

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM

### AT THE SLĪTERE NATIONAL PARK

 <p><small>Foto: Jānis Smeļinskis</small></p> <p><b>VELOBRAUCĒJIEM</b> valdamerčus pa baltu ceļiem, gar jūru un cauri Slīteres sliem</p>	 <p><small>Foto: Jānis Smeļinskis</small></p> <p><b>KĀJĀMGĀJĒJIEM</b> pirmā jūru maršrutu gar tīras krastu, Mārtiņi, Koknesi un</p>	 <p><small>Foto: Viktors Bērns</small></p> <p><b>DABAS VĒROTĀJIEM</b> vairāku dzīvnieku sugu, tostarp, dzīvnieku Slīteres sliem</p>
 <p><small>Foto: Jānis Smeļinskis</small></p> <p><b>AUTOCEĻOTĀJIEM</b> apkaņi Slīteres nacionālajam ceļam, pa- skatīties uz skatu vērsmi</p>	 <p><small>Foto: R. B. "Arnis" Bērns</small></p> <p><b>LAIVOTĀJIEM</b> Jūras maršrutu – līdz Koknesi šķērsojot gar piekrasti</p>	 <p><small>Foto: Andrejs Pūlis</small></p> <p><b>PUTNU VĒROTĀJIEM</b> putnu dzīvī, migrācijas sezonā un rudens</p>



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## Introduction

This document was produced as part of the European Commission's Life+ programme. The project is called "Proposals for Environmental Policy and Governance based on demonstrating of environmental, social and economic benefits from tourism in the Slītere National Park – a NATURA2000 territory" (LIFE07 ENV/LV/00981). Recommendations on the development of sustainable tourism at the Slītere National Park are the first document to look at the territory as a unified tourism destination, keeping in mind the principles of sustainable tourism.

Article 2 of the Latvian law on protected natural territories states that one reason for the identification of such territories is to make sure that areas which are meant for public leisure, education and training are preserved. Article 1 of the law on the Slītere National Park, for its part, states that the park was established to preserve natural, cultural and historical values, as well as to promote sustainable economic development in the territory. In the context of tourism, the concept of a "national park" mostly has to do with environmental tourism, which is a symbol of a high quality of the environment and a well-planned tourism infrastructure.<sup>1</sup> Tourism is an area of business which can be developed at the Slītere National Park if all parties work together successfully to create added value for the territory and its residents.

The recommendations apply to the period beginning in 2010, with short term (0-5 years), medium term (6-10 years) and long term (11 and more years) suggestions for activities. The recommendations are based on the SNP territorial development vision and the related actions.

The recommendations were drafted:

- With the involvement of people who live in the SNP and its environs;
- In partnership with the SNP administration and its views;
- With a working group involving the relevant government ministries and institutions (the Economics Ministry, the Environmental Ministry, the Agriculture Ministry, the Regional Development and Local Government Ministry, the Environmental Protection Board, the National Cultural Monuments Protection Inspectorate);
- In accordance with the infrastructural needs of the Dundaga local government insofar as the seashore is concerned;
- After listening to the recommendations and conclusions of foreign experts;
- On the basis of a developmental vision for Kolka and its environs that was prepared by Egons Bērziņš from the Rīga Technical University;
- In accordance with the territorial plans of the Kurzeme Planning Regions, 2006-2026;
- In accordance with the territorial plans of the Talsi District, 2007-2019;

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<sup>1</sup> Langenfelda, M. "Ieskats nacionālo parku veidošanas vēsturē" (A Look at the History of National Parks), *Slīteres nacionālā parka ziņas*, No. 17, 2005.

- In accordance with the third version of the Kurzeme Planning Region operations plan, 2010-2013.

The recommendations can be used in the context of:

- The tourism section of the Environmental Protection Plan;
- The drafting of a spatial development strategy for the seashore;
- Making grant requests for European and/or national projects;
- Territorial development planning at the local government level;
- Initiating legislative changes in documents related to tourism development and environmental protection;
- Attracting investments and generating ideas for the development of the territory;
- Updating information in the SNP's marketing and informational materials.

# 1. Analysis of tourism resources

The Slītere National Park was established in 2000, although it was declared a nature reserve back in 1923. The most important values of the park in terms of tourism are ancient Liv fishing villages, the mostly untouched and fantastic environment, and the park's geographic location in Latvia.

The Slītere National Park is a Natura 2000 territory – a network of protected natural territories created by the member states of the EU. The status of a Natura 2000 territory means that it is a high-quality tourism destination in terms of status and understanding.

The Liv villages and Liv culture and language are material and non-material heritage values of global significance which could achieve UNESCO status.

## 1.1. Geographic placement

The Slītere National Park is in the Northwest of Latvia. Its largest populated area is Kolka. Kolkasrags is the northernmost point of the Kurzeme peninsula, and it is there that the shorelines of the Baltic Sea and the Bay of Rīga come together. Under appropriate weather conditions, crossways waves can be seen, and the fact is that Kolkasrags is a distinct cape which should be a must-see destination for every tourist.

The SNP territory could be expanded by attaching the Ovīši nature reserve, the Ance swamp and the local forest reserve to it. That might expand people's views as to reasons why they should visit the SNP, breaking down the ideas about the regime of the reserve or the concept that it is a closed territory.

## 1.2. History

“The Slītere National Park was established in 2000, but its origins date back to 1921, when a natural monument with a territory of 1,100 hectares was established at the foot of the Blue Hills of Šlītere. The Slītere National Reserve, with 7,861 hectares of land, was established in 1958. In 1977, it was expanded to 14,882 hectares, and in 1979, the reserve was given its own administration and specialists. Today the park covers 16,360 hectares of land and 10,130 hectares of sea, with a depth of up to 10 metres in the Baltic Sea and the western coast of the Bay of Rīga” – that is what is written about the Slītere National Park at [www.ziemeļkurzeme.lv](http://www.ziemeļkurzeme.lv).

The SNP has a diverse and colourful history, but the thing that Latvians remember most vividly about it is that it was once completely or partly closed to visitors, both because it was a nature reserve and because the Soviet coastline was closed for military purposes. This fact still remains in the minds of many people in Latvia when they think about Slītere, but in its informational materials, the town has little to say about phases in history that could be especially interesting or commemorative for many visitors from Latvia and abroad.

Information materials and other sources should definitely emphasise the fact that Slītere is a national park that is open and friendly to visitors. The vast Soviet heritage, however, should not be ignored – the remaining buildings, stories and memories. This information should be posted on information stands and published in informational materials, because it is a subject which is of interest to plenty of visitors.



**Figure 1. The location of the Slītere National Park in Latvia**

### **1.3. Nature**

Nature is one of the main tourism resources at the Slītere National Park. The values here are unique in Europe and the world. The Slītere National Park is known as an “open-air museum” focused on the history of the Baltic Sea. The Blue Hills of Šlītere stand witness to the geological events. The shore of the ancient Baltic Ice Sea was as much as 30 metres high 10,000 years ago. The Stiebri hills were on the shore of a lake 8,000 or 9,000 years ago. The barrier of dunes and the damp areas between the dunes remind us of the Litorine Sea which was here 4,000 to 7,000 years in the past.<sup>2</sup>

The Blue Hills of Šlītere are an important resource of tourism as the Šlītere lighthouse and the viewing tower are located at the shore there, and in their slopes and at the foot there is the Šlītere nature trail.

The gentle climate of northern Kurzeme is the reason why there are some 860 different plants in the park, some of them very uncommon.<sup>3</sup> The geographic placement of the park is such that masses of birds gather there during migration season – as many as 60,000 birds an hour will fly across the park during the spring.

The **Bažu swamp** is in the Slītere reserve – a high swamp of the coastal variety which covers 2,646 hectares. The swamp emerged when the bed of the sea rose after the Ice Age. It may be that the process continued even later. Elderly residents point out that there are piles of rocks far from the shore which were once places where ships stopped.

The environmental values are a fine tourism resource. Nature can be the foundation for several popular and long term tourism products such as bird and animal watching, experiencing a coastal storm, hiking down botany trails, etc.

### **1.4. Beaches and the sea**

The Slītere National Park is on the coast of the Baltic Sea, with long, sandy beaches. These have no improvements for tourists, however, and they are absolutely inappropriate for those who seek recreation. The beaches at Kolka and Mazirbe are

<sup>2</sup> See [www.celotajs.lv](http://www.celotajs.lv).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

comparatively busier. Beaches by other villages are very quiet and may well continue to be quiet. The beaches at Kolka and Mazirbe should be improved with small service elements such as the rental of water equipment or even a small café sometime in the future. Each village needs to put up a sign pointing to access roads to the sea. There should also be information about car parks, whether free or fee-based, near the sea. There is a shortage of information about the sea, its shores and activities therein. Well-appointed beaches with proper information and a sea which offers relevant activities would certainly serve as a tourism product.

Lots of people in Latvia quietly dream of experiencing a storm on Cape Kolka, and that is a product that could be sold to foreign tourists, too. A list of potential visitors could be assembled, and when a storm is approaching, they could be quickly contacted and asked to come to Kolka.

### ***1.5. The cultural environment***

The coast of the sea has been populated for centuries. Ancient Liv fishing villages such as Sīkrags, Košrags, Pitrags, Saunags, Vaide, Kolka and Uši were established here. Over the last century, however, the territory has taken on its current appearance. Economic activities in the Liv villages flourished until World War II and ended when the Soviet regime shut the area down. The activities of Liv fishermen were halted in many cases. Now that the Slītere National Park has been established, some of the fishing villages are in very poor shape, with no more economic activities of any kind. This refers to Sīkrags, Saunags, Pitrags, Košrags and Vaide. The villages only become more active in the summer, when seasonal residents show up.

The area around the Šlītere environmental monument in the southern part of the park was once populated by the so-called “hill people” who were engaged in different economic activities than those who lived in the fishing villages. The Šlītere baronial estate was here, and Dūmele is nearby.

1991 land reforms had a unique effect on the cultural environment and the landscape, because coastal land was returned to heirs in the Bažas swamp, which was in the reserve.

People are of great importance in shaping a cultural environment. The cultural environment in the coastal areas of the Slītere National Park was established by one of the smallest nations in the world – the Livs. They’ve set up several NGOs to preserve their cultural values, they collected intangible evidence such as songs, the language, the legends, etc., and they’ve established collections of household objects. Each year, on the first Saturday in August, there’s a Liv festival in Mazirbe. It is the preservation and development of the ancient Liv cultural environment in the coastal area that could create a tourism attraction that is just as important and valuable as Cape Kolka.



## Populated places (villages<sup>4</sup>)

This is a list of major villages in the area. All of them are important to tourists in terms of the cultural and historical evidence which they provide. We're also prepared to recommend things that the villages could do in order to facilitate tourism.

**Kolka (Kūolka)** was developed as a village in Soviet years, when fish processing plants were moved there from other villages. Prior to that it had been no different than the other Liv fishing villages. There's a collection of Liv household objects at the Liv Centre in Kolka. There are also churches for three denominations – Lutheran, the Orthodox and Catholic. Cape Kolka, the name of which means “sharp corner,” is the northernmost point in Kurzeme. To the North-Northeast of Cape Kolka, there is a shoal that is approximately 5.5 km long and up to 1.5 m deep. It is based on a dolomite shelf. It is very dangerous from ships and boats travelling around the cape from the West, because a boat will easily float over it, but if a wave tosses it back, it can be damaged. Ships can be grounded on the sandbar. There are countless wrecked ships and boats in the shallows of Cape Kolka, and that has been true for centuries. During stormy weather, the waves in the area can be as much as seven metres high.

