Let's go on a tour of the Irbene locator!

29.08.2016

Only a short time after its reconstruction, the Ventspils International Radio Astronomy Centre has been attended by interested parties from the UK, Germany ... and even Australia.

Popularly known as the Irbene locator, the Ventspils International Radio Astronomy Centre remains a popular tourist destination, especially attractive to those who are interested in military heritage.

After a thorough restoration, it has once again opened its doors to visitors and promises exciting
tours.

During the Soviet era the military town "Zvaigznīte" was located here in the Ance parish. This was no ordinary army real estate, but rather one of the Soviet's top secret facilities, used for listening in on military conversations and spying on NATO countries during the Cold War years.

After the Latvian state regained its independence, the seized property has been operated by the Engineering Research Institute of Ventspils University College. There are two huge antennas still running - a fully steerable parabolic RT-32 antenna, whose 32-meter diameter makes it the largest one in Northern Europe and the eighth largest in the world, as well as another RTS-16 antenna with a 16-meter diameter.

Both antennas have been refurbished in the summer of 2015 and are in full use for scientific research purposes - for interstellar medium object observations, Solar radio observations, radio location of asteroids and man-made objects passing Earth, including space debris, and especially large-base interferometric observations following objects outside the solar system.

In the few months since the Radio Astronomy Centre in Ance parish has been newly available for tourists after reconstruction, it has been visited by more than a thousand enthusiasts from Latvia and neighbouring countries, and also from such countries as Britain, Germany, Sweden, Canada and even Australia.

The tour takes place with a guide. It lasts about an hour and a half, during which interested persons get acquainted with the Irbene territory, take a walk through the underground tunnel and visit the Friedrich Zander memorial room.

Baltic-German Friedrich Zander (born in 1887 in Riga, died in 1933 in Russia) was one of the most prominent Soviet scientists who left an important mark on the development of rocket-building.

Visiting the Radio Astronomy Centre is a good choice because Irbene is surrounded by several other noteworthy objects. A few kilometres further on the Kurzeme sea-coast with a beautiful pebble beach, stands the Ovisi lighthouse, which is the oldest preserved navigation building in Latvia.

Nearby is Mikelbaka, which is the highest lighthouse in the Baltics - 62 metres. Pleasing to the eyes is also the Irbe River, which is particularly popular among boaters. Also nearby is the Slitere National Park with its wonderful flora and fauna, Cape Kolka, where the Riga Gulf connects to the great Baltic sea, and the unique historical Liv coastal territory - the Livonian or Liv coast.