

# SUSTAINABLE TOURISM MODEL

## Example: the Slītere National Park

The aim of the sustainable tourism model is to ensure continuous balance between economic development of the territory and nature conservation through involvement of the local community. This sustainable tourism model consists of several documents – guidelines – that have been drafted as documentation of experience in the process of building a sustainable tourism destination: tourism product development, event organization, marketing, visitor monitoring and other tasks. The guidelines describe how the sustainable tourism model can be implemented in practice.



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## THE PROJECT TERRITORY - THE SLĪTERE NATIONAL PARK



### 1. THE PROJECT TERRITORY - THE SLĪTERE NATIONAL PARK

The Slītere National Park was formed in 1957 as a nature reserve. In 2000 it was reorganised as a national park. In 1945 – 1993 the area was a borderland, and a restricted military zone. The national park covers an area of 16,360 ha on land and 10,130 ha in the sea. Located in the Kolka and Dundaga parishes of the Dundaga administrative district in Kurzeme region. Status: especially protected nature territory, Natura2000 site, Important Bird Area.

#### MAJOR NATURAL TREASURES PROTECTED IN THE SLĪTERE NATIONAL PARK:

- The park contains 46% of vascular plants, 59% of mosses, and 42% of lichens known in Latvia;
- A bird migrating route of Northern European importance passes across the Kolka cape;
- Of the 342 species of Latvia's birds, 261 have been found at the park and 135 species have nested there.
- The territory is home to the Liv people, one of seven Finno-Ugric nations in the world – something that is of great importance in the cultural and historical heritage of Northern Europe. Testimony to the Liv lifestyle is given by the local fishing villages with their planned grids, characteristic houses and ancillary buildings, the Liv People's centre, local cemeteries, the boat cemetery at Mazirbe, the Liv festival, language, stories, traditions, etc.
- There are lots of cultural and historical objects in the area: lighthouses, churches, baronial estates, the former maritime school, villages, farmsteads, the remnants of the narrowgauge railroad line that ran here, military heritage of the Soviet era, etc.;
- The territory is rich with history and legends which date back to the age of the Vikings, through the century of sailing ships, and ending up in the present day.

#### MAJOR CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL TREASURES:

- The territory is home to the material and nonmaterial heritage of the Liv people, who are one of seven Finno-Ugric nations in the world – something that is of great importance in the cultural and historical heritage of Northern Europe. Testimony to the Liv lifestyle is given by the local fishing villages with their planned grids, characteristic houses and ancillary buildings, the Liv People's centre, local cemeteries, the boat cemetery at Mazirbe, the Liv festival, and intangible treasures such as language, stories, traditions and so on;
- There are also lots of cultural and historical objects in the area, including lighthouses, churches, baronial estates, the former maritime school, villages, farmsteads, the remnants of the former narrow-gauge railroad line that ran here, military heritage of the Soviet era, etc.;
- The territory is rich with history and legends which date back to the age of the Vikings, continuing through the century of sailing ships, and ending up in the present day. Scientists have conducted lots of research related to the local natural environment.

#### LOCAL BACKGROUND - THE SITUATION BEFORE THE PROJECT

- Growing public interest in the former closed military zone, increasing visits, lack of visitor management;
- General public belief that Slītere is a nature reserve and a restricted access territory. Visitors are mostly in transit, making a stop-over to see the Cape Kolka;
- Poor tourism infrastructure and services due to low and seasonal demand;
- Conflicts involving the national park's administration, the local municipality, local community, businesses. Lack of local cooperation and common effort for territory development planning;
- Road reconstruction and paving expected which would increase the numbers of visitors in transit;
- Vast and unused natural, cultural and historical resources available for the development of sustainable tourism to generate local income and conserve the local environment.

## THE CONCEPT OF THE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM MODEL



## 2. THE CONCEPT OF THE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM MODEL

### 2.1. THE CONCEPT OF THE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM MODEL:

- All stakeholders - local residents, businesses, administration of the national park, municipality are invited at the round table to assess the situation, formulate common interests, and agree upon the goals and actions.
- During stakeholder meetings the benefits sustainable tourism development can bring to the territory/ local society are demonstrated. The meeting participants are asked to express their opinions, name existing problems, objections and interests to involve in tourism. Discussions start about the vision of what kind of tourism the stakeholders would like to develop.
- Several local meetings are required to involve the local society. During these meetings, gradually the common goals and interests are found, common trust is built and willingness to work together is born.
- Every meeting ends up with practical conclusions and setting next tasks with deadlines. The task achievement is assessed at the next meeting.
- The most active community members form an initiative group and involve the rest of people in activities.

### 2.2. INVENTORY OF THE LOCAL TOURISM RESOURCES:

- After the local initiative group is formed, the next task is to take stock of all tourism resources available in the territory (natural, economical and human resources) in order to take a decision about what kind of tourism products shall be developed.
- Local people are involved in collection of information. The stress is put on things that are important and seem attractive to the locals – stories, legends, events, hobbies, local foods, private collections, like, in case of Slitere, old household things, objects washed ashore, etc.
- Local visits take place to the existing and potential tourism objects, photos are taken, their related information collected from local sources and inserted in a structured database.
- Review of all available publications, research and other literature is done to learn about the values and unique features in the territory and highlight them in destination promotion.
- It is important to involve experts of tourism, cultural history and others in the process in order to assess the situation objectively and professionally.
- Problems and obstacles to tourism development are recognised, like, the lack of infrastructure, specific restrictions to economic activities, local conflicts, etc.

