

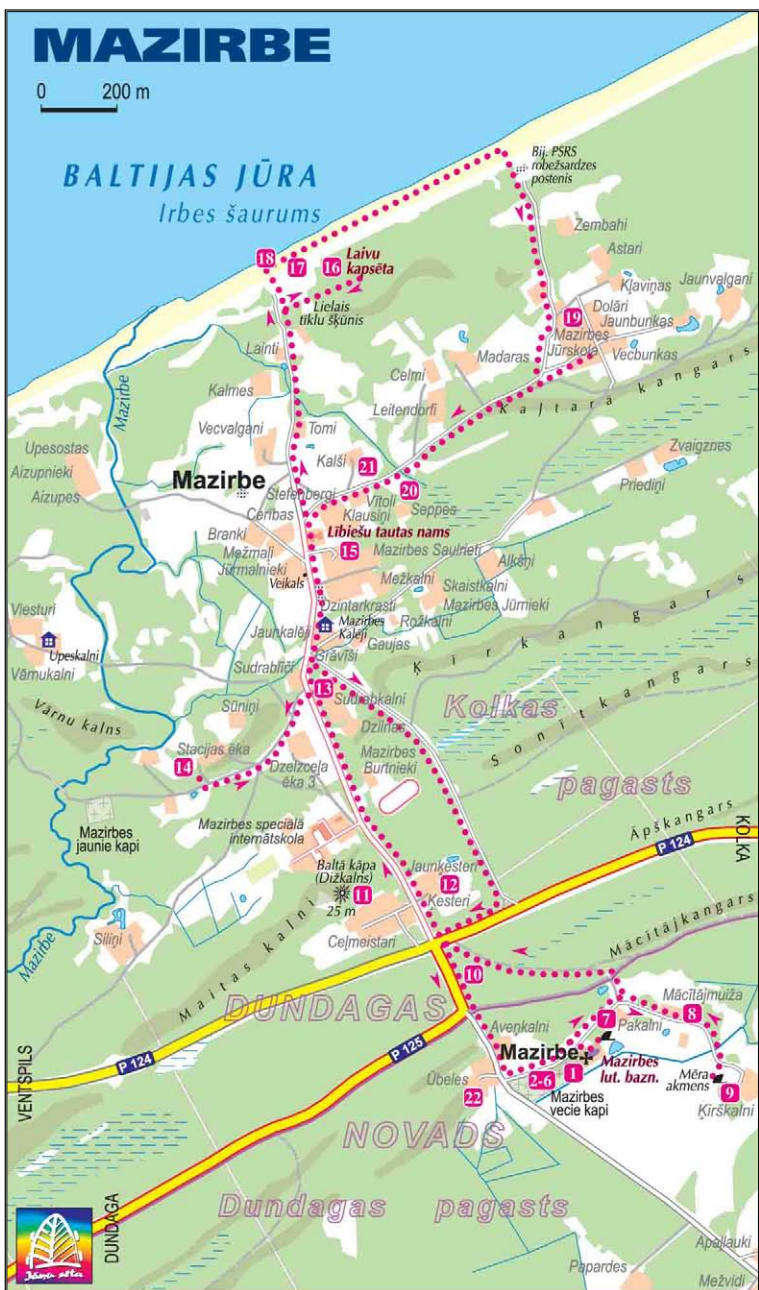


HIKING ROUTE LEARN ABOUT MAZIRBE

Welcome to Slītere!



In the Slītere National Park, except for restricted areas, you may walk freely through it to look for plants, animals and landscapes, to pick mushrooms and berries, to go swimming (except at Kolkastrags, where it is dangerous), to get a suntan, to ride a bike or a boat. While doing it, let's respect the nature values!



THE ROUTE

This is a route for active hikers, and it covers Mazirbe and its surroundings. Here you will find information about the Liv people and their culture. The Liv nation has lived on the shores of the sea in this region for many centuries.

Mazirbe was first mentioned in documents in 1387, and it was once the largest Liv village on the Kurzeme shoreline. Even recently it was an important centre for fishing and shipping. Today we know of Mazirbe as the site of the Liv People's Hall and the annual Liv festival that is held in the village.

