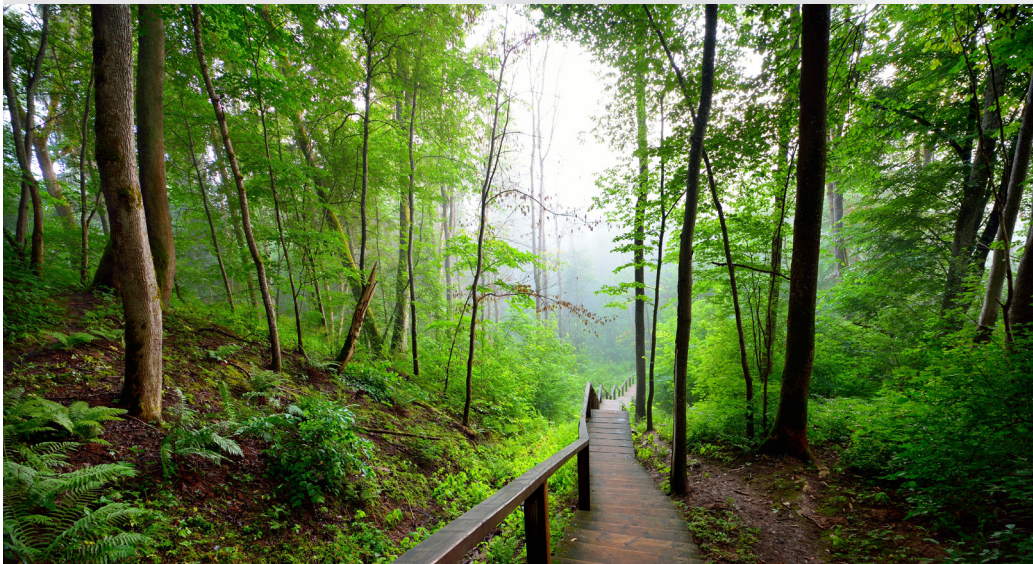




# TURAJDA. TURAJDA RAVINES AND CAVES



Tracks in Gauja valley

Photo: Baltic Pictures and the Archive of Sigulda TIC



Gūtmaņala Cave



Turaida Castle

**i Description.** For travellers interested in the nature and culture monuments located on the banks of the old Gauja valley. The reason why fortified settlements by Livs later followed by monolith stone castles erected by Germans were established here are the natural conditions and geologic processes over the last 10,000–15,000 years and consequences thereof — complicated terrain, steep ravines and rock pillars on banks in the places of their interactions, onto which castles were erected. Were the primeval valley not formed by the glacier, the nature and culture landscape of Sigulda would be completely different!

**☀ Best time to go.** April–October. Especially recommended during the blooming of bird-cherry trees, the colourful autumn, and sunny winter days with a few snow. Early spring is also suitable, since the leafage of trees and bushes does not cover the view.

**➔ Distance.** ~ 6 km.

**☰ Route.** Sigulda Tourism Information Centre by Gutmans Cave – Vikmeste Valley – Mounds Taurētāju and Rata – Mound Kārļa – Turaida – Turaida Museum Reserve – Dainu kalns or the Hill of Folksongs – stairs leading down from Dainu kalns to the River Gauja – Turaidas Street (Igauņu Ravine) – Sigulda Tourism Information Centre by Gutmans Cave.

**🕒 Duration.** Half-day or a full day route.

**📶 Difficulty level.** Moderate. Some sections — banks of the primeval valley of the River Gauja, Vikmeste Valley — might be strenuous due to their steepness.

**🛣 Road pavement.** Asphalt (in Turaida), forest roads, gravel roads, paths, wooden stairs on the steep banks of the Gauja valley and its tributaries.

**📍 Starting point/ destination**  
Parking lot at the Gūtmaņala Cave  
57.17633, 24.84699

**📍 Way marking.** None on site.

**📍 Distance to Riga.** 55 km.

**🚌 Public transportation.** The train Riga–Sigulda operates 8–9 times per day and so the bus. Turaida is reached by bus (buses going to Krimulda or Inciems), bus stop “Turaida”, electric car, or on foot (5 km).

**⚠ Worth knowing!** Suitable trekking footwear and a map of Turaida is needed. During wet weather conditions, the wooden stairs may be slippery. Turaida Museum Reserve charges an entrance fee. Walking outdoors is at one’s own risk. Emergency services: 112.

**⚠ Recommendation.** Route can be merged with Sigulda or Krimulda routes, or any part thereof.

**📱 Enter Gauja mobile application**



GooglePlay



AppStore

## SERVICE

**i | Sigulda Municipality Tourism Information Centre,**  
Sigulda, Ausekļa Street 6, +371 67971335, info@sigulda.lv,  
www.tourism.sigulda.lv

**i | Sigulda Tourism Information Centre by Gutmans Cave,**  
Sigulda, Turaidas Street 2a,  
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**🏨 | Bīriņu Castle,**  
Bīriņi, Vidriži rural territory, Limbaži Municipality, +371 64024033,  
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**🏃 | Leisure Complex “Reiņa trase”**  
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**⚽ | Footballgolf Park**  
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## SIGHTSEEING OBJECTS

**1 | Sigulda Tourism Information Centre by Gutmans Cave** 57.17633, 24.84699

**2 | Tautas Park**

Facilitated area on the slope of the right side of the primeval valley of the River Gauja, including several popular tourist sites – Gūtmaņala Cave, Viktors Cave, and Mazā Cave. Instead of the former oxbow lake of Gauja, there is an artificial **pond**. Smaller sandstone **outcrops** are seen on the shores of it.