Kolka lacks information for tourists about it and the surroundings. This is the most heavily visited place in the entire SNP. Kolka should also have a café, a hotel with approximately 50 beds, and a big Visitors' Centre. The central car park should not be on Cape Kolka, but in the village centre, which is 1 to 1.5 km away. People should be asked to walk to the cape if they are able to do so. At the Ūši homestead on the seashore, the fishing barn should be restored so that fishing implements could be displayed, or perhaps even a small café could be opened.

Craftsmen should be encouraged in Kolka to produce souvenirs which symbolise the park's environmental values and cultural environment, as well as Kolkasrags itself. They could demonstrate their crafts to tourists. There is also a lack of countryside farms which are prepared to demonstrate the lives of a fishing farm or offer products and services such as fresh and dried fish, trips into the sea, and fishing expeditions, as well as agricultural activities.

**Mazirbe (Irai)** was a Liv fishing village and shipping centre until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century – the largest Liv village along the Kurzeme shoreline. Historical sources indicate that Mazirbe was established in 1387. During the 1930s, the village flourished. A fishermen's co-operative built a fish processing plant. In 1938 and 1938, the Livs built a centre for themselves with the help of their related nationalities of Finns, Estonians and Hungarians. Over the subsequent decades, fishing was banned on the shoreline, and the fish processing plant was shut down.

27 km away from Mazirbe, out at sea, is the southern tip of Saaremaa Island – Cape Sõrve. This is the narrowest part of the Irbe narrows. Interesting objects in Mazirbe include rocks near the parsonage which commemorate the Black Death and are cultural monuments of national importance. The rocks relate to an epidemic of the plague in 1710. The parsonage and its ancillary buildings date back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century and are also of interest. There's a monument to the Livs which symbolises the

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<sup>4</sup> For this section, I am thankful for information from Bērziņš, E. “Līvōd Rānda – a Cultural and Historical Trip in the Land of the Livs.”

disappearance and assimilation of the Liv nation, and there's the Mazirbe medieval cemetery, which is an archaeological monument and is known as the "plague graveyard." It is near Grabi.

Mazirbe lacks much to return life and a Liv atmosphere to it. Hiking routes in the village and along the seashore should be established to bring together all of the main Liv cultural values. The Mazirbe Folk Centre should have a small café and accommodations. Ship-building facilities should be restored, as should net huts on the seashore.

**Sīkrags (Sīkrōg)** is one of the oldest Liv settlements, dating back at least to 1387. The entire village is a monument of urban construction of national importance, and everything in its centre must be preserved – historical buildings, their structure, the road network, the landscape, the skyline, etc. A protected zone of 500 metres has been set around the village. This is the quietest beach and least populated village in the entire area at this time.

**Košrags (Koštrōg)** is a fairly densely built up Liv village which dates back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century and is one of the most recent Liv villages. This village, too, is a national monument of urban construction, which means that buildings, the planning structure, the placement of buildings, the road network, the landscape, the terrain, green areas, etc., must be preserved. There are a few homesteads – Tilmači, Anduļi, Virgo and others – which have survived as typical fishing village structures.

There are active businesspeople in Košrags, and services such as dining, leasing of inventory, information, guides and car parks must be based on co-operation with them. A bit of social infrastructure can also be established with the help of private businesses (routes to the sea, instruction stands, information stands, etc.).

**Pitrags (Pitrōg)** is a former fishing village and an ancient centre for the building of boats and ships. There are countless wrecks in the shallows of Pitrags. After storms, parts of very old ships can be found on the shoreline. There are legends about the destruction of the Swedish fleet in 1625, with the entire shoreline from Mazirbe and Kolka full of the remains of soldiers and horses that had drowned. There is a wrecked Courlandian ship which is thought to date back to the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> century. People say that an ancient boat owned by pirates sank in the Pitrags River, which is 11 km long. There are lots of legends and stories about Pitrags and events which have taken place there. The old ship building tradition is a resource which has not been used in tourism. In the mouth of the Pitragupe river, there used to be one of the largest ship building sites along the Latvian seashore.

**Saunags (Sānag)** is a former fishing village dating back to 1387. There is a medieval cemetery at the Nigliņi homestead which is an archaeological monument.

**Vaide (Vaid)** is a fishing village with a name related to the Liv word "vaid," which means "gap." It is said that this is the best place from which to set off on a voyage to Saaremaa. The sea often tosses up the wrecks of stranded ships. The Vecroči River flows into the sea at Vaide. It starts at the Vaide Pond which is manmade so as to establish a dam for the Vaide ditch that was dug from the side of the Bažas swamp.

The **Šlītere iestate** – an interesting complex of buildings which is a potential attraction site, is located not far from the Šlītere lighthouse. The administration of the national park moved into the estate building at the end of 2009.

### 1.6. Existing and potential points of interest for tourists

Tourism in the Šlītere National Park is largely concentrated in four zones right now – at the Šlītere lighthouse, in Mazirbe, on Cape Kolka, and around Kolka. The Šlītere National Park contains the most popular tourism destination in the whole region – Cape Kolka, which attracted more than 50,000 visitors in 2008.



**Figure 2. Places in the Šlītere National Park where tourist objects are concentrated**



**Kolkasrags** and the Kolkasrags Information Centre (5745.392 N; 2236.002 E) Cape Kolka is at the northern tip of Kurzeme, and the Baltic Sea and the Bay of Rīga flow together here. This is a popular place for bird watching, and it is the most popular tourist destination in Northern Kurzeme. There's a visit centre, a car park, information stands, etc. This is a promising tourism object, and the environmental infrastructure must be improved so as to attract greater flows of tourists.



The **Kolka lighthouse** (5748.130 N; 2238.035 E) was built in 1884 on an artificial island that is six kilometres off the coast. It is not open to tourists in organised ways, although people can take a boat out there themselves. Visvaldis Freimanis at [www.juraslaivas.lv](http://www.juraslaivas.lv) offer tours to the island for 10 or 4 passengers. Five trips with between 12 and 18 boaters in each group were organised there in 2008. This is another tourism destination with potential.

The **old Kolka lighthouse** is a wreck at the tip of Kolkasrags. There are people who think that it could be restored, but biologists are not certain that it could be fastened to the ground firmly enough to make sure that it is not washed away during storms.

The **Kolka Liv Centre** (5744.584 N; 2235.12 E) was established in 1993 and has a collection of Liv household objects. 1,052 tourists visited it in 2008.



The **Šlītere lighthouse** (5737.705 N; 2217.359 E) was built in 1849 and 1850, which makes it the second oldest navigation structure in Latvia. Initially it was used as an orienteer for ships. In 1999, it lost its status as part of the maritime navigation system, and it has since then become a popular tourism destination. If the weather is clear, you can see all the way to Saaremaa Island from it. The lighthouse regularly features exhibitions. Right now there's one about the building traditions, methods and materials of Liv villages. The lighthouse is open to visitors from May 1 to October 15. According to the Talsi Tourism Information Centre, the lighthouse is the eight most visited places in the Talsi District, with 6,740 visitors in 2008. There's a car park, two information stands and lavatory facilities. At the same time, though the Šlītere lighthouse is one of the most often visited tourism objects in the park, its potential has not been fully used. As a tourism object, it must become more attractive. It could offer information about pirates or ship navigation around Cape Kolka. There must also be other services such as a summer café.



The **Liv People's Centre in Mazirbe** (5741.013 N; 2219.054 E) was built in 1938 and 1939 and is in the second most densely populated Liv village in the Šlītere National Park. The building has an information centre, and the ethnographic collection "Randāli" is housed there. 900 visitors came to the museum in 2008. The building is not really lively, though. There's no attractive or interactive offer for tourists. We recommend the establishment of a café or accommodations during the summer season in rooms which are currently vacant in the centre.



The **Boat Cemetery** (5741.372 N; 2219.018 E) recalls the fact that the ancient Livs burned their old boats. During Soviet times, that was banned, and so a boat cemetery began to emerge in Mazirbe. It is not deep in the forest, but you have to know what you're looking for. It is an interesting object which will disappear in time if no more old boats are bought there.



The **forest animal antler museum** at the Purvziedi homestead in Vaide (5743.62 N; 2227.636 A) features antlers collected by Edgars Hausmanis, not by hunting, but instead by working as a forest ranger. There are tenting locations and a few cabins for accommodations.



The **Mazirbe Church** (5740.285 N; 2219.825 E) was built in 1868, and at one time it offered worship services in the

ustainable development tourism at the Šlītere National Park

Liv language. The church is in an interesting location. The adjoining cemetery is where an ancient burial mound used to be, and the prototype for Taizelis is buried there. There's also a werewolf's grave and an unusual Liv grave. Near the church are three rocks commemorating the devastation of the Black Plague in Kurzeme. There is a pine with a circumference of 3.17 metres, and visitors can look at the former parsonage. The church itself has not been positioned as a tourism object. This would require improvements in the area. There's a lack of information about the church and places near it. There should be an information stand and additional signs with information as to whether and when the church and its recollection centre are open to visitors.



The **viewing tower at the cliff of the Blue Hills of Šlītere** (5737.458 N; 2216.63 E) has a car park, and when the weather is good, you can look across the forest all the way to the Baltic Sea.

Other potential destinations in Mazirbe include the big White Dune, which is the highest point in the area, the remnants of the old narrow-gauge railroad, the former maritime school, the remnants of fishing ports, the ancient living homes Ķesteri, Sudrabkalni, Sepi and Kalši, etc. Most of the mentioned objects are private property and can be seen from outside only, they are not open for visitors.

In addition to these, tourist destinations may include the nature trails which the SNP has set up among the sandy pines and the steep shore of Ēvaži (described in Section 3.1) as well as ancient Liv fishing villages (see Section 1.5), the Nigļiņi linden tree, and others.

## 2. Analysis of and recommendations about the tourism support infrastructure

The infrastructure at the Slītere National Park is poorly developed. Most steps in this area are taken by SNP administrators and businesspeople, but little is being done by the local government. It is important to make sure that all three of these groups work on a unified tourism development plan, focusing in particular on the relevant infrastructure.

### 2.1. Signs and information stands

The beginning of the national park is indicated on information signs with white letters on a brown background. From there on, there are signs with oak leaves on them at regularly spaced intervals to indicate that the visitor is in a protected territory.



2.1.1.



2.1.2.



2.1.3.

**Figure 2.1. The information infrastructure at the park, as created by the SNP administration**

The park has nine three-panel information stands which were produced in accordance with the style for protected natural territories. The stands include general information about the park, tourism objects that have been established by SNP administrators (Figure 2.1.1), and detailed information about the object near which the stand is. The information is presented both in Latvian and in English. The nature trails which the administration has set up have information about objects along the way. The bike route from Kolka to Mazirbe is marked with wooden sticks with a pictogram of a bicycle against a green background (Figure 2.1.3). All of this is maintained by the administrators of the Slītere National Park.



**Figure 2.2. The information stand at Cape Kolka**

There is an information stand at Cape Kolka which has a special design to symbolise its location and the things which local residents do. It fits in very nicely with the surrounding environment (Figure 2.2).



2.3.1.



2.3.2.



2.3.3.

**Figure 2.3. The information infrastructure at Košrags (stand, signs, an information sign)**

An information stand about Košrags as a fishing village (Figure 2.3.1) was set up in 2004 with support from the European Community's Life programme project "Livonian Green Coastal Region - 21," and its purpose is to attract attention to the nationally significant monument of urban construction which the village is. There are signs pointing to ancient Liv fishermen's homes (Figure 2.3.2), and at those homes there are information plaques with their names and brief descriptions (Figure 2.3.3). At the same time, this information infrastructure is now five years old and a bit dowdy. It should be restored or thought up anew, and there should be a unified information system in all of the local villages.



2.4.1.



2.4.2.