Season: Year-round

Length: 7-10 km

Time: 2-3 h

Difficulty: Easy

Road cover: Mostly paved and gravel roads

Beginning: Mazirbe church

End: Mazirbe church

Route: Mazirbe church – Mērakmeņi – Liv People's Hall – Boat Cemetery – Baltic Sea shoreline – Mazirbe church (for a more detailed description of the route, see "The most interesting destinations")

Markings: Some parts of the route will be marked by colours on the trees

Alternatives: You can start at the Liv People's Hall. You can follow the marked bike route Kolka-Mazirbe-Sikrags, or you can follow the seashore to Kolka (~20 km), spending the night in one of the seashore villages.

Distance from Riga: 170 km

Logistics: A circular route which ends where it began

Note: Bring this information sheet with you when you go on the route.

Emergency services: Ring 112

TOURIST SERVICES:

Nearby accommodations: Mazirbes Kalēji 63248374, 29213412

Upeskalni 29259510, Dzintariņi 26173009

Shops: In the centre of Mazirbe

Information:

www.kolkasrags.lv 29149105; www.countryholidays.lv 67617600;

www.livones.lv; www.talsurajons.lv 63224165;

www.ziemeļkurzeme.lv 63232293, 29444395



The Boat Cemetery



On the seashore at Mazirbe

The Slītere National Park (established in 1999 as a strict nature reserve) is known, with good reason, as an open-air museum which shows the historical development of the Baltic Sea. Nowadays evidence of geological events is seen in the Blue Hills of Slītere, which stand 20 to 30 metres high above what was the shore of the Baltic lake of ice 10,000 years ago. The Stiebrī hills were former 8,000 or 9,000 years ago, while the Littorina Sea formed Europe's largest set of dune ramparts and damp hollows between those ramparts. This occurred between 4,000 and 7,000 years ago. The gentle climate of Northern Kurzeme is the reason why so many rare plants are found in the park – some 860 in all including Common Yew (*Taxus baccata*) and Baltic Ivy (*Hedera helix* var. *baltica*). Of certain value in the preservation of these treasures was the Soviet military machine, which has left behind army bases and other military objects in the area. The presence of the military meant that the area of what is now the Slītere National Park remained largely undisturbed for 50 years. The park includes one of the most popular tourist destinations in Latvia – the Cape of Kolka, which is visited by more than 50,000 travellers each year. During the spring migration of birds, tens of thousands of birds fly over the cape within one hour. Along the shore of the Baltic Sea is the so-called Livonian coast, which stretches from Kolka to Sikrags and Oviši. Fishing villages and other cultural objects established by the world's smallest ethnic minority, the Livonians, can be found here. Tourists will enjoy interesting four nature trails, bicycling routes, viewing tower, and the Slītere lighthouse which is open for visitors.

The Slītere National Park features several other hikes, as well as bike, water and auto routes. Look for a list of routes on www.countryholidays.lv and for markings out in nature.



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THE MOST INTERESTING DESTINATIONS

1 The Mazirbe Lutheran Church. Built in 1868. In its time, the church has been useful to sailors as a landmark. It has suffered much damage over the course of time, particularly after World War II. It was restored in the early 1990s. Worship services in the Liv language were held here at one time. The so-called cross of cross, which is a unique symbol, can be seen in three places on the building's façade.

2 The old burial mound. This is a Medieval and contemporary graveyard. Legend has it that a holy place existed here in ancient times. There are several interesting objects here (3-6).

3 The pine tree. This secular pine tree has a circumference of 3.17 metres. According to one story, a guest worker in Soviet times cut a hole in the tree with a motor saw (it can be seen from the side of the cemetery) so as to access honey that was inside.

4 The Old Taizelis monument. This monument is dedicated to the fisherman Nīks Freimanis (1845-1908), who served as the prototype for the character Old Taizelis in stories and a play written by Mārgers Zariņš.

5 The werewolf's grave. A place full of legends and ghost stories – the grave which is ancient and covered with rocks is reputedly the only resting place in Latvia for a werewolf.

