

# SIGULDA

Sigulda, a town in the Vidzeme Region, is situated in the most picturesque part of the primeval Gauja valley. Reddish devon sandstone forms steep rocks and caves on both banks of the river. Because of this, since time immemorial Sigulda has been called the Switzerland of Vidzeme. Sigulda with its heritage of extraordinary natural beauty and antiquity provides indelible impressions in any season.



## **A bit of history...**

### **Sigulda castle**

The Order of the Brethren of the Sword began to build a castle at Sigulda in 1207 – initially a “Castellum” – type fortress with a chapel. The Order was defeated in battle in 1236, and the Livonian Order took over the site. Major reconstruction was done, and a convent type structure emerged. The castle was sacked during the Great Northern War in the early 18th century. All that is left today is the southwestern part of the convent building, with Gothic window

apertures and the tower of the main gate.

The buildings that can be seen in the area at this time were built in the 18th and 19th century during the reign of several German noblemen. After World War I. The Sigulda baronial estate was turned over for the use of the Latvian Association of Writers and Journalists, and it commissioned a reconstruction of the buildings between 1953 and 1937.

The Soviet Health Ministry installed a sanatorium at the estate

after World War II. Since 1993 it has been home of the Sigulda City Council. The city has begun restoration of the castle ruins.



## Turaida castle

The Turaida Museum Reserve is located on a site where the Livs of the Gauja valley lived 1.000 years ago. They had a wooden castle and port here. In 1212, the German Crusaders burned the wooden castle, and a medieval brick castle was put instead. It was owned by the archbishops of Riga between 1214 and 1566. Today the restored castle features exhibitions which speak to the unique role which Turaida has played in the cultural history of Latvia.



## And nature...

### The Gūtmaņa cave

This is the largest cave in the Baltic States – 18,8 metres deep, 12 metres wide and 10 metres high. An old legend says that Liv warrior ordered that his beautiful but cheating wife be entombed in the wall of a local cliff. The woman's tears turned into a clear stream of water, which later carved the massive cave into the wall of rock. Another legend talks of a healer who supposedly healed many people with the

healthy water of the area in the cave. The most popular story about the cave speaks of the Maiden of Turaida, Maija who was killed here.



### The Gauja National Park

The Gauja National Park was established in 1973, and it surrounds the most beautiful part of the Gauja River – 93,5 km in length, from Valmiera to Murjani.

The width of the ancient river valley is up to 2,5 km while a Sigulda it narrows to just 900 metres. The Gauja, weaving its way among steep shores, has cut through Devonian rock over the course of

millions of years. The ancient valley is the deepest in the Baltic States, and the point of the Gauja National Park is to protect this unique nature complex with its flora and fauna.



## Enjoy your visit to the Switzerland of Vidzeme – Sigulda!

If you would like to join us for the excursion to Sigulda, please mark it in the registration form. The additional fee is 40 €.

This price includes: transport, English-speaking guide, tickets, lunch.