



BEST LANDSCAPES IN THE VICINITY OF ĀRAIŠI



Āraišu ezerpils

Foto: Baltic Pictures un Juris Smāļinskis



Maltīte Āraišu ezerpilī



Zviedru priele

Description

Suitable for those interested in nature and culture environment. Appreciated by those running after beautiful sights to catch these by a photo camera. Āraiši is a place merging nature- and man-made objects with a history more than thousand years old, and the landscape here is the result of interaction between man and nature. Due to this, the Āraiši Archaeological Museum Park has been established. Located in the territory of Gauja National Park.

Route:

Āraiši Lake Fortress – Āraiši Castle Ruins – Drabeši Manor – Āraiši Windmill – Āraiši Lutheran Church – Āraiši Lake Fortress.

Best time to go

April–September. Blooming period of dandelions. Can be enjoyed on beautiful winter days with a few snow as well, since some roads are not cleaned from snow. Particularly breath-taking during sunny winter days, when trees are covered in frost.

Difficulty level

Easy.

Distance

Around 5 km.

Duration

Including sightseeing — half day.

Road pavement

Asphalt, gravel road.

Distance to Riga

82 km.

Starting point/ destination

Parking lot at Āraiši Lake Fortress (parking fee), 25.28261, 57.25181. Optional — at Āraiši Lutheran Church or Āraiši Windmill.

Way marking

None on site.

Public transportation

Regional buses to Āraiši or the nearby vicinity. 0.5 km off there is the road A2 (regular buses, bus stop “Drabeši”), road Cēsis–Riga (bus stop “Betes”), 3 km off Āraiši Railway Station.

Worth knowing!

Working hours of the Lake Fortress and mills shall be retrieved in advance. Observe traffic rules while on the road. Hiking outdoors is at one's own risk.

Emergency services: 112.

SERVICE

Amata Municipality Tourism Information Centre

Kumadas Street 2, Ieriķi, Amata Municipality, +371 64119024, +371 28681083, turisms@and.lv, www.amata.lv

Cēsis Tourism Information Centre

Cēsis, Pils Square 9, +371 64121815, +371 28318318, info@cesis.lv, www.tourism.cesis.lv

Baltic Wildlife

+371 28808440, laura@balticwildlife.eu, www.balticwildlife.eu

Hotel “Karlamuiza Country Hotel”

Kārļi, Drabeši rural territory, Amata Municipality, +371 26165298, info@karlamuiza.lv, www.karlamuiza.lv (catering to be announced in advance)

Hotel “Melturi”

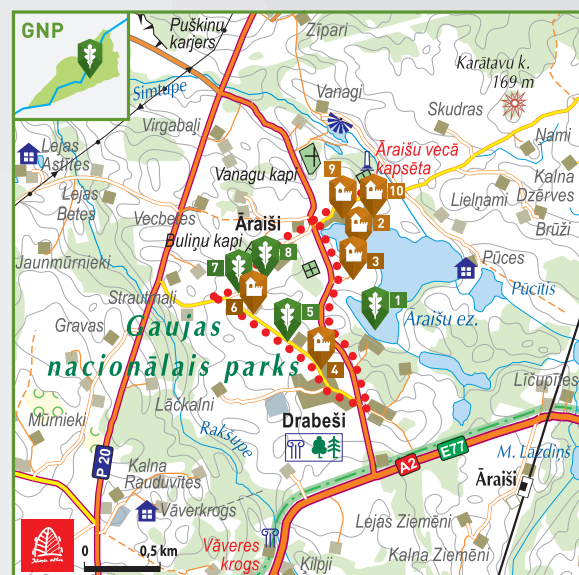
Melturi, Drabeši rural territory, Amata Municipality, +371 64129467, +371 29267224, melturihotel@gmail.com

Resort hotel “Jonathan SPA Estate”

Amatciems, Amata Municipality, +371 25606066, reception@jonathanhotel.com, www.jonathanspahotel.com



Āraišu ainava



SIGHTSEEING OBJECTS

1 | Lake Āraiši 25.28191, 57.25162

The 32 ha large and 4–12 m deep lake has three parts. Āraiši Lake Fortress is located in the northern part of it. The shores of the lake are mostly boggy and hard to access, but the water in the lake is a key component of the scenery, especially when viewed from hilltops in the vicinity. **Pay attention!** Lake Āraiši is rich in bays, and its banks accommodate smaller areas of reeds. The lake is a traditional nesting place for the great crested grebe — the largest of grebes nesting in Latvia. These birds are easily seen from the shores of the lake; if one is lucky, the unique floating nest might be spotted. Mute swans, wild ducks, coots, and grey herons are seen here, while during the bird migration many other water birds and other species of ducks are observed here. Reeds are home to the easily spotted bird of prey — marsh harrier, and in the evenings and mornings during spring one can hear the specific singing of great bittern. Some have spotted the osprey and the great egret.