## THE CONCEPT OF THE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM MODEL



### 2.3. SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS – A VISION:

- Individual interviews with local people, businesses, municipality, SNP administration and other stakeholders are done to find out the directions for tourism development and willingness to actually engage in it.
- Information, knowledge and expertise is gathered from outside the project territory – the results of other projects, development visions, interviews with relevant people and similar activities to obtain opinions and ideas in wider context and generate a broad vision for development.
- Visitor opinions and demands are found out (interviews, surveys, feedback on site and during tourism fairs). Visitor needs and interests are specified to develop the territory accordingly.
- Based on the summary of the collected information, a descriptive document is drafted to look at all resources in complementary and destination context. The document offers a vision – a description of what the territory could look like if developed as a tourist destination using all existing opportunities. The vision or proposal document presents a common goal and context where each player clearly sees its role as well as the role of other players and the ways to cooperate and work together to achieve the goal.
- Each tourism object, the available and potential service is analysed individually, pointing at its strengths and weaknesses, the necessary improvements to make it attractive to visitors. The infrastructure in which all the separate objects function is analysed as well as it is important for the territory as a whole destination.
- A separate chapter in the document describes the recommended actions, implementing actors, responsible bodies, partners, priority levels and deadlines.
- The Proposal document is presented to the local community, and is first sent electronically to all stakeholders asking for their comments. The draft version is discussed in a stakeholder meeting, the comments and recommendations are incorporated into the final version. This way, it is achieved that tourism development is not imposed from outside. The local society accepts it, involves and contributes.
- The main purpose of the Sustainable tourism development proposal document is to clearly define what tourism products should be developed to meet the market demand.

## THE CONCEPT OF THE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM MODEL



### **SNP EXAMPLE**

#### **Proposals for sustainable tourism development in the Slītere National Park (Recommendations for the sustainable development of tourism at the Slītere National Park)**

[http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/prof/proj/PolProp/Dokumenti/SNP\\_turisms\\_EN.pdf](http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/prof/proj/PolProp/Dokumenti/SNP_turisms_EN.pdf) ( 1,2 Mb, pdf).

The document analyses the tourism resources available in the national park, tourism infrastructure and its required improvements, available tourism products, tourism impact on natural values. The document also describes the goal of the tourism development, the vision and required actions.

#### **The proposals are developed:**

- In cooperation with the local residents, tourism businesses, SNP administration, municipalities, tourist information centre and representatives of the local NGOs;
- Forming a task force and discussing with the representatives of the responsible ministries and state institutions in Latvia;
- Taking into account the infrastructure needs as defined by the Dundaga municipality;
- Listening to foreign expert recommendations and conclusions;
- In discussion with Egons Bērziņš (Riga Technical University) of his development vision of Kolka and environs.

#### **The proposals are relevant for:**

- Tourism section in the Nature Protection Plan (the Nature Protection Plan of the Slītere National Park has a reference to the Proposal document);
- Spatial development strategy of coastal areas;
- Justification of European and/or national project applications;
- Municipality territorial development plans;
- Initiation of amendments in tourism and nature conservation legislation;
- Attraction of investments and generation of ideas for territorial development;
- Information updates in tourism/marketing materials of the SNP.





### 3. TOURISM PRODUCTS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

#### 3.1. DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM PRODUCTS

To attract visitors to the destination and stimulate consumption of local services, touring routes are developed. A touring route is a product that brings benefits to several service providers in the destination – accommodations, catering, guides, equipment rent, transport, etc.

Touring routes of different types are developed – self-drive, cycling, boating, hiking – as each mode of travel has its specific target audience. Bird and animal watching tours are developed taking into account the rich nature of the destination in combination with the knowledge, skills and expertise of the national park specialists. The routes are built in cooperation between all interested parties – tourism businesses, local residents, municipality, administration of the protected nature area, etc. Working for a common goal helps to reduce local conflicts where such exist.

Each route description has a list of service providers. It is important to include as much service providers as possible. This way they receive marketing support and are integrated in the destination's tourist offer.

#### 10 steps in building a touring route:

(1) The idea of the route; (2) Investigation of maps and references; (3) Provisional mapping of the route; (4) Testing of the route in different seasons of a year; (5) Corrections after testing; (6) Testing with eventual tourists; (7) Preparing the route description sheet; (8) Involving other service providers and interested players; (9) Marking the route; (10) Route maintenance and updating of the information.

#### **SNP EXAMPLE - the process of developing new tourism products in the Slītere National Park. Basic principles and 10 steps in developing a touring route**

[http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/prof/proj/PolProp/Dokumenti/SNP\\_product\\_development\\_EN.pdf](http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/prof/proj/PolProp/Dokumenti/SNP_product_development_EN.pdf)  
(283 Kb, pdf).

