medieval Viljandi castle
- 2 Viljandi suspension bridge, constructed in 1879 in Riga, installed at Viljandi Castle in 1931
- 3 Kondas Centre, art museum
- 4 Viljandi Museum, presents the history of Viljandi
- 5 Viljandi Old Water Tower
- 6 Bonifatius Guild, medieval artisans' guild
- 7 Lake Viljandi beach
- 8 Strawberries in Viljandi
- 9 Viljandi St. John's Church, built on the ruins of a Franciscan Abbey



## 5 INSIDER TIPS

1. Visit the medieval ruins of the Orden Castle. The construction of the castle began in 1224, built on the former Estonian stronghold.
2. Relax at the shores of Lake Viljandi.
3. Enjoy the best selection of local cuisine at café Fellin and café-restaurant Harmoonia.
4. Take part in workshops of Bonifatius Guild's craftsmen.
5. Visit the annual Hanseatic Day in Viljandi, always on the 1st weekend of June.



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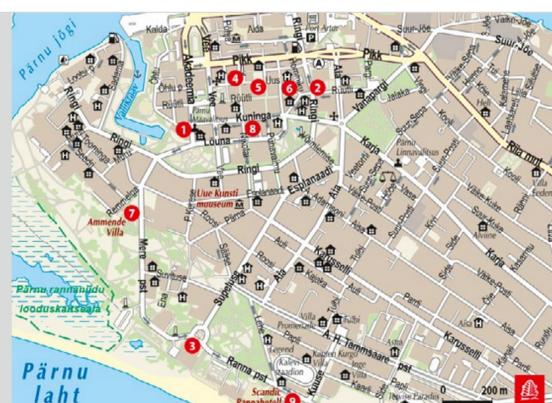


## PÄRNU

Pärnu (Pernau) – Hanseatic Paradise for Seaside Holiday

Pärnu was founded in 1251 by the Teutonic Order, and the castle Ordensburg (Castle of the Order) was mentioned for the first time in 1265. Pärnu became a member of the Hanseatic League – of importance was the ice-free harbour. After the Livonian war in 1561, Pärnu belonged to Sweden and had a cultural and economic heyday. Pärnu is situated at the mouth of the river with the same name. The city has a 3 km long sandy beach in the northern part of the Bay of Riga. Pärnu is a popular spa and beach resort since 1838, when the first swimming baths opened. Most of

the tourists come from Estonia, Finland, Germany and Sweden (Swedes already before WWII). After the fall of the iron curtain and Estonia's regained independence, Pärnu was appointed „Summer capital of Estonia” in June 1996. Pärnu has a big yacht harbour and an airport. The Elisabeth and Katarina churches, the Red Tower, the Villa Ammende and the Tallinn (Reval) Gate are interesting sights in the Old Town.



### 9 HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Tallinn Gate, the only remaining 17th century gate
- 2 Monument to the Declaration of Independence of the Republic of Estonia
- 3 Pärnu Mud Baths, the symbol of Pärnu resort
- 4 Pärnu Town Hall
- 5 Mary Magdalene Guild that unites the artisans in Pärnu
- 6 Red Tower, tower of defence of the Hanseatic town of New-Pärnu
- 7 Villa Ammende, one of the best examples of art nouveau in Estonia
- 8 St. Elizabeth's Church (from the Baroque period)
- 9 Beach Hotel, masterpiece of Estonian functionalism



## 5 INSIDER TIPS

1. Pärnu Beach. Enjoy a romantic walk along Pärnu's beach promenade. Stop for a drink at sunset in one of the cosy beach-cafés.
2. The wooden villas. Admire the architecture from Pärnu's ancient times as a health resort.
3. Feel the festival mood at the Hanseatic Day. Always the last weekend in June. Medieval market, performances, music.
4. The thematic tour "City air shall set you free". Get to know everything about the way of living in Pärnu during Hanseatic times.
5. Pärnu moat. Admire the highest fountain in Estonia and enjoy a walk or a picnic on the charming meadow of the Pärnu moat.



### Contacts

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## MOBILE APPS

Easy. Offline. Just download and "Explore Hansa".

Explore Hansa mobile applications provide you with all the necessary information about each city and its wonderful sights. You can also learn about the Hanseatic history of the 9 cities.

The QR codes you find on the page about each city. Available both for Android and iOS. The downloaded Apps can be used offline. Available in several languages.





