

# What is NATURA 2000 ?



*Useful information for land owners, residents and tourism providers in  
NATURA 2000 sites*



**LCTA "Lauku ceļotājs"  
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## What is NATURA 2000?

NATURA 2000 is a network of nature protected areas of European importance. It has been established to protect rare and endangered plant and animal species and their habitats (biotopes) in Europe.

In Latvia the network was based upon the existing nature protected areas, adding 122 new sites. It means that every EU country develops its own system of NATURA2000 sites as a part of the whole NATURA2000 system. Thus, NATURA 2000 sites are nature protected areas of European importance.

Human beings can also be an important and essential part of nature, through implementing long term, well considered management measures targeted at conservation of territories and protection of species, for, example, taking care for meadows. The status of NATURA2000 does not automatically mean termination of all economic activities – it rather means well thought over activities, including economic, at the same time respecting the “needs” of the natural values which are of European significance – biological diversity, species, biotopes, landscape, etc.

In many cases, visitors are welcome to NATURA200 sites – those visitors respecting the natural as well as human born heritage.

### What does the term NATURA 2000 mean?

*Natura* means „nature” in Latin, and 2000 is the year by which the system was supposed to be built. The term NATURA is understood the same in all countries and recognised as a “brand” of protected nature areas.

Sometimes, for the sake of convenience, the sites are called simply the „NATURA sites”.

### What is the aim of the NATURA2000 network of sites

The main aim of the NATURA2000 sites network in Europe is protection of rare and endangered plant and animal species and their habitats. It is necessary, because economic activities during the last centuries have influenced and even destroyed innumerable natural values – ecosystems, biotopes and species.



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### **What is a biotope?**

A biotope is a territory, formed as a result of nature processes or human activities; it has its unique, specific conditions and elements of animate and inanimate nature. A biotope can be coastal dunes, a mire, a meadow, a lake, a pine forest, etc. Especially protected are those biotopes which are rare or endangered through human activities, e.g., grey dunes.



### **What species and biotopes of European importance are protected in the NATURA2000 sites?**

Of the species and biotopes, listed in the EU directives, there are 20 plant, 20 invertebrate, 5 mammal, 3 reptile, 11 fish, 70 bird species and 60 diverse types of biotopes protected in Latvia.



### **What bird species are protected in the NATURA 2000 sites?**

Several bird species are protected, like black stork, white tailed eagle, golden eagle, eagle-owl, black woodpecker, wood grouse, black grouse, etc.



### **What are the protected area types of the NATURA 2000 sites?**

In Latvia, there are the following types of the NATURA 2000 sites: nature reserves, national parks, nature restrictions, nature parks, protected landscape areas, nature monuments and micro restrictions. The latter are small-size territories (e.g., a part in a forest) that are designated to protect and maintain places where protected species or biotopes are found.



Today there are 336 NATURA 2000 sites in Latvia (4 nature reserves, 3 national parks, 250 nature restrictions, 38 nature parks, 9 protected landscape areas, 9 nature monuments and 23 micro restrictions). Their total space is 11,9 % of the country's territory.



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**Are protected nature areas and NATURA 2000 sites the same thing?**

All the NATURA 2000 sites are also protected nature areas. However, not all the protected areas are designated as NATURA2000 sites. Today in Latvia there are 689 protected nature areas (without protected trees) , and 336 NATURA 2000 sites.



**Which are the largest and the smallest NATURA 2000 sites in Latvia?**

The largest NATURA 2000 site in Latvia is the North Vidzeme biosphere reserve. The smallest sites are particular nature monuments and micro restrictions.



**Can I advertise and show to visitors rare plant and animal species found in the NATURA2000 sites?**

Information about habitats and biotopes in the protected areas can be disseminated only with written approval from the administration of the respective protected area, or, where there is no one, with written approval of the Nature Protection Board. Namely, it is illegal to advertise rare species and protected biotopes in tourist literature and/or expose them as tourist attractions without relevant approval.



**How can I know that I have entered a protected area or a NATURA 2000 site?**

The protected areas are marked with the sign shown in the photo – an oak leaf on green.

Because of the large numbers of the protected areas, their borders are not marked everywhere.



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## Who is responsible for administration of the NATURA 2000 sites?

The largest NATURA 2000 sites – nature reserves, national parks and the North Vidzeme biosphere reserve have administrations, and one of their functions is to manage these territories. Other protected nature areas and NATURA2000 sites are managed by the Nature Protection Board ([www.dap.gov.lv](http://www.dap.gov.lv)) under the supervision of the Ministry of Environment. This institution provides information on the NATURA2000 sites. Those protected areas, which have no particular administration, are managed by the respective local governments.



