

### Marcinkonys Visitors Centre

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## ZACKAGIRIS SIGHTSEEING ROUTE





Dear visitors of Dzūkija National Park, we are pleased invite you to discover Marcinkonys environs by following Zackagiris sightseeing route. The length of the route is 13.8 km, however, you may choose sections of 7 km or 10.5 km. The route begins at Marcinkonys Visitors Centre.

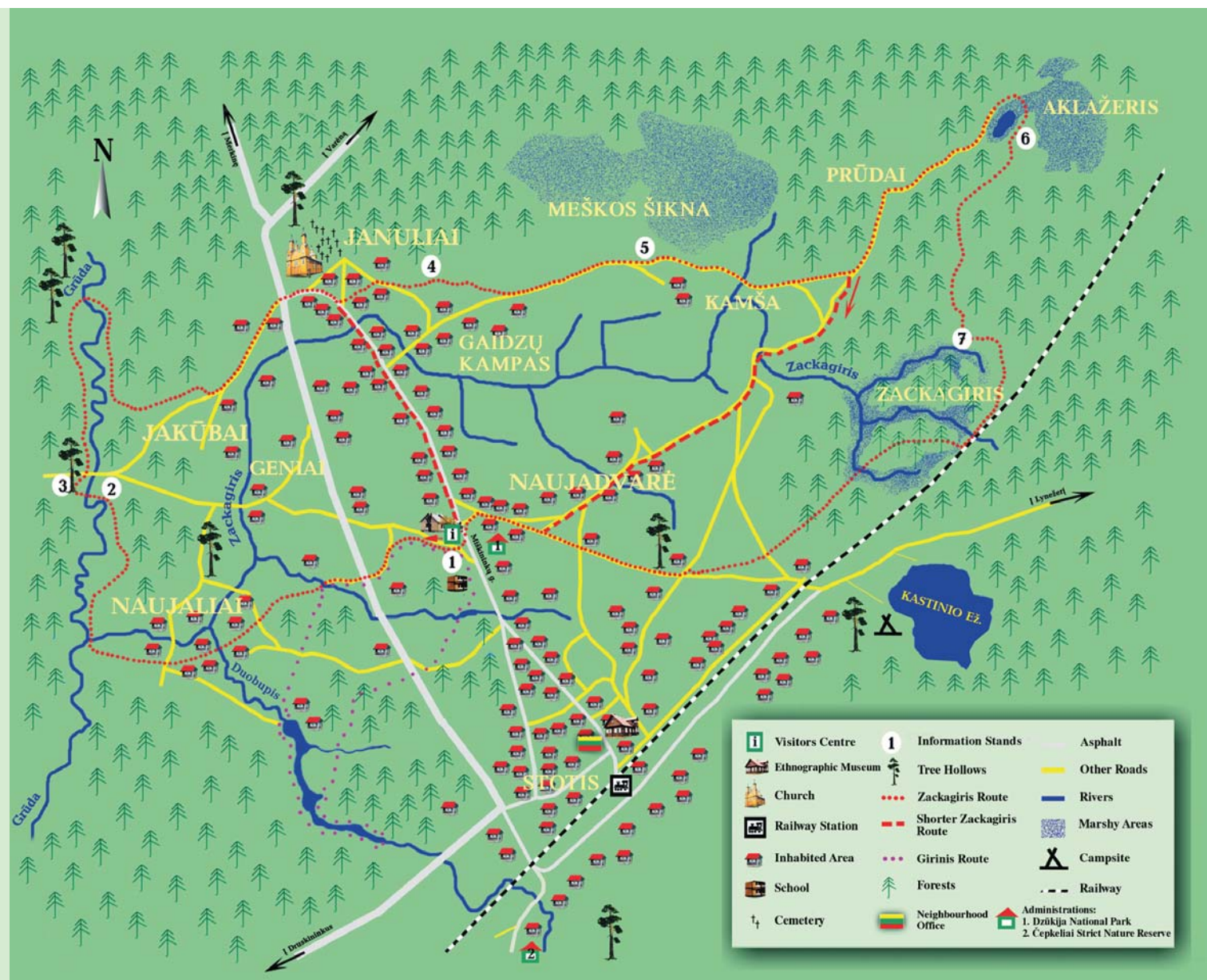
**1** Marcinkonys is one of the largest Lithuanian villages which originated from a settlement of forest scouts mentioned back in 1637. Up to the middle of the 19th century, it was a small village that expanded only after the railway Warsaw – St. Petersburg was built (in the second half of the 19th century). The environs of the village have been inhabited since the Stone Age. Now Marcinkonys has over 800 inhabitants. The administrations of Čepkeliai State Reservation and Dzūkija National Park, as well as Marcinkonys Visitors Centre are located here. A small path winding further leads toward the part of the village called Naujaliai or Kremlius situated in a depression. The Duobupis, a small river that crosses Naujaliai, farther on joins with the Zackagiris stream which gave the name to this sightseeing route. After leaving the village, the Zackagiris flows into the Grūda that runs through the forests from the Grūda Lake that separates Lithuania and Belarus. The length of the Grūda is 45 km. It differs from the Park's other rivers by its very wide valley and an abundance of loops and old riverbeds. Earlier, the Grūda was famous for its large population of crayfish; one can also see trout and graylings and others that hunt there. The Grūda water-meadows are a favourite hiding place for corn-crakes, while herons look for frogs here and cranes come here in spring.