**Figure 2.4. Information stands about the Kurzeme seashore and the protected zone of shoreline dunes**

There are information stands focusing on the Kurzeme seashore in Kolka and Mazirbe (the middle image in Figure 2.4.2). These stands were installed by the Green Movement in 2007. SNP administrators were not asked for permission to install the stands. The information is presented in pictograms which indicate what people are not allowed to do on the seashore. Similar information stands (Figure 2.4.1) contain more extensive information about rules in the protected dune zone and beach, and these are found in Sīkrags and Kolka. They were financed by the LVA and were installed all along the Latvian shoreline with the approval of the SNP. At the same time, SNP administrators had minimal chances to change the information. Local governments decided where the stands would be installed. The stands have maps showing public car parks in the SNP, along with information about prohibited activities in the protected zone. The stands are a poor way of addressing tourists – they only inform them about bans, not other types of information about what people are allowed to do in the zone.

In addition to the aforementioned stands, there are others in the SNP which contain information about a specific infrastructure object that has been constructed with partial financing from the European Union's Structural Funds – road rebuilding and improvements in waste management (the right side image in Figure 2.4.2).

There are plans to install two more stands, in Ēvaži and Kolkasrags, on maritime Natura 2000 territories and maritime birds. This will be part of the Life programme project. The information has been approved. The Life programme requires that the stands be maintained for the next five years, and the administration of the park has been asked to do so by preparing duplicates of the information.



2.5.1.



2.5.2.



2.5.3.

**Figure 2.5. Signs in the SNP installed on the basis of private initiative**

There are several signs in the park which have been installed on the basis of private initiative, pointing the way to the sea (Figure 2.5.2) and the boat cemetery (Figure 2.5.1), and stating a ban on driving in the protected zone (Figure 2.5.3). Positive initiative is a good thing, but the infrastructure of these signs should be unified. Each sign is completely different from the others. Laws require local governments to be responsible for the infrastructure of signs.

There are directional indicators in the park (CSN sign No. 706), with a brown background and white letters pointing to the Liv People's Centre, the Mazirbe Church, the Pēterzers trail, and the Šlītere lighthouse.

#### **Ways of improving information:**

- All information about the SNP must be posted on the Internet, where information can be updated quickly and easily. The administration's homepage is being shut down, and a new one, [www.daba.gov.lv](http://www.daba.gov.lv), is being prepared. Information on the Internet must be structured so that visitors and tourists can easily find and understand it. The SNP visitors' centre should be responsible for the homepage;
- There should be signs pointing to access to the sea in all of the villages in the Liv and the Latvian language, and there should also be signs pointing back to the villages;
- Information stands currently offer passive information which quickly becomes out of date. At the same time, tourists would like to learn about all of the services at



the SNP – not just those that are offered by the park’s administration, but also those that are offered by private enterprise:

- The signs must be put up in villages where there are car parks;
  - Depending on the capacity of the location, three-panel stands should be ones where information can be put up on both sides, thus saving on resources and expanding the amount of information that can be indicated;
  - The stands should show the addresses, but not telephone numbers of tourism companies and service providers, and they should also indicate the phone numbers of emergency services and the Tourism Information Centre;
  - The stands must be replaced once every three to five years, because they become out-of-date and wear out; the park’s visitors’ centre should be responsible for this;
  - All of the information must be in Latvian and English, with major place names also in the Liv language;
- Signs should be painted on trees to indicate bike and hiking routes (see “Guidelines for Painted Signs Denoting Active Tourism Routes”).

## ***2.2. Tourism information and Visitors’ Centres***

There are two tourism information centres in the Slītere National Park – one in Kolkasrags and the other at the Liv People’s Centre in Mazirbe. Within a 30 km radius there are also tourism centres in Talsi, Dundaga and Roja, and they have a history of positive co-operation and co-ordination.

The visitors’ centre at Cape Kolka is open from Friday through Sunday during the off season, and every day during the tourism season. SIA Kolkasrags manages the centre, where people can buy souvenirs, have some coffee and pay for car parking privileges. There are also showers and lavatories for visitors. A portable café was established in the summer of 2009.

The information facility in Mazirbe is maintained by SIA Berta. It is opened if someone calls in advance – the phone number is on the door of the Liv People’s Centre. During the season, it should be open constantly or at least on weekends.

The Slītere National Park must make plans for a **larger visitors’ centre** – one with extensive information about the park, opportunities for seminars on subjects such as the howling of wolves, viewing of animals, etc. It could sell souvenirs and have a café, too. One of the most promising locations for this would be the Šlītere lighthouse complex. The environment is one in which the car park can be expanded, leisure facilities can be installed, parking for campers can be provided, etc. Such initiatives, however, are limited by the proximity of the strictly restricted zone (the Slītere trail), where visitors are not welcome.

## ***2.3. The Internet***

Free Internet services are available at the Mazirbe library during its opening hours from Monday to Friday, but all in all, Internet services in the SNP are very

poor. This limits business, because only expensive mobile Internet connections can be used.

There are public Internet facilities at the Kolka library, the Šlītere lighthouse, the Dundaga Tourist Information Centre, and the Vīdale school. Information about the SNP can be found on the following homepages.

- [www.slitere.gov.lv](http://www.slitere.gov.lv), which is the homepage of the park's administration;
- [www.ziemeļkurzeme.lv](http://www.ziemeļkurzeme.lv), with information about Northern Kurzeme;
- [www.kolkasrags.lv](http://www.kolkasrags.lv), with information about Cape Kolka;
- [www.celotajs.lv](http://www.celotajs.lv), with information about country travelling, including the SNP;
- [www.kolka.lv](http://www.kolka.lv), with photographs from the SNP;
- [www.livones.lv](http://www.livones.lv), a portal focused on Liv culture and language;
- [www.kolka.info](http://www.kolka.info), the homepage of the Ūši weekend home;
- [www.pitagi.lv](http://www.pitagi.lv), the homepage of the Pītagi guesthouse;

In future, the SNP homepage could be maintained by the visitors' centre that is described in the previous section of this report. It would publish all available information about SNP services and events, as well as updated information about these matters.

## **2.4. Public transportation**

Populated locations in the Slītere National Park can be accessed by bus. There are bus services among the more densely populated areas – Kolka-Rīga (every day), Rīga-Dundaga-Mazirbe (only on Sundays), Rīga-Dundaga-Kolka (every day), and Rīga-Vandzene-Kolka (every day). There are also local buses – Talsi-Dundaga-Vīdale-Kolka, for instance. Every working day, there is a bus with the route Dundaga-Mazirbe-Pitrags-Saunags-Vaide-Kolka-Mazirbe-Slītere-Neveja-Dundaga, one in the morning, and another in the afternoon, provided by the individual enterprise *Auto un būve*. According to surveyed businesspeople, some tourists do visit Kolka via public transport. At the same time, it has to be mentioned that travelling by public transportation is very difficult in this area (for example, to and from the Sīkrags village). Another example: to go from Ventspils (a former regional centre and the biggest town in the North Kurzeme) to Kolkasrags, one has to change 3 busses and the trip takes half a day while the distance between Ventspils and Kolkasrags is ca 75km.

There must be more information about bus schedules at all bus stops, and it must be provided in Latvian and English.

## **2.5. Roads**

The Slītere National Park can be entered from three directions – from Ventspils (Route P 124), which is a gravelled road for part of the way and paved along the route Mazirbe-Pitrags-Saunags-Vaide; from Dundaga (P 125), paved all the way, and from Rīga (P 131), also paved all the way. Now that the road from Ventspils has been partly paved, it can be expected that tourist numbers will increase. General information about the SNP at this time is available along two of the three

roads (at Ēvaži and at the Šlītere lighthouse), but not along the road from Ventspils. The plan is that a car park will be installed alongside the latter road, however, and a stand can be placed there.

## **2.6. Dining**

There are no dining services in the Slītere National Park apart from the summer season, and the nearest facilities will be found by tourists in Roja or Dundaga. During the summer season, the Zītari café is open. In 2009, a farm called Krūziņi was asked by SIA Kolkasrags to offer food at a summer café on Cape Kolka.

Even during the season, however, there is a lack of a simple and inexpensive eatery – no tableside services, but traditional foods such as fish, buns (*pīrāgi*), carrot buns, Kurzeme beer, etc. Perhaps there could also be a travelling café for major events such as the Liv festival.

## **2.7. Shops**

There are shops with regular opening hours in Mazirbe and Kolka. The individual enterprise Dzelzīši provides automobile services in smaller fishing villages, doing so on the basis of a specific schedule and on specific days.

Visitors should receive information about the location and opening hours of shops on information stands, because there are few stores, they are small, and their opening hours are limited.

## **2.8. Car parks**

There are free car parks at the Šlītere lighthouse, the Pēterezers nature trail, the viewing tower at the blue hills, Sīkrags, Mazirbe, Kolka, the sandy pine trail, the Ēvaži nature trail, and the pond in Vaide. A fee-based car park is at the Cape Kolka Visitors' Centre.

The administration of Slītere has indicated places for new public car parks in Sīkrags, Pitrags, and at the Ķikāns River where land is owned by the Environmental Ministry. The car parks must be identified on visitor materials (guidebooks, stands, etc.). There should also be public leisure facilities at the car parks (see below).

Private initiative which offers fee-based car parks in the territory should be supported.

## **2.9. Resting places**

There are few resting places in the SNP – tables, benches, refuse bins and places for campfires. There are such facilities at the Cape Kolka Visitors' Centre, at Lake Vaide and along the Pēterezers trail. There should be facilities in Kolka and Mazirbe, and the Zēņi ponds at the park entrance. The latter site would also be a good place to put a general information stand about the SNP as such. If campgrounds are to be offered, those must be based on private initiative and fee-based services.

## **2.10. Lavatories and showers**

There are public lavatories at all of the popular tourist destinations – the Slītere lighthouse, the viewing tower at the blue hills, along nature trails, and at the Cape Kolka Visitors' Centre. There are no lavatory facilities, however, in the small Liv fishing villages or on the beach.

Lavatories are to be installed in the public car parks of the SNP administration, but the locations have to be identified more precisely.

There is a fee-based shower at the Cape Kolka car park, and it is a fee-based service.

In future, there must be fee-based showers at private campgrounds and near the most popular beaches.

### ***2.11. Other services***

There is a petrol station owned by SIA Lateva in Kolka, and another 15 kilometres away in Dundaga.

The nearest emergency medical care facility (112) is in Dundaga, which is 15 kilometres from the SNP boundary. The closest general practitioner is also in Dundaga. The nearest dentist's office is in Kolka. Kolka and Dundaga have pharmacies.

The nearest bank branches and ATMs are in Dundaga, where Latvijas Krājbanka is present. The Latvian Postal Service offers services in Kolka and Dundaga.

### 3. Analysis of and recommendations about existing types of tourism and products

This chapter is focused on the types of tourism and related products that are available at the Slītere National Park at this time. The SNP lacks tourist services and information about them, as is the case in many places outside of Latvia's larger towns and cities. In popularising such services, however, we must remember that the territory is a sensitive one, and only friendly businesspeople who invest in the maintenance and development of the SNP infrastructure and services should be supported. Simple criteria and guidelines are needed for SNP businesspeople so as to recognise those who are friendly to the environment and the park (i.e., awarding the right to use the SNP logo, promotion in the SNP's marketing and information materials, as well as public recognition in terms of letters of support to receive EU funding, etc.).

A good resource for the development of new routes can be the former narrow-gauge railway line which has a firm foundation for roads.

