

## Water tourism route

### Slutišķi – Nīcgale

*(Slutišķi – Daugavpils – Līksna – Nīcgale)*

### VI - VII

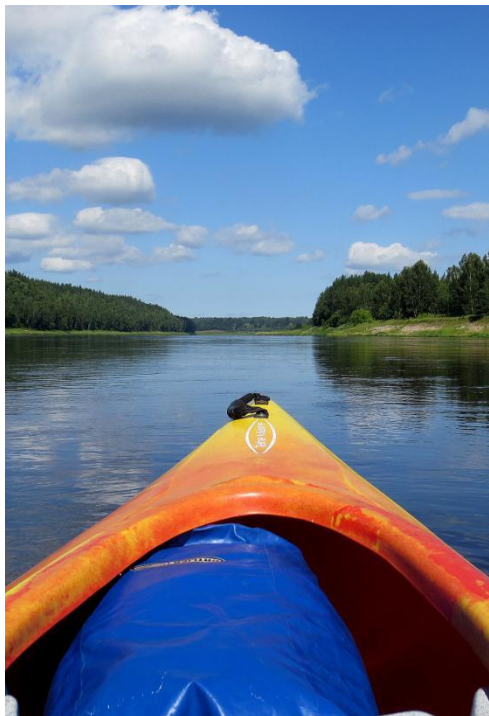
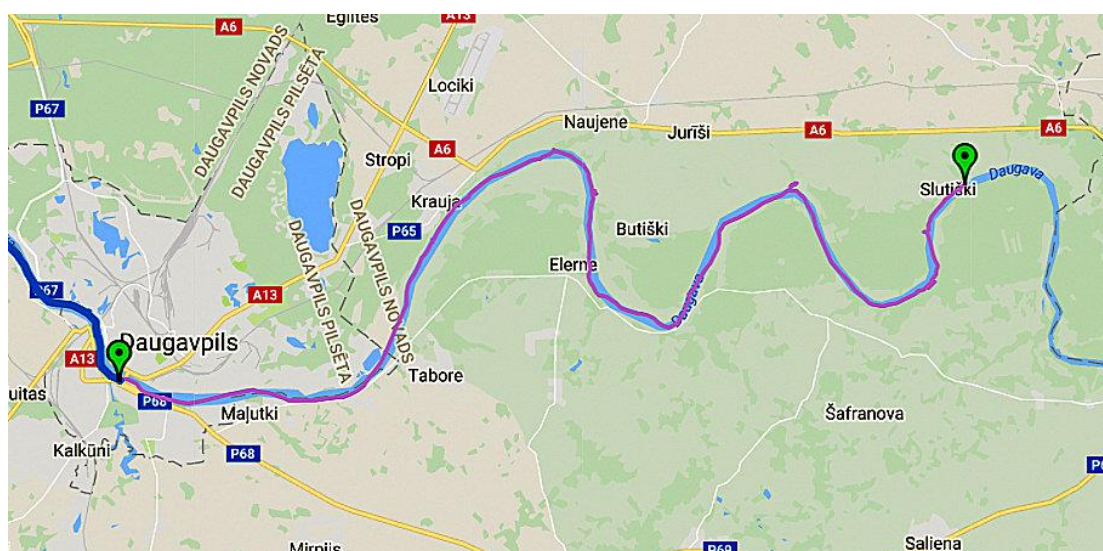
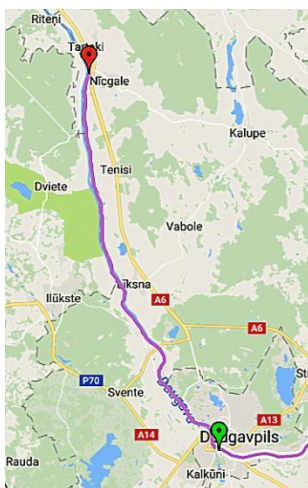


Photo by Juris Smaļinskis



Picture 1. Part of the route: Slutišķi – Daugavpils (38 km)



Picture 2. Part of the route: Daugavpils – Nīcgale (36 km)

**Route.** The route is suited to active boaters who love long boat trips and enjoy discovering interesting nature, cultural and historical monuments. Because of high waves during windy time, the route is not suitable for boaters with little or no experience. The route will not fit to lazy ones as it requires strength and strenuous physical efforts.

