Trip to Sigulda by a private car

We advise you consider

In Latvia you should always expect the weather might change during the day. If it shines in the morning, no one can guarantee it won’t be raining in the afternoon.

We recommend you to start the trip around 9:00 am.

You should take some snacks for the road as lunch can be delayed because of the schedule.

Iela – means “street” in Latvian.

For every site feature there is a given estimated time. The time may vary depending on the traffic and your personal preferences.

Drive Defensively - refer to our separate document Latvia Driving Rules.
From Riga City Center, take the road Brivibas iela. Keep on driving straight. Outside Riga the road continues as highway A2. Total driving time to Sigulda City Center is about one hour.

You will pass Vangazi Senite.

When the road narrows to one lane in each direction, it means you are approaching Sigulda.

Take the first turn left—Pulkveza Brieza iela.

Note: This intersection has been modernized and will look different than this photo.
Where to start?

Sigulda Hotel
Now you are in Sigulda town limits. The road goes straight aslope. Turn left to Rigas iela.

Keep on driving straight, cross the railway tracks. At the end of the road turn right to Ausekla iela, keep on going straight till Pils iela.

Turn left to Pils iela. Now you are in the center of Sigulda.

On your right hand- a hotel and Tourist Information Office. Option: You can park at the hotel and visit hotel ‘s café + WC (another 20 min).
Looking for a place to stay or perhaps just something to drink or to visit a restroom?

On your right is a lovely stone building.

Hotel Sigulda and cafe.
Main Tourist Office is located at the Train Station
Continuing in Pils iela the same direction till the junction with Barona iela. You will see the sculpture of Krisjanis Barons (the greatest Latvian folklorist ahead. The junction is a roundabout. Turn left to the nearest street to the sculpture- continuation of Pils iela. On your left hand – a park with the main Lutheran Church of Sigulda.

At the end of Pils iela there is a parking lot- park your car there. Walk around the park, see the 19th century Manor (City Hall), walk on the path towards the ruins of Sigulda Castle (see the next page).

Return back to the parking place.
History of Sigulda

Sigulda is located 52 km away from Riga. Since ancient times the place has been called “Switzerland of Vidzeme”, because the river Gauja here carves deep in the valley and shows peculiar Devon sandstone cliffs and caves.

Up to the 13th century the place was reigned by the Liv tribes (Finn–Ugric group), whose leader was Kaupo. He was the first to accept Christianity. That is why one of the first Latvian areas occupied by the German crusaders was the area of Sigulda, then called Turaida (in German - Traiden). In 1207 the district was divided – the lands on the right bank of the river Gauja were taken by the Riga Bishop, but the left bank - by the Sword Brothers Order. In 1207–1209 the Order erected in the area a stone castle named Segewald, from which the name of Sigulda derives. In the middle of the century the Riga Domecapitul built a castle at Krimulda. During the middle ages a small town grew around the castle. During the Livonian War Ivan the Terrible destroyed the Krimulda Castle. In 1562 Sigulda fell to the Poles. In the first quarter of the 17th century Sigulda was occupied by Swedes and Poles, who have burnt down the castles of Turaida and Krimulda (they have not been renewed). From 1625 till the 18th century Sigulda was under the Swedish Crown. Then Peter the Great had conquered the region. Since 1889 with the construction of the railway from Riga to Valka, Sigulda began to develop as a resort area for rich families from St. Petersburg and Warsaw. In 1935 - during the first Latvian independent state years – there were already 374 apartment houses in Sigulda. During the WW2 the beautiful railway station of Sigulda was destroyed. In 1953 Krimulda and Turaida were joined to Sigulda. 1973 - the Gauja National Park was established with its center in Sigulda. In 1986 a bobsleigh track was built in Sigulda, where every year international competitions take place. However, the greatest value of the town is its numerous nature, cultural and historical monuments, which make Sigulda one of the most favorite sightseeing places in Latvia.

Sigulda Castle

Built by the Sword Brothers Order in 1207. Destroyed during the Livonian War in the late 16th century. Since 1973 partly restored.
Drive back to the street junction with Barona iela.

Turn right to Cesu iela, drive straight.

Turn right to Gaujas iela, keep driving straight aslopes.
Map

- New restaurant
- Bus Stop
- Parking
- Turaida Castle Entrance
- Stairs to trail down the valley
- Caves
- Krimulda Village on hill overlooking Gauja River Valley
- Parking
- Overhead Tram
- Sigulda Castle

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Cross the river Gauja on the bridge. OPTION: taking pictures of views close to the bridge.