*The tourism products and services in the Slītere National Park are involved in routes and excursions: hiking, cycling, boating, self-drive and nature watching.*

*The routes involve local residents in delivery of services and in cooperation. The template of route descriptions was developed by tourism professionals. The routes are agreed, improved and updated with the local tourism specialists and community members as well as with the SNP administration.*

*The route description sheets are designed using the Scribus software program which does not require designer skills, therefore anybody can design or update the route descriptions. User instructions in Latvian are provided at <http://macies.celotajs.lv>.*

*The route description scheme can be used to develop new routes or edit the existing ones.*

#### **Distribution of the route description sheets:**

- Downloadable from the Internet (from popular web sites easily accessible to the target audience);
- Available from the tourism businesses (accommodations, food services, etc.) where the hosts print the sheets when needed and give them to visitors as a suggestion of what to do in the surroundings. This makes life easier to rural tourism providers helping them to answer the questions about where to go and what to see in locality.



### 3.2. ROUTE MARKING

The aim of marking of the touring routes is to maintain the routes in action and to ensure that tourists, following descriptions and maps, would not get lost. Choosing paints and marking symbols it is possible to rely upon the local experience as well as upon experience from different countries.

- The route has to be negotiated with the managers and owners of land (municipality, businesses, administration, etc.).
- Getting the tools and materials – paintbrushes, paints and other.
- The costs of marking are low, therefore routes can be marked when necessary, as part of local cooperation, and without any funding support from the local municipality or other.
- In the process of marking, certain uniform routing principles have to be observed.
- Regular inspections of the route and renovation of marking signs have to be done according to the need.
- The marking symbols and colours have to be explained in the web and printed descriptions of the routes.

#### Advantages of marking with colours:

- Low costs (no need to manufacture special plates or other signs);
- The marking is put on already existing objects in appropriate places, like trees, stones, poles, etc.;
- Colour marking is simple and efficient.

#### **SNP EXAMPLE - Guidelines for colour marking/signposting of touring routes**

[http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/prof/proj/PolProp/Dokumenti/Vadlinijas\\_krasas\\_markejums\\_LV.pdf](http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/prof/proj/PolProp/Dokumenti/Vadlinijas_krasas_markejums_LV.pdf) (863 Kb, pdf).



*The document describes the experience in marking the trails and offers practical advice. The method is recognised as the cheapest and the most cost efficient.*

#### How the guidelines were developed:

- *To find the most efficient and the cheapest method of marking trails, experience of several European countries was surveyed;*
- *Several outdoor marking tests were done to find the best marking symbols and colours;*
- *Guidelines were drafted, based on the previous two steps;*
- *An outdoor training seminar was organised inviting all interested bodies and individuals. During the seminar we marked the route "The Liv villages". The route marking was approved with the SNP administration.*





### 3.3. OUTDOOR INTERPRETATION: STANDS AND SIGNPOSTS

The goal of outdoor interpretation is to inform about tourism products in visitor friendly, attractive and informative way, avoiding abundance of scientific terms. Information should cover natural, cultural and social values of the territory.

Our outdoor interpretation stand concept includes a map, photos of the objects, texts, pictograms, headings, the logos of the territory's protected status and of funding institutions to stress that the territory is important from the point of view of biodiversity. It is essential to include such information which is useful to visitors at the moment they find themselves in front of the stand, namely, a possibly comprehensive list of all kinds of service providers should be enlisted. At this point, it is not so important to stress who is the financier and owner of the stand (municipality, protected area administration, private business, etc.).

#### Steps in developing outdoor interpretation:

- Conceptual agreement on location and contents of outdoor stands.
- Careful elaboration of information contents for each outdoor stand and defining a clear message to be delivered to visitors by means of each outdoor stand.
- Prepare text, maps and photos. Basic information is drafted by tourism professionals, consulting with experts in, e.g., botany, zoology, etc., for specific parts.
- Make a list of services (accommodations, shops, catering, tourist information, equipment rent, etc.) and mark them on the map.
- Edit information and translate the text. The stand information is also checked and approved with the local community taking into account their corrections and suggestions.
- Layout design of the outdoor information stand.
- Layout editing.

Approval of the layout final version with the manager and owner of the territory (park administration, municipality, private land owners, etc.).

#### Outdoor interpretation contents should include:

- High quality maps;
- Information about the territory, objects, nature values, services, rules to be observed, and funding bodies;
- Each outdoor stand should include unique information and combination of facts to avoid overlapping with other outdoor stands;
- Illustrative photos should be added to the text;
- The stand should include information, preferably in pictograms, about what visitors are allowed and what they are not allowed to do in the protected area. The information should focus on possibilities and facilities, not only restrictions;
- Present the information in two languages – the national language and in one of the foreign languages the majority of visitors would understand: English/Russian/German/Spanish or other.



