

From the course setter

The eleventh TAOK rogaine takes rogainers to one of the main sight-seeing areas in South Estonia. The core attraction in the area is the primeval valley of Ahja river with Devonian sand stone cliffs, known in Estonian as „*taevaskoda*“ or in translation „*heaven's hall*“. Rogaining course offers several possibilities to sight the river from different angles. However, as this is not a swimming competition, triathlon or adventure race, it is prohibited to cross the artificial lake section of the river (east from the event center) by swimming or any other means. This section of the river is marked on the map with purple vertical stripes as out-of-bounds. Crossing the Ahja river or its branches in other sections is at participants own risk, it is highly recommended to use the bridges marked on the map.

The terrain includes two nature protection areas: Ahja river primeval valley (the area surrounding the artificial lake and the section of the river south east of it) and Valgesoo marsh (the big marsh in the north eastern part of the map). When moving in these areas, please take appropriate care to minimize your impact on the nature. Absolutely no trash shall be left on terrain.

Runnability of the forest in general is good. There are many roads, tracks and rides, pushing up the speed of top teams. However, there are also some parts of the terrain which are more difficult to pass, while the rogaining map does not indicate passability. The water level is relatively high. Bogs and marshes are rather wet. While the proportion of the area covered with bogs and marshes is not very big, it will be difficult to prevent getting wet feet.

It is possible that for the first and the last time in the history of TAOK rogaines the winner takes it all. However, reaching the maximum score will depend on the motivation of the teams who have the capacity for this. Nonetheless, I expect that reaching the maximum score will be a privilege of few teams while I hope that finding the best route will not be too trivial. For the great majority of teams there will be enough to do during the whole control time, while some of the teams going for the ‘big bite’ may face the risk of getting back late.

The area is popular for trekking, bird-watching, berry and mushroom-picking, so there are many smaller tracks that you do not find on the map. Also, there has been quite some forest cutting and this is actually currently continuing. There are many clearings. Some older clearings are indicated as the forest, while some newer ones may be missing from the map.

Tartu-Petseri railway and Tartu-Põlva road run through the terrain. There are also a few local roads. Be cautious when crossing roads or running by them. There is some traffic also on the railway.

There is 1 organised water station on the terrain with cold water. In addition, there are indicated 3 natural sources by the river – 1 is at the control station and 2 are not far from control stations on possible routes. Furthermore, the map indicates 2 places with open access to drinking water - one in Kiidjärve village (just behind the bus stop, on west side of the road) and another in Taevaskoja village at the southern wall of the village library (the first building north from railway on the eastern side of the road). These 3 sources and 2 wells are self-service water stations – there are no drinking cups, so you may consider taking your own. It is also prohibited to leave any trash at these sources and wells.

Please pay attention to the out-of-bounds areas. Beyond the river section mentioned above also some fields are marked as out-of-bounds. Obviously, it is also prohibited to enter the territory of farmsteads and settlements, marked on the map with olive green color.

I am confident that will manage to plan the best route for your team to suit your tastes and capacities while taking into account the above given hints and warnings. I hope you will enjoy this terrain. I certainly do.

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