Keep on driving, as the round turns right. On your left hand you see ponds, after passing them, on your right hand there will be a parking place.

Park your car there.
Caves– estimated time 11:00 – 11:30

Cross underpass from the parking lot.

Continue left towards the caves. Visit the caves/take pictures – Gutmana, Viktora, Maza (the Small).

Return to the car the same way you came.

Drive to the exit of the parking lot, and then turn right.

**Gutmana Cave**

The biggest cave in Latvia (500 m³, length 18.8m, width 10m, max height 10m). Partially surviving inscriptions back to the 17th century! It has been said the spring in the cave has healing powers. The legend says there was a “good man” – Gutmanis, who lived in the cave in the ancient days and healed locals.

**Victor’s cave**

Length 5.9m. It has been said the cave was carved by Viktors Heils – a gardener of Turaida castle and the bridegroom of the Rose of Turaida (SEE – Grave of the Rose of Turaida)

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Keep on driving straight, you are on the road P8, drive till ‘T’ junction with road P7. On your right hand - the entry to the Turaida Castle complex.

Turn left.

Note: there is a new restaurant 1 km along this road toward Krimulda. Can’t miss the large wooden building on right hand side of the road

You will see a parking lot on your left hand. Park your car here.
Cross the road towards the entry to the Turaida Castle.

The Museum is open from 10:00 till 18:00 (May–October).

Entrance fee 1.50Ls

Buy tickets at the cashier.

Guided tour for 10Ls (contact person Ilga).

Turn right from the cashier.

Keep on going till you see the stairs on your left hand.

**Grave of the Rose of Turaida**

Situated under a huge linden tree the grave has a marble tablet with the inscription - “Here rests the Rose of Turaida”. There are written documents telling a story about the Rose of Turaida - Maija (1601 – 1620). She was a local girl, who was in love with the gardener of the Turaida Castle - Viktors. It has been said Maija was murdered by another jealous obsessive man, because she refused to marry him…

The symbol of Maija’s faithfulness, dignity and purity is very strong and lives till today. Many marring couples come to the grave to put flowers on it and to pay tribute to Maija - the Rose of Turaida.
Continue moving the same direction towards the Turaida Church.

**Visit the Turaida Church**


Exit the Church and turn left, keep on moving towards the Castle.

**Turaida Castle**

Built in 1214 by the Bishop of Riga. Burned down in 1776, however, the original medieval structures preserved in the basement and ground floor level. In 1936 scenic platform was erected in the upper level of the tower at the height of 27 m. The former shed, semicircle tower an the southern wing with its historic interior have been renovated. Archaeological excavations were started in 1976.

Visit the Tower and see the magnificent view from the top.

Exit the Tower and turn right – visit the Museum.

Exit the Museum and turn right, walk down the path to see the ruins of the Castle and the views to the valley of Gauja.

Exit the area of the Castle exit direction. Take the right path to see the sculptures on the Dainu Hill.
Visit the Dainu Hill – Folk-Song Garden.

Open air exposition. There are 25 sculptures spread over the park. The sculptures are dedicated to the Latvian folk songs and their gatherer – the great folklorist Krisjanis Barons. The park was established in 1985. Krisjanis Barons used to climb the Hill every day of the last year of his life.

Use the attached map and visit the former Turalda Manor upon your will

The Manor is mentioned as early as 16th century. However, it was many times rebuilt and 14 ponds and following buildings have survived till today:

the old and new house of estate manager;
granary;
overseer’s house;
stable;
kennels;
pub-tea house;
living house of estate servants;
fish basement (functioning);
smithy (with demonstration of the craftwork);
sauna (with exhibition);
drying-kiln;
apple store-house;
gardener house and cart-house with carts;
sledges and harness exhibition.
Krimulda – estimated time 14:00 – 14:15

As you leave the Turaida property, return to the parking lot. Exit it and turn left to road P7.

Drive on the road P7 till the junction with Krimuldas iela.

Turn left, keep on driving straight till Krimulda village, drive around the village, see the Krimulda Castle.

OPTION: park the car. Walk behind the castle to see the view on the valley of the river Gauja.

On your right hand side of the road just before the turn to Krimulda you will see one of the new winter snow based businesses that are ‘springing up’ all over the area – no pun intended!
On arriving in Krimulda Village, take the right hand fork in the road and as you approach a group of buildings at a ‘T’ intersection, there is parking on the left side.