### **SNP EXAMPLE - The content of the outdoor information stand. Guidelines for outdoor interpretation.**

[http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/prof/proj/PolProp/Dokumenti/Outdoor\\_panels\\_EN\\_2010.pdf](http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/prof/proj/PolProp/Dokumenti/Outdoor_panels_EN_2010.pdf) (1,1 Mb, pdf).

The goal of this guideline is to show an example of a visitor friendly, non-academic, attractive and, at the same time, useful and educational outdoor interpretation of a territory or an object.

5 outdoor information stands have been installed in the Slītere National Park.

Their design follows the officially approved uniform visual style for especially protected nature areas. The interpretation was developed mainly by the specialists from "Lauku ceļotājs", and both - the contents and location of each stand were approved with the local community and the national park administration. The guidelines describe the main steps in planning and production, examples of the contents, the standards for stand design, considerations regarding the choice of locations, etc.

The interpretation include practical and useful information for visitors enabling to use the local services.

The stand locations were carefully selected reviewing already existing outdoor information stands and finding out the sites where there is the highest need for information.

All the stand locations are agreed with the land owners, the national park administration, the municipality and in discussions with the local community. As a result, a high level local acceptance is achieved. The information contents depend on the location of each stand and accords with the theoretical part of the guidelines.





### 3.4. SERVICE PROVIDER TRAINING

- First the training needs of the local service providers are found out (e.g., development and improvement of specific services, customer relations, etc.);
- Training program is set up and lecturers/trainers found who are practitioners in the respective field. Usually it is worth to involve also a marketing specialist to look at the topics from the perspective of the market demand;
- The necessary technical equipment and handouts are specified;
- Costs are calculated and budget is set up;
- Training dates are set taking into account the local conditions, availability of training facilities, catering options and needs, and the most convenient time for the target audience;
- Training events are announced, with the program, date and place, through all the available information channels: e-mail, local newspapers, municipality, tourist information centre, formal and informal contacts;
- Assessment forms of the training event are distributed to participants. They are asked to return the forms and give their suggestions for the next training themes and events;
- Seminar participants sign in the participant list and leave their contact details;
- It is worth to develop handouts or some training literature on the training topic for individual reading;
- It is advisable to combine classroom lecture with practical training (e.g., for nature tourism product development, it is recommended that the trainer takes the group out and explains things in natural environment).
- As a follow-up, assessment forms are analysed to see the need for further training seminars and topics.

#### **SNP EXAMPLE - Training seminars to support tourist service providers**

*Tourist service providers from Slītere took part in several product development seminars. Seminar lectures were given by a number of practicing professionals in each of the seminar topics.*

*Video from the nature tourism development seminar on 11.11.2010:*  
<http://video.id.lv/MyWeb/web/lc/>

*Video from the culinary product seminar on 01.12.2010:* <http://video.id.lv/MyWeb/web/lc2/>

*Examples of seminar programs:* [http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/prof/train/courses\\_lv.html](http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/prof/train/courses_lv.html)

*“Lauku ceļotājs” runs a training portal <http://macies.celotajs.lv>, offering free downloads of training materials and reference literature the Association has developed on different aspects of tourism.*

*Useful materials are “The Basic principles for environmentally friendly and sustainable nature tourism activities and product development in nature areas”:*  
[http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/prof/proj/EEZ/Doc/dabas\\_vadlinijas\\_eng.pdf](http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/prof/proj/EEZ/Doc/dabas_vadlinijas_eng.pdf)

*and “Culinary heritage in rural tourism”:* [http://macies.celotajs.lv/publ/research/kulinarais\\_mantojums\\_lauku\\_turisma.pdf](http://macies.celotajs.lv/publ/research/kulinarais_mantojums_lauku_turisma.pdf)



### 3.5. CONSERVATION OF THE AUTHENTIC ENVIRONMENT AND TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE

The goal is to conserve the traditional cultural environment and historical landscape of the territory. Traditional architecture is one of the most visible expressions of the identity of the place. If the local residents are aware of the unique local identity as one of the values attracting visitors, they try to maintain it, building and renovating their homes and arranging the yards according to the traditional character of the place. Descendants of the families having lived in the area since generations have an inherited sense of how a homestead and the yard should look. Still knowledge and practical advice is required, therefore it is advisable to develop guidelines explaining the elements of the traditional architecture and their use in modern context.

- The territory is explored involving experts in architecture and/or cultural heritage;
- The collected information is summarised to give an insight in the history of the traditional architecture, principles of courtyard planning, types and design of buildings, factors influencing architecture style, construction elements, building and finishing materials, recommendations for reconstruction and new constructions;
- The document is presented to the local community and local level institutions to build acceptance and make the document „viable”. Comments from the local community and local level institutions are incorporated in the final version of the document;
- The document is presented to the relevant national institutions responsible for conservation of cultural heritage. Their recommendations are incorporated;
- The final version of the document is presented to public at large and distributed to all interested bodies. If it is not possible to distribute a printed version, the document is sent electronically.

