

„2008-2011 Sustainable use and management of nature resources in the Natura 2000 sites – popular and potential tourism destinations in Latvia.“

(2008 – 2011)

Project information: http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/prof/proj/EEZ/EEZ_en.html

Project goal – maintenance and rational use of biological diversity and nature resources in the *Natura 2000* sites in Latvia as existing and potential tourism destinations, facilitating balanced and planned economical development according to the principles of sustainability.

Key activities and results:

1. Tourism development plans for 4 *Natura 2000* sites in Latvia – the Rāzna national park, the Vidzeme stony seacoast within the Ziemeļvidzeme biosphere reserve, the Abava river valley nature park, the nature park “Dvietē’s floodlands”. The sites will be inspected and stakeholder seminars will be organized to ensure involvement of all stakeholding parties and integration of their interests in the tourism development plans.

2. Tourism management guidelines for *Natura 2000* sites.

Nature objects in the *Natura 2000* sites which are advertised as tourism attractions will be inspected, good and bad management practices will be identified and impact from tourism assessed. The guidelines will be based on inspection data and analysis.

3. "Traveller's Green Advice".

Practical advice for tourists, and informative as well as educational material for tourism providers, tourist

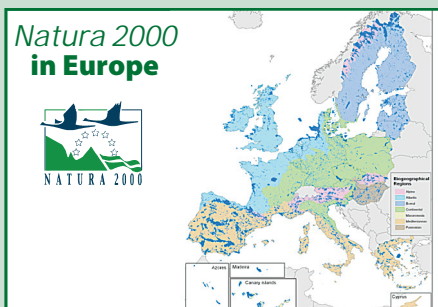
information offices, local governments and others concerned with the *Natura 2000* sites. The Traveller's Green Advice will present, in an easy and user friendly way, the nature protection rules and regulations to be observed when visiting nature sites.

4. Five brochures, promoting environment friendly tourism, nature values and importance of their protection for visitors:

- Hiking in Latvia,
- Boating in Latvia,
- Cycling in Latvia,
- Nature sightseeing in Latvia,
- Nature Holidays in the Baltics.

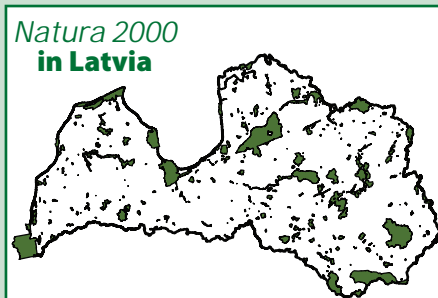
5. The Baltic conference on tourism in protected nature areas.

The conference will take place in spring of 2011 and will invite all stakeholders interested in tourism development in *Natura 2000* sites and other protected nature areas in the Baltic countries.



Natura 2000 in Europe –

Natura 2000 is a network of nature protected areas of European importance. It has been established to protect rare and endangered plant and animal species and their habitats (biotopes) in Europe. *Natura 2000* sites exist in all 27 Member States, they cover app. 20% of the EU territory – protecting many of our most attractive landscapes.

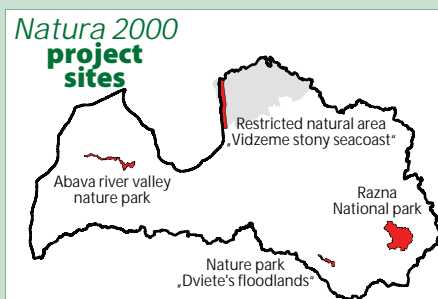


Natura 2000 in Latvia –

There are 336 *Natura 2000* sites in Latvia (4 nature reserves, 3 national parks, 250 nature restrictions, 38 nature parks, 9 protected landscape areas, 9 nature monuments and 23 micro restrictions). Their total space is appr. 11,9 % of the country's territory. Some *Natura 2000* sites, like nature reserves and national are managed by their respective administrations. Other protected nature areas and *Natura 2000* sites are managed by the Nature Protection Board (www.dap.gov.lv) under the supervision of the Ministry of Environment and local governments.

See information on the *Natura 2000* sites accessible to visitors, and photo galleries at

http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/wrth/natura2000_en.html



Natura 2000 project sites

The project will produce the tourism development plans for four *Natura 2000* sites in Latvia representing:

- all regions of Latvia
- diverse profile of protected areas
- diverse forms of management of the area as a *Natura 2000* site.

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Restricted natural area “Vidzeme stony seacoast” in the Ziemeļvidzeme biosphere reserve

The 60km long Western border of the Ziemeļvidzeme biosphere reserve is washed by the Baltic sea waters in the Gulf of Riga. A versatile and attractive mosaic of coastal biotopes is found there – the Randu meadows, the Devonian period sandstone outcrops, the stony and sandy beaches, dunes and forests on dunes. The Randu meadows and the Vidzeme stony seacoast are Natura2000 sites. Villages along the seacoast are frequented by tourists. In some places there are information stands, parking facilities, nature trails. Visitor concentration is observed in particular sites creating considerable and unbalanced environmental burden.

Dviete floodplain nature park

This is a truly unique natural territory – the ancient Dviete River valley, Lake Skuķi and Lake Dviete, and the flood-land meadows which are adjacent to the ancient valley. During flood season, they are something of a safety valve for the waters of the mighty Daugava River. The meadows can absorb a great deal of floodwater, and later they slowly return the water to the river. All of this creates a fairly unusual ecosystem. The river valley is important for birds during migration and nesting. Tourists arrive to watch wild cows in the meadows. There are information stands and services of local guides are available.



Abava river valley nature park

The ancient Abava River valley between Kandava and the place where the river flows into the Venta River is the most expressive river valley segment in Kurzeme region in terms of landscape and terrain. The valley is 30 to 40 metres deep and as much as 300 metres wide. The territory is distinguished by great diversity of a biological nature (more than 800 kinds of plants), featuring many different biotopes and natural monuments such as streams, waterfalls, cliffs, huge rocks, and many cultural and historical monuments. The Kandava and Sabile town centres are architectural monuments. The Sabile Winery Hill and the Pedvāle open air arts museum are popular tourist attractions. To preserve the landscape, wild cattle were released in the meadows. There are nature trails for tourists, and the Abava is the most popular river for water tourists in Kurzeme. In spite of the high potential, the tourism resources are underused.

Rāzna National park

Latvia's newest national park (2007) is in the “land of the blue lakes” – the region of Latgale. One of the goals of establishing a national park was to preserve the natural treasures of the region. Lake Rāzna, which is the second largest in Latvia, is there, as is Lake Ežezers, which has more islands than any other lake in Latvia. There are other bodies of water, as well as typical landscapes of hillocks and a unique cultural environment. One of the most popular destinations in the park is Mākoņkalns Hill with the Volkenberga castle ruins which offers a lovely view of Lake Rāzna. There are several campings, guest houses, swimming spots and other recreation facilities by the Lake Rāzna. Administrators of the newly established park are working on the tourist infrastructure – trails, routes, etc. The site has a great potential for tourism, and, properly managed, it has every opportunity to become a popular and significant nature tourism destination in Latvia and the Baltics.

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