

draft

Military Objects' Usage Guidelines



LCTA "Lauku ceļotājs"
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This report was compiled within the Baltic Green Belt project. The Baltic Green Belt project wants to conserve, use and develop the common natural and cultural heritage of the coastal border areas formerly dividing east and west by establishing a platform for transnational cooperation between stakeholders working in nature conservation and sustainable development of the southern and eastern Baltic Sea coast.



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The reports are published as part of the European Green Belt initiative which has the vision to create the backbone of an ecological network, running from the Barents to the Black Sea that is a global symbol for transboundary cooperation in nature conservation and sustainable development. www.europeangreenbelt.org

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This report can be downloaded from
www.balticgreenbelt.net

The responsibility for all contents lies with
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Introduction

The available information brings to notice that in the second half of the 20th century approximately 10 % of the territory of Latvia was taken by the USSR army military bases and other military objects related to the Soviet army, whose number reached several hundreds. Irrespective of the multitude and variety of these objects (including also pre-soviet), there are only few shining examples in Latvia of how these significant historical resources are being used for sightseeing or how an attractive and informative touring product has been developed on their basis.

Meanwhile European and international practice provides countless examples where such objects are popular tourist attractions at the respective regional or even national level.

The **objective** of the military objects' maintenance guidelines (hereinafter – the Guidelines) is to introduce this successful European practice and to promote the usage of Latvian military heritage in the development of new touring products, as well as to draw public attention to the future protection of the military objects, since the majority of the 19th – 20th c. military objects (it refers both to material and nonmaterial heritage) has been lost forever.

The concept „object of military heritage” or „military object” in these Guidelines refers to:

- An object that has been used or provided for military purposes for the past 2 – 3 centuries;
- The former USSR army objects – missile bases, aviation and tank firing ranges, former military aerodromes, military towns and parts and related objects, objects of the border guards and counterespionage, etc.
- The former fortification systems, coastal defence batteries, fortresses, pillboxes, block-houses, bunkers, and in some cases – sconces;
- Collections, museums and exhibitions devoted to the warfare and military issues;
- Significant battle fields, if these sites are facilitated and exhibited as sightseeing objects;
- Weaponry, for instance, - canons;
- People as well – narrators and organized events that continue or display the traditions related to the historical military heritage.

Individual single finds, such as charges, guns, helmets, graveyards of the departed in different wars, castle mounds (as ancient fortifications) and the majority of the Medieval castles which are in most cases promoted as the sights of the respective region, are not considered to be military objects by these Guidelines.

The contents of the Guidelines are the following:

- **Examples of the military objects' usage in other Nordic countries and Latvia** – concrete examples from the best practice in relation to the military domain which show a touring product, developed on the basis of interesting, attractive and important military resources;
- **Criteria for the evaluation of the military objects' suitability to tourism**, for which a simple algorithm has been drawn up – how to evaluate the military objects' suitability to the involvement in the development of a touring product;
- **Existent and potential military objects in Latvia** – on the basis of previously developed criteria, a list of the currently existent and potential military touring objects has been created, which includes 63 objects;
- **Aspects of the application of historical materials and information** – the role of historical materials in the development of touring products has been explained;
- **Example of the elaboration of a military touring route** – a particular military touring route has been created in Kurzeme, which is the richest area in Latvia in terms of unused military resources;
- **Guidelines on the military objects' usage in tourism** – how to utilize the previously used and unused resources related to the military domain;
- **Map: Military tourism objects in Latvia** – a demonstrative overview map with the present military tourism offering in Latvia;
- **Military heritage related websites and information sources** – listing of different Internet websites, mainly related to Latvia and the Nordic countries;
- **Involved parties** – a list of people, who have so far participated in the activities, related with „Lauku ceļotājs” (“Countryside Traveller”) military projects, is drawn up.

The Guidelines are meant to serve as information and idea generating material for the owners of military objects, managers, the personnel of the self-governments and Tourism Information Centres (TIC), the staff of museums and other institutions.