#### **SNP EXAMPLE – traditional coastal architecture in the Slītere national park.**

##### **Description, analysis, recommendations**

*The document provides a summary of the history of coastal architecture in North Kurzeme region. It gives recommendations to those planning and implementing building construction in the Slītere national park and willing to combine the traditional and modern values as well as to integrate buildings in the environment without impairing the national park's values.*

[http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/prof/proj/PolProp/Dokumenti/SNP\\_apbuve\\_vadlinijas.pdf](http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/prof/proj/PolProp/Dokumenti/SNP_apbuve_vadlinijas.pdf) (7.42 Mb, pdf)

*The document gives insight in the history of planning and construction of buildings in coastal fishing villages, the principles of courtyard planning, types and design of buildings, factors influencing architecture style, construction elements, building and finishing materials, recommendations for reconstruction and new constructions. The initiative to write the guideline came from the local community who needed practical advice how to design elements of courtyards and maintain the traditional identity of the North Kurzeme fishing villages. The guidelines have been presented to the State Inspection for Heritage Protection, the Association of Latvian Architects, and to the Political supervision group of the project. The guidelines were also presented to the local community thus achieving local recognition. Protection and maintenance of the local environment and culture is mainly in hands of the local people. Incomers have to respect the local situation in order to be accepted. Public opinion has a great power!*





### 3.6. CONSERVATION OF THE LOCAL CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

The goal is to show the unique identity of the place, to relate it to the present day, and to catch interest of visitors. If a little-known language or a dialect exists in the territory, it is interesting from the aspect of cultural history. It is advisable to collect words and phrases that are used in everyday situations and can be useful to visitors in the area. The local names can be used, with explanations, in the environment – signposts, information stands, menus, the names of guest houses and other businesses, in travel guides, etc. It helps to highlight the identity of the place, catches interest, and contributes in conservation of the local cultural environment.

#### Steps to follow:

- Involve the most active representatives of the cultural environment in drawing up the dictionary and set deadlines;
- Develop the concept – the volume, content, etc.;
- Select and translate the vocabulary items;
- Present the dictionary to the local community, invite to use it in tourism products, agree about specific cases of use (e.g., signposts in the respective language) and deadlines;
- Distribute the dictionary to the local tourism businesses and other interested bodies.

#### **SNP example - The Latvian - Liv - English dictionary**

[http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/prof/proj/PolProp/Dokumenti/libiesu\\_vardnica\\_EN.pdf](http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/prof/proj/PolProp/Dokumenti/libiesu_vardnica_EN.pdf)  
(401 Kb, pdf)

*The Slītere National Park is a home location to one of the smallest nations in the world - the Livs. This small Latvian-Liv-English explanatory dictionary contributes to sustainable development as the Liv language can be used in promotional and marketing materials, and to maintain the Liv identity of the people who live in the territory. The dictionary translates words that are useful in everyday life - the names of homesteads, place names, foods, festivities, etc. The dictionary was set up following the local community initiative.*

*The Liv language translation is used in signposts, outdoor interpretation, tourism product descriptions, the titles of touring routes and in the Slītere National Park's tourism guide.*





### 3.7. NATURE VALUES

The aim is to show and explain in everyday language the surrounding nature values that are not especially protected, hereby increasing visitor interest and respect to nature and its processes. For that purpose, a plant finder or similar publication can be produced.

- The concept of the publication – contents, volume, etc. It can be a demonstration of plants growing in the territory of a single farmstead or in wider surroundings. It can be a simple plant finder on one A4 sheet, or it can be a whole guidebook. It is important to stick to the principle of simplicity and catch visitor interest to learn about nature;
- The list of species (plants, birds, animals, mushrooms, etc.). It is worth to involve nature specialists to make professional and correct list of species;
- Photos and information. The principle: to source and use attractive facts related to the use of a plant or its specific features both today and earlier. Descriptions should be written in everyday language avoiding the use of scientific terms;
- The publication can be translated in one of foreign languages, which is understood by the majority of foreign guests. It can be, as well, only in one language, targeted at the domestic market. It is worth to provide the Latin names of plants, birds and animals;
- The publication is distributed or demonstrated in outlets where it is accessible to visitors walking and hiking in the local area (tourist information centres, travel agencies, etc.);
- The publication can be used by the local guides who offer nature excursions. Sheets can be copied and distributed to excursion group to put down their individual observations. Optionally, the sheets are distributed to the group for the use during excursion to help recognise the plants, and are returned to the guide after excursion;
- It is worth to point out the locations where particular species or groups of species can be observed. Possibly, it is worth to set up a nature watching route or trail.
- It is worth to do observations and make notes – this way you can inspire your visitors for new observations and to inform precisely about the best time each species can be observed.

#### **SNP example - Botanical Guide. The Plant Finder**

<http://www.celotajs.lv/p/view/botanicalguide?lang=en>

*The goal of the Botanical guide is to help anyone to find and recognise plant and mushroom species around us, and to provide captivating facts about them in a language that is understandable to those who are not professionals in biology and mycology.*

#### **Sections in the guide:**

*“Worth seeing”:* Latvia’s most interesting botany-related nature trails, including information about huge and/or interesting trees of various species, alleys of trees, botanical gardens, dendrology parks, other types of plant collections, museums, interesting farms, etc.

*“Plant and Mushroom Routes”:* a list of ready-made routes without guide services.

