



# WATCHING NATURE IN THE BĪRIŅI CASTLE PARK



Bīriņi Castle



Horse riding in Bīriņi Castle park



Blue Anemone (*Hepatica nobilis*)

**i Description.** Covers three parks [or parts thereof] of Bīriņi Castle – Priežkalns Park, Mežaparks Park, and Ainavu Park introducing with the diversity of local flora, fauna, architecture of the park and relief. Will be enjoyed by each and every one interested in natural processes in man-made areas.

**☀ Best time to go.** April–October. Over the various months, the number of species to be observed will vary. At the end of April–beginning of May these will be spring plants, migrating and nesting birds, later — typical summer species. And late summer and autumn is the best time to watch various species of mushrooms.

**≡ Route:** Administration building – Lake Dzirnava – Sēru Alley – Cemetery – Mežaparks Circle (Lielās Meadows – Mīlestības Islet – Mound Avota – Augusta Pond) – Eņģelkalns – Emīlijas Alley – Ainavu Park – Mīlestības Oak – Stable – Bīriņi Castle – Administration building.

**🔄 Difficulty level.** Easy.

**➡ Distance.** ~ 7 km.

**🕒 Duration.** Several hours depending on the attention of hikers.

**📍 Road pavement.** Mainly forest roads and paths, paths in the park, few asphalt roads.

**🚗 Starting point/ destination.** Car parking lot at the administration building of Bīriņi Castle.

**📍 Distance to Riga.** 55 km.

**📍 Way marking.** The route includes signposts to various historical objects of the park and castle, and other objects in the park.

**🚌 Public transportation.** Bīriņi is reached by regional bus running from Riga on the road Ragana–Limbaži (P9), or from Saulkrasti. You can reach Bīriņi by bicycle (16 km) riding from Saulkrasti Railway Station.

**! Worth knowing!** Suitable trekking boots and a map of the park is recommended if one wishes to study also the meadows and habitats related to beaver activities. The activity is at one's own risk. Emergency services: 112.

**📱 Enter Gauja mobile application**



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## SERVISS

### 🏠 | Bīriņi Castle

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White storks (*Ciconia ciconia*)



Linden alley in Mežaparks



Woodpeckers forgings

## PAY ATTENTION!

### Plants, mushrooms

Although there are several species of trees and bushes in Mežaparks Park, pre-dominantly **pin**es (including old ones, with the so-called crocodile-skin bark) and **firs**, the crack willow (secular tree) are found here, and in the undergrowth many **hazels** and **brackens** are seen. The former meadows are overgrowing with **grey alders**, while **black alders** are found in wet sites. Near the cemetery, an impressive **linden tree**, and at the foot of it — the lichen **peltigera** is seen. The alleys are turned into beautiful bright red colours during autumn by the **spindle**. And in spring it is a common place for **blue and white anemones**. The broad leaves of asarabaccas hide red blossoms underneath. Note the **lily-of-the-valley** and its berries are toxic! Meadow-sweets are found in the boggy grasslands in late summer. Older trees (along the access road to the castle) are covered in many species of **lichen**, which is an evidence for the clean air. On the trunks of the fallen trees, the so-called Artist's Bracket (or Artist's Conk) and the red banded polypore can be seen.

### Birds

The best time to watch birds is May–June. During this time of the year, the birds are very active — they sing, protect their territory, and are busy making nests. Bird species typical to elder wood habitats can be seen in the parks of the castle — **great spotted woodpecker**, **three-toed woodpecker**, **black woodpecker** (the holes they make in old deadwood), **tawny owl** (tree hollows, its rutting-time songs at night). Often various species of tits (**great tit**, **European crested tit**, **willow tit**), **Eurasian nuthatch**, common **blackbird** are seen, the **song thrush**, **jays**, **finches**, etc. can be heard. On one of the small towers of Bīriņi Castle, the **white stork** is nesting for several years (its nest is seen in full if one steps up to the top of the great tower). Common guests in the pond or Lake Bīriņi are **wild ducks**. A careful watcher might spot **crossbills** in winter.

“Saulē Bīriņi pils” Ltd. is maintaining the nature trail.

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### Animals

One can spot **hares** (or traces left behind — its droppings) in the woody parts of the park. Along the western slope of Mound Mežaparks (highest point rising above the alluvial grasslands), a small river flows, where the **beaver** has built its dam. In the vicinity, including on the shores of Lake Dzirnava traces by beavers are seen — fallen trees with gnawed off bark. Traces by **wild boar** are obvious. During warm summer evenings (July), in the vicinity of Bīriņi Castle and above Lake Bīriņi several species of **bats** are seen. Once **squirrels** were often seen in the Castle Park. The growing number of martens accounts for the decrease of squirrels in the whole territory of Latvia.

### Insects

Ant-hills are seen on the side of the paths. Mole-crickets are heard singing at the end of May. The old trees of the manor alley are home to a beetle rarely found in Europe — the hermit beetle.