# KOKNESE

Koknese (Kokenhusen) – Pearl on the River Banks

Koknese is situated on the scenic banks of the River Daugava and the River Pērse, about 100 km from Riga. Koknese got town privileges in 1277 and flourished as Hanseatic city during the 14th century. 1420 the castle Kokenhusen became summer residence of the Archbishop of Riga and in the 16th century it was their main seat. A railway that connected Koknese with Riga was completed in 1861 and made Koknese a popular holiday resort for Riga citizens.

Today culture and history dominate the city and, together with the scenic surroundings, make Koknese worth visiting. Major cultural and sport events, as well as a variety of cafés, increase the interest of the visitors.



## 5 INSIDER TIPS

1. Visit the ruins of Koknese medieval castle. In past times the ruins of Koknese medieval castle were situated on a high hill, at the confluence of the rivers Pērse and Daugava. Today the waters of the river Daugava lap its feet.
2. Take a walk through Liktepdārzs (the Garden of Destiny). On an island in the River Daugava develops a natural monument in Koknese: Liktepdārzs, the Garden of Destiny.
3. Explore Koknese Park. Situated between the restored manor complex and the ruins of Koknese castle. Perfect for recreation.
4. Enjoy the Catfish Waking Festival in May. Medieval festival with an extensive cultural program. Taste the delicious catfish soup, made from an old Hanseatic recipe.
5. Take a walk along the River Daugava. An ever-changing, 1,5 km long nature trail from Koknese to Liktepdārzs.



# KULDĪGA

Kuldiņa (Goldingen) – Town with a Rich Soul

Already in the 2nd century B.C., fishermen and hunters settled down on the shores of the river Venta. In 1242, Dietrich von Grüningen, the Livonian Master of the Order of Knights, built a castle here, after warfare against the Couronians. The castle was first called "Jesusburg" and later "Goldingen". In the documents of the Hansa, Kuldiņa is mentioned for the first time in the middle of the 14th century. At that time, German craftsmen and merchants settled down here. They came to dominate the trading activities and brought wealth to the citizens of Kuldiņa. The city still today

keeps its historic charm. In 2008, the Old Town of Kuldiņa, situated on the small river Aleksūpite, received the European Heritage Label. Two main attractions are well worth mentioning: Waterfall Ventas Rumba which is the broadest in all Europe (249 meter) and the 164 meter long Old Brick Bridge, which you can cross by car. The surroundings of Kuldiņa are perfect for active holidays. At the end of May, a large non-commercial Cycling Festival takes place with activities both during daytime and at night.



## 5 INSIDER TIPS

1. Explore the nature trails along the River Venta. During Hanseatic times, the River Venta meant an important trade route for Kuldiņa. Today the river is perfectly suited for active recreation.
2. Visit Duke Jakob's Fair. This historic festival takes place in the middle of October. Arts and crafts, live-music.
3. Join the interactive tour "The History of the Ancient Town of Kuldiņa". The interactive museum gives you an overall perspective on the history of Kuldiņa.
4. Take a trip through Kuldiņa on the Goldingen Train. A must not only for old-train-lovers.
5. Experience the adventure tour "On the Old Glass Road". Take a ride in a canoe down the river Venta to the ancient sand cave-labyrinth and return to Kuldiņa by bike.



# VALMIERA

Valmiera (Wolmar) – Creativeness Through Centuries

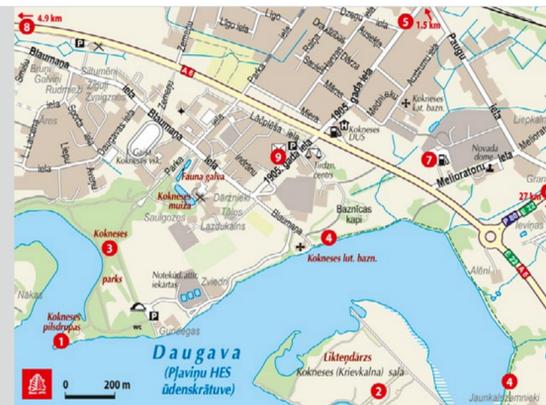
Valmiera is one of the biggest and most creative cities in Latvia. With its more than 27 000 inhabitants, it is the veritable regional centre for culture, education, industry and sport. The commercial heyday was obvious in Valmiera already in the 14th and 15th centuries, when the city became a member of the Hanseatic League. In the vicinity of the city you find the Gauja National Park. One of the landmarks of Valmiera is the gothic St Simeon's Church, situated in the oldest part of the city. It was built in 1283 and the original Ladegast organ from 1886 is still there. The castle that belonged to the

Livonian Brothers of the Sword was destroyed in 1702, during the Great Nordic War, and is now to be seen in ruins. The oldest Livonian pharmacy is still in use, built in the 18th century on the embankment of the castle. Valmiera is the cultural centre of the Vidzeme region. It is the only city in the region with a professional theatre, the Valmiera Drama Theatre, operating since 1919.