*“Plant Finder”:* photos of more than 400 most common plants, lichens and mushrooms species. Each species description has got some interesting facts or stories.

*“Protect and preserve”:* a list of all of the protected species of plants which are often plucked for bouquets and sold. These are species which need to be left alone right where they are.





## 4. MARKETING

### 4.1. TRAVEL GUIDE OF THE TERRITORY

The goal is to provide visitors with practical and quality information on the territory as a whole – nature, history, tourist services, touring around, etc.

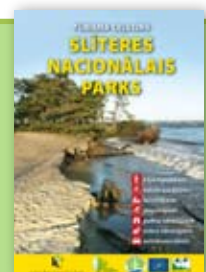
#### Key steps in production of the travel guide:

1. Previous work
2. Development of the structure and contents of the guide. The contents are developed by tourism professionals. It is worth to find 5-10 key values („pearls” or „treasures”) in the territory – usually particular sights, natural or cultural attractions, people and the values they have created, things that are associated with the given territory. This works well in marketing.
3. Regular visits in the area, to the objects and attractions there, collecting information from the local population. This way the authors of the guide have an objective and updated idea of what is going on in the territory in all seasons of a year.
4. Involving municipality or other administration for approval of information contents.
5. Involvement of the local businesses, tourist information centre, regional researchers and other local players.
6. Development of touring routes for the guidebook. Active touring routes can be included which are developed together with local players (see „10 steps in building a touring route”).
7. Development of the guide contents.
8. Approval of the layout version with possibly wide stakeholder representation. The layout and contents are approved with the national park administration or municipality and its tourist information centre as well as with local regional researchers and service providers. All the constructive suggestions, corrections and additions are included in the guide.
9. To gain local acceptance, the guidebook should be presented to the local community as well as to public at large. You can also send a press release and free copies of the guidebook to media. It is advisable to put online the electronical version of the guidebook for better public accessibility.

#### **SNP example - The Slītere National Park Travel Guide**

<http://www.celotajs.lv/p/view/SliteresCelvedis2010en?lang=en>

*This is the first in Latvia such a comprehensive travel guide of a national park and a Nature2000 site. Also, for the first time, a travel guide is based on the local stories. More than 30 local residents, people from the administration of the Slītere National Park and Dundaga municipality and others were all involved in creation of this guidebook. It contains information on values of nature, culture and history, all tourist services available in the park and other useful information.*



*The structure of the guidebook is developed together with professionals of tourism industry as an example. Further editions can follow this example, updating and adding information. This approach provides for continued local cooperation and accessibility of tourism products to visitors (social and economical factors). Key principles and basic steps in producing the Slītere Traveller's Guide: [http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/prof/proj/PolProp/Dokumenti/SNP\\_celveza\\_gatavosanas\\_principi\\_EN.pdf](http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/prof/proj/PolProp/Dokumenti/SNP_celveza_gatavosanas_principi_EN.pdf) (158 Kb, pdf).*



## 4.2. Joining in wider marketing and promotional actions (national, regional, Baltic region or other)

The territory is included as one of the destinations in a wider tourism offer. This way more trust and recognition is achieved in the target audience. It also helps to reach larger target audience which is not possible and cannot be adequately done by individual service providers or even the whole destination.

### Options are following:

- Theme publications – for example, national, regional or European, and similar guidebooks;
- Involve in marketing campaigns organised by national tourism organisations;
- Develop such destination’s tourism offer which is relevant to include in larger touring routes. It can be done in consultation with the travel agencies in the country or international tour operators who are selling similar travel packages or tours to similar destinations;
- Invite mass media, organise fam days and fam trips.
- Invite tourism professionals – agencies, operators, accommodations, guides and others to a fam trip for professionals. From them you can learn a lot about how to make tourism products in your destination;
- Develop and maintain the destination’s web site with updated information on services available;
- Involve in international marketing organisations and associations.

### **SNP example - The Baltic National Parks’ Guide**

*The goal of the Baltic national parks’ guide is to provide, in one publication, a useful and practical visitor information for touring the national parks in the Baltic countries.*

*The guide positions the Baltics as a single tourism destination and includes information about nature, history and culture as well as about tourist services and routes promoting Nature2000 sites in the Baltic countries.*

#### **Production of the guide:**

- *Visit the national parks, local businesses, tourist information centres, services to collect information and make photos;*
- *Meet with the national park administrations;*
- *Develop a variety of touring routes visiting the national parks;*
- *Find and formulate key values of each park from the visitor point of view;*
- *Write and translate texts;*
- *Send the text for editing and approval to the national park administrations;*
- *Print the guide and send certain number of copies to each national park;*
- *Inform media and target audience about publication of the guide, organise distribution.*







### 4.3. PARTICIPATION IN TRAVEL FAIRS AND EXHIBITIONS

Participating in travel fairs you get in direct contact with eventual visitors of your destination. During fairs you can understand visitor expectations and ideas about your destination which helps to develop relevant tourism offer. Travel fairs represent an opportunity to inform travellers personally about what they can expect and experience in your destination. **Steps to do:**

- Develop the concept of your travel fair stand presenting the image and products, inviting to visit your sustainable tourism destination;
- Develop stand design and technical specification. The stand consists of the basic construction and changeable/removable elements which can be renewed as necessary at low cost or can be used separately from the whole stand in other promotional events;
- The stand concept should be possibly open and democratic stressing accessibility and hospitality of the destination;
- The stand should demonstrate the key values – nature, culture, people, etc. The stand should illustrate that the services are really based on the local society. The values should be communicated in simple, understandable and brief form to catch visitor attention and interest. The values should be integrated in the services and routes so that the visitors could easily enjoy them getting impressions and memories of the destination.
- Choose the manufacturer and place an order for the exhibition stand.
- Participate in travel fair.