## Where to find general information on the NATURA 2000 sites?

The information on the NATURA 2000 sites can be found in the web site of the Nature Protection Board [www.dap.gov.lv](http://www.dap.gov.lv) and in the web site of the Ministry of Environment of Latvia [www.vidm.gov.lv](http://www.vidm.gov.lv) as well as in the regional environment boards or administrations of the NATURA 2000 sites.



## What are the principal restrictions to economic activities in the NATURA2000 sites?

Depending on the aim and category of a particular NATURA2000 site, and depending on the location of your property and activities, restrictions may vary – starting from total prohibition of economic activity (in nature reserves or nature reserve zones) to minimal restrictions as in protected landscape areas or the neutral zone of the biosphere reserve. Practically there is no differences in managing the NATURA2000 sites and especially protected areas.



## What popular tourist areas in Latvia are designated as NATURA 2000 sites?

Most of NATURA 2000 sites in Latvia can be freely visited, except nature reserves. Many nature attractions, landscapes, species, etc., are found there. The most popular tourist destinations in the NATURA2000 sites in Latvia are the national parks of Gauja, Ķemeru and Slītere, the North Vidzeme biosphere reserve, the Pape and Engure nature parks, the hilly landscapes of Talsi, the Abava river ancient valley, the nature parks of Tērvete, Piejūras („Seaside”), Daugavas loku („the curves of the River Daugava), the protected landscape areas of Veclaicene, Vestiena, Augšzeme, Augšdaugava, etc.



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**Is there visitor friendly infrastructure provided in all NATURA 2000 sites?**

Part of all NATURA2000 sites have the necessary infrastructure – nature trails, routes, boardwalks, viewing towers, resting-places, waste bins, toilets, signposts, information posters, tourist camp sites, available services of environment guides, etc. However, it is not necessary to increase the numbers of visitors in all areas – some of them should be „reserved” for natural processes to take place! For example, there are 4 nature reserves in Latvia where visitors are not allowed. However, with previous appointment, it is possible to visit the Teiči nature reserve and walk a particular nature trail, only with the guide from the administration of the nature reserve. Also in the Slītere and Ķemeri national parks, there are nature trails, which can be visited only with their guides.



**How can people find information on NATURA 2000 sites in a particular area?**

Information on the NATURA2000 sites in Latvia and their respective location by administrative regions can be found in the web site of the Nature Protection Board of Latvia (<http://www.dap.gov.lv/?objid=257>).



For example, in Valmiera region, you will find several nature restricted areas – the Lake Burtnieks meadows, the Oleru marsh, the Rūjas floodlands, the Zilaiskalns hill, the Salaca valley nature park, as well as some parts of the Gauja national park and the North Gauja protected landscape areas are in this administrative region.



**What benefits can I get as a rural tourism provider or property owner in the NATURA2000 sites?**

The first advantage is the little transformed nature, the quality of natural environment, landscape, nature monuments, plant and animal species and other natural values which are found in your territory and the nearest location (and in Latvia in general), and are extinct in Europe, therefore they are an attraction to foreign guests. You have to know how to package them in a tourism product doing it in a highly responsible and sustainable way! Another advantage is that land



owners and self-governments have a possibility to apply for EU funding for management of the NATURA2000 sites. Thirdly, those land owners, subject to restrictions of economic activities due to the NATURA2000 status of their property, can apply for compensation according to legislation. More information in <http://www.dap.gov.lv/?objid=1256>.

### **What is the legislation on designating, management and other use of the NATURA2000 sites? Where to find them?**

Laws and regulations concerning nature protection are accessible from the homepage of the Latvian Ministry of Environment:

[http://www.vidm.gov.lv/lat/likumdosana/normativie\\_akti/?doc=3151](http://www.vidm.gov.lv/lat/likumdosana/normativie_akti/?doc=3151)  
[http://www.vidm.gov.lv/lat/likumdosana/normativie\\_akti/?doc=3148](http://www.vidm.gov.lv/lat/likumdosana/normativie_akti/?doc=3148)

Individual regulations on protection and use (by the Cabinet of Ministers) prescribe the protection and use as well as functional zoning of each particular territory.

Nature protection plans (accessible from the homepage of the Nature Protection Board) are recommendations, defining management activities planned in each particular territory, admissible and inadmissible actions, incl. in tourism.

