

Conference

TRAILS: GOOD FOR HIKERS. GOOD FOR COMMUNITIES. GOOD FOR ECONOMY



20 May 2022



Hotel VICTORIA,
Miško str. 11, Kaunas



The conference is one of the project's „**Development of Forest trail in Latvia and Lithuania and expanding the Baltic Coastal Hiking route in Lithuania**“ (Hiking project, LLI-448) closing events and will be followed by a hike in Plateliai, Lithuania on 21 May (the official opening of Forest trail in Lithuania) and a hike in Kuldiga, Latvia on 22 May (the official opening of Forest trail in Kurzeme region, Latvia).

Unique tourism product has been created: the Baltic Trails (**Forest Trail** and **Baltic Coastal Hiking Route**) – a network of long-distance hiking trails connecting Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. These trails placed Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia on the hiking map of Europe.

CONFERENCE TOPIC

The conference will highlight advantages of hiking in a more comprehensive meaning, presenting it not only as an outdoor activity or an alternative way of travel, but also as a tool to attract travellers, strengthen communities along the trails and foster local entrepreneurs, thus contributing to the prosperity of the society concerned.

Panel discussion in the afternoon will invite to hear out hikers from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania sharing their experience and exchange views on Forest trail and Coastal route in Latvia and Lithuania.

After the conference participants will have opportunity to take a guided tour of Kaunas – European Capital of Culture 2022.

WHO WILL PARTICIPATE

The conference will bring together a wide range of stakeholders: developers of tourism products, trail planning specialists, municipalities and organisations responsible for trail maintenance, tourism organisations, service providers and hiking enthusiasts.

AGENDA

20 May 2022



- 09:00 – 10:00 Registration and coffee
- 10:00 – 10:10 Greetings from representative of Kaunas Region
- 10:10 – 10:25 **Tourism policy cha(lle)nges: to improve and to adapt**
Marius Goročovskis, Ministry of the Economy and Innovation, division of Tourism Policy, Lithuania
- 10:25 – 10:40 **The potential of Lithuanian nature routes**
Aušra Griksaitė, Public enterprise Lithuania Travel, Lithuania
- 10:40 – 11:10 **E-paths connect Europe and people**
Steen Kobberø-Hansen, European Ramblers Association (ERA), Denmark
- 11:10 – 11:40 **Development of the national framework for trails in Sweden - incorporating a 20-year experience**
Kenneth Joelsson, Tourism in Skåne AB, Sweden
- 11:40 – 12:00 **The Baltic Trails - experiences, challenges, solutions, future plans and expectations**
Asnāte Ziemele, Latvian country tourism association „Lauku celotajs”, Latvia
- 12:00 – 13:00 **Lunch**
- 13:00 – 14:30 **Panel discussion** moderated by **Linas Žabaliūnas**
Panellists:
Merle Rallmann, journalist, hiker, blogger, Estonia
Aija Neilande, project manager at Kurzeme Planning region, hiker, Latvia
Povilas Rudinskis, geologist, hiker, Lithuania
Matas Toliušis, teacher, guide, hiker, Lithuania
Agnė Vaitkuvienė, president, Lithuanian Countryside Tourism Association, Lithuania
- 14:45 – 16:15 **Guided tour of Kaunas following the Forest trail route and more...**

CONFERENCE SPEAKERS



MARIUS GOROCHOVSKIS

Chief officer in the Ministry of the Economy and Innovation, in the division of Tourism Policy where he works with the state aid projects, strategic planning, innovation, and connectivity projects. He holds Master's degree in Politics and Communication, and he spent most of his career working in public relations in the Ministry of Environment, PR agency, human rights NGO. Marius is a dedicated pedestrian who believes that a true exploration is only possible by immersing into a location physically and mindfully. And that is what tourism is about.



AUŠRA GRIKŠAITĖ

Product Development & Infrastructure Analysis department project manager at Lithuania Travel. Lithuania Travel is national tourism development agency responsible for Lithuania's tourism marketing and promotion. The strategic goal of Lithuania Travel is to raise awareness of Lithuania as an attractive tourism destination and to encourage inbound and domestic travel. More information - <https://lithuania.travel/>



STEEN KOBBERØ-HANSEN

Steen has been a part of the rambling society since 2011, where he joined the Danish Ramblers Association. His interest in trails has made him chairman of the Danish Path Committee in the Danish Ramblers Association. Here he has worked with E-paths and quality hiking trails for many years. Later Steen joined European Ramblers Association (ERA) and is now member of the Board of ERA. He is responsible for the 12 E-paths in Europe. Steen has furthermore worked for years with the Leading Quality Trails – Best of Europe and he is responsible for implementing the Leading Quality Trails – Best of Europe, DAY WALK, which will be implemented in 2022 and 2023.



KENNETH JOELSSON

Kenneth has been exploring trails around Europe since the beginning of the 21st century. This fascination inspired him to get involved with the development and maintenance of the Skåneleden trail, the most southern long-distance trail for hikers in Sweden, working as the trail manager for the county of Skåne. He has also worked as a consultant organizing trail destinations in other parts of Sweden. Right now, Kenneth is involved in a national project for a framework for trails in Sweden. In addition, he writes guidebooks for outdoor enthusiasts and leads guided tours in the area around his home village Dalby.