#### **SNP example - Exhibition stand**

[http://www.gallery.celotajs.lv/index.php?album=Events%2F2011%2F110212\\_Balttour\\_Life%2F](http://www.gallery.celotajs.lv/index.php?album=Events%2F2011%2F110212_Balttour_Life%2F)

*Our goal participating in the „Balttour” travel fair with an exhibition stand was to promote the Slitere National Park as a Natura2000 site which is a protected nature area, open to visitors and offering a variety of holiday options and services. The stand was designed as an open construction so that the visitors can enter, take the information materials, fill in our questionnaires and talk to the staff asking questions.*

*Roll-up posters are important elements of the stand. They can be used separately from the stand in seminars, lectures, conferences and other public events to disseminate information. The posters illustrate particular tourism products in the Slitere National Park - hiking, cycling, driving, boating, nature watching, etc. Large size photos are selected, showing people experiencing those products. The posters can be changed as necessary if they get worn out or when new products are developed. The costs of new posters are comparatively low.*

*One of the most important functions of our stand was to serve for customer survey needs. We made a survey asking stand visitors their attitude and beliefs regarding protected nature areas, their interest in visiting and using nature and active tourism products.*





### 4.4. VISITOR EVENTS

The goal is to present the tourism products, services, local produce and the destination as a whole to large public audience and media. Another goal of such event is also to consolidate the local society and institutions, to generate ideas, to design and shape the tourism offer for the season. All involved stakeholders have a common goal and a lot of work to achieve it. There is no time for conflicts.

In the first event (if the event is to become regular) the tourist services (guided excursions, entrances) should be offered free of charge to attract more visitors. Do not plan to present services of high costs, like, the local transport. Food services should be available for pay, however, it is recommended to put a low profit margin and choose local foods. If the budget allows, it is advisable to provide a simple meal, for example, a soup free of charge for visitors.

At later stage, when the visitors know the event as a regular one, you can ask small fees for services to cover costs. Still it has to be remembered that the goal of the event is promotion of the destination, therefore it cannot be viewed as the right time and place to make profit.

It is recommended to involve a marketing company or specialist in organisation of the promotional event. There is a high competition between a number of events, and, especially as your event is promoting specific non-mass product, professional knowledge is required to address and attract the target audience in relevant way.

It is important to stress the uniqueness of the destination in your marketing message. Sustainability should also be stressed (but avoid using this professional term in marketing!). This way you will prepare the visitors to really learn about the destination and behave responsibly.

#### Steps in organising a promotional event:

- Make preliminary investigation and take decisions;
- Get familiar with the legislation concerning event organisation;
- Involve cooperation partners;
- Involve sponsors and informational support;
- Make inventory of the available and required resources;
- Write the program and scenario of the event;
- Calculate the event budget;
- Make the list of operational tasks;
- Write the communication plan;
- Use social networks to get publicity;
- Involve local community and businesses;
- Establish communication with media;
- Establish communication with politicians and the relevant institutions;
- Start communication with the event participants;
- Run and manage the event;
- Do the event follow-up.



**SNP example - Guidelines for organization of public events in nature territories**

*Vadlīnijas:* [http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/prof/proj/PolProp/Dokumenti/SCD\\_vadlinijas.pdf](http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/prof/proj/PolProp/Dokumenti/SCD_vadlinijas.pdf) (22 Mb, pdf).

*List of attachments to the guidelines: The program of the Travel Day to Slītere (TDS), the TDS newsletter (two editions), the list of organiser required resources, estimated expenditures, the TDS communication plan, the list of businesses participating in the TDS market, the list of attractions and events open to visitors on the TDS, examples of event communication, press releases.*



**Attachments:**

[http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/prof/proj/PolProp/Dokumenti/SCD\\_vadlinijas\\_pielikumi.pdf](http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/prof/proj/PolProp/Dokumenti/SCD_vadlinijas_pielikumi.pdf) (44 Mb, pdf)

*The goal of the guidelines is to summarise and transfer the experience of “Lauku ceļotājs” in planning and management of public events in protected nature areas, including Natura2000.*

*The first TDS was a success and attracted ca 1000 visitors. It united the local community involving people in event organisation and demonstrated to visitors as well as to the local community a full and diverse spectre of the destination’s tourism offer. The TDS event improved the local self-esteem and showed if and how the local tourism products meet the needs and interests of visitors. It brought income to the participants of the TDS market of local products.*