2 | Āraiši Lake Fortress

Reconstruction of a lake dwelling of the 9–10th century by the ancient Latgallians (significant on European level). The fortress has been reconstructed based on local archaeological excavations, during which ~3700 ancient things, around 100,000 smashed dishes, and 151 remains from buildings were found. During the excavations, it was concluded that once five build-up layers with remains from domestic, household, and fortification buildings had existed here. The lake fortress is reconstructed according to its outlook in the 9th century (Stage 1 in its development). Thus it is among the rare sites in the Baltic States, where visitors can study the domestic conditions of people who lived more than 1000 ago! Entrance fee. A nice view towards the windmill (westward) is seen from the lake fortress.

3 | Āraiši Castle Ruins

Around 100 m south of the lake fortress. Square castellum-type castle in the peninsula of Lake Āraiši was inhabited from the 2nd half of the 14th century till beginning of the 17th century. Its edges mark the four cardinal points, and it is separated off in front by a protection ditch, the remains of which are still visible. The castle ruins are a good place to observe the vicinity — Āraiši Lake Fortress, Lake Āraiši, church, and the windmill on top of the mound.

4 | Drabeši Manor

Dates back to the 18th–19th century. 12 buildings related to the manor have survived till nowadays. The central manor house was burnt down in 1905, and restored later. Manor is enclosed by a park.

Pay attention! Long alleys of oaks are found on the nearby roads. The oaks are home to various species of timber-decaying polypores

(sulphur shelve, robustus conk), lichen, and moss. Cavities of larger trees may be home to owls, bats, and various species of insects. Alleys have been planted in Latvia since long ago to stop the wind and give shelter to travellers. Various species of woodpeckers, including the middle spotted woodpecker and the grey-headed woodpecker are found in the larger trees in the park and elsewhere around Āraiši. Another water bird can be spotted in the small pond of the manor park — common moorhen. Since the species is rather reserved, one shall be patient.

5 | Scenic road section

A scenic road section from Drabeši Manor to Āraiši Windmill with a view towards Lake Āraiši. Here and elsewhere in the vicinity the corn-crake can be heard. The bittern can be heard in the vicinity of Lake Āraiši, rather in the Meitu Island. **Pay attention!** The culture landscapes in the vicinity of Āraiši are a typical nesting place for many common species of birds of Latvia, which are rarely spotted in other European countries. Here one can see the white storks, red-backed shrikes, common rosefinches, common buzzards, and if one is lucky, the lesser spotted eagles. During spring and summer evenings, the nightingales, grasshopper warblers and the corn-crakes (rare in Europe) can be heard.

6 | Āraiši Windmill

Located on the highest point in the area with a beautiful **360° view**. One of the rare Dutch-type windmills (1852) in Latvia with an operational mechanism. Visitors can try milling the grain. Here one gets the opportunity to catch one of the most beautiful sights over Gauja National Park beyond the primeval valley of the River Gauja.

7 | Scenic road section

A scenic road section from Āraiši Windmill to Zviedru Pine with a view over Lake Āraiši, the fortress, Lutheran Church, and the windmill.

8 | Zviedru Pine 25.27167, 57.25016

Located 250 m north of the Āraiši Windmill, on the roadside. Its circumference is close to 2 m. A legend tells the pine was planted by the King of Sweden during the Great Northern War. The pine is scenic and fits into the landscape. From here one gets a beautiful view over the Āraiši Windmill and Lake Fortress.

9 | Āraiši Lutheran Church

The first church was erected in 1225, but the first written data of the community dates back to 1445. During the 17th and 18th centuries, the church was reconstructed and expanded several times. Its current look dates back to 1791. The interior stems mainly from the 18th century.

10 | Āraiši Rectory

Located next to Āraiši Lutheran Church. The rectory facilities were constructed in the 18th–19th century; 0.2 km to the North of it, the old Āraiši Cemetery with a pile-up fence from boulders is seen.