



WATCHING PLANTS ON PIĶENES CLIFF



Alternate-leaved golden-saxifrage (*Chrysosplenium alternifolium*)



Wild Strawberries (*Fragaria vesca*)



Blue Anemone (*Hepatica nobilis*)



Description

Introduces to the variety of plants and habitats in the section of the primeval valley of the River Gauja from Krimulda to Velnala Cliffs. Suits anyone interested in plants, mushrooms, as well as animal and bird species common in Gauja National Park. For better understanding of plants, a guide is recommended.



Best time to go

Over the various months, the number of species to be observed will vary. At the end of April–beginning of May these will be spring plants, later – typical summer species. Large variety of mushrooms is seen in the vicinity in autumn.



Route

Cable car station in Krimulda – Krimulda Manor – upper part of Piķenes Cliff – Velnala Cliffs – lower part of Piķenes Cliff – Serpentina Road in Krimulda – Cable car station in Krimulda.



Distance

~ 6 km



Duration

Several hours depending on the attention of hikers.



Difficulty level

Easy.



Road pavement

Mainly forest roads and paths, unpaved roads, wooden stairs on the slopes. Near Krimulda Manor – asphalt and cobblestone pavement.



Starting point/ destination

24.83129, 57.16937

Parking lot at cable car station in Krimulda.



Way marking

None on site. Signposts for cyclists are placed in some sections from Krimulda to Velnala Cliffs.



Distance to Riga

50 km



Public transportation

The train Riga-Sigulda operates 8-10 times per day. Krimulda can be reached by the cable car by crossing the primeval valley of the River Gauja, or on foot, or by electric car, or by regional bus.



Worth knowing!

Suitable trekking footwear and a map of Sigulda and Krimulda is needed. Navigation devices might be useful. Walking outdoors is at one's own risk. Emergency services: 112.



Recommendation

Cross the River Gauja on the pedestrian bridge and have a look at Velnala Cliffs from the other side.

SERVICE

i | Sigulda Municipality Tourism Information Centre

Sigulda, Ausekļa Street 6, +371 67971335, info@sigulda.lv, www.tourism.sigulda.lv

G | AdventureRide

Pērle 1, Alderi, +371 29269559, info@adventureride.eu, www.adventureride.eu

G | Baltic Wildlife

+371 28808440, laura@balticwildlife.eu, www.balticwildlife.eu

SIGHTSEEING OBJECTS

1 | Primeval Valley of the River Gauja

One of the most impressive Baltic terrain forms, which accommodates Gauja National Park to protect and preserve it. Primeval valley of the River Gauja starts at the mouth of the River Abuls with Gauja, and ends near Murjāņi. Sandstone outcrops, often called rocks by the locals, dating back to the Devonian Period are among the key natural and landscape values and tourism sightseeing objects of the River Gauja and its tributaries. They are also found in most of its tributaries, the valleys and ravines of which merge with the primeval valley of Gauja.

Pay attention! Next to the cable car, there are stairs leading down the valley, where one can see the slope forest habitats with deadwood, decayed trees, and mushrooms causing a decaying effect to timber. Moss on trees — squirrel-tail moss.

2 | Krimulda Manor

Both towards the manor house (from the other side and the cable car) and from the manor house, there is a beautiful **view** over the primeval valley of the River Gauja.

Pay attention! The romantic **landscape park** with many old trees, including oaks, established by the first Johan Lieven has survived till nowadays. Suitable place to study moss and lichen (ramalinas, usneas, etc.)

3 | Piķenes Cliff 24.82708, 57.16081

Approximately 1 km long and 78–80 m high section of the right side of primeval valley wall of the River Gauja. Along the upper part of Piķenes Cliff, there are forest paths, while along the upper and middle part — Sigulda hiking route. Some places, especially when the trees are without leaves, offer slight **outlooks** on the primeval valley of the River Gauja.

Pay attention! Piķenes Cliff is covered in **forests of slopes**, which are protected habitats. Pre-dominated by oaks, linden trees, maples, and hazel-trees. Suitable place to watch ferns, flowers, moss, lichen, and mushrooms. In the meadow opposite of "Brūveri", dug-ups by wild boar can be seen, and one might be lucky and spot roe deer on early mornings. Along the bank of the primeval valley of the River Gauja, there are many large decayed trees (home to larvae, door snails, mushrooms, and insects), deadwood. It is the home of various species of woodpeckers leaving traces (besides the bird sounds and songs that are heard) of their "artworks" on the trunks of trees, sulphur shelves. Many types of moss, including squirrel-tail moss.

4 | Velnala Cliffs 24.81179, 57.15047

One of the most impressive cliff walls of the valley — around 15 m high; located on the curve of the right bank. From the opposite bank of the River Gauja the dark mouth of **Velnala Cave of Krimulda** can be seen in the middle of the cliffs. Above **Velnala Cave**, there are old and biologically valuable pines with the so-called crocodile skin bark. Wooden plankways restored on the upper part of cliffs.

5 | Velnala Cave of Krimulda 24.81129, 57.15042

The 22.5 m deep (length of galleries — 35 m) cave is formed in the yellow sandstone from Gauja suite 8 m above the water table of Gauja. It is estimated to be around 10,000 years old and created by a spring, which later disappeared and the cave



partially fell in. Since 1980, visits to the cave are terminated. Until then, the cave was a popular tourism site. Ancient pagan place.

6 | Pedestrian bridge over the River Gauja 24.80707, 57.14917

The suspended bridge was constructed in 1976 to make a circular route between Sigulda and Krimulda. Ideal for watching salmons during autumn, when the water is clear.

7 | Mazā Velna Cave 24.81859, 57.15017

Heading from Velnala Cliffs in direction of Krimulda along Piķenes Cliff, one cannot pass by without noticing the Mazā Velna Cave, located at the feet of the cliff, opposite of Gauja oxbow lake. The entrance of the cave is split by a sandstone pillar in two parts. Length — 16.5 m, width — 4 m, height — around 2 m.

8 | Oxbow lakes

Two larger oxbow lakes are seen in the lower part of Piķenes Cliff. Oxbow lakes are the former riverbeds. Where the current has made shortcuts, the old riverbeds no longer expect regular flow of water. Usually the exchange of water takes place during the spring floods, bringing fresh water. Due to the specific hydrologic conditions, special communities of flora and fauna have developed in the oxbow lakes, which is why these are often in the status of protected habitats. Oxbow lakes are often "controlled" by beavers leaving their traces in the oxbow lakes and on the banks thereof. Piķene Beaver Trail has been established here.