#### 3.1. Walking and hiking routes

The Slītere National Park has four nature trails in the park which it maintains:

1) The **Šlītere nature trail** is 1.2 km long and is made up of wooden footpaths. The trail starts at the Šlītere lighthouse and passes through the park's oldest part, with characteristic protected biotopes of European importance – forests on the ancient shoreline, wetlands rich with minerals, grassy swamps, excessively damp broadleaf forests, etc.<sup>5</sup> The trail is in the reserve. The trail may be visited only on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays between May 1 and October 1, in the presence of a guide, and with application in advance. The problem here is that this is not a product which is appropriate for families and small groups, because in 2009 the guide charged LVL 14 per trip. Thought must be given to whether the trail is necessary in the first place – there's the issue of environmental protection on the first hand, but also the need to develop the Šlītere lighthouse complex as an important tourism destination on the other. There are several options here. The regime of the reserve can be changed, the current system with the guide can be preserved, or the trail can be shut down, instead setting up a place where visitors can look at the cliff, setting up a barrier along its edge.

2) **The Pēterezers nature trail** features a lovely landscape alongside the Dundaga-Mazirbe road. It leads along a former tram route. There are footpaths to cross the swampiest parts of the trail, although many of these require renovation. There's a leisure facility with campfire sites at Pēterezers. The trail begins at the car park, which has an information stand and lavatory facilities. The trail is free of charge. The number of visitors is unknown.

3) **The Kolkasrags pine trail** is 1.2 km long, with wooden footpaths leading through a unique seashore dune landscape, with sandy beaches and dunes with pine

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<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.slitere.gov.lv>.

trees that are hundreds of years old and are partly covered by sand. At the beginning of the trail is a car park with an information stand about the trail. The trail is free of charge. The number of visitors is unknown.

4) **The Ēvaži nature trail and steep shore** is 0.3 km long. There's a car park and information stand on the border of the Slītere National Park, along the Jūrmala-Kolka highway. There is one of the few places where the steep shores of the Bay of Rīga (8-15 m<sup>6</sup>). The trail is free of charge. The number of visitors is unknown.

The park does not offer longer hiking routes. We suggest that the following be established:

- A route **along the sea** with signs pointing to each village and stating the distance between the villages, along with information about the villages and what can be seen there;
- A **Kolkasrags ring trail**, allowing tourists not only to visit Cape Kolka, but also to visit the village of Kolka and others;
- A **great ring of Mazirbe trail**, allowing tourists to visit the best places in Mazirbe.

### ***3.2. Bicycle and automobile routes***

**Kolka-Mazirbe.** The Slītere National Park has established a 30-km bike route from Kolka to Mazirbe along shoreline fishing villages. Riders can return along the seashore or along the main road Kolka - Mazirbe, which is not busy. The route is marked with wooden sticks.

The park does not register the number of bicyclists, but the observations of people who rent out bicycles suggest that the park lacks interesting routes for bikers. Cape Kolka and small villages have traditionally been attractive destinations for foreign bicyclists, but the condition of the roads has been a big problem (still the road between Kolka – Vaide and Mazirbe – Ventspils is not paved) because foreign bikers ride longer distances between different locations (e.g., Rīga-Kolka-Ventspils-Liepāja).

**The Kolka ring** – around the Slītere national park, hitting Kolka, Melnsils, Dundaga and Mazirbe. The circle is 63 km long and is not marked. In the Slītere National Park, the route passed through six villages – Sīkrags, Mazirbe, Košrags, Pitrags, Saunags, Vaide and Kolka. Outside the national park, the route continues toward Melnsils, where riders have to leave the paved Kolka-Rīga highway onto a forest path which crosses Ezermuiža and Ezerplavas. From there on, it's a gravel road toward Vīdale.

**The ring of Slītere** (Kolka-Košrags-Dūmele-Melnsils-Kolka). The route via Dūmele and back to Kolka (50 km) should be restored, thus renewing a bike route that was always in demand among tourists, because it allows them to ride their bikes through the SNP. The route was closed until mid-2009, because it led through a reserved zone. Given the specifics of bikers and the fact that mushroom and berry pickers, as well as motorised vehicles, pass down the road, it is again open to bikers. The route is not marked, but paint could be put on trees as a marker.

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<sup>6</sup> According to the Talsi TIC. Data about 2009 were not available when this document was written.

**The Liv villages** – Mazirbe-Vaide-Mazirbe, with an opportunity to extend the linear route to Sīkrags and/or Kolka which is a new route, developed in 2009.

The administration of the Slītere national park plan to develop a cycling route **Mazirbe-Sīkrags** –5.6 km, putting up bridges of the Ķikans and Mazirbe rivers and planning for improved road cover in future.

Bike rentals are offered by the Ūši guesthouse (5 bikes), the Mazirbes Kalēji guesthouse (20 bikes), the Pītagi guesthouse (5 bikes) and the Upeskalni guesthouse (2 bikes).

The Slītere National Park has no routes for automobile tourists, and we would recommend at least one: **Around Slītere. The best locations** – a route that would allow people to drive through the park and to see its loveliest spots.

### ***3.3. Observations of nature***

#### ***3.3.1. Landscapes and viewing locations***

Landscape is one of very important nature and tourism resources in the national park, therefore maintenance of the existing viewing sites and installation, according to possibilities, new sites, should play a role in future tourism development activities. Below are descriptions of the existing viewing sites.

1) The Šlītere lighthouse, with a view of the Slītere forests and the Baltic Sea, as well as Saaremaa Island if the weather is clear.

2) Cape Kolka, where the Bay of Rīga comes up against the Baltic Sea – this is a popular destination for bird watchers.

3) The viewing tower at the blue hills, on the shores of the ancient Baltic Lake. From here one can see the Baltic Sea and Saaremaa Island.

4) Mežlīdumi. Currently the site is not installed, presented and advertised as a viewing site, however, from here one of the most beautiful views open on the Slītere national park. This is a site with a great landscape potential.

5) The Ēvaži shore – the steep shore of the Bay of Rīga.

A potential landscape viewing site is the ravine in the slope of the Blue Hills (the road from Cirstes to Riepoldi), where impressive sandstone outcrops can be seen in the slopes.

#### ***3.3.2. Animal and bird watching***

Animal and bird watching are not offered at the park as a tourism product, even though it is a product which is becoming increasingly popular throughout the world. There is no infrastructure for this, in terms of blinds and viewing towers. There should be a product which the tourist can use – simple descriptions, advertising materials and guidebooks can popularise it. There should also be guides who can talk more about the fauna in the SNP.

### ***3.4. Water tourism routes and activities***

The sea is a resource which can be used to make offers to boaters and those who engage in other types of water-based activities. Local companies are offering

little in the way of such services. Local residents say that this is because the weather is appropriate for sea voyages near the SNP only about 40 days a year.

1) Right now there is a product which involves a trip to the Kolka lighthouse and is offered by [www.juraslaivas.lv](http://www.juraslaivas.lv). In 2008, the company organised five trips with 12-18 people per group and one to three people in each boat.

2) Sea captain Visvaldis Freimanis takes people around the Kolka lighthouse in a fishing boat. There are two types of boats – for 10 and for four passengers. Captain Freimanis also offers a chance to go fishing with nets, or fishing for plaice with the old method of strings.

3) An additional water route could be boating along the shores of the bay from Kolka to Melnsils.

4) Vaide and its surroundings are offered as a kiting location by [www.kitelife.lv](http://www.kitelife.lv), because when the weather is right, it is interesting to enthusiasts, especially between Vaide and Kolka. The SNP allows tourists to drive close to the sea to unload their gear (at the Kolkasrags pine trail) if they ask for permission in advance. Mazirbe is also proposed as a location for kiting. One must bring one's own equipment, and the SNP has no offer of long-term or short-term storage of equipment. Kilters need a safe place to keep their equipment before and after the event itself. This could also be a place to rent equipment, as well as beach equipment such as water bikes, boats, parasols, tanning chairs, swimming rings for children, etc. Such a location could be established in Kolka, where more people visit the beach. From the perspective of safety, the local government would have to set aside a place for kilters where they will not disturb people who are simply relaxing on the beach.

5) There should be a port for small yachts at the Uši guesthouse near Kolkasrags. A network of small ports, a planned port in Kolka, and the necessary infrastructure for ports are all described at [www.latviancoast.lv](http://www.latviancoast.lv), which was financed by the “SuPortNet Latvia” project from the PHARE Programme. Mazirbe is another potential place for a boating port.

6) In addition to the port for small yachts, the location near Ūši would be good for ferryboat traffic to and from Saaremaa Island in Estonia. Initially these would be daytrips, with no automobiles and just passengers (with bikes in some cases). This would require the necessary services for day trippers – transfers, dining, tours, shopping, souvenirs, rental of cars and bikes to tour the island, etc.

7) SNP should designate the areas where water skidoos, motor boats and water skiing are allowed. Such an area could be from the Kolka jetty to the Brīzes, turning the former fish processing plant into a recreation facility (SPA hotel) to provide a variety of water related services. Another place could be near the Sīkrags, with the consent of the local residents. When designating such areas, the local municipality should take care about the safety and security issues, e.g., to mark the waters with buoys. Still a large part of the local residents think that water skidoos should not be allowed in the national park at all.



### **3.5. Guides**

The homepage of the Talsi District, [www.talsurajons.lv](http://www.talsurajons.lv), offers a list of guides. There are 10 who offer guide services in the Slītere National Park. Tourists have to contact the guides themselves and arrange for the services.

Information about guide services is hard to find, and the services and prices are not easily perceived (most guides will work only with groups). The added value of guides is of enormous importance for the territory, because the guide can interpret nature, birds and animals as the main value of the SNP in a way which tourists understand. A simple and clearly defined product is needed here in terms of what guides offer. This should be published in all areas of information – stands, tourism information centres, guidebooks, etc. Professional guides from the SNP administration should train local businesspeople so that they can handle guide functions for a lower price or one that is part of other services. The guide's added value is particularly important for nature tours – animal and bird watching, environmental events, botany trails, etc.

### **3.6. Farms open to visitors (country goodies)**

There are a few farms and fishermen's homes in the Slītere National Park which offer traditional food and traditions. This is a niche in which tourism companies can specialise and supplement existing offers.

A good example is Uši at Kolka, where the owners of the farm demonstrate the preparation of the traditional carrot and other buns that are eaten in Northern Kurzeme (they will accept small groups of up to five people).

The environmental health farm Jaunlīdumi on the southern border of the SNP offers a look at wild horses, cattle and the blue cows of Latvia.

The Liv Centre in Kolka offers an exhibition of handicrafts and other crafts.

Anda Ruska grows watermelons, other types of melons, tomatoes and cucumbers in Kolka, and she also produces goat cheese. If one rings her in advance, one can taste the goat cheese and purchase plants.

Smoked fish can be bought in certain locations around Kolka and Mazirbe in the SNP. People put up signs at the side of roads when fish are available (mostly in Mazirbe and Kolka).

### **3.7. Events**

Various events are organised in the Slītere National Park – Global Water Days (March 22), Environment Days (June 5 in Europe), bird watching days (late April, early October), and an event to open the season at the Šlītere lighthouse (early May). Ownership of the lighthouse has changed, and there is no information as to whether a season opening event will be held next year. Events for visitors are held on Saturdays and Sundays at the SNP, and these may not coincide with the actual date when the event is observed globally or in Europe.

A Liv festival is held on the first Saturday of August at the Liv People's Centre in Mazirbe.

In 2009, Kolka celebrated Fishermen's Days, which are celebrated all along the Bay of Rīga on the second Saturday of July. This should become a tradition.

Both in 2008 and 2009, in late August and early September, the Salmo fishermen's club organises an event for fishermen that is called "The Plaice of Mazirbe." It's a competition involving plaice fishing in accordance with the country's fishing regulations.

The calendar of events must be planned during the previous year's autumn, when calendars are being designed for printing. Events must be advertised more extensively – at least on the homepages of all of the companies that are in the SNP. Repeat visitors and tourism organisations must be informed. Fishermen's days are particularly popular along Latvia's seashore. People associate these with the sea and dried fish – both of which are among the SNP's most powerful resources.