As the bends of the river Daugava rather frequently change the flow direction, you must be ready to face counter wind (north, south and west winds). In such situations it is recommended to sail leeward, closer to the shore from which the wind blows. Before or after the trip tourists are welcome to visit tourism sights in Daugavpils or elsewhere along the banks of the river invisible from the boat.

**Route course:** Slutišķi - Daugavpils – Līksna – Nīcgale. The route described above is located in Daugavpils district.

**Type of boat.** A canoe or kayak boat is recommended, which is faster and easier to manoeuvre in case of windbreaks. Inflatable boat or raft also can be used however it may be difficult to manoeuvre even in insignificant crosswind. The route can be completed also with a bigger row boat.

**Recommended time.** The best time for completing the boat route is June to August. However, if the weather is appropriate, trip can be completed also earlier or later, e.g., in autumn when leaves change colour.

**Length:** ~ 74 km. The route can be extended till Līvāni (+ ~ 30 km) or Jēkabpils (+ ~ 57 km). The route also can be started already from Krāslava (+ 30 km) or near Koškovci (+ 63 km) village situated near the border between Latvia and Belarus.

**Time.** For canoe or kayak type boats the route takes 3-4 days.

Length of the first part of the route “Slutišķi – Daugavpils” - 38 km. Length of the second part of the route “Daugavpils – Nīcgale” - 36 km.

Time spent for the trip depends on various factors – boat type, number of boaters per boat, their physical fitness, direction and strength of wind, water level, stream speed, purpose of the trip (recreation, sporting activities, fishing etc.) and time spent on tourist attractions.

**Degree of difficulty.** The route can be defined as a moderate difficulty route, if it is completed in 3 days and in case of favourable weather conditions (with no wind or counter wind up to 3 m/s). However, having hardly manageable boat and unfavourable weather conditions (strong counter wind) make the route hard to complete.

**Start point:** Slutišķi, between Putāni brook and Slutišķi village on the right bank of the river - a place with a pontoon for boarding and docking.

**End point:** Boat deck in Nīcgale, 0,1 km from catholic church in Nīcgale. Steep shore must be taken into account as boats will have to be carried up the hill. On top of the shore there is a drivable road.

**Logistics and public transportation.** Although bus services are available near the start and end points, it is more convenient to use local boat rental facilities (boat transfer, passenger transportation to personal vehicles, accommodation) or use private means of transport.

**Recreation places for nautical tourists.** Between Slutišķi and Daugavpils there are several well-equipped (in Slutišķi and Vasargelišķi, near Dinaburg castle mound) and some not fully equipped boat docks. Between Daugavpils and Nīcgale, however, there is only one well-equipped dock on the left bank of the river near Svente and Pilskalne parish borders just in front of Ilūkste town. Sandblasts on the banks of the river or islands can be used for short time rest. Availability of sandblasts and islands is highly dependent on the level of water in the river, therefore summer and time with no significant rainfall is more appropriate for boating.

**Information.** All valuable items including maps, information materials and navigation equipment must be packed in waterproof covers before the trip. Tourism information materials and maps are available at Daugavpils Tourist Information Centre.

Distance from Rīga:

- Slutišķi - 248 km

- Nīcgale - 194 km

**Please, pay attention to safe boating tips!**

- Check the current day weather forecast before starting the trip. Don't start the trip unless favourable weather conditions are expected as the weather is highly dependent on wind direction and strength on Daugava river.
- If the wind speed exceeds 4 to 5 m/s, river waves may be dangerous to canoe type boats as boats may be overturned.
- There is a strong stream in the river Daugava especially in spring and after heavy rain. Do not overestimate your skills!
- Make sure you always wear a life vest, even if the boat is close to the bank of the river. Daugava has very unequal bed level especially between Slutišķi and Daugavpils, where shallow places are often changed by deep places and little river rapids.

- Beware of underwater objects such as stones, tree branches, fishing nets etc.
- Respect fishermen! Try not to scare fish.
- Evaluate whether this route is suitable for travelling with young children.
- Do not cross the river Daugava unless conditions are suitable for that.

Take care of your and your peers 'health and safety! Everyone is responsible for their own their peers 'safety. Emergency phone number: 112.