Walk behind the main Estate house for a wonderful view of the Gauja River valley and both the Sigulda and Turaida Castles. About 1 km to the left (North East is the ruins of the 13th century castle). A little further back on the trail past the ruins is a view point for Turaida Castle.

Granted in the middle of the 13th Century from the Riga archbishop, a stone castle was built on the top of the Krimulda hill. It was not defensible and was soon destroyed by the enemy and laid for years in ruins. In the early 1900’s, the current set of buildings were built from the stones of the original castle. The main Estate building is now a children’s rehabilitation center.
Krimulda Village – Castle & Estate – It’s mysterious

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Hungry or thirsty – just a few more minutes

Leaving Krimulda Village we hope you will come back soon and explore what is behind those mysterious doors!

Return to road P7, turn left and drive straight along enjoying the lovely fields.

Be watchful for those stork birds nests on the top of the poles. Maybe you will see a stork feeding their young or flying by.

Latvia is home to a large stork population.

In the fall come back and view the colors spectacle and enjoy the snow sports in the winter as well.
On the way from Krimulda Village to Ragana along highway P7 is a marvelous surprise on the left hand side of the highway.

Time permitting, stop and explore for 15 minutes the lovely church and grounds.

In the fields around the church be watchful for a nest of storks or one just flying by.

There is a nature trail to the Gauja river starting at the church.

The Krimulda church congregation (now Lutheran) was started in 1205. The stone church has been destroyed and rebuilt several times of the year but is still one of the oldest in Latvia and celebrates its 800th birthday in 2005.
Lunch at Ragana Tavern - estimated time 14:30 – 15:15

On the P7 and A3 junction you will see the Ragana Kekis and Tavern ahead. Turn right and then immediately left and again left – the entrance to the parking place is from the street behind the Tavern.

Park the car in the parking lot.

Visit “Raganas Kekis” (“Witch cuisine”) tavern and have lunch – about 3–4 Lats per person for three course lunch.
Exit the parking lot. Turn right.

Drive till the road P9. Turn left.

Continue till Birini.

When you see the gate of the Birini Castle on your left, turn there.

Continue straight till you reach the entrance to Birini Castle with the ticket office on your left side.

Pay the entrance fee – 0.50 Ls for a parking, 0.80Ls – entrance fee per person.

Continue driving straight up the hill through gate to the parking place. Park your car there. Hotel building is on your left hand. Go inside.
Driving back to Riga—estimated time—about one hour

Drive from Birini to Ragana on road P9.

Turn right to the highway A3. Keep on going till Senite.

After Senite highway A3 becomes A2 and brings you back to Riga.
Koldeselle (sand dune hill) as the ancient Livs called it, reached its highest prosperity level under the rule of count Mellin in the 18th century, and then they won Pistohlkors family during the 19th and 20th centuries. The main buildings of the present culture and historical complex of Birini Castle were built during that time.

Set on a hill overlooking a lake, the present Birini Castle was constructed in 1860. Gardens and a wide, hilly forest - park surround it. The grounds also contain traces of the past with watermill, a mausoleum for the manor family, and park monuments.
Birini Castle – Day visit – Self walking

Have a walk in the Castle surroundings-

Walk in the park in front of the castle on the lake shore.

Behind the castle there are horse stables.

Return to the main path and keep on going straight. On your left hand you will see Angels Hill (Engelkalns), after you will see a small lake.

Walk across the lake and visit the Love Island (Milestibas Salina) in it.

Walk towards the Linden Alley (Liepu aleja). Cross two bridges over small canals.

Keep on moving straight and visit the Mausoleum (Kapenes) – the family of the count lies there.

Out of the Mausoleum move straight and cross another canal. On your left hand you will see Beet Garden (Bisu darzs). Turn right on your first turn.

Walk down the Watermill. Visit the Watermill (café today).

Walk along the shore of the lake and return to the parking place.

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Go to the hotel’s reception.

Contact the reception staff to begin the guided tour. (10Ls)

Don’t miss the following features using the map of the places:

- Horse stables
- Love oak and Angels Hill (Engelkalns)
- Love Island (Milestibas salina) with a romantic pond
- Linden Alley (Liepu aleja)
- Mausoleum (Kapenes) – the family of the count lies there
- Beet Garden (Bisu darzs)
- Watermill. Visit the Watermill (cafe today). OPTION – visit the cafe for coffee break.
Birini Castle – overnight

Please check in at the hotel’s reception

Please make arrangements for your dinner and your breakfast for the following day

Check out time is at noon
We hope that you enjoyed your day in the lovely Sigulda countryside!

Thank you!