### ***3.8. Accommodations***

Nine companies offer accommodations in the Slītere National Park, with a total of 130 beds. These are evenly scattered throughout all of the fishing villages (see Appendix 1).

There are more than 70 accommodations within 50 kilometres of the park's borders.

At first glance, this may seem to be a sufficient number of accommodations, but in practice it has been seen that during the season, there are simply not enough beds. What's more, the quality of services is very divergent among the various enterprises. The park lacks campsites with a service infrastructure that satisfies general hygienic requirements. Outside the season, by contrast, there is little demand for accommodations.

As tourist numbers increase, a tourist-class or 3-star hotel is going to be necessary – one with around 50 beds in or near Kolka. A small guesthouse should also be installed in the People's Centre in Mazirbe. Country or weekend homes are going to be established on the basis of private initiative as the number of tourists increases. Those are not going to be large accommodations, which means that the burden on the environment is not going to be excessive at all.

## 4. Analysis of and recommendations about the effects which tourists have on the park's environment

The most important tourism resources at the Slītere National Park are directly related to the territory's most important natural, cultural and historical values. These are why this is a national park, and so it is only logical and understandable to protect, in the long term, the factors which lead people to travel to the SNP from other parts of Latvia and abroad. At the same time, however, environmental protection must go hand-in-hand with the territory's socioeconomic development.

### 4.1. Analysis of visitor statistics

One of the most popular tourist destinations in Latvia and in the historical region of Kurzeme is within the territory of the Slītere National Park. That is **Kolkasrags**, which, along with the village of Kolka, is one of the most frequently visited locations in the park territory. Cape Kolka is one of the few objects about which detailed statistics related to visitors are available. These can be used to look at changes in visitor numbers over the course of a long period of time. It does have to be said that only those people (drivers) who have used the SIA Kolkasrags car park are registered, which means that actual visitor numbers are higher. Still, the existing data offer a pretty good idea about processes in the territory. The upswing in visitor numbers can be attributed to the things which SIA Kolkasrags has done to improve the territory. It has opened the Visitors' Centre, in 2009 it offered the only dining facilities in Kolka, it organises various events, including educational ones, and it helps to market Kolkasrags. According to Jānis Dambītis from SIA Kolkasrags, provisional numbers show that the 2009 economic crisis caused a reduction in visitor numbers of around 20% (some 10,000 visitors).

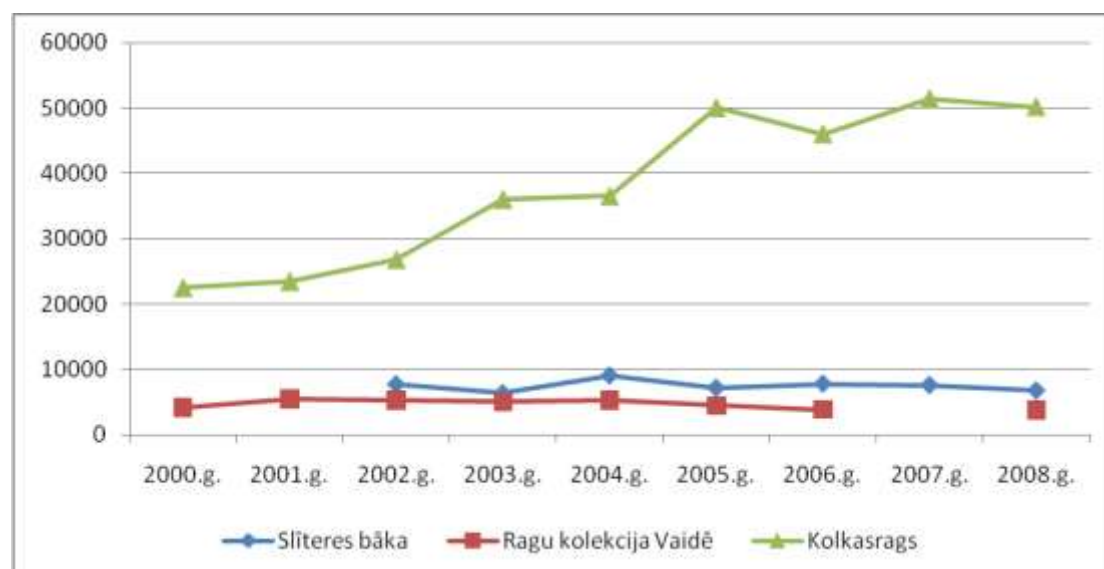


Figure 3. Visitor numbers at some of the more popular SNP destinations, 2000-2008<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> According to the Talsi TIC. Data about 2009 were not available when this document was written.

A second tourist destination with respect to which precise visitor statistics have been available for the past eight years is the **Šlītere lighthouse**. Visitor numbers have remained quite stable over the course of these years.

Statistical data have also been available for nine years about the **Vaide antler collection**, where trends in visitor numbers are quite similar to those relating to the lighthouse. That can be attributed to the fact that neither destination has changed over the course of time. Neither have there been active and properly targeted marketing activities.

A problem is that visitor numbers have never been totted up at three very important environmental tourism objects – the Pēterezers, pines of Kolkasrags and Ēvaži nature trails. Such data would at least reflect general trends in tourism flows, and that would make it possible to judge the “investment” which these infrastructural objects make in the local economy. In future this could be addressed with electronic registration of visitors.

There are a few objects (**the Kolka Liv Centre, the Liv People’s Centre in Mazirbe, Randāli** – collection no longer available) with respect to which there are statistical data about a few separate years. These do not do much to indicate trends in visitor numbers.

In the area of **active tourism products**, according to SIA Jūraslaivas, the number of people who want to sail around the Kolkasrags lighthouse has been increasing bit by bit ever since 2006. That can be attributed to the fact that this is a new and unprecedented tourism product. It is a good thing that these events involve guides from Jūraslaivas who make sure that tourists are safe and that the unique historical monument that is the Kolkasrags lighthouse is not damaged.

The number of clients at **tourist accommodations** in the Slītere National Park increased between 2005 and 2008, according to Inese Roze, director of the Talsi Tourist Information Centre. A particularly large leap was seen in 2007, when the numbers doubled over 2006.

The author of this chapter<sup>8</sup> has learned that some individuals or small groups visit objects that are in the **reserve** section of the national park – the Dāvids castle (in the Šlītere reserve; an object that was popular and much advertised during the early part of the last century), the great rock of Jušuleja (in the Zviedri forest reserve), the Bažas swamp (in the Bažas swamp reserve), as well as a few peripheral objects which are outside of the reserve zone (the Zārtapi cliffs, the Zārtapi waterfall, the Zviedrugrāvis waterfall). These places can only be visited with the permission of the SNP, without which the trips are illegal. In accordance with the “Drafting of Proposals on Environmental Policy and Governance, Demonstrating the Benefits of Tourism Development in the Environmental, Social and Economic Sphere at the Slītere National Park” (LIFE07 ENV/LV/00981) project; electronic monitoring has been installed at two of the aforementioned objects.

Analysis of the aforementioned and other data allow one to present the hypothesis that visitor numbers at other tourism destinations in the national park – those with respect to which there has been no attempt to count the numbers (nature

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<sup>8</sup> Juris Smaļinskis, Country Traveller.

trails, the seacoast, the park as such) – have increased a bit or, in some cases (those where the offer has not changed and where there has been a lack of active marketing) has remained relatively stable. We must also, however, take into account provisional data about visitor numbers to Cape Kolka, which show that the economic crisis has pushed those numbers down by around 20% when it comes to local travellers. Here we see that tourist flows can be substantially affected by external factors which have nothing to do with the specific territory.

As to forecasts about the next few years, the economic crisis will certainly have an effect on traveller numbers and habits. On the other hand, it is also possible that Latvian tourists may choose less often to travel abroad, instead electing to visit domestic locations. True, they will spend less money than has been the case in previous years.

The **long term goals** of the park insofar as visitor numbers are concerned should focus on encouraging a situation in which:

- Visitors spend an average of one or two days, or two to four days in the park;
- Visitors to the park make maximum use of existing and future tourism products (tourist accommodations, country goodies, guides, bicycle rentals, dining services, etc.);
- The national park is primarily chosen by those people who are environmentally friendly in their active or passive leisure, as well as people who want to learn more about the park's natural, cultural and historical environment.

#### ***4.2. Places where visitors are in greatest concentration***

Figure 2 in this document shows the primary areas in which tourism resources are concentrated, and these more or less coincide with those parts of the Slītere National Park which attract the largest numbers of visitors. Although there are many objects with respect to which even approximate visitor numbers are unknown, visitor numbers can also be evaluated on the basis of many other indicators and observations.

Among the most frequently visited objects (according to the author's observations, such visitor statistics as are available, etc.) are the Pēterezers, pines of Kolkasrags and Ēvaži nature trails, the seashore and beach at Mazirbe and Kolka, as well as the small villages of Sīkrags, Košrags, Saunags, Pitrags and Vaide. The main corridors for motor vehicles, public transport and visitors include the Ventspils-Kolka road (P 124), the Jūrmala-Kolka road (P 131), and the Mazirbe-Dundaga road (P 125). The infrastructure which is necessary to handle visitor flows must be maintained and planned to the maximum extent along these corridors and at all of the aforementioned locations.

#### ***4.3. Anthropogenic effects on the environment***

It is difficult to differentiate between the anthropogenic burdens created by visitors to areas such as the seashore and the overall burden which, to a certain extent, also involves local residents and their activities (e.g., fishing). That is why in this document we are looking at the total burden, without trying to separate out that part of it that is created by the tourism industry.

A serious problem is the fact that the tourism season and, therefore, the burden of visitors are mostly concentrated on the period between May and September – just a

few months. That means that it is important to prepare products for the time period which is between the summer seasons.

<b>Territory/Object</b>	<b>Major anthropogenic effects</b>
Nature trails	Appearance of new trails, trampling of vegetation, mechanised transport (including motorcycles) along the trails
The seashore at populated areas	Trampling of coastal biotopes, disturbance of nesting birds and other species, destruction of protected flora, trash, mechanised transport of various kinds on the beach
The rest of the seashore	Mechanised transport of various kinds on the beach, disturbances
Sandstone biotopes	Damage caused by inscriptions on the rock or attempts to clean the rock to find “ancient” inscriptions
Locations of rare species	Disturbances (including during the bird migration season) – something that can be prevented or at least significantly reduced if the process is organised properly
Cape Kolka	The worst type of anthropogenic effects – erosion, trampling, degradation of plants; this can be prevented by installing footpaths, but the damage is caused to highly endangered biotopes of the Latvian and the European level (the gray and the forested dunes).

### Images illustrating anthropogenic effects



**Figure 4.1.**

The surface of the Pēterezers nature trail was damaged in the autumn of 2008 with a mechanised transport vehicle, possibly a trail motorcycle (dark line)



**Figure 4.2.**

Along the Pēterezers nature trail, tourists create new pathways to reduce the curves of the old trail. This damages the heath, tree roots and steep sides of the dunes – something which may create a greater risk of erosion.



**Figure 4.3.**

The beach between Vaide and Kolka recalls the era when the Soviet military controlled the territory – all kinds of transport tracks, mostly caused by fishermen or buyers of fish (mostly in May and June).



**Figure 4.4.**

The stream valleys which cross the blue hills have impressive sandstone cliffs at easily accessed location (in this image, along the Criste-Riepoldi road). These are damaged in various ways, but particularly via inscriptions which not only damage a protected biotope, but also are unattractive.



**Figure 4.5.**

The areas which are most burdened by visitors are the places where people can access the sea from villages. These are used not only by pedestrians.



**Figure 4.6.**

A sample area set up during the project period to monitor the condition of the Dark Red Helleborine (*Epipactis atrorubens*) along the pines of Kolka nature trail, the aim being to see whether the numbers of this endangered plants is changing along the sides of the popular trail.