### Worth to see

The route is situated on two specially protected nature territories (SPNT). **Nature Park Bends of the Daugava River** (Daugavas loki) was founded in 1990 to preserve the unique and peculiar Daugava river valley landscape, valuable natural complexes, biodiversity of plant and animal species, as well as cultural-historic monuments. In 1980s it was planned to flood Daugava valley in order to build hydroelectric power station in Daugavpils. However, the plan was not completed due to the start of Latvian National Awakening. Daugavas Loki Nature Park is a part of a bigger SPTN - **Augšdaugava protected landscape area**. Both areas can be used for hiking, bike rides, sailing along the Daugava, watching birds and animals, picking mushrooms and berries, swimming in designated and well-equipped places, and use publicly constructed infrastructure (trails, towers, resting places).

Traveling through the water tourism route along the river Daugava reminds a time travel, because after glaciers retreat exactly along the Daugava valley the first plants and later also animals arrived in the present territory of Latvia. Also, the first people - hunters Daugava was a corridor, where they began to inhabit the glacial "abandoned" territories. Dinaburg, Markov, Vecračina and Aizvējiņi (Dinaburga, Markova, Vecračina, Aizvējiņi) castle mounds and ancient settlements serve as an evidence, that banks of the river Daugava were inhabited already long time ago.

**1.** The start point of the route is near the **Slutišķi old believers' village**. It is worth to take a walk around the village to get acquainted with surroundings. In territory of the village there was a settlement and a graveyard. During the archaeological excavations there were found antiquities of Lithuanian origin. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century some of Russian old believers settled in the territory of Latvia to escape from religious persecution in their ethnic homeland. Without knowing the existence of the settlement, they built their homes on the ancient graves. Nowadays Slutiski villaga has a cottage-type layout with buildings typical to Latgale region - with decorated windows, doors and facades. In premises of **Slutišķi old believer's village** operates a museum established as a **branch of Naujene Local History Museum**. Visitors can get acquainted with Old Believers culture and traditions. In order to get a deeper insight, visitors can use guide services. From the top of the Daugava valley riverbank you can enjoy one of the most unusual Latvian **cultural landscapes**. Looking on south you will see **Krauja scarp**. 0.6 km from Slutiski village there is a **Markova castle mound** which is connected with a 2 km long cognitive **trail**.

**2.** One kilometre to the south of Slutišķi village on the right bank of the river there is the Slutišķi scarp, surrounded by the Daugavsargi bend side glens. The slope of the scarp is 36 degrees, length - 570 m, and height - up to 41 m. Scarp declivity is equipped with stairs, allowing visitors to reach the top of the scarp to admire landscape from a viewing tower and relax in well-equipped resting place.

3. To the south of Slutišķi village you can see **Ververi scarp** (also called **Lisaja Gora**) - a spectacular, about 270 m long and up to 42 m high Ververi bend formation. Hikers can get up the scarp through a forest trail.

4. The peculiar place in the river Daugava, where the river valley between the two above-mentioned scarps is narrowed to 500 m, is called the **Gate of River Daugava**. Another such narrowing of the valley can be found a bit more than a kilometre further between bends of Ververi and Rozališķi. The Gate of River Daugava is one of the most beautiful places on the river. The outcrops visible on the slopes of Slutišķi and Ververi scarps are made up of glacial sediments. At the foot of the scarp, however, interesting naturally formed stone paving can be observed. It can be better seen at a time when vegetation is not very rich and dense. When the river has a low water level, most attentive observer will notice small sandstone outcrops. Apparent geological processes are still occurring on the slopes of the scarp – high water level significantly rinses the foot of the Ververi scarp, while the rain and melting snow waters rinse the top of the scarp. **Slope forests** and gullies situated around scarps are protected habitats. The Ververi and Slutišķi scarp are the two most powerful and impressive bank formations of the river Daugava in the territory of the park and one of the most impressive river scarps in Latvia. From the top of the scarp you will see one of the most beautiful views around river Daugava.

5. **Vasargelišķi viewing tower**. From the restored wooden viewing tower, one of the most beautiful landscapes in the river Daugava valley. This landscape was depicted on 10 lats banknotes issued by the Bank of Latvia. The tower can be reached by a 0.4 km long walk from the river, respecting the private property of the area. Go along the border of the field, cross the brook and take the stairs on the steep valley of the river Daugava.

