

ALONG THE LAKESIDES

AND WETLANDS

Bicycle route:

Trakai–Varnikai trail–Trakai

Route length: approx. 10 km

Route starting point: Karaimų str.

GPS 54.649536, 24.930907

Route end point: Karaimų str.

GPS 54.649536, 24.930907



Trakai is a wonderful area of lakes enticing tourists with scenic landscapes and abundance of historical heritage. If you brought your bike to Trakai, it was really a good idea. It's a great place for active recreation. It is most exciting to exercise a little, while admiring the beautiful scenery, and to discover new and interesting things about the history of Trakai, its people and nature.

You are welcome to the 10 km trip to Trakai, particularly enjoyed by nature lovers, since its ultimate point is Varnikai trail revealing the mysteries of nature. This route stretches along bicycle paths and comfortable routes, so the journey will be safe and happy.

If you cannot bring the bicycle to Trakai by car, no problem. It can be brought by train, and some buses departing to Trakai. But if you visit Trakai and suddenly decide to have a bike ride, it is also not a problem – the town has several bicycle rentals, and you will most likely find a suitable two-wheeled vehicle.

The route starts in the sightseeing area, in the intersection of Trakų and Karaimų streets. Here you will find a bicycle and pedestrian path routed along the shore of Galvė lake. Turn there.

While riding along the bicycle path, it is difficult to take eyes off Lake Galvė. It is rarely empty: usually it is teeming with

yachts, windsurfers, kayaks and boats. Galvė is often chosen as a venue for rowing competitions and regattas. The lake is adorned with as many as 21 island, almost every of them with its unique legend. They say that the largest island in Lake Galvė, called Valka, was a place where those condemned to die were kept in ancient times. Relatives were allowed to say goodbye to the condemned from the nearby island of Raudų („lamentations”), so the name is discernible. Small Pirtsalė island derives its name of the habit of Duke Vytautas the Great to punish the guilty nobles in it – dragging them under the coals. The lake also has its own legend. According to it, the lake's name comes after the word “head” (Lith. “galva”). Ostensibly, it used to take away at least one life – a “head” every year.



After driving along the cycling trail for 100 m you will see the bridge to the Castle Island **1**. Follow it and visit the Trakai Island Castle and Historical Museum. There is no designated bicycle parking near the castle, so you cannot leave your bicycle unless you can lock it to a tree.

The Trakai Island Castle was built in the fourteenth century and is currently visited by about 350 thousand people every year. The visitors are fascinated by the spectacular Gothic castle fondled by the lake waves, the only island castle in Eastern Europe. The Golden Age of this castle was the period of rule of Duke Vytautas the Great (second half of the fourteenth century – first half of the fifteenth century). It was Trakai Castle that this ruler chose as his principal residence. Now, the castle has a history museum with collections of numismatics, archaeology, applied arts, Karaites and Tatars



culture and history. The castle hosts various events, classical music concerts, and the old craft days in summer.

Look around the Island Castle and go back along the bridge to the shore, then turn left. In 300 m you will reach the Trakai Peninsula Castle. This castle was built in a similar time as the Island Castle, but much less of it has survived. Now you can see 11 of its towers. In one of them, the fifteenth century conspirators killed the Lithuanian Grand Duke Žygimantas Kęstutaitis, the lender's brother of Vytautas the Great, who briefly ruled Lithuania after the death of Vytautas the Great. The Peninsula Castle regains its initial grandeur in June, during the bustling medieval festival that brings together dozens of artisans, musicians, knights demonstrating their combat skills, courage and chivalry, and of course, many spectators. The Dominican chapel has survived in the castle area and now hosts the sacral art exhibition **2**. Climb up the Aukų Hill, once a place for the rites of the old religion.

200 meters from the castle you will see the pontoon bridge separating Galvė and Luka (Bernardine) lakes. Smarter ones will easily drive over it by bicycle, and those who do not really trust their driving skills, better walk by foot. Pull over on the bridge to admire the picturesque carved shores of the lakes on both sides. Turn left behind the bridge, and pedal along Lake Galvė until you reach another small bridge in 200 meters. Cross it, and turn right.

In half a kilometre will find Varnikai mound **3**. If you have a thermos of tea and a snack, you will hardly find a more beautiful place full a short picnic. Look around, and cycle again, until in 600 m you will see the arrow to Varnikai cognitive trail. The trail is a little less than a kilo-

metre away from here. Along the way you will pass the graves of victims of the Holocaust **4** on the left. Here, 1446 Jews who lived in the surrounding towns and villages were killed and buried in 1941: 366 men, 483 women and 597 children.

The length of Varnikai cognitive trail is 3.5 km. It winds along the swamp of Ilgelis, through the places one never sees often since they are too difficult to get close. The trail is equipped with information stations, describing the nature of the area, the local landscape features, and associated human activities. When travelling along the trail, you see how the tall forest turns into a marsh right in front of your eyes: so wild, mysterious and radiating its unique charm. Pause in a few rest areas, listen and watch the life bustling around. By the way, during the warm time of the year you will be escorted by the thick buzzing thirsty crowd, so mosquito protection will be most useful.

When you finish the exploration of the swamp of Ilgelis, turn your bike and take the same trail back to Trakai.



PLACES TO VISIT:

- 1 Trakai History Museum**
Pilies sala, Trakai
GPS 54.652633; 24.933611
☎ +370 528 53 946
✉ info@trakaimuziejus.lt
🌐 www.trakaimuziejus.lt
- 2 Exposition of Sacral Art**
Kęstučio g. 4, Trakai
GPS 54.645442; 24.936073
☎ +370 528 55 297
✉ info@trakaimuziejus.lt
🌐 www.trakaimuziejus.lt
- 3 Varnikai Mound**
GPS 54.649874, 24.947297
- 4 Holocaust Place and the Monument**
GPS 54.650023, 24.961835

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V a r n i k ų m i š k a s



Žyrai
Pirtis
Galvė
Paršiukai
Pilies s.
Karaimų s.
Bažnyčinė
Karaimų g.
WC
Pūstelninko s.
Viduriai
Čertuvka

Bebrų j.

Zemaitis g.

Nerespinka
Varnikai

Luka

TRAKAI

Vytauto g.

Totoriškųjų e.

Varnikai

Dumbė

Igelis

Jurgelė

Igelio pelkė

Baluosys