#### ***4.4. Directions and instruments to reduce anthropogenic burdens***

Here is a list of major things that can be done to reduce the burden on important environmental tourism and recreation resources:

1) **The infrastructure** must be maintained (nature trails, information stands, viewing towers, footpaths, etc.), and new ones must be established. A priority right now is car parks in the small coastal villages, and at least minimal improvements to those areas from which tourists access the sea (footpaths, trash bins);

2) **Tourism products** – trends and surveys among businesspeople show that most tourists spend just one day at the national park. To change this, there must be new tourism products which are focused on different target audiences and are environmentally friendly so as to extend the period of time which people spend at the park and to enhance the contributions which this would create for the local economy. This involves new hiking, biking and boating routes, as well as bird and animal watching. This latter area is one in which the zoologists, botanists and other specialists of the SNP could play a greater role. There must be new products related to the territory's wealth of cultural and historical heritage, the aim being to reverse the focus on natural resources which exists at this time. These products should be developed on the basis of existing resources and infrastructure.

3) **The involvement of local residents** is important in promoting partnerships and loyalty among different “players” in the national park. The work of environmental guides must be encouraged. The local residents whose living space is the national park are essentially interested in conservation of its values.

4) **Educational events** – seminars, green advice, national parks days, as well as other, regularly scheduled educational events at the park so as to enhance environmental consciousness of all players in the national park – entrepreneurs, local residents, local government representatives, local NGOs and other initiatives.

5) **Monitoring** – electronic registration of visitors at certain parts of the national park must begin in the nearest future. In 2009, Country Traveller drafted monitoring guidelines, and it has begun monitoring at a few important environmental objects under the auspices of the aforementioned project.

6) **Inspection.** In the coming years, Latvia could follow the Scandinavian example of managing the protected nature areas, where a ranger not only ensures conservation of nature values in long term, but is also a contact person – an environment guide which communicates and cooperates with all stakeholders in tourism, facilitating their environmental education and, if necessary, can also be a guide for special interest groups visiting the national parks.



## 5. The goal, vision and activities for tourism development of the SNP

### 5.1. The developmental goals of the SNP

The goal of the Slītere National Park is to establish itself as a unified tourism destination with values that are specific to the park – **nature, quiet and beautiful sandy beaches, a wealth of fauna, the interesting heritage and traditions of the Liv people, the special foods of Kurzeme**, etc. The SNP is visited by local tourists and foreign guests who find peace and harmony inside themselves and with the surrounding environment; they draw strength from their visits.

The long term strategy for the Slītere National Park includes an expansion in the park's coastal territory to bring in the environmentally restricted areas of Ovīši and Ance swamps and forests. This would change the present stereotypes of the Slītere as a closed strict nature reserve zone.

There are three major areas of activity in this regard, with schedules, priorities and identification of those who will be responsible for them – development, infrastructure, and marketing.

### 5.2. The vision of SNP development in the long term

The authors of the document provide the territorial development vision on how the territory might look after several decades.

- The ferry boat from Saaremaa Island in Estonia to Cape Kolka is popular. People who arrive from Estonia spend an average of one to three days at the SNP, making use of services rendered by local businesspeople. There are also increasing numbers of people who go to Saaremaa and use services in the SNP (accommodations/dining) during transit stops;
- Yacht tourism is highly developed in Latvia, and the port at Kolkasrags is among the most popular ones;
- Kolkasrags is a final destination – a cape which everyone should see, with legends about the power of its shifting environment used as a basis for new and diverse tourism products; A number of capes in Europe (e.g., the North Cape in Norway, the Rock Cape, etc.) have become a European well known tourist attractions. Among them, should be the Kolkasrags, which is located in the centre of Europe.
- During the strong autumn storms services at accommodations in the SNP cost more, because demand exceeds supply; the SNP Visitors' Centre has the simple and effective service of using E-mail to inform interested parties about an approaching storm;
- Animal watching (birds, animals) is one of the most popular products in the Baltic States. People can spot large wild herbivores, including moose, stags, deer, etc.), and if they enter the park with a guide, then there is a 90% chance of seeing some of these. Visitors to the SNP Visitors' Centre and its homepage can hear information about these and other animals in the park, accompanied with the sound of wolf howls, singing birds, etc.;

- The SNP is popular for families with children, because there are lots of trails, as well as free leisure locations at which to organise a picnic. The SNP offers stands and guides with interesting and easily perceived information for those who want to learn more about the environment. Public events (bird days, water days, the Liv festival) attract schoolchildren and others with specific interests);
- Liv traditions and words are used to name buildings and foods. The Liv festival is widely attended. The SNP is associated with the Liv shoreline. Liv organisations participate actively in the planning of local activities, seeking to attract visitors, projects and financing. The centre at Mazirbe is a popular meeting place, with a café, a chance to hear the Liv language and songs, the offer of local foods, etc.;
- The SNP has a large Visitors' Centre where people can get information about events, services, etc. Trips through the park for bird watchers and animal watchers begin at the centre. Knowledgeable and professional specialists work here as guides, they are well aware of the situation in the North Kurzeme and also in much larger region. Before or after the trips, they get full and concentrated information about the park and the most vivid elements of its history. They listen to recordings of bird and animal voices and learn about their lives and habits. The Visitors' Centre has a small café, a gift shop, and exhibition hall, and a seminar hall. Here one can reserve a room, buy ferry tickets, start tours, as well as buy maps, SNP information materials, and posters. Once a year the Visitors' Centre brings together the park's employees, local residents and local businesses to talk about what's to be done the next year. The centre is based on state, private and local government investments, and it is managed by a private business or an NGO. The centre attracts projects related to the development of the SNP. It also handles marketing, client relations, and co-ordination of the park's central homepage and its various events. Public-private partnership is part of the mix. Some of the income which the park receives is returned to the park for improvements and maintenance. As noted, all of the participants in the process (local residents, businesspeople, the local government, park administrators, NGOs, etc.) get together once a year to talk about their experience and changes that are needed, as well as to consider opportunities and threats in the development of the park. All of the involved parties see each other as partners, because only by working together can they ensure the sustainable and harmonised survival of the park;
- The number of permanent residents in the park is gradually increasing. These people are very loyal to the idea of the park and are proud of being part of it. There are residential areas in the park which attract few visitors, but there are also distinctly commercial locations that are focused only on visitors to whom services can be offered. Local residents actively offer services to visitors, and thus they support tourism development. There is ongoing monitoring of tourism development, as conducted by the Visitors' Centre and the SNP administration. Effects on the environment are identified in a timely way and then reversed with the help of infrastructure and events. People with summer homes in the park observe local construction guidelines, as well as traditional building techniques. They use Liv names for new buildings, respect the environmental protection rules of the SNP, and establish a tasteful and traditional landscape of fishing villages. Each service or product provider who satisfies the park's criteria receives the park's logo (decisions on this are taken by a voluntary commission at the Visitors'

Centre which is made up of a representative of the park's administration, a representative of the local government, a representative of the Visitors' Centre, people from local tourism information centres and from local NGOs, etc.). The logo is a sign of quality which shows that the products and services are part of the park's offer. Local residents take care of the park's environmental and cultural values, and the park takes care of its residents – their economic activities and traditions must be seen as a component in the park's cultural heritage;

- Businesspeople are educated about the park's ideology and philosophy. Annual educational seminars about the environmental, natural and ecological processes of the park help businesspeople to receive information which they can then transfer to their guests. The seminars are organised by the Visitors' Centre, with guest lecturers from the park's administration and from the business world. Businesspeople and administration staff of the park are equal partners, working in close cooperation with the purpose to facilitate nature protection and socio-economic development of the territory.
- SNP visitors make up some 500,000 visitor days per year, with 2/3 coming from Latvia and 1/3 – from abroad. The average tourist spends LVL 51 a day, with the multiplicative effect (1.8 according to EuroGites calculations, 2010 equivalents) of total revenue of approximately LVL 13,500,000 for the territory each year. The main season is between May and September. The most popular destinations are Kolka and Cape Kolka, Liv events in Mazirbe, bird and animal watching, visiting Cape Kolka during a storm, etc.
- The businesspeople and other tourism stakeholders in the Slītere national park are in active cooperation with other regional and national level state and local government institutions and NGOs, this way involving the SNP in tourism offer of Latvia and the Baltics.

To achieve the goal defined in this document and the vision set, the chapter 5.3. offers an action plan.

### 5.3. Recommendations on the further development of tourism

No.	Planned events	Organisers, partners	Priority	Term*	Explanation, description
<p><b>New establishment/improvement of products</b> so as to ensure that the SNP is an outstanding tourism destination, one that is competitive at the Baltic level; this will require improved tourism products, as well as new ones that are based on existing resources, focusing on that which is unique and different in the territory.</p>					
1.	Bird/animal watching and other products aimed at learning about nature	Businesspeople in partnership with NPA, SNP	High	Short term	<p>Bird/animal watching must be one of the primary tourism products at the SNP, identifying times and places where it is available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information must be correlated about guides, and products must be based on their offer and knowledge;</li> <li>• Education is needed for local businesspeople, with regularly scheduled courses and seminars which allow them to simplify the offers which they make to their guests;</li> <li>• Trails, legends, events, locations (towers, blinds) must all be identified.</li> </ul> <p>This refers to products which relate to the environment as such – the typical forests of Slītere, for instance. What are they? Where can they be seen? There's the special and dangerous sea, there are storms on Cape Kolka, and there is information about how the dunes and the seashore emerged.</p>
2.	Design and establishment of new active tourism routes: 1) Establishment and marking of new hiking routes;	Businesspeople in partnership with NPA, SNP	High	Short term	<p>1) Hiking tours are needed along the seashore near Mazirbe and Kolka;</p> <p>2) There must be new bike routes, both local and longer ones, with different distances and difficulty</p>

	2) Establishment and marking of new bicycling and auto routes.				<p>levels;</p> <p>3) The routes must be based on the infrastructure in the environment (they must be marked, and signs must be put up to show how to get to villages from the seashore); management is a concern, and there must be descriptions and maps of the routes to show distances among villages and nearby activities and services;</p> <p>4) The track of the former narrow-gauge railway can be used to plan biking and hiking routes.</p> <p>5) As most of the visitors arrive by cars, such car driving routes must be developed which are relevant from the nature protection aspect and represent the optimum way to get familiar with the SNP while still making the visitors to step out of their vehicles and do some walking or use other nature friendly means of transportation.</p>
3.	New offers on the seashore and beach	Local government in partnership with the NPA, SNP, businesspeople.	High	Short term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There must be two types of beaches – public and improved ones at Kolka and Mazirbe, as well as peripheral and quiet ones;</li> <li>• The improved beaches need small platforms for summer cafés, changing areas, lavatories, benches, etc.;</li> <li>• An infrastructure of footpaths must be established leading to the sea from all of the villages, with signs put up to indicate the direction;</li> <li>• There must be visualised information about car parks in the villages (including small and privately owned ones);</li> </ul>

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Net huts along the seashore should be renovated and used to lease water sports inventory on the busiest beaches.</li> <li>• Water based activities (motorised vehicles) like water skidoos, motor boats, water skiing have to be planned at Kolka, improving the territory of the former fish processing plant and the jetty (in the side of the Riga gulf), offering equipment rent and services. Another eventual place is the beach at the Sīkrags village (provided the local residents and summer cottage owners have no objections).</li> <li>• Sites and facilities for kiteboarding, surfing and other water sports activities.</li> <li>• The sites for diving are the surroundings of the Kolka cape and the Irbe strait (opposite the Liv villages from Kolka to Sīkrags).</li> </ul>
4.	The Liv cultural environment and its involvement in tourism offers	Liv NGOs, local government, local businesspeople.	High	Medium term	<p>The SNP is home to one of the smallest ethnic groups in the world – the Livs. There are Liv centres with activities and events for tourists and others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Liv Centre at the Liv People’s Centre in Mazirbe must be brought to life with a café and guesthouse;</li> <li>• Ancient Liv crafts traditions must be brought back to life, establishing crafts centres in Kolka and Mazirbe;</li> <li>• An attractive and interesting Liv centre is needed in Kolka;</li> <li>• Stories about the Livs must be part of tourism</li> </ul>

