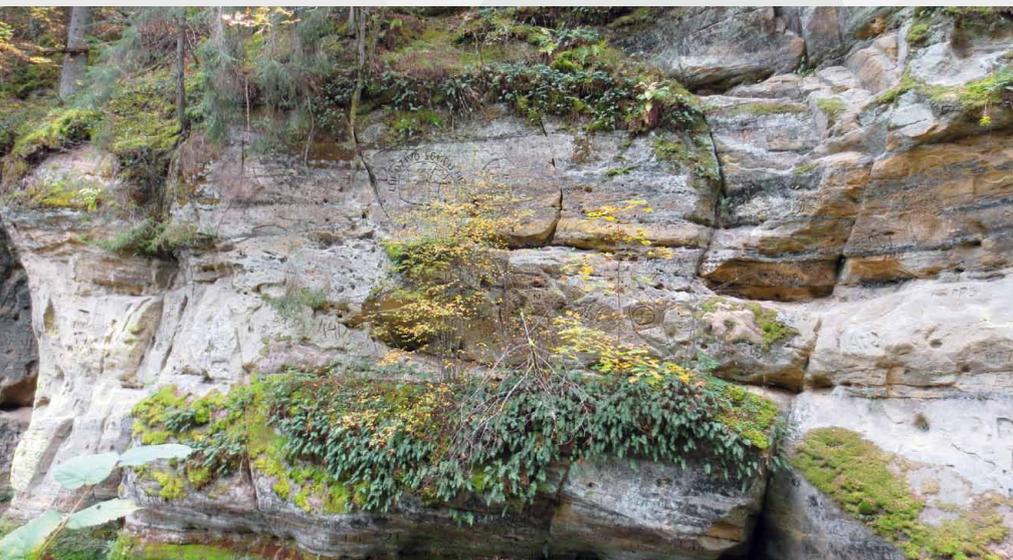




WALKING ALONG THE RIVER LOJA



Outcrops of Loja



Blue Anemones (*Hepatica nobilis*)



Leisure Park "Rāmkalni"

Foto: Baltic Pictures and Enter Gauja

i Description. Not for nothing the River Loja is called Klinšupīte or the River of Cliffs. Despite the views, the banks of Loja are less popular than those of the Rivers Brasla or Amata. Along the right bank downstream of the road Inčukalns-Valka (A3) there are several paths running through a less strenuous environment. The predominantly sandy (and rocky here and there) riverbed of the shallow river can be crossed on foot during warm days. This is an ideal place for Nordic walking fans and nature watchers, showing off its plants, birds, insects, and mushrooms.

☀ Best time to go. April–October. The spring will delight you with blooming bird-cherry trees and anemones, while the autumn – with colourful leaves. Hiking in winter is also fun!

➔ Distance. ~ 5 km.

🕒 Duration. 2–3 h hiking.

📍 Route. Leisure Park "Rāmkalni" – Loja – Loja Hillfort – Murjāņi Sports Gymnasium – "Rāmkalni".

🏠 Difficulty level. Easy.

🚶 Road pavement
Asphalt near "Rāmkalni" and the destination, elsewhere – forest roads, paths.

📍 Starting point/ destination
57.12462, 24.65910.
Leisure Park "Rāmkalni" located next to road Inčukalns-Valka (A3), on the left bank of the River Gauja, near the bridge.

📍 Way marking. None on site.

📏 Distance to Riga. 40 km.

🚗 Getting there and away.
Own transportation required to get from destination back to the starting point. Car parking lots at the starting point and destination; public buses run on the road Inčukalns-Valka. Bus

stops ("Sēnīte" before "Rāmkalni" leading in the direction of Riga, and "Internātskola" leading in the direction of Valmiera) are close to the starting point and destination. There is a small path leading from the bus stop "Sēnīte" to "Rāmkalni" (0.7 km) along the upper part of the left bank of the River Gauja (avoiding the busy road).

⚠ Worth knowing! Suitable footwear needed. Local map is recommended. Prior to walking, one should visit the information point in "Rāmkalni". Be careful when walking along the steep banks as these are subject to erosion by the water! Walking outdoors is at one's own risk. Emergency services: 112.

