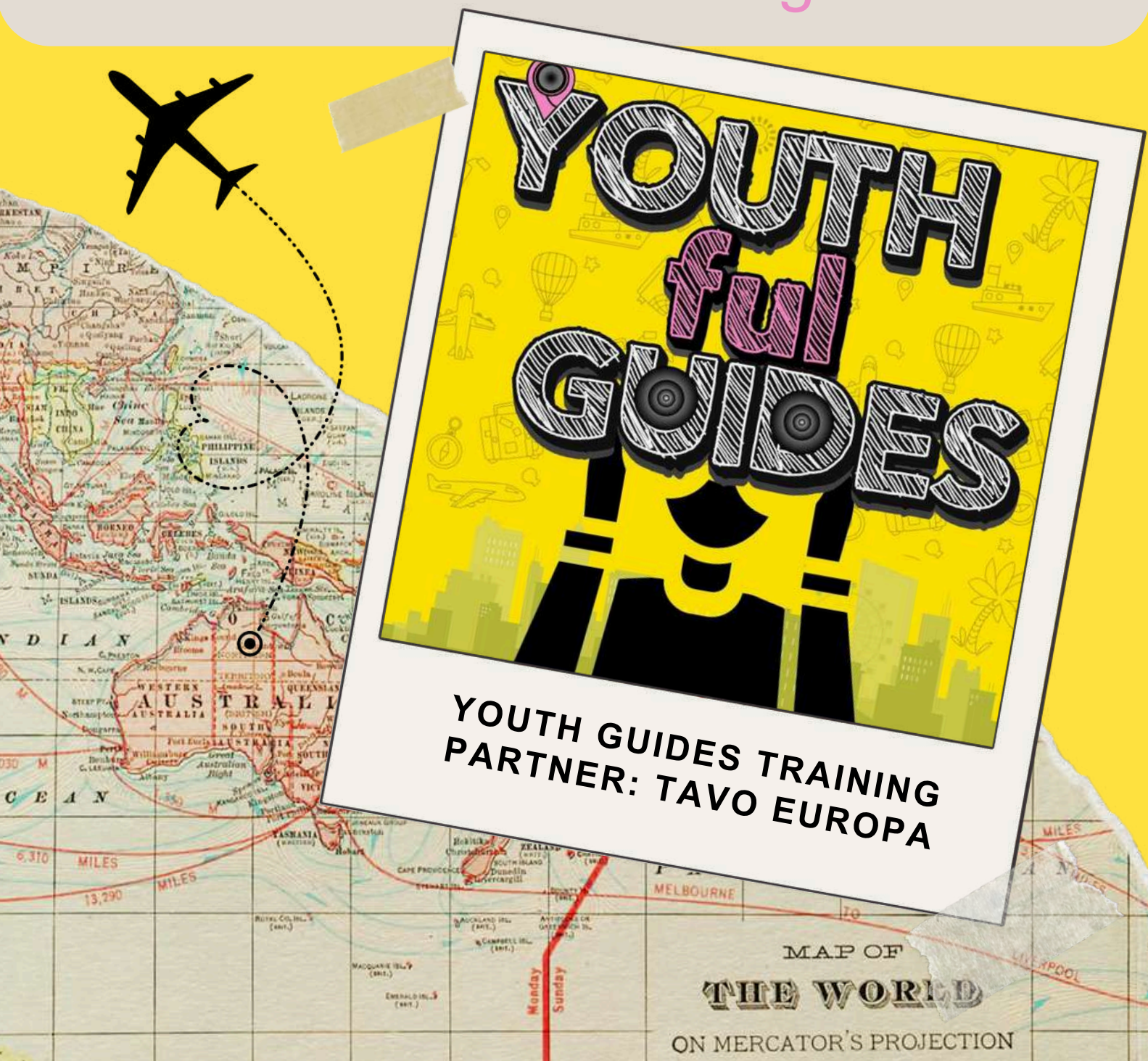


YOUTH-FUL-GUIDES

Training Material



ERASMUS+PROJECT: EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION OF TOURIST GUIDES (YOUTH-FUL-GUIDES) N° 2023-3-EL02-KA210-YOU-000178929

FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION. VIEWS AND OPINIONS EXPRESSED ARE HOWEVER THOSE OF THE AUTHOR(S) ONLY AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REFLECT THOSE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION OR THE EUROPEAN EDUCATION AND CULTURE EXECUTIVE AGENCY (EACEA). NEITHER THE EUROPEAN UNION NOR EACEA CAN BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR THEM.