					<p>routes, products, menus, souvenirs, and all types of information carriers;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liv names must be used for homes (including new ones), and a small dictionary is needed for Latvian and Liv place names and household names – one that would be available to all SNP residents and others;</li> <li>• The traditional architecture of the local fishing villages must be promoted, establishing guidelines with respect to construction; the guidelines must be freely and easily accessible to any property owner or would-be property owner at the SNP.</li> </ul>
5.	Innovative (non-standard) products	Businesspeople	High	Medium term	<p>There is a need for innovative products which are specifically characteristic of the SNP and which differ it from other territories in Latvia, the Baltic States and Europe:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Storms at Cape Kolka, with an E-mail list to alert interested parties when a storm is approaching and when its culmination can be expected; a Webcam on the Kolka lighthouse would allow for interactive observations of storms;</li> <li>2) The territory is perfect for so-called yellow tours, because many famous people live or own property there; this would be a map with stories, legends and rumours;</li> <li>3) Geocaching (<a href="http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geocaching">http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geocaching</a>) is a popular thing. The SNP is involved, but this can be monitored and improved in a more targeted way; still, it is important to evaluate the</li> </ol>

					<p>effects of this product on nature – something that is not always easy to forecast;</p> <p>4) Finding bits of amber on the seashore after a storm;</p> <p>5) Mushroom hunting and berry picking, involving GPS technologies, recipes and cooking classes.</p> <p>6) Use of attractions like tranquillity and quiet (the most quiet place in Europe), untouched nature areas, sea water, fresh air, and other “simple” elements to develop innovative tourism products in future.</p> <p>7) Place fishing from the seashore.</p>
6.	Preservation of the Soviet military heritage	In partnership with the Interior Ministry and NATO	Medium	Medium term	In partnership with the Border Guard, an information centre could be set up at Kolkasrags to talk about the Soviet-era closed territory. Part of the shoreline could be designed to look like it did during that period, with exhibits featuring Soviet military equipment or copies there. Existing Interior Ministry buildings can be used for exhibitions about the closed zone, the Soviet military and the Soviet Border Guard, as well as, possibly, for seminar facilities.
7.	Development of SNP specific local souvenirs	Businesspeople	High	Annual	Local craftsmen can produce souvenirs focused on that which is specific at the SNP – the Liv heritage (signs, names, beliefs, models of boats), Cape Kolka, the lighthouses, elements of nature, animals, birds, etc.; all souvenirs must be available at tourism information centres and other places which



					tourists visit.
8.	Dining and traditional cookery	Businesspeople	High	Medium term	The SNP sorely lack simple dining facilities, including portable cafés for events. Typical Kurzeme dishes such as bacon buns, smoked fish, beer, porridges and wine should be popularised in information materials, with information given to tourists as to where the foods can be tasted or purchased. Smoked fish could be purchased directly from the relevant companies, while fresh fish could be bought directly from fishermen who are returning from the sea.
9.	Boat and ship building, carpentry	Businesspeople	Low	Long term	The traditions of boat building could be restored by establishing new workshops or restoring old ones. The ancient and traditional design of boats must be reinstated, and a blacksmith will be needed in one of the villages. The boat cemetery must be supplemented with new boats. The history of shipping traditions in the area must be emphasised.
10.	Health products	Businesspeople	Low	Long term	To define the health and rehabilitation products which could become an important part of the tourism offer in the SNP.
<b>THE TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE</b>					
11.	Improvements to beaches	Local government	High	Medium term	Improved beaches are being ensured opposite every populated area in the SNP, with Mazirbe and Kolka as the priorities. The local government must work on improvements to beach territories in partnership with the park's administration and local land owners. There must be small platforms for summer cafés, changing rooms, lavatories, benches, and

				<p>other necessary elements of the infrastructure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In Sīkrags – one lavatory, two dressing rooms, two trash bins, one information stand, and three safety buoys to mark out the swimming area;</li> <li>• In Mazirbe – one lavatory, three dressing rooms, three trash bins, one information stand, and three safety buoys to mark out the swimming area;</li> <li>• At the Mazirbe Maritime School – one lavatory, two changing rooms, three trash bins, one information stand, and three safety buoys to mark out the swimming area;</li> <li>• At Košrags – one lavatory, one changing room, two trash bins, one information stand, and three safety buoys to mark out the swimming area;</li> <li>• At Pitrags – one lavatory, two changing rooms, three trash bins, one information stand, and three safety buoys to mark out the swimming area;</li> <li>• At Saunags – one lavatory, one changing room, two trash bins, one information stand, and three safety buoys to mark out the swimming area;</li> <li>• At Vaide – one lavatory, two changing rooms, two trash bins, one information stand, and three safety buoys to mark out the swimming area;</li> <li>• At Kolkasrags, opposite the car parking at the Kolka Pine trail – one lavatory, three changing rooms, three trash bins, one information stand, and three safety buoys to mark out the</li> </ul>
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					<p>swimming area;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At the Kolka Cultural Centre – one lavatory, three changing rooms, three trash bins, one information stand, and three safety buoys to mark out the swimming area.</li> </ul>
12.	<p>Establishment and maintenance of car parks, roadside stopping places in fishing villages – Sīkrags, Mazirbe, the Mazirbe Maritime School ,</p> <p>Pitrags, Košrags, Saunags , Vaide, Kolkasrags and Ēvaži, as well as a car park on the western edge of the park (at the Ķikāns River) and improvements to the existing ones at Cape Kolka and at the Cultural Centre in Kolka</p>	<p>NPA, SNP, local government, businesspeople all working together</p>	High	Short term	<p><b>Explanation:</b> The anthropogenic burden on seashore, dune and forest biotopes must be reduced, with visitor flows diverted from those areas in which there are specially protected species of plants and animals</p> <p><b>Description:</b> The SNP will indicate locations for car parks on land owned by the Environmental Ministry. These will be established on the basis of public-private partnership, and management will be entrusted to a local businessperson or the local government. Private initiative must be stimulated here, allowing people to rent out car parking facilities to tourists on their own homesteads. This involves very minimal environmental impact, and it does address the problem that is identified here. There must be information stands and lavatory facilities at all public car parks. The cost of car parks should be differentiated on the basis of how far they are from the sea – the farther away, the cheaper, or even free.</p>
13.	Restoration of information signs and stands	NPA, SNP, local government, businesspeople	High	Annual	Anyone who installs a stand must take responsibility for its maintenance, updating or removal if it is no longer needed. Each stand

					requires the approval of the local government and/or the SNP.
14.	<p>Footpaths and their maintenance in the shoreline dunes (Sīkrags, Mazirbe, Pitrags, Kolka, Košrags, Saunags, Vaide).</p> <p>New and improved walking routes to access the sea at Sīkrags, Košrags, Pitrags, Saunags, Vaide, Cape Kolka, Kolka, and from the Mazirbe centre and the Mazirbe Maritime School</p>	NPA, SNP, local government	High	Short term	<p><b>Explanation:</b> The anthropogenic burden on seashore, dune and forest biotopes must be reduced, with visitor flows diverted from those areas in which there are specially protected species of plants and animals.</p> <p><b>Description:</b> The SNP administration has, each year, installed and then, at the end of the season, removed footpaths for walkers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sīkrags – A pathway to the beach, 50 m gravel, 50 m wood;</li> <li>• Mazirbe – Pathways to the beach, 70 m gravel, 60 m wood;</li> <li>• Mazirbe Maritime School – Pathways to the beach, 50 m wood;</li> <li>• Košrags – Pathways to the beach, 200 m gravel, 70 m wood;</li> <li>• Pitrags – Pathways to the beach, 200 m gravel, 150 m wood</li> <li>• Saunags – Pathways to the beach, 100 m gravel, 100 m wood</li> <li>• Vaide – Pathways to the beach, 100 m wood</li> <li>• Cape Kolka – Pathways to the beach, 200 m wood</li> <li>• Kolka Cultural Centre – Pathways to the beach, 40 m wood</li> </ul> <p>In addition to the pathways, there must also be signs</p>

					pointing toward the sea. The pathways will have to be renovated each spring.
15.	Maintenance of existing nature trails and viewing towers – the pine trail, the Ēvaži trail, the Pēterezers trail, the Slītere trail, and the Slītere watchtower	NPA, SNP	High	Annual	These pathways might be turned over to private enterprise, but there are few profit opportunities in this regard. The only possibility would be to install campsites or fee-based car parks near the trails.
16.	Establishment and maintenance of a bird watching tower at Kolkasrags	NPA, SNP	Medium	Short term	<b>Explanation:</b> Hundreds of thousands of birds cross Cape Kolka during migrating season, and that makes it one of the most important bird watching locations in the region. The tower is needed for bird watching by scientists and educators, as well as the public. <b>Description:</b> A bird watching tower must be built next to the car park of the SNP administration. It must be adapted for people with special needs.
17.	Tenting near Kolkasrags (identifying and improving the territory)	Businesspeople with NPA, SNP approval	Medium	Short term	<b>Explanation:</b> The anthropogenic burden on seashore, dune and forest biotopes must be reduced. The number of visitors to Cape Kolka is on the rise, which means greater demand or accommodations, but also increasing violations related to the unauthorised setting up of tents in the dunes and the forest. <b>Description:</b> The tent sites should be established and managed by private enterprise, but the SNP needs to indicate the places where they are permitted (on Environmental Ministry land). These sites could be near Cape Kolka and the Šlītere lighthouse. The tenting sites will have to be marked

					out in the park's Environmental Protection Plan.
18.	Maintenance of the Šlītere lighthouse complex	NPA, SNP together with businesspeople	High	Short term	The lighthouse must attract tourists with a simple café (outdoor tables, pastries, tea/coffee, etc.). The territory could also contain a campsite and public leisure infrastructure such as tables, benches, a pergola, and areas for campfires. There can also be a visitor's centre. If there are campsites, those have to be based on private initiative. The lighthouse has to be handed over for private management so that more extensive services can be offered to visitors.
19.	Establishment and maintenance of public leisure facilities	Local government, businesspeople	High	Annual	<b>Explanation:</b> The whole park lacks public leisure areas for visitors and local residences.  <b>Description:</b> These are places which need tables, benches, trash bins, lavatories, information stands, covered areas and, if possible, places for campfires. Waste removal and management are important in such areas. These must be free areas, but if a tent site or campground is installed, that would be a matter for private initiative. Potential locations – at the Zēņi pond, at the starting point of the SNP's five nature trails, and at the Šlītere lighthouse. The selection of locations must require the approval of the SNP.
20.	Maintenance and improvement of tourist routes, including the existing bike route between Kolka and Mazirbe	NPA, SNP together with businesspeople	High	Annual	<b>Explanation:</b> As the park's infrastructure is improved, care must be taken for the future management thereof.  <b>Description:</b> The sticks on which the existing route is marked out need to be renovated, or the markings must be painted on trees. Other routes must be