ASNĀTE ZIEMELE

Asnāte is the president and founder (1993) of the Latvian country tourism association. Her experience includes leading and participating in over 40 rural tourism product development, branding and marketing projects with partners in the Baltics, Europe and Scandinavia. As the association leader, Asnate has introduced the national eco-labelling system for rural tourism (since 2000) and maintains the dialogue between tourism and nature protection sectors. She is the initiator of the Baltic Coastal Hiking Trail and the Baltic Forest Trail, and linking both with the European long distance hiking path network.



MERLE RALLMANN

Works as a journalist. The same time she studies at the Luua Forestry School in Estonia, majoring in hiking management. She has been engaged in long-distance hiking since 2013. During this time, she has hiked nearly 7,500 km of different hiking trails in Estonia, Latvia, Spain and Portugal. Last year, during winter, she passed the 1000 km section of the Forest Hiking Trail (E11) from Tallinn to Riga. During the hike, she gave ongoing feedback to the creators of the hiking trail and introduced FHT in various media channels. For this, she was awarded "Hiking Activist of the Year 2021" award by the Estonian Hiking Association. This year she plans to continue Forest trail from Riga to Lithuania.



AIJA NEILANDE

Aija is a person who has participated in all three projects as a project partner or a member of the steering committee and has taken part in the creation of both trails - The Baltic Coastal Hiking Route and The Forest Trail. During route inspections, she walked both trails in full length within the Kurzeme region (total most kilometers from all partners). Participated in route marking and involved local stakeholders. Coordinated routes with municipalities, cooperated with tourism information centers, actively involved entrepreneurs.



POVILAS RUDINSKIS

Geologist, student. Former leader/chairman of the Vilnius University Hiking Club and now actively involved in the club's activities, volunteering to lead hikes for people of all ages in eastern and southern Lithuania. He started hiking in 2018, is interested in the culture of hiking, and enjoys long-distance hikes that require walking for several days or more and overnight camping. He has hiked in all the Baltic countries. In his spare time, he creates routes, shares knowledge and tips with people, also, kayaks and looks for new paths for adventures.



MATAS TOLIUŠIS

Or a Bearded Guide is a history teacher who cannot imagine his free time without hiking, running, and other outdoor activities. He promotes a healthy lifestyle and physical activity every day through his personal example, sharing on his Instagram account. The teacher leads activities in the hiking club at the gymnasium of Lithuanian University of Health Sciences. Not once in a life time he beaten 100 km of overnight hikes, few marathons, and the main hiking stops are always in Lithuania. The life motto - physical activity and hiking is always a good idea!



AGNĖ VAITKUVIENĖ

Lithuanian Countryside Tourism Association leader since 2020. For more than 15 years has been researching local tourism, teaching tourism at Vilnius University and regularly participating in various local tourism promotion projects. Since 2004 runs a family organic farm and rural tourism business. In Lithuania, the Countryside Tourism Association is responsible for marking of the E-paths (European hiking routes), and represents Lithuania at the European Ramblers Association.



LINAS ŽABALIŪNAS - moderator of the Conference

Travel and tourism for Linas – needed as air! Actively involved in travel trade since year 2000. Manages incoming tour operator Baltic Holidays as well one of the founders of Kaunas CampInn and Natur Camp Birštonas campsites. Keen countryside guide knowing Baltics as the palm of his hand enjoying going off the beaten track to explore the new destinations! Chairman of the board of the Lithuanian countryside tourism association, an independent non-profit organization uniting over 400 members involved in rural tourism in Lithuania. Knowing most of them by name gives an opportunity to promote Baltics as the best destination to explore nature, local food or get to know culture experience local life.



REGISTRATION:

<https://forms.gle/k7s2iwbkn6ifBUvdA>

The conference registration is open until
18 May 2022.

More info: info@krda.lt

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Interreg
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Project LLI-448 “Development of Forest trail in Latvia and Lithuania and expanding the Baltic Coastal Hiking route in Lithuania” (Hiking project) is being implemented with the support of the European Union Interreg V-A Latvia-Lithuania Cross Border Cooperation Programme 2014–2020.

Total costs of the project are EUR 788,104.

Co-funding by the European Regional Development Fund is EUR 669,888.

LEAD PARTNER:

KAUNO REGIONO
KAUNAS REGIONAL



PLĖTROS AGENTŪRA
DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Public body Kaunas regional development agency

PROJECT PARTNERS:

LATVIA



Lauku Ceļotājs
www.celotajs.lv

Latvian Country Tourism
Association "Lauku Celotajs"



KURZEMES
PLĀNOŠANAS
REĢIONS

Kurzeme planning region



KULDĪGAS
NOVADS

Kuldiga municipality

LITHUANIA



LIETUVOS KAIMO
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Lithuanian Countryside
Tourism Association



Žemaitija National Park
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