6. In the next bend in Butišķi there are still visible places and traces of the **Daugavpils hydroelectric power station** construction. One of the historic events of restoration of independence of the Republic of Latvia was the involvement of scientists and intellectuals in the fight against the construction of this hydroelectric power station in the mid-eighties. Environmental protection and related activities were one of the forms of non-violent resistance against the existing regime. Despite public opinion, the hydroelectric power station construction work was launched. Deforestation was started, sand and gravel deposits were developed, and construction of a dam was started. The witness of these events is the **Elerne gravel hill** situated on the left bank of the river Daugava next to the **Catholic Church of Elerne**. If the hydroelectric power station would have been built, nowadays, instead of the Daugava river valley standing waters of a large reservoir would be visible.

7. **The Dinaburg (also Naujene or Vecpils) castle mound** is a well-formed 25-meter-high man-made relief formation on the right bank of the river Daugava, surrounded by two deep side gullies. The remains of the **Livonian Order Castle** are still present in the castle mound. The castle was built in the place of the Latgalian wooden castle between 1275 and 1277. In 13th-14th centuries due to its strategic position, this was an important trading venue. In order to get into the castle, it was necessary to go through the outer and inner pre-castle and cross a drawbridge. The palace had a courtyard paved with granite pieces. By the middle of the 16th century the castle served as the residence of the Dinaburg commander. In 1561, after the removal of the Order the castle was governed by the Polish power, but in 1577, Ivan the Terrible troops destroyed the castle. At the end of 16<sup>th</sup> century the construction of a new fortified castle started at the present place of the Daugavpils city, therefore Dinaburg lost its strategic significance. During the Northern War the castle was already completely abandoned. In 1996, on the Dinaburg castle mound, the Livonian Order Castle was set up, but in 2015, the **castle mound trails** were restored and improved. From the Dinaburg castle mound there is a spacious and picturesque view of the Daugava valley and the first bend of the river Daugava - the Elerne bend. The castle mound is situated in 0.2 km distance from the boat dock.

**8. 1.5 - 2 km north of Dinaburg castle mound there is Juzefova (Jezupova) village, whose name comes from the name of the nobleman Juzef (Jezup) Shadurskis. But its former name - "Naujene" originates from the Lithuanian word "Naujene" or "Novene". Nowadays Naujene is situated 1 km north of Juzefova. The first sacred building - the church in Juzefova was built in in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. After the initiative of the Jesuit and philosopher Stanislavs Shadurskis, in 1782 a new wooden church was built here. In 1804, Jesuit monks settled in Juzefova and it became a temporary Daugavpils Jesuit mission place. The Jesuits here performed catechesis - the study of the basis of faith in the form of questions and answers. The wooden church was burnt down, when the German troops stepped back in 1944, but the church tower lasted until 1949. Fire did not damage the congregation house, where later a prayer house was installed. The building was reconstructed several times, creating altars in the building, adding paintings and replenishing sacred interior. The existing **St. Peter and Paul's Roman Catholic Church in Juzefova** has been built over the long period - from 1934 to 1961. In the Soviet times the church premises were reconstructed to library and club. The church came back in the possession of the congregation a lot later - in 1989. A year later, the interior of the room was repaired. As a result, the building regained its former appearance. Behind the church there is a spacious view of the river Daugava valley and the Butiski bend. Before or after the boating trip travellers are welcome to take a walk around **Juzefova manor park** and get acquainted with an interactive environment exposition in the **Naujene Local History Museum**.**

**9. Krauja** is a populated place on the right bank of the river Daugava. Some information sources indicates, that during the Livonian war in this place there was a Russian military camp. The name of the **Krauja manor** originated from the German "Hof zum Berg" - "Mountain Manor". The last owners of the manor before World War I were representatives of count Shahno family. One of them, Marian Shahno, built an eclectic style manor castle in 1910. The partially demolished castle survived through the Soviet times, until it burned down in 2002. Until nowadays only the walls of the building, hidden in dense vegetation layer, are still extant. The **park**, however, is still visited by locals for a peaceful walk.

**10. Rugeli quarry** is situated on the right bank of the river near the boarder between Daugavpils district and Daugavpils city. For construction of Daugavpils hydroelectric power station gravel was extracted exactly from the Rugeli quarry. Today, Rugeli is a popular recreation and swimming area not only among the city inhabitants, but also guests from the neighbouring area.