**Pay attention!** Trees in the park are covered with a thick “carpet” of moss and lichen. Here one can study the most common lichen species. During spring a lot of blue, white, and yellow anemones, lesser celandine, and other spring plants are found here.

**3 | Gūtmaņala Cave** 57.17609, 24.84259

For more than hundred years, the Gūtmaņala Cave has been a popular sightseeing object. It is the largest cave in Latvia in terms of width (12 m), height (up to 10 m), and one of the largest in terms of volume. It might rather be called a cave-like gallery, since the length of it reaches only 18.8 m, unlike other of its dimensions. The cave is not only a geological monument, but also of heritage value and myth-enshrouded (most popular – of the Rose of Turaida). Its **ancient inscriptions** on the walls and ceiling (eldest of which dates back to the 17th century) are undervalued. A **spring** comes out of the cave, and it continues to shape the cave also nowadays. **Pay attention!** The sandstone outcrops in Gūtmaņala Cave are related to various flora and fauna species. The black “patina” is the velvet lichen. There one will find also the polypodies (fern), common fragile fern, and moss such as *Tortula lingulata* and great-scented liverwort (closer to waters). Wrens make their nests in small cavities.

**4 | Viktors Cave** 57.17602, 24.84256

Next to Gūtmaņala Cave. Length – 5.9 m, width – 6.8 m, height at the portal – 4.8 m.

**5 | Mazā Cave** 57.17502, 24.84126

Length – 14 m, height at the portal – 3.6 m. A powerful artesian **aquifer** flows out of the cave.

**6 | Vikmeste Valley** 57.17179, 24.83682

The right tributary of the River Gauja has shaped a deep ravine with steep slopes, and at the lower reaches of this river there are sandstone **outcrops** (even around 4 m high). On the right (western side) of the ravine, there is the **Vikmeste Hillfort** covered in forest.

**7 | Mound Taurētāju** 57.17303, 24.83724

The intersection of the deep ravine of the River Vikmeste and the right side of old valley wall of the River Gauja is a place reached by wooden stairs.

**8 | Mound Rata** 57.177428, 24.835614

Highest point of the area (93 m above sea level, around 81 m above Gauja water level) covered with a forest.

**9 | Mound Kārļa** 57.18152, 24.84545

Hillfort covered with forest located on the slope of Igauņu Ravine – opposite of Turaida Castle.

**Pay attention!** In the section from Mound Taurētāju to Turaida, the



route leads along the old valley wall of the River Gauja, where the protected forests of slopes (oak, linden, hazel, maple), large-size deadwood home to various species, including rare species of snails, beetles, and mushrooms, are seen. Traces by woodpeckers on the trees are also visible.

**10 | Turaida Museum Reserve** 57.18306, 24.85060

Over the 42 ha of Turaida Museum Reserve, one can visit excellent heritage monuments of Baltic significance covering a history of 1000 years. **Turaida Manor** pond attracts grass-snakes feasting with frogs sometimes during the spring, **memorial place for the Rose of Turaida**, next to which is a **great linden tree**, which according to legends grows on the grave of Maija (“the Rose”). **Turaida Lutheran Church**, **Tautasdziesmu Park** or the Park of Folksongs and **Dainu Hill**, on the slope of which there flows the **Skandinieku Spring** (discovered and landscaped in 1982) out of a cave located in sandstone outcrop. While walking through the Dainu Hill, one can enjoy a magnificent view over the **Turaida Castle**. Forests of slopes around Dainu Hill and Turaida Castle are a good place to watch birds of the woodpecker family. Hedgehogs, badgers, and roe deer are seen in the park. There is also a linden “circle” – offshoots coming from one stump. Alongside the stairs (walking down to the riverside) – the habitats of forests of slopes.

**11 | Turaida Castle**

Turaida and Krimulda area is one of the areas gathering most of insects in Latvia. The reason behind the insect diversity is the old deciduous forests alongside the River Gauja, which is home to rare beetle species, e.g., the lesser stag beetle, or cardinal beetle. Various species of butterflies are found in open areas, while the riverside will reveal dragonflies. The best time to watch insects is May–July.

**12 | Igauņu Ravine** 57.177428, 24.835614

Right side of the old valley of Gauja featuring a small brooklet, which accommodates the road Sigulda-Inciems (P8). February 2008, on the eastern side of the ravine with the Turaida Castle on it, a relatively rare phenomenon in Latvia – **landslide** – was observed; its traces are nowadays seen as a slope covered with bushes. The steep slope of Igauņu Ravine, the end of Turaida Hillfort, is called the **Slakteru Ravine**.

**13 | Slakteru Vale**