## 5 INSIDER TIPS

1. Explore the Old Town. These are the highlights of this city tour: Old Pharmacy, the castle ruins of the Livonian Order and the museum quarter.
2. Best view. From the 43 m high tower of the St Simeon Church you have a breathtaking panoramic view.
3. Restaurant "Vecpūis". The Bachelors' Park was created by 8 bachelors, who later gave it as a gift to the town. Nowadays there is a restaurant with outstanding cuisine in the pavilion.
4. Amusement park on the steep banks of the River Gauja. Take a walk through the amusement park on the steep banks of the river Gauja, where nature trails thrill all your five senses.
5. Visit a fair of old traditions. Since more than 20 years, the Simjūds Fair takes place on the 2nd Saturday of October.



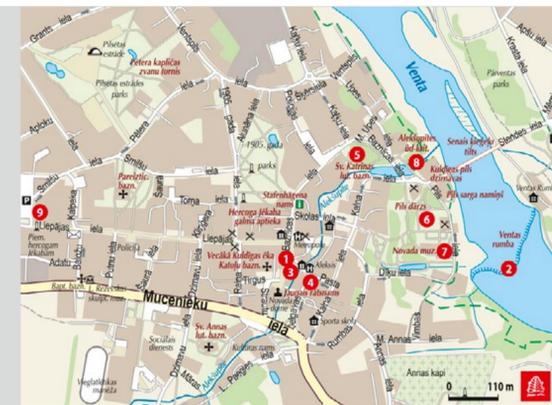
## 9 HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Medieval castle ruins
- 2 Liktepdārzs, gift from the nation to the state on its centenary
- 3 Koknese Park, created in 1900
- 4 Nature Trail along the River Daugava to Liktepdārzs
- 5 Crafts Centre "Mazā Kāpa"
- 6 Deer and Safari Park "Zemītiņi"
- 7 Creative House
- 8 Organic Farm "Janavas". Herbal teas, organic cosmetics, barefoot trail
- 9 Tourism Information Centre: Model of Liktepdārzs and the medieval castle



### Contacts

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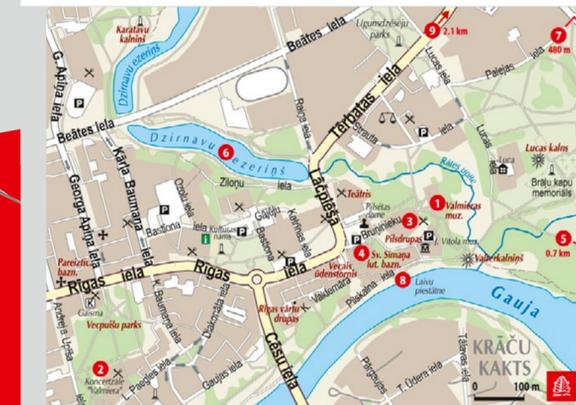
## 9 HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Kuldiņa Old Town (13th century)
- 2 Waterfall Ventas Rumba (249 m), the broadest waterfall in Europe
- 3 The Town Hall Square with the Old Town Hall
- 4 Interactive museum "Senās Kuldiņas stāsts"
- 5 St. Catherine's Lutheran Church (end of the 13th century)
- 6 The Town Garden
- 7 Kuldiņa District Museum
- 8 Waterfall on the River Aleksūpite
- 9 Cooperative shop "Kuldiņas labumi" with regional products



### Contacts

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## 9 HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Complex of Buildings of Valmiera Museum (18th century)
- 2 Bachelor's Park and the historical pavilion building
- 3 Valmiera Castle of the Livonian Order (13th century)
- 4 St Simeon's Church and its tower (13th century)
- 5 Steep Banks of the River Gauja
- 6 Old watermill
- 7 Park of Senses on the River Gauja's steep banks
- 8 Gauja Tram
- 9 Valmiermuiža Brewery



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# LIMBAŽI

Limbaži (Lemsa) – Town of Silver

Limbaži is situated 90 km north of the capital Riga, between Valmiera in the east, on the shores of the Limbaži Lake, 20 km to the west of the Bay of Riga. The Livonian castle "Lemesle" was built in the 10th century at the crossroad of two commercial routes. A settlement grew around the castle Ordensburg (built in 1223), got town privileges at an early stage and became member of the Hanseatic League. Thus, today's Limbaži is one of the oldest cities in the historic Livonia. In 1385, the Lübeck law was applied in Limbaži. In the beginning of the 16th century the importance of Limbaži as a commercial cen-

tre decreased, both the river Svētupe and the nearby situated Dune Lake silted up. The historic city centre still keeps its street system as it was arranged in 1385 when the ramparts were built. The greatest part of today's Old Town dates back from the 18th century and from the end of the 19th century. The "Museum of Living Silver" is a real highlight. Here the collected works of the artist Olegs Auzers are exhibited. His magnificent silver sculptures are unique in all Europe.