*The event becomes regular as the organisational initiative is taken up by the local initiative group, with the financial support of the municipality and park administration.*





### 5. VISITOR MONITORING

Visitor monitoring is necessary to monitor the anthropogenic load on the nature objects, follow the dynamics of visitor numbers, make conclusions about the most visited/loaded sites and services, efficiency of events, the necessity to manage visitor flow, and to demonstrate to the stakeholders social and economic impact of tourism in the territory. **Steps to follow:**

- Review and select the most appropriate visitor monitoring methods (e.g., survey, interviews, visitor counting using electronic counters and entrance tickets, photo monitoring of the objects, sample plots in attraction sites to observe trample, etc.);
- Set the monitoring period and points of reference;
- Carry out monitoring activities;
- Analyse monitoring data;
- Present monitoring results to the local society at the evaluation events of the sustainable tourism model operation.
- Use monitoring data in planning of further activities regarding the required improvements, tourism products and services, visitor flow management, infrastructure development, cooperation between all interested parties.

#### Surveys

- Formulate questions and design a survey form to get the required data;
- Decide how to distribute the survey form according to survey specifics: on-site survey during events, survey campaigns with the help of volunteers, distributing survey forms in guest houses, tourist information centres and other places where possible. On-line survey is done via the destination's web site and/or related web sites. Respondent motivation can be achieved offering a prize lottery.
- Make the summary and analysis of results.

#### Electronical visitor counting

- Select objects and locations to install electronic visitor counters;
- Select electronic visitor counters according to the specifics of the place (infrared, radio wave, etc.);
- Purchase and install electronic counters, train the service staff;
- Organise regular data reading and analysis.



**SNP example - Monitoring Methodology for monitoring the dynamics of tourism environmental, social and economical impact in the Slītere National Park**

[http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/prof/proj/PolProp/Dokumenti/1.version\\_monitoring\\_methodology\\_EN.pdf](http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/prof/proj/PolProp/Dokumenti/1.version_monitoring_methodology_EN.pdf) (575 Kb, pdf)



The guidelines describe the methods of visitor monitoring to detect the environmental, social and economic aspects of visitor flow dynamics in the Slītere National Park as a tourism destination.

The document describes methods to register visitors, their behaviour and its effects as well as methods for long term monitoring of natural and cultural tourism attractions and assessment of results. The guideline characterises advantages and practical use of each method.

Visitor monitoring is carried out following the guideline, and tourism environmental, social and economical impact is monitored. The data are used for conclusions and further long term development of the destination.

**Visitor monitoring activities in the Slītere National Park:**

1. Regular visits and visual observations of the objects;
2. Digital photo monitoring of the objects;
3. Sample plots;
4. Recording the negative impacts in touring routes;
5. Visitor electronic and physical counting in tourism objects;
6. Visitor surveys;
7. Interviews with tourism specialists and businesses;

Based on the monitoring data, it was proved that increasing visitor numbers do not harm nature values if the visitor flow is carefully managed and directed and if relevant infrastructure is provided. Local economy is stimulated, and the balance between environment conservation and economical development is maintained.





### 6. CONCLUSIONS - WHY IS THIS MODEL SUSTAINABLE?

The model is sustainable as it caters for the interests of all stakeholders. They have clear motivation to involve, cooperate and keep the model running for the development of local economy and nature conservation:

- The local community appreciates the nature as the main visitor attraction to the destination, and the opportunities to develop tourism services to gain economic benefits. The national park is regarded as a resource for local economy and represents a high quality living environment. Without proper visitor management, uncontrolled and growing visitor flow would generate inadequately heavy anthropogenic load on this protected nature area;
- Stakeholder cooperation is efficient as there is a specified and achievable goal set, where all the involved parties see their benefits;
- Marketing activities are there to promote the destination as a whole, not only individual services or the national park from the nature protection aspect. The Slītere National Park is included in the Baltic National Parks' Guide and is promoted in the Baltic context as a single destination. Tour operators are addressed, their advice and specifications are used to develop competitive and demanded tourism products;
- The visitor event „Travel Day to Slītere” has become a tradition. The day not only promotes the SNP as a destination, but also stimulates the local community to improve the local knowledge and awareness through involvement of the local people in development of new tourist services, touring routes and gathering information for promotional publications. Through this process, the local people learn a lot about the nature, culture and history, strengthen social values like the sense of local identity and belonging, self-esteem.

#### All stakeholders:

- Accept tourism development in the area;
- Involve in providing tourist services and/or development and maintenance of tourism infrastructure;
- Practice regular communication, take common decisions, coordinate activities;
- Are direct beneficiaries from tourism economically and socially.

**The key principle of the sustainable tourism model -  
constructive and continuous local cooperation between equal partners.**

The sustainable tourism development model is based on the example of the Slītere National Park. With relevant planning, the model is applicable for implementation and development of sustainable tourism destination in other nature protected areas.

Download the document from [http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/prof/proj/PolProp/PolProp\\_results\\_en.html](http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/prof/proj/PolProp/PolProp_results_en.html)

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