### **11. Daugavpils**

**12. Blessed Jesus' Heart Roman Catholic Church in Līksna.** The church was built in 1909-1913. The quality of its red brick used for the church construction was poor, therefore, since 1939, about 60 000 bricks have been replaced! Despite this historical fact, the church has been nominated as one of the most impressive sacred buildings in Latvia. Though the building can be admitted as an example of neo-gothic architecture, forms of the interior equipment - altar, rostrum, organ loft, and the confession benches are more characteristic to Gothic style. The organ was built in 1931. The church was damaged during the World War I and was restored in 1921. The church is also visible from the river Daugava.

**13. St. Virgin Mary's Roman Catholic Church in Nīcgale.** It was built by order from Count Henrihs Plāters-Zībergs from 1862 - 1863, devoting the church to the birth of Virgin Mary. The building and its interior items were damaged during World War I. The church was renovated in in 1922. The church's structure has been preserved since the 1960s, but the upper part of the central altar was rebuilt in 1957. A few years later, in 1961, organs were installed. The church is also visible from the river Daugava. Boaters can arrange accomodation at priest's house.

## **Places to visit in Daugavpils**

Before or after boating, it is worth spending one day in Daugavpils, learning about the rich cultural and historical heritage of the second largest city in Latvia.

### **14. Daugavpils Fortress**

The symbol of Daugavpils. An outstanding fortification. The only early 19th century fortress in Eastern Europe that has remained virtually unchanged.

### **15. Mark Rothko Art centre**

The multifunctional institution of contemporary art located in the Daugavpils Fortress in its former Arsenal building. It is the only place in Eastern Europe where it is possible to see original artworks of world famous artist Mark Rothko, a founder of Abstract Expressionism.

### **16. Daugavpils Bat Centre**

Daugavpils Fortress is the most significant bat hibernation site in Latvia. Here you can visit Exposition of the Daugavpils Bat Centre. Offers: both day and night excursions (not more than 10 pers., May – September). Advance registration.

### **17. The exposition of historic costumes “The chest of memories”**

Here everyone can look at the costumes and accessories of the early 20th century.

### **18. Latgale Zoo**

Here, in the artificially created jungles, a visitor can see spotted pythons, spectacled caimans bathing in the sun, playful macaques jumping in the lianas and other swimming, whistling, crawling, hopping and flying tropical creatures.

### **19. Science Center “Zinoo Daugavpils”**

Easy science for children. Exciting and educational activities, unusual experiments.

### **20. Dubrovin Park**

Located between Rīgas and Parādes Streets. The development of the park was actively supported by Pavel Dubrovin, who was the city mayor from 1876 to 1890. The park was named after its creator, and not far from the fountain there is a monument to Dubrovin.

### **21. Daugavpils Regional Studies and Art Museum**

One of the oldest museums in Latgale (1938). Located in beautiful building (1883). The museum offers cultural, historical, nature displays and thematic exhibitions.

### **22. Sundial**

Located in the Daugavpils University public garden. The sundial was created in 1910 (designed by Arkady Yaskov, a teacher of the non-classical secondary school of Dvinsk (Daugavpils)).

### **23. Andrejs Pumpurs Public Garden and St Alexander Nevsky Russian Orthodox Chapel**

Located opposite the Unity House. Created in the second half of the 19th century. The public garden contains a bust of the poet Andrejs Pumpurs, fountain "A Girl with a Lily", St Alexander Nevsky Russian Orthodox Chapel and a monument to innocent victims of the Red Terror. Chapel was consecrated in 2004. Located on the former site of St Alexander Nevsky Cathedral (1864). In 1961 the cathedral was closed and in 1969 – demolished.

### **24. Unity House**

The Unity House was constructed in 1937 at the suggestion of the country's president Karlis Ulmanis using donations and funds provided by the state. At present here situated the Daugavpils theatre, the Latvian Cultural Centre, the Central Library of Latgale, a tourist information Centre, Shmakovka museum, Latvian House, the US Information Centre and other institutions.

### **25. Shmakovka museum**

Offers: modern and attractive story about the oldest Latgalian alcoholic beverage – shmakovka, which is an integral part of the culinary heritage. Tours, tastings and souvenirs.