The Guidelines have been developed **within the framework of the project „The Baltic Green Belt” of the pilot project of the Baltic Sea Region Trans-national Cooperation Programme, implemented by the Latvian Rural Tourism Association „The Countryside Traveller”**, simultaneously also preparing a map of military tourism routes. The preparation process of the information about the objects involved > 30 different interested persons (see Section 9) – students of local history, tour guides, local enthusiasts, the staff of museums, TIC, and self-governments, etc., and by virtue of their cooperation a database on the military objects and related tales has been established on Countryside Traveller's website www.celotajs.lv in the division „Worth seeing”; valuable information has been gathered and historical photographs for the purposes of the above-mentioned map of the military tourism routes have been obtained. Although the “focus territory” of the project is Kurzeme's historical area (the western border of the former USSR), the information has also been gathered and the experience obtained in the rest of the territory of Latvia. The project activities and previous results have aroused great

interest from Latvian journalists and gripping publications both in the “central” and regional press, as well as video stories on the Latvian Television, thus generating interest in the military objects and positive resonance within the sphere.

The Baltic Sea Region Trans-national Cooperation Programme Project „The Baltic Green Belt”.

The aim of the project is to facilitate the preservation of the Baltic Sea region biological diversity by establishing the Baltic Green Belt as a permanent network of cooperation. In geographic terms, the Baltic Green Belt runs along the boundary of the Iron Curtain that was set up by the former USSR. For this reason the environment here remains largely untouched and unique. The plan of activities related to the Baltic Green Belt includes attempting to improve the ecological situation in the coastal zone, both in the sea and on land. This will help to promote the sustainability of social and economic aspects of the process, and it will also help to ensure economic welfare for local residents. The project includes NGOs, government institutions, representatives of business and scientific institutions – 15 partners and 7 associate partners in all, all of them representing countries which surround the Baltic Sea. **The Countryside Traveller rural tourism association is one of the partners, and its task in this project is to organize a pilot project in co-operation with the Slītere National Park.**

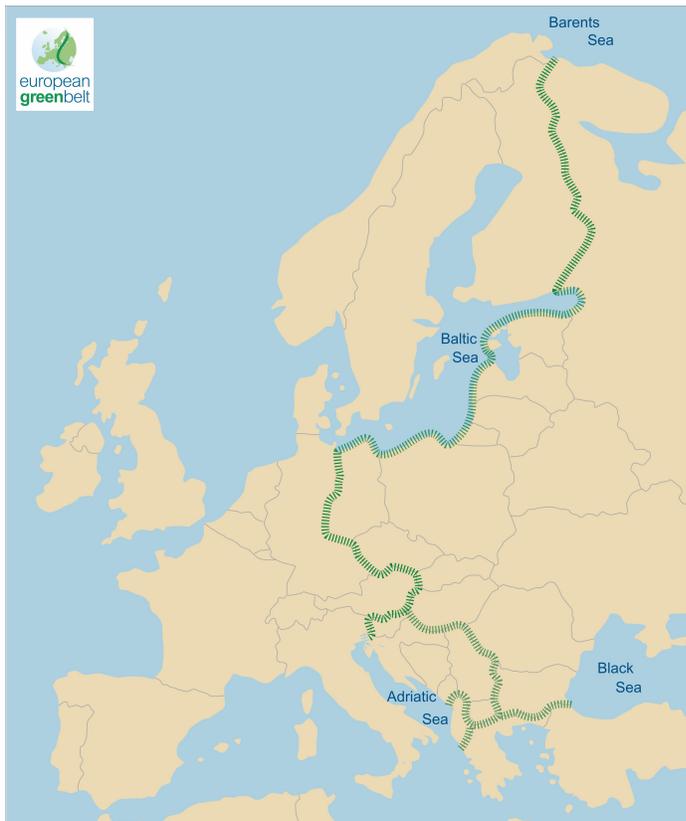


Figure – the European Green Belt - <http://europeangreenbelt.org>