Co-funded by
the European Union



CHAPTER 1: Introduction

- 1.1 What is Youth-ful-Guides Project?
- 1.2 Purpose of The Educational Program
- 1.3 Overview of the Tourism Industry of Lithuania

Interactive content

CHAPTER 2: The Role of a Tour Guide

- 2.1 Understanding The Role of the Tour Guide
- 2.2 Understanding the Tourists
- 2.3 Qualities and Skills of a Successful Tour Guide
- 2.4 Cultural Awareness and Local Knowledge
- 2.5 Professionalism and Ethics

Interactive Content

CHAPTER 3: Communication Skills

- 3.1 Greeting and Introducing Yourself
- 3.2 Public Speaking
- 3.3 Storytelling and Engaging Speaking
- 3.4 Adapting Communication to the Specific Group
- 3.5. Handling tough situations

Interactive Content

CHAPTER 4: History & Culture of the Region

- 4.1 A Brief History of Lithuania and Vilnius
- 4.2 Architectural Highlights of the Region
- 4.3 Local Traditions, Festivals, and Cuisine

Interactive Content

CHAPTER 5: Designing and Leading Tours

- 5.1 Tour Preparation & Creating Engaging Tour Itineraries
- 5.2 Timing and Pacing Your Tour
- 5.3 Using Visual Aids and Technology
- 5.4 Ensuring Safety and Comfort for Tour Participants
- 5.5 Adapting Tours for Different Seasons and Events

Interactive Content

CHAPTER 6: Customer Service

- 6.1 Understanding Visitor Expectations
- 6.2 Building Rapport with Tour Participants
- 6.3 Managing Diverse Groups and Ensuring Inclusivity
- 6.4 Handling Complaints and Providing Solutions
- 6.5 Creating Memorable And Positive visitor experiences

Interactive Content

CHAPTER 7: Environmental and Sustainable Tourism Practices

- 7.1 Promoting Sustainability
- 7.2 Educating Visitors on Local Environmental Issues
- 7.3 Responsible tour practices for a guide
- 7.4 Collaborating with local communities

Interactive Content

CHAPTER 8: Legal and Safety Responsibilities

- 8.1 Understanding Tourism Laws and Regulations
- 8.2 Health and Safety Protocols for Tour Guides
- 8.3 Managing risks on tours
- 8.4 Legal responsibilities and ethical considerations

Interactive Content

CHAPTER 9: Career as a Tour Guide

- 9.1 Moving from training to guiding
- 9.2 Ongoing learning and development
- 9.3 The YouthFulGuides APP

CHAPTER 10: Guided Tour in Vilnius

Two day guided tour in Lithuania

CHAPTER 11: Evaluation & Certification

CHAPTER 12: Closing Remarks

References

FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION. VIEWS AND OPINIONS EXPRESSED ARE HOWEVER THOSE OF THE AUTHOR(S) ONLY AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REFLECT THOSE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION OR THE EUROPEAN EDUCATION AND CULTURE EXECUTIVE AGENCY (EACEA). NEITHER THE EUROPEAN UNION NOR EACEA CAN BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR THEM.

CHAPTER 1: Introduction



1.1. What is YOUTH-ful-GUIDES Project ?

The **YOUTH-ful-GUIDES Project**, funded by the EU under the Erasmus+ Programme, aims to empower young people by equipping them with the skills and knowledge necessary to become proficient tourist guides, with a focus on local heritage, cultural preservation, and sustainable tourism.