6 A monument to the parents of A. Bertholds. This is the grave of the parents of Captain A. Bertholds with an unusual grave monument.

7 The Black Plague rock at the church. The surface of the rock once contained text about the destruction of local Livs by Swedish King Charles IX and by the Black Plague (the rock is on a spot where victims of the plague were buried, and the text has been erased over the course of time). The smallest rock on the top, which also used to have an inscription, has been brought here from the Pakalni homestead.

8 The former parsonage. Built in the 18th century and rebuilt in the mid-19th century, the parsonage was the place where the Liv flag was first consecrated. Renovations of the parsonage are underway at this time. Since September 2009, it has been used by the Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church as a rest home for its Recollection Centre.

9 The great Black Plague rock, which has engraved text that can still be seen to a certain extent – it tells future generations about the local pastor who died from the plague, about how the parsonage was established at Sikrags and then moved to Mazirbe. The rock is also a monument to six pastors of the nearby congregations. All the three stones tell about the horrors of the Black Plague in 1710, the texts have been engraved during the parson Peterson in 1711-1734.

10 Kaziņmežs is a small area of forest to the East of the Cirste-Mazirbe road where it intersects with the Kolka-Ventspils road. This is a fabled place. When we take the Krustceļš route through Kaziņmežs, we arrive at the Kolka-Ventspils road (P 124).

11 The White Dune, also known as Dižkalns or Baltais kalns hill, is 25 metres above sea level and is the highest point in the area.

12 Kēsteri – the home where the Liv cultural activist and organist Kārlis Stalte (1870-1947) was born.

13 Sudrabkalni – a former pharmacy and medical treatment facility until the late 1980s, then an elementary school, and now a private residence.

14 The old narrow-gauge railroad. You can still see the station, the baggage warehouse, the house where the station commander lived, and the path along which the little train ran back in the day.

15 The Liv People's Centre – a building erected in 1939 which represents the identity of the Liv people and houses a photographic exhibition devoted to the Liv people.

16 The Boat Cemetery. Dating to the 1960s, when the Soviet military started to limit fishing along the shoreline, this cemetery illustrates the fact that boats were no longer of any use and were simply abandoned in the dunes. Some say that border guards burned some of the boats. Others claim that Soviet border guards banned the old tradition of burning fishing boats on Summer Solstice Eve. Along the way to the boat cemetery, you can examine the **Great Net Barn** from the outside.

17 A fish processing plant which has collapsed down to its foundations (it ended operations in 1978).

18 Remnants of the plank ways of a fishing port can be seen on the shoreline and in the sea opposite Mazirbe. They recall the former fishing co-operative Zivs, which was here in the 1930s. From here we go up the seashore (approximately 700 metres) the border guard tower. There, we turn right and head for the Maritime School.

19 The former Maritime School (1894-1914) trained more than 1,000 students. During Soviet times, a border guard facility was housed here, and the border guard tower has been preserved. Along the road to the school are forested shoreline dunes with small buildings which create an interesting coastal landscape. The road between the Maritime School and the sea was once known as the Captains' Road.

20 Sepi – this granary, made of logs, was built in the 1920s and 1930s by an Estonian called Jēkabs Jaga.

21 Kalši is a home that was built in the early 20th century. It has been restored, preserving the bricks that came from the kiln at Brauskas in the wall of the building.

22 The location of a former saloon on the side of the Mazirbe-Cirste road in Ūbeles.



The Mazirbe Lutheran Church



The old burial mound



The Old Taizelis monument



The secular pine tree



The werewolf's grave



The Black Plague rock at the church



The former parsonage dwelling house



The great Black Plague rock



The Kaziņmežs forest



The White Dune



The old narrow-gauge railroad



The Liv People's Centre



The former Maritime School



Lauku Ceļotājs

12-21, Vilīpa str., LV-1083, Latvia
Phone: +(371) 67617600 • Fax: +(371) 67830041
lauku@celotajs.lv • www.countryholidays.lv

Photo: Lauku Ceļotājs (Juris Smaļinskis), from the archives of the Talsi tourist information centre

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