It means that residents and those planning tourism related activities in the NATURA2000 sites must be aware of the requirements and conditions set in the above documents.

### **What NATURA 2000 sites are in the other Baltic countries?**

The most popular NATURA 2000 sites in Estonia are the Monzund archipelago (with the largest Estonian islands), the national parks of Vilsandi, Matsalu and Lahemaa, the Endla and Nigula reserves, the Haanja and Otepää nature parks, etc.

In Lithuania – the Curonian spit, the national parks of Žemaitija, Aukštaitija and Dzukija, and many regional parks.

### **Where to find information on how to develop tourist activities in environment friendly and sustainable way?**

The experts of the LCTA “Lauku ceļotājs” have done a review of the existing situation and produced the guidelines – manual “Guidelines and examples of using the nature resources – nature objects, biotopes, species and territories in sustainable and environment tourism products and their promotion”. The project was financed by the Latvian Environment Protection Fund, and the mentioned documents are accessible from [http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/prof/news\\_lv.html](http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/prof/news_lv.html).



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## **What are the most frequent restrictions for tourism in the NATURA 2000 sites?**

Restrictions can refer to specific activities and/or territories (where visiting is not allowed or restricted to particular seasons of the year). They can also depend on the nature protection category of a particular NATURA2000 site.

The following things are useful to remember when visiting NATURA2000 sites and protected nature areas, e.g., nature parks:

- The following is allowed exclusively in designated areas:
  - o Parking of vehicles and trailers
  - o Tenting
  - o Camping
  - o Making bonfires
- Driving all kinds of mechanical vehicles and horse drawn carts is allowed only on the roads. It is not allowed to drive off road in the forest and on farmlands;
- Any such activities are forbidden that leave or could possibly leave a significant negative impact on natural biotopes, species of wild animals, plants and mushrooms and their habitats or reproduction, rest and feeding of wild animals and birds, as well as gathering during the periods of migration;
- Without written permission from the administration of the territory, it is not allowed to:
  - o Organise open air mass sports and entertainment events with more than 50 participants;
  - o Install educational, recreational and tourism infrastructure objects;
  - o Establish new enclosed open air wild animal gardens/farms;
  - o Organise car, bike, motorboat and water skiing races, as well as rallies, test or training rides.
- Unchained dogs, without a lead and muzzle are not allowed in open air areas, except hunting and border guard, as prescribed in the respective legislation;
- In the restricted nature areas it is not allowed to use water motorbikes.

Behave with responsibility towards the culture and nature values and local residents when visiting the NATURE 2000 sites!





The NATURA 2000 sites in Latvia marked green. Sources: Nature Protection Board (<http://www.dap.gov.lv/?objid=257>)

### **Useful information:**

1. [www.celotajs.lv](http://www.celotajs.lv) – Latvian country holiday association „Lauku ceļotājs”;
2. [www.biosfera.gov.lv](http://www.biosfera.gov.lv) – the North Vidzeme Biosphere reserve;
3. [www.dap.gov.lv](http://www.dap.gov.lv) – Nature Protection Board;
4. [www.eco.celotajs.lv](http://www.eco.celotajs.lv) – the Green Certificate;
5. [www.eedp.lv](http://www.eedp.lv) – the Lake Engure nature park;
6. [www.gnp.gov.lv](http://www.gnp.gov.lv) – the Gauja national park;
7. [www.kemeru.gov.lv](http://www.kemeru.gov.lv) – the Ķemeru national park;
8. [www.ldf.lv](http://www.ldf.lv) – the Latvian Fund for Nature;
9. [www.lob.lv](http://www.lob.lv) – the Latvian Ornithological society;
10. [www.lvema.gov.lv/public/](http://www.lvema.gov.lv/public/) - the Latvian Environment, Geology and Meteorology agency;
11. [www.lvm.lv](http://www.lvm.lv) – the state stock company „Latvijas valsts meži”;
12. [www.pdf-pape.lv](http://www.pdf-pape.lv) – the Pape nature park;
13. [www.putni.lv](http://www.putni.lv) – birds in Latvia;
14. [www.slitere.gov.lv](http://www.slitere.gov.lv) – the Slītere national park;
15. [www.teici.gov.lv](http://www.teici.gov.lv) – the Teiču nature reserve;
16. [www.vidm.gov.lv](http://www.vidm.gov.lv) – the Ministry of Environment of Latvia;
17. [www.vitila.gov.lv](http://www.vitila.gov.lv) – the network of Latvian environmental guides.

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