📱 Enter Gauja mobile application



GooglePlay



AppStore

SERVICE

i | Sigulda County Tourism Information Centre "Gūtmaņala", Turaidas iela 2a, Sigulda, +371 61303030, info.gutmanala@sigulda.lv, www.tourism.sigulda.lv

🚶 | Leisure Park "Rāmkalni"
"Vītiņkalni", Inčukalns rural territory, Inčukalns Municipality, +371 29100280, info@ramkalni.lv, www.ramkalni.lv

🏰 | Bīriņi Castle

Bīriņi, Vidriži rural territory, Limbaži Municipality, +371 64024033, +371 29416661, hotel@birinupils.lv, www.birinupils.lv

🏡 | Krimulda Manor, Sigulda county, Sigulda rural territory, Mednieku street 3, +371 67972232, +371 29111619, info@krimuldasmuiza.lv, www.krimuldasmuiza.lv

🏌 | Sigulda Footballgolf Park

Krimuldas rural territory, Krimuldas municipality, "Kraujiņas", +371 26022919, info@impresso.lv, www.siguldafutbolgolfparks.lv

SIGHTSEEING OBJECTS

1 | Leisure Park "Rāmkalni"

Active leisure opportunities available for all age groups and families. On the steep banks of the River Gauja, one shall find the longest summer toboggan track (400 m, seven curves) in the Baltic States. Pure fun with old tyres on the toboggan run, the locally invented "Mad rotor" (two people rolling down the steep bank) and the "Flying chair", canoe and bicycle rent. The sporty part here can be continued with a meal in Rāmkalni restaurant or bistro, and the shop offers home-made products, sweets and biscuits from Latvian farms and local bakery.

2 | 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. Although the maximum depth (85 m) is reached near Sigulda, views of the primeval valley of Gauja are impressive near "Rāmkalni" as well. 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. **Rāmkalnu Cave** – a small sandstone outcrop is seen also opposite of "Rāmkalni" summer toboggan track.

3 | Oxbow lakes

The first kilometre leads along oxbow lakes of the River Gauja (right side of the path). Oxbow lakes are the former riverbeds of the River Gauja. Where the current has made shortcuts, the old riverbeds no longer expect regular flow of water. Usually the exchange of water in some of the younger oxbow lakes 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 interesting to nature watchers. Oxbow lakes are often "controlled" by beavers leaving their traces on the banks thereof.

Pay attention! Traces of beavers (teeth marks on trees, dams) in the oxbow lakes of Gauja, dug-ups of wild boar in the meadows, grey alder stands instead of former meadows, horsetail stands, and forked pines (lone trees) overgrowing dry grasslands.

4 | River Loja, also Loģe, Klinšupīte

The 26 km long river runs out of Lake Jērkules. Downstream of Loja, where its deep valley merges with the primeval valley of the River Gauja, beautiful sand outcrops on both banks can be observed. The most scenic part of Loja is the section from "Rāmkalni" to Murjāņi Sports Gymnasium.

Pay attention! Rich oak stands along the banks of Loja and oak-related habitats. Some oaks are a broad biotope to special species of insects and mushrooms, including polypores (thin-maze flat polypores). At some places large-sized decaying trees and deadwood, which are home to various species of insects, and snails (including door snails). Jays. On the way – large-sized fir-trees, trees with traces by woodpeckers. Trees fallen over the river (home to wren and other species), microscopic red alga *hildenbrandia* on the underwater stones, which is evidence of clean water. Lots of moss and lichen on older trees.

Nature Conservation Agency maintaining most of infrastructure in Gauja NP. If you see something wrong, tell the Agency at **+37164107230; +37167509545** or **vidzeme@daba.gov.lv**



5 | Former luge track

The track dates back to 1978 when it was erected as a training track for Murjāņi Sports School; the track is sort of unique since it has wooden structures. The track was constructed by luge enthusiasts and fanatics under the lead of R. Upatnieks. It lost its role after the Sigulda Bobsleigh and Luge Track was constructed. Till this day, only poor remains are found on the steep banks of Loja.

Pay attention! Be quiet and you might spot roe deer. During spring the banks of Loja are covered with blue and white anemones. On the slopes of the river, one might even spot the perennial honesty, which is relatively rare and protected in Latvia.

6 | Loja (Kaupiņu, Asegāles) Hillfort

57.146087, 24.68274

The hillfort is hard to identify by a stranger among the rolling landscape. A hint is the ca. 15 m high cliff at the feet of which (which is also the curve of the River Loja) there lies an impressive yellowish sandstone outcrop. Above that outcrop you will find the hillfort, which is partitioned off by a deep ravine of a small brook on the northern side.

Pay attention! Sandstone outcrops are at some places subject to the lateral erosion by the river current. Although relatively unstable, they are an important habitat to many plant, lichen (including protected ones), moss, and insect species. Loja outcrops are home to the nesting kingfisher. On the sandstone outcrops, velvet lichen (protected) and rich polypody stands.

7 | Murjāņi

Murjāņi is associated with the Murjāņi Sports Dormitory School (now – Murjāņi Sports Gymnasium) established in 1965, where along various sports disciplines the students get also general secondary education.



The Thin-maze Flat Polypores (*Daedaleopsis confragosa*)



Chaffer Beetle (*Melolontha melolontha*)