



# BOATING AROUND THE KOLKA LIGHTHOUSE

## 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 Kolkasrags, 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 route involves boats that are meant for this specific purpose. They are stable and seaworthy. The tour can be taken under different weather conditions, but only if the windspeed is no more than 4-5 m/s. You should preferably have a guide with you. The first 1.5 kilometres of the route are along the western shore of the Gulf of Rīga. At the Kolka shallows, it turns toward the Kolka lighthouse, which is at a distance of approximately 5 km. After an hour or so, the boat sails around the artificial island (it is not legal to step ashore). Photographs can be taken, after which the boat returns to its initial departure point. In planning the route, try to sail when the wind is blowing toward the nearest shore.

Kolka is the only Liv village which preserved intensive economic activities such as fish processing even after the Soviet border regime was put in place. The population grew here even as it diminished elsewhere in the region. The name of Kolka, of course, is linked to the name of Kolkasrags. During the Soviet era, movement in this area was restricted.

**Time:** Preferably during the first half of the summer, but anytime when the weather is right

**Distance:** ~15 km

**Duration:** 3-4 h

**Type of boat:** SitOnTop sea kayak

**Difficulty:** Depends on the direction and strength of the wind, as well as the height of waves beginners should take the tour only when the wind speed is no more than 3-4 m/s

**Beginning:** Uši campsite and guesthouse

**End:** Uši campsite and guesthouse

**Alternatives:** Depending on the direction of the wind, the boat can sail along the shore of the Gulf of Rīga to Melnsils; the route can also begin at Kolkasrags

**Distance from Riga:** 150 km

**Logistics:** The beginning and the end of the route are at the same place

**Note:** Boating tours are arranged in groups with not more than 6-8 boats. Experienced guide is a must. While out at sea, make sure that you follow safety recommendations. Safety gear is compulsory – sea boating life vests and hydro suits to prevent hypothermia, a GPS system, a telephone. The direction and speed of the wind has to be considered, sailing during inappropriate weather conditions should be avoided. The artificial island should not be approached when the wind is strong and waves are high, because the boat might crash into the cement structures that are there).

**Emergency services:** Ring 112

### TOURIST SERVICES

**Nearby accommodations:**

Uši 63276507, 2947569; [www.kolka.info](http://www.kolka.info)

**Resting places:** The Uši campsite, Kolkasrags

**Shops:** In Kolka

**Dining:** At the Kolkasrags car park (seasonal) and the Zitari café (seasonal)

**Information:** [www.livones.lv](http://www.livones.lv);

[www.talsurajons.lv](http://www.talsurajons.lv) 63224165;

[www.kolkasrags.lv](http://www.kolkasrags.lv) 29149105;

[www.ziemeļkurzeme.lv](http://www.ziemeļkurzeme.lv) 63232293, 29444395;

[www.countryholidays.lv](http://www.countryholidays.lv) 67617600

### IN THE SEA BY FISHING BOAT

By fishing boat you can go around the Cape of Kolka or the Kolka lighthouse. The route takes about 1 hour. Boats with 10 seats or with 4 seats are available. There is an option to take part in fishing with nets or traditional plaice fishing with ropes. Tasting smoked fish on the shore. Reservations: sea captain Visvaldis Feldmanis in Kolka, tel. 28327142.



The Kolka lighthouse



The Kolka lighthouse

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](http://www.countryholidays.lv) and for markings out in nature.



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## THE MOST INTERESTING DESTINATIONS

**1 Ūši** – a campsite and guesthouse in Kolka where, if you apply in advance, you can see how the traditional carrot buns known as “sklandu rauši” are baked.

**2 Kolkasrags** is the most distinct cape along the Latvian seashore, and it is the place where the Baltic Sea and the Gulf of Riga come together. The horn extends under the sea for another five kilometres and up to the Kolka lighthouse. The sun rises and sets in the sea at Kolkasrags, and those are some really fantastic views. Swimming is not recommended here because of shifting currents and sand. A monument by the sculptor Ģirts Burvis, to “Those Taken by the Sea,” has been installed in the dunes at Kolkasrags. The monument represents a gate through which the Kolka lighthouse can be seen. Other points of interest include a wrecked ship, a rock marking the centre of Europe, information stands dedicated to the founder of Latvia’s maritime industry, Krišjānis Valdemārs, and a former Soviet military base which is used today by the Latvian Coast Guard and which can be viewed only from the outside. During spring migration, there are lots of birds at Kolkasrags, and this is of interest to bird watchers. There is a convenient car park, benches with tables, a visitor centre, and, during the summer season, a small café where you can have a delicious meal.

**3 The old Kolkasrags lighthouse** is just a set of ruins right now. The lighthouse at the tip of the horn was built in the 16th century and renovated several times. The ruins are slowly decaying because of storms and ice during the winter. They had been standing well away from the shoreline once, but now are slowly disappearing under water.

**4 The Kolka lighthouse** is on an artificial island which was created between 1872 and 1875. The original lighthouse was made of wood, and its light was first lit in June 1987. As the island settled into the sea, the current tower was built. It began operations on July 1, 1884. Today the lighthouse is six kilometres from Kolkasrags at the end of its sandy shallows (back when it was built, it was just five kilometres away). The island still has the building for the lighthouse supervisor, as well as several outhouses. The metal lighthouse which is there now was built in St Petersburg. It has been an automated lighthouse since 1979.



*Approaching the Kolka lighthouse*



*Boating group by the lighthouse*



*Storm in the Cape of Kolka*



*Smoked plaice*



*Boats at the Cape of Kolka*



*Boats on the way to the Kolka lighthouse*



*The Cape of Kolka*



*The seashore by the “Ūši” homestead*



*Traditional carrot buns “sklandu rauši”*



*The stone wall of the Kolka lighthouse*



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Photo: Lauku Ceļotājs (Juris Smalīnskis, Aiva Jakovela), the “Jūras laivas”, Peo Jonsson, “Ūši” guest house and “Krāces” open farm.

[www.countryholidays.lv](http://www.countryholidays.lv)