### **26. Daugavpils Historical Centre and Rīgas Street**

Taking a leisurely walk down Rīgas Street, one can not only admire the beautiful facades of the buildings, but also do some shopping and enjoy a tasty meal. Opposite Post Office No. 1 (42a Rīgas Str.) it is possible to see the sculpture of a pond turtle. At the end of the street, opposite the railway station, it is possible to see water cascades.

### **27. Escape Room**

Escape room is intellectual entertainment for a 2 - 5 people teams.

### **28. Synagogue and Jewish of Daugavpils and Latgale Museum**

Daugavpils synagogue Kadish built in 1850. The Jewish of Daugavpils and Latgale museum is located on the 2nd floor of the synagogue that is open to visitors on preliminary request.

### **29. Daugavpils Lead Shot Factory**

Daugavpils Lead Shot Factory is the oldest ammunition factory in Northern Europe, founded in 1885. It is the only such factory in Baltics. Here it is possible to see the historic exhibition, the shot-making workshop, the unique shot tower of 37m height that spreads over the 19m deep water well beneath.

### **30. The Exposition of Medical History**

This is the only one exposition in Latgale that reflects the theme of the history of medicine. The exposition of Medical History is located in Daugavpils Medical College. Advance registration.

### **31. Church Hill**

Church Hill is a unique place in Daugavpils. Churches of all 4 main religious denominations in Latgale exist within a relatively small area. This complex creates a unique panorama of Daugavpils.



### **32. Daugavpils Clay Art Centre**

The Centre offers the possibility to get acquainted with the cultural heritage of Latgale - ceramics and pottery traditions.

### **33. Protection Embankment**

A unique 6-km long engineering structure along the bank of the Daugava River, which not only protects the city against floods, but also serves as a road. The protection embankment was designed by Pavel Melnikov, a military engineer-captain, and constructed in 1830–1841. In some places the embankment is 9 meters higher than the water level in the river.

#### **Services on the banks of the river Daugava.**

**Daugavpils Tourist Information Centre**, 22a Rīgas Street (building of The Unity House) Daugavpils, +371 65422818, +371 26444810, turisms@daugavpils.lv, [www.visitdaugavpils.lv](http://www.visitdaugavpils.lv)

**Daugavpils Fortress Cultural and Information Centre**, 5 Nikolaja Street (in the territory of Daugavpils Fortress) +371 65424043, +371 28686331, [cietoksnis@daugavpils.lv](mailto:cietoksnis@daugavpils.lv)

#### **Boat rental**

**Boat and raft rental**, Daugavpils district, Naujene parish, “Vilusi”, + 371 29493121, [www.plostilatgale.lv](http://www.plostilatgale.lv), [ilmars.lociks@inbox.lv](mailto:ilmars.lociks@inbox.lv)

**Boat rental “Mučas”**, 1 Īsā Street, +371 28344394, [www.laivunoma.com](http://www.laivunoma.com)

**Kayak rental**, +371 29839631, +371 29965098, [www.facebook.com/sotkajakarimaj](https://www.facebook.com/sotkajakarimaj)

#### **Accommodation located close to the river**

**Camping “Ozianna”**, Daugavpils district, Naujene parish, + 371 29182474, [www.piedaugavas.lv](http://www.piedaugavas.lv), [info@piedaugavas.lv](mailto:info@piedaugavas.lv)

Shops are available in Daugavpils city and Naujene, Krauja, Līksna, and Nīcgale parishes.

Catering services are available in Daugavpils.



The beginning of the route near Slutišķi  
Photo by Juris Smaļinskis



View from Slutišķi scarp  
Photo by Juris Smaļinskis



View from the Ververu scarp  
Photo by Juris Smaļinskis



Rozališķi bend on the river Daugava  
Photo by Juris Smaļinskis



Daugava near Vasargelišķi  
Photo by Juris Smaļinskis



View from the Vasargelišķi viewing tower  
Photo by Juris Smaļinskis



View from the Dinaburg castle mound  
Photo by Juris Smaļinskis



Daugava near Dinaburg castle mound  
Photo by Juris Smaļinskis



Daugava near Daugavpils  
Photo by Juris Smaļinskis



Daugava near Daugavpils  
Photo by Juris Smaļinskis



Daugava near Daugavpils (railway bridge)  
Photo by Juris Smaļinskis



Daugava  
Photo by Juris Smaļinskis



Daugava near Nīcgale  
Photo by Juris Smaļinskis

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