## 5 INSIDER TIPS

1. Join the tour "Hansa Town Limbaži". City tour with focus on the Hansa and medieval living.
2. Visit the Old Town Hall. Everything you need to know about silver and splendid wall-paintings from the 18th century.
3. Be enchanted by the aroma of freshly-baked bread in Lielezers Bakery. Taste the rye bread that is made from a century old recipe.
4. Relax on the beach of the picturesque Lake Lielezers. The well-tended beach was awarded the Blue-Flag in 2015. Playground for children, boat rental, sports field, pontoon bridge.
5. Celebrate Limbaži's birthday. Every year, during the first weekend of August, the town festival takes place including a Medieval market.



# STRAUPE

Straupe (Roop) – the Smallest Hansa Town in the World

Straupe is an ancient Hanseatic city in Latvia, north of Riga. Thanks to its location at the crossroads of major trading routes, Straupe became a central site already 800 years ago, in the administrative district Rosen. The family von Rosen had their family seat here until 1939, with one interruption. Straupe grew very fast and was an important Hanseatic city until the middle of the 17th century. Several wars during the next centuries devastated the region, and the castle lost its importance. The Swedish-Polish war destroyed Straupe. Today Straupe is the biggest village in the municipality Pārgauja.

2008 opened the Straupe Farmers' Market, offering a variety of local slow food products. All year round it opens on the first and third Sunday every month. The district Pārgauja, to great extent situated within the Gauja National Park, attracts hikers and anglers thanks to the picturesque scenery with many lakes. Here you also find the one and only subterranean lake in the Baltic region. Comfortable summerhouses and camping sites close to the rivers Brasla and Gauja or on the lake-shores are appropriate for family holidays.



## 5 INSIDER TIPS

1. Take a walk along the Hanseatic Hiking Trail and get to know Straupe together with a skilled guide.
2. Experience true hospitality at Straupe Old Post Station, rustic restaurant with tasteful local food. Open on market days or with pre-reservation.
3. Visit Straupe Farmers' Market on the 1st and the 3rd Sunday of every month, from 11:00 to 15:00.
4. Biking tour "Around Straupe". Enjoy a comfortable tour through the nice surroundings of Straupe.
5. Boat trip on the river Brasla. Discover the most beautiful small river in Latvia in a canoe.



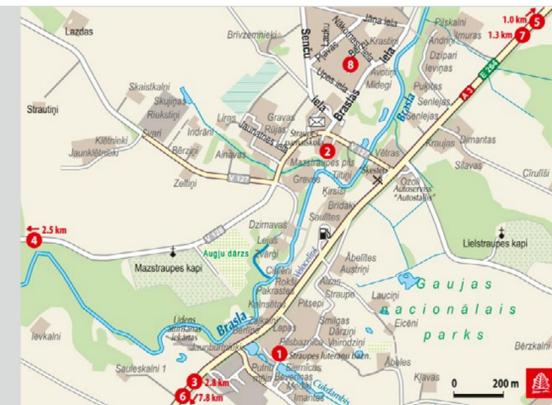
## 9 HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Limbaži medieval castle ruins
- 2 Limbaži Town Museum, the New Castle of Riga Town Council
- 3 Museum of Living Silver, the workshop and wall paintings in the Old Town Hall
- 4 The radial network of streets in the Old Town
- 5 Old Firefighter's Depot
- 6 Transfiguration of Christ Orthodox Church
- 7 Limbaži St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church
- 8 Lake Lielezers in Limbaži Beach and Nature Trail
- 9 "Limbaži Tīne", wool processing based on ancient design traditions



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## 8 HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Lielstraupe Castle, the church and the park (13th century)
- 2 Mazstraupe Castle (14th century)
- 3 Straupe Old Post Station and Straupe Farmers' Market
- 4 Vējiņi Subterranean Lakes
- 5 Bakery Rožkalni's shop "Senā Hanza"
- 6 Primal valley of the River Brasla
- 7 The farm shop of Straupe's Dairy
- 8 Blacksmiths' workshop in Straupe



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