

## Key principles and basic steps in producing the Slītere Traveller's Guide

### Key principles:

1. The information included in the Slītere Traveller's Guide was repeatedly checked on site. Therefore it is truthful and reliable, corresponding to the situation at the time of on-site inspections;
2. The active touring routes included in the Guide were set up and tested as part of the development process of the Guide;
3. Local residents: entrepreneurs, service providers, administration of the national park, self-governments, tourist information offices of the surrounding region, specialists of regional studies, enthusiasts and others were involved in all stages of the Guide development process;
4. There is a strong focus on promotion of local services and local produce in the Guide (stimulation of local economy). Practical information takes up a large part of the Guide which makes this publication different from other sources promoting especially protected nature areas/Natura2000 sites (the main and only focus in these is usually put on nature values);
5. The Guide does not contain highly scientific information which could be too complicated for an "average user";
6. Description of the objects, sites and territories in the Guide is mainly based on the stories, memories, witnesses of the local people, historical photos etc. This approach adds new contents to the information space instead of the frequently observed "*copy-paste*" method when new tourist literature publications represent compilations from a number of Internet sources and earlier travel guides;
7. The information which was collected from local residents has been put in digital form and can be used in next promotional works about this territory;
8. Only such nature sites were included in the Guide which are not visitor sensitive and where visiting could not do harm or bring negative impact on environmental quality (nature and environment protection aspect);
9. The author of the Guide put himself in the role of a traveller and tested local services and transportation. This way, the Guide is based on practical experience of a person who would actually use the services instead of just doing a desktop work to collect information;
10. The above principles (involvement of the local people, stimulation of local activities, protection of nature resources, etc.) comply with the key theoretical principles of the sustainable tourism development.

### Basic steps:

#### **1. Previous work**

The author of the Guide first visited the territory in 1988 when it was a nature reserve. The coastal area was a state boarder zone with strict regime and limited access. Since then, the author of the Guide has been following the processes in the given territory and has repeatedly visited it after the protection status was changed and the area became a national park in 2000. Consequently, the author has monitored the territory for more than 20 years.

#### **2. Development of the structure and contents of the Guide.**

Staff members of Latvian Country Tourism Association took part in the development of the structure of the Guide (see item 7). First it was decided what chapters will be in the Guide and



what information has to be sourced. After that, on-site visits and testing of the local objects and services started.

### 3. Regular inspections of the territory.

During preparation of the Guide (2009-2010) regular inspections, at least once in a month, including in wintertime, took place in the territory to visit the sites, services and collect information from local people (see above). This practice provided reliable and updated knowledge about the processes in the territory throughout a year.

### 4. Involving the Slītere National Park Administration.

The Slītere National Park Administration (a structural unit of the Nature Protection Board) was involved in several Guide development stages. The following was approved with the administration:

- The concept and contents of the Guide;
- The list of objects included in the Guide;
- Active tourism routes created during preparation of the Guide;
- The layout version of the Guide where corrections, additions and suggestions from the SNP administration were integrated.

### 5. Involvement of local entrepreneurs, tourist information offices, specialists of regional studies and other local “players”.

The local involvement took place through:

- Interviews;
- Surveys;
- Making scanned copies of the historical documents and photos offered by the local people;
- Testing services of local businesses;
- Involvement in commenting on and adding to the descriptions of the touring routes;
- Involvement in discussion of the Guide layout version. Valuable corrections, additions and recommendations were received in this process.

Altogether, around 30 people were involved in the development of the Guide. It is a high proportion related to the space and the low population density of this area.

### 6. Development of the touring routes for the Guide.

New active tourism routes were developed for the Guide involving the local players as much as possible (see the “10 Basic steps in developing active tourism routes” in the description “Development of New Tourism Products in The Slītere National Park”).

### 7. Development of the Guide contents

There are the following chapters in the Guide:

- **Getting to and touring the Slītere National Park** – practical advice on transportation, roads, distances, choice of visiting times, etc.;



- **Attractive facts of nature and history** – 3 chapters describing the most significant and most interesting nature facts and historical events related to the Kurzeme peninsula and the Slītere National Park;
- **What visitors can do and what they should not do** in the Slītere National Park. This chapter was especially important because usually restrictions and prohibitions are stressed in protected nature areas. This publication focussed on things people are allowed to do in the park.
- **Exciting events in the Livonian coast** – a special chapter devoted to the culture and history of the Liv people (which is one of the unique aspects and specifics of the territory). The chapter contains attractive facts and stories never published before;
- **Worth seeing and knowing** – > 100 descriptions and photos of attractive nature and cultural history sites. The attraction sites are grouped according to their location in the park in successful order as it is convenient for visiting. No sensitive biotopes, findings of rare species or similar objects where tourist flow could damage nature values were included in the Guide;
- **Touring routes** – 9 different hiking, cycling, boating, skiing, self-drive and bird watching routes. Lack of real visitor products and services so far has been a problem in publications promoting especially protected nature areas and Natura2000 sites;
- **GPS coordinates of tourist attraction sites** – assistance in orientation to modern technology users;
- **What else you can do in the national park** – information on services, other activity facilities;
- **Annual events** – a calendar of regular events with time schedule. Especially important for those willing to take part in educational events;
- **Do not leave behind!** A list of useful equipment and things to bring along;
- **The small explanatory dictionary of Slītere** – clarification of the few terms and foreign words used in the Guide;
- **The small dictionary of Liv language** – some Liv words which are the most essential in communication. This is an important sustainability aspect as language and culture is one of the basic principles of ecotourism and sustainable development;
- **Green and practical advice** to all visitors of the national park on nature friendly behaviour and respecting interests of local residents;
- **Services** – practical information on useful services available in the park and the nearest surroundings, including contact details;
- **The map of Slītere National Park** – high quality (!) map where the objects described in the chapter “Worth seeing and knowing” are marked.

## 8. Approval of the Guide layout version

After the contents was ready, the layout version was approved with the administration of the Slītere National Park, the local government and its tourist information office, as well as with the local specialist of regional studies who keeps on the Liv traditions. All the constructive suggestions, corrections and additions were included in the Guide.