**2** Hill of Shooting-Range. A shooting-range was established here during the Polish Occupation period later to be used by Germans. There were wooden rails at the foot of the hill that were used for pulling a trolley with attached targets. A cottage stood at the edge of the forest from which they used to shoot at the moving target-trolley. The high slope would “absorb” the shots that missed the target. Village children used to look for lead from bullets for their fishing-rods. They used to slide down the sand and look if any piece of a bullet came up to the surface.

**3** Trees with hollows. When you cross the Grūda, you will find a hollow pine. There are very old bee-keeping traditions in the forests of Dzūkija. During hard periods, people would face a shortage of bread or money but they would never experience a lack of honey. Honey and wax were the main source of income for many inhabitants for a long time. They used to climb trees by using special equipment that is exhibited at the Ethnographic Museum in Marcinkonys. You can see bees living in tree hollows on the Ancient Bee-Keeping Path located in Musteika environs.

**4** The Dune of Roosters. The white sand hill is an open hill in the Roosters' corner. Inland dunes in Dzūkija pine forests extend for tens of kilometres but all of them have stopped moving since trees and grass have stopped the movement of sand. But this dune is still alive. Helped by the wind, it tries to resist plants by pouring its white sand on them.

**5** “The Bear’s Rump”. Lichen forests are replaced by small swamps, meadows and bushes called “The Bear’s Rump”. On the right, there are cultural meadows with the straightened and deepened Zackagiris stream flowing through, and on the left, there is a small but very beautiful raised bog. In spring, andromedas burst into blossom and



cotton-grass shows its white tuft. Ledums and bog whortleberries grow in drier places, and cranberry stems interlace on the hummocks of swamps. Moving toward the Aklažeris, fenced fields called Prūdai appear on the left.

**6** The Aklažeris. It is a small lake of thermo-karstic origin that appeared when an ice lump broke away from a glacier and was covered with soil. The bogging process transformed the lake of almost 10 ha into an transition mire while only fifty years ago one could swim there. Silver crucian carps used to spawn in the lake, and fishing boats would be moored along the shores. A lot of mountain arnicas and sand pinks grow on the slopes of the lake's shores.

**7** Beavers' Places. The path leads through the sections stretching out through the dunes toward the Warsaw – St. Petersburg railroad leaving the Aklažeris behind. On the right you can see lush sedge meadows and low-lying marshy land quagmires which conceal beaver cabins. On the left, 200 m from the railroad, there is a circus brimming with numerous springs where the Zackagiris stream begins. After visiting a woody island, you will reach a wide clearing: these are lanes through which Marcinkonys village cattle were driven to the border of Čepkeliai Raised Bog. If you turn left, there is the Kastingis Lake nearby, and if you turn right, you will return to Marcinkonys Visitors Centre by following the lanes.