					marked out (we recommend paint on trees), each route must be checked annually to assess its situation, and relevant information must be provided to tourists. Depending on the type of transport, routes must be improved in the sense of installing footbridges across rivers where necessary, for instance.
21.	The basic and service infrastructure for kiteboarding, surfing, incl. motor vehicles (storage of equipment, leasing of equipment, etc.)	Businesspeople, relevant NGOs, associations, organisations	Low	Medium term	<p><b>Explanation:</b> Water sports enthusiasts love the area around Kolka, but there is no offer of the relevant services even though lots of people use the natural resources.</p> <p><b>Description:</b> Locations must be identified and improved, doing so in association with kite boarding organisations. The old net hut at Mazirbe might be renovated for this purpose. The former fish processing plant near Kolka (in the side of the Riga gulf) should be renovated and serve as infrastructure for equipment rent. The old jetty should be included in the infrastructure.</p>
22.	Establishment and maintenance of a visitors' centre for the park	NPA, SNP together with businesspeople or NGOs	High	Medium term	The visitors' centre must be a matter of public-private partnership. Public financing will be needed for public functions such as representation events, lectures and seminars about natural values, exhibitions, etc. Private financing will relate to a souvenir shop, guide services, a café, etc. The centre could be sited at the Šlītere estate, the Kolka Cultural Centre, or Mazirbe.
23.	A hotel in Kolka	Businesspeople	Low	Long term	As visitor numbers in the region increase, a tourist class or 3-star hotel is going to be needed – one

					with around 50 beds.
24.	A Liv homestead on the seashore, a fishing barn	Businesspeople, EU funding	Low	Long term	As old Liv traditions are restored in the region, an open-air homestead is needed to exhibit them. A place needs to be located and used for a concert, perhaps in Kolka between the Uši homestead and Cape Kolka, not far from the sea. If UNESCO recognition can be received for the Liv heritage, then that will make it easier to attract EU funding.
25.	Adapting the Kolka lighthouse for visitors	Local government, businesspeople in partnership with the Freeport of Riga Authority, etc.	Medium	Long term	<b>Explanation:</b> There's interest in the lighthouse, but people are not allowed to step ashore on its island without authorisation. <b>Description:</b> This might initially supplement existing tourist products with a pier where visitors can disembark. Later, exclusive accommodations in simple rooms can be offered, thus allowing people to experience a storm at sea. The approval of the Rīga Freeport Board will be needed for this purpose.
26.	A Webcam on the Kolka lighthouse	Local government, businesspeople in partnership with the Freeport of Riga Authority, etc.	High	Medium term	A Webcam needs to be installed with the approval of the Rīga Freeport Board. An Internet connection, of course, will be needed, and the cam will have to be maintained. Costs will have to be covered, and an Internet homepage will have to be identified on which images from the cam can be broadcast.
27.	The Kolka Army building – former borderguard post of the USSR military - military heritage	Local government, businesspeople in partnership	Medium	Medium term	The building can be restored as a monument to the Soviet military heritage, and it can also be used to present contemporary NATO activities. The Interior Ministry would have to be contacted about this.



		with the Ministry of Interior of Latvia, NATO			
28.	The Liv People's Centre in Mazirbe	Liv NGOs, local government in partnership with local businesspeople, the SNP visitor centre, etc.	High	Medium term	The Liv People's Centre in Mazirbe must be open and active, a place where the spirit of the Liv nation can be felt. It must not be a static object with nothing more than a regional exhibition. The building must come alive as a visitors' centre, an information facility, etc., with a café or even accommodations for guests.
29.	Ferry boat piers and a yacht port	Local government, businesspeople.	High	Long term	The infrastructure for a modern yacht port in Kolka can be based on the existing breakwater opposite the Ūši homestead.
30.	Ferry services from Kolka to Saaremaa Island (Estonia)	Local government together with businesspeople	High	Long term	<b>Explanation:</b> There would be a far greater passenger flow if a ferry were to operate during the season (once or twice a week at first) to and from the Saaremaa Island, which attracts two million tourists a year.  <b>Description:</b> At first the ferry could transport only people to keep prices down (a smaller boat is needed), along with bikes, etc. This would require a pram stop, activities for day trippers, and a programme for several days for those who want to spend a longer period of time at the SNP.
31.	Animal blinds/towers	Businesspeople in partnership with NPA, SNP			A high-quality animal watching product is needed. The locations must be identified by SNP zoologists and guides, and they must be the ones who organise

					and offer the product.
32.	A toll road in the SNP	Local government	Low	Long term	SNP residents have suggested a toll road in the park, but that should only be done if the visitor flow increases to the point where it has to be limited because of its negative effects. A toll road right now and in medium term would have terrible effects on the territory's development.
33.	Arranging premises for volunteers and university students.	SNP visitor centre in partnership with NPA, SNP	High	Short term	Students and volunteers (a well established practice in other countries) can be in future a significant support in research, management and improvement of tourism in the SNP.). The SNP should become an area where young tourism and nature research specialists play a particular role. The rooms can be arranged in some of the existing facilities, e.g., the Siliņi house at Mazirbe, the Liv people's house, the potential visitor centre or some other place.
<b>MARKETING EVENTS</b>					
34.	The homepage of the SNP	SNP visitor centre in partnership with all stakeholders.	High	Annual	<b>Explanation:</b> No existing homepage with information about the SNP is complete. For instance, <a href="http://www.slitere.gov.lv">www.slitere.gov.lv</a> only reports on administration activities, with no information about private business initiatives, services and products. Company homepages only speak to their own activities and services, with only selected information. Usually they do not even mention that they provide their services in the national park. <b>Description:</b> A proper homepage with information about entrepreneurial activities that is updated regularly. If the SNP homepage is shut down as part

					of the restructuring, then it must be ascertained that along with the joint Environmental Protection Plan page, there is easily available information about Slītere, too. Employees of the visitors' centre must think about how to update information from the perspective of tourists.
35.	Publication (LV, EN, DE, RU) and updating (also electronically) of SNP guidebooks, brochures, and informational materials	SNP <b>visitor centre</b> together with NPA, SNP, local government, businesspeople and etc.	High	Annual	The informational publications (apart from the SNP guidebook, which can only be published with project support) must be inexpensive and simple, popularising the SNP as a destination and pointing toward what can be seen and done there. They must also speak to where additional information can be received. These publications must always be available on the homepage for download, and they must also be distributed among businesspeople.
36.	Establishment and maintenance of new open-air information stands	NPA, SNP, local government in partnership with businesspeople, and NGOs (incl. LCTA „Lauku ceļotājs”)	High	Annual	Design and installation of five new open-air stands – at the boat cemetery, the Mazirbe Church, Košrags, the car park in Kolka, and at the end of the pines of Kolka trail (Country Traveller). Another stand is needed at the Sīkrags station (SNP administration), and two stands with information about seabirds must be installed on the side of the Bay of Rīga (Baltic Environmental Forum). Local government and SNP approval is needed for all of the stands, which must contain thorough information about all of the services that are available. The stands must be unified in terms of visual style and content. Those who install them must also maintain and update them.

37.	Preparation and regular updating of information sheets about tourism products	NGOs, businesspeople	High	Annual	Information sheets must be available about each route and each product (hiking, biking and boat trails, nature and bird watching). The design must be one that can be distributed to tourists at a low level of cost. These products can easily be positioned on relevant homepages on the Internet.
38.	Use of the SNP logo as a sign of quality for goods, products and services in the park	SNP visitors' centre together with NPA, SNP	High	Short term	The SNP must work with businesses and the local government to establish simple criteria related to tourism service providers who offer high-quality services in an environmentally friendly and sustainable way (an example in Sweden is <a href="http://www.naturesbasta.se">http://www.naturesbasta.se</a> ). Each service or product provider who satisfies the criteria can be authorised to use the park's logo as a sign of quality and the fact that the product or service is part of the park's overall offer. The logo can be used when advertising the relevant products and services.
39.	Annual meetings for all who are interested in the SNP – businesspeople, national and local government representatives	Country Traveller, later NGOs, the NPA, SNP, businesspeople, the local government	High	Annual	Everyone who is involved in the park (local residents, businesspeople, the local government, the administration, NGOs, etc.) must meet once a year to talk about the previous year's experiences, to discuss potential changes, to take an overall look at the park's development, opportunities, threats, possible investments, volunteer work, working bees, etc.
40.	Ensuring the status of UNESCO cultural heritage for the Liv cultural heritage	SNP visitors' centre	High	Medium term	This would give another sign of recognition for international tourism at the SNP, attracting more visitors.
41.	<b>To preserve the identity of the</b>	Country	High	Short term	The Slītere National Park is not densely populated,

	<p><b>location:</b></p> <p>1) A <u>small Liv-Latvian dictionary</u> of everyday words and traditional place names;</p> <p>2) <u>Guidelines on traditional construction</u> (fences, doors, roof cover, etc.), particularly emphasising the relevant elements and their meaning and origin. The guidelines must include both descriptions and illustrative photographs.</p>	Traveller, then NGOs			<p>and there are particularly few people who live there all year long. During the summer, there are vacationers and tourists. This means the risk of losing the identity of the park's locations, because the permanent residents shape culture and are part of the territory's cultural heritage. In the interests of tourism development, this heritage must be preserved, and newly arrived residents/owners (even those who just come for the summer) must be told about the preservation of traditions in the names of homesteads, the architecture of buildings, etc.)</p> <p>These documents must be voluntary guidelines and recommendations, available at the local government, the park's offices, tourism information centres, etc. The information must be distributed to new landowners, residents and businesspeople in the territory, with the recommendation of using Liv names and building elements for homes and businesses so that the typical characteristics of the territory are not lost (the Livs, fishermen, the people of Kurzeme, etc.).</p>
42.	The park needs a <b>short term developmental strategy</b> with specific land zoning to protect the environment, culture, and historical evidence from all eras in time.	NGOs, SNP visitors' centre sadarbība ar NPA, SNP	High	Short term	The lack of co-operation is seen in the information that is available at the Slītere National Park. People must join together, merging their resources and knowledge. This refers to what the state, private enterprise, and the local government offer to visitors in terms of products, activities,

					accommodations, etc. These must be jointly popularised in publications and materials to benefit tourists by offering them as much and as thorough information as possible about the SNP. Work must also be done on developing new products or maintaining old ones, improving them in accordance with market demand. Environmental and cultural values must promote harmonised economic activities in the territory.
43.	A <b>visitors' centre</b> (NGO with a business which it owns)	Local residents, businesspeople, the local government, the NPA, SNP	High	Short term	There must be an NGO for the SNP territory which can bring together the main “players” in the park – representatives of the public, state and local government and private sector. This NGO could attract small state subsidies to maintain the park, as well as EU funding, resources from businesses, donations, etc. The NGO would establish and maintain the main SNP Visitors' Centre on the basis of public-private partnership. It could initiate new products, training, projects, etc., so as to develop tourism activities, control tourism flows, monitoring park visitors, and assessing effects and eliminating those that are negative. The NGO would also be responsible for the drafting and implementation of the park's marketing strategy.
<b>RESEARCH</b>					
44.	Monitoring of visitors to the park	SNP visitors' centre, businesspeople, local residents in	Low	Annual	This needs to be done so as to improve offers in the park while also determining trends in visitor numbers over the course of time. The process can also be used to learn what visitors think about the

		partnership with SNP			quality of services, and the like. Different monitoring methods should be used: visitor counting (also electronic) and regular surveys of visitors and service providers with the goal to identify the most significant problems and find solutions.
<b>OTHER AREAS</b>					
45.	Involvement of volunteers and students	SNP visitor centre, local businesspeople, residents in partnership with NPA, SNP and the Vidzeme University College.	Medium	Long term	A well known practice in the world is to involve volunteers in e.g., infrastructure installation, various maintenance works in the area, etc. Initially volunteers from other countries shall be involved because volunteerism is not a well established tradition in Latvia. A completely unused resource is university students who could take part in research, surveys, monitoring and other work.

\* The term for the various efforts is 5 years after 2010 for short term, 6-10 years for medium term, and more than 11 years for long term projects.