Objectives:

The core objectives of the project are:

- Empower Youth: Equip young participants with the necessary skills in tourism, digital tools, and sustainability to help them become community leaders and professional guides.
- Promote Sustainable Tourism: Foster eco-friendly tourism practices that highlight environmental conservation alongside cultural preservation.
- Digital Readiness: Address the digital transformation by training participants to use and develop digital tools, including the YOUTH-ful-GUIDES app, to create and promote eco-friendly tour itineraries.
- Active Citizenship: Encourage youth to engage with their local communities, enhancing cultural appreciation and promoting active citizenship.

Activities:

The project comprises various activities that contribute to the holistic development of youth as professional guides:

- Creation of Youth Guide Groups: Selection and training of youth in each participating country.
- Developing Training Material: Crafting educational programs that cover cultural heritage, sustainable tourism, and communication skills.
- Guided Tours: Youth-led guided tours in Greece, Spain, and Lithuania to demonstrate the skills learned and foster collaboration with local and international stakeholders.
- YOUTH-ful-GUIDES App: Development of a digital platform for young guides to craft and share eco-friendly tour itineraries and interact with travellers.
- Dissemination: Regular newsletters, events, and digital outreach to promote the project's progress and outcomes.



Partners:

The project is a collaboration between several European partners:

- FM-EPICHEIREIN (Greece): The lead partner, specializing in project management and training.
- Inercia Digital (Spain): Focuses on digital skills and training for young guides.
- Tavo Europa (Lithuania): Engages youth in social entrepreneurship, focusing on marginalized groups and inclusivity.

The primary target groups include:

- Youth: Aged 16–30, interested in cultural heritage, tourism, and sustainability. This group benefits from skills development, digital literacy, and active citizenship training.
- Local Communities: Local businesses, cultural institutions, and authorities who will collaborate with young guides and benefit from increased tourism and sustainable practices.
- Tourists: Both domestic and international visitors, including eco-tourists and educational groups, who will experience guided tours with a focus on cultural and environmental awareness.

Impact and Follow-up:

The project is expected to have long-lasting impacts on both the participants and the communities involved:

- For Youth: Participants will gain professional experience, improve employability, and contribute to their local economies through tourism.
- For Local Communities: The initiative promotes local culture and sustainable tourism practices, fostering community pride and economic growth.
- For the Tourism Sector: The digital tools created, such as the YOUTH-ful-GUIDES app, will offer innovative ways to engage with eco-conscious travellers.

Follow-up activities include the continued use of the YOUTH-ful-GUIDES app, future collaborations between project partners, and ongoing support for new groups of young guides in the partner countries.

Conclusion:

The YOUTH-ful-GUIDES project is an initiative that brings together cultural preservation, sustainable tourism, and digital innovation. By empowering young people to become tour guides and community leaders, it fosters active citizenship and strengthens the local tourism economy, all while promoting eco-friendly practices. This project serves as a model for future youth-centered initiatives in tourism and cultural engagement.

1.2. Purpose of educational program

The **YOUTH-ful-GUIDES Project** delivers educative informative material to young participants which would prepare them to obtain skills to become a professional guide. This program has mixed cultural knowledge with environmental awareness, providing them with deep knowledge about the culture and sustainable tourism practices in Vilnius city and in the digital tools in learning to be a guide. The project ensures the development of guiding abilities in participants while they practice and learn more about what tourism does to local ecosystems and communities involved.

A core component of the education program is a study in history and culture about Lithuanian capital Vilnius, which will give participants an opportunity to relate with their heritage. Using a participatory mode of learning, the training program enhances appreciation for the cultural and historical values of Vilnius so that participants can communicate useful information to visitors in a relevant and interesting manner. Additionally, this training program emphasizes the need for sustainability, guides leading tours in such a manner to balance cultural appreciation with environmental conservation.

Therefore, the program was digital literacy for the participants because they learned skills on how to use such contemporary tools as YOUTH-ful-GUIDES App in creating and disseminating ecotourism tour plans in contact with a wider society.



1.3. Overview of the Tourism Industry of Lithuania

History

Tourism has been a part of Lithuanian culture for centuries, however, it differs compared to other European countries. To begin the discussion about Lithuania's tourism we can not skip the historical background.

Lithuania's history as a country **begins in early 13th century**, when grand duke Mindaugas (who later on became the one and only king of Lithuania in 1253 July 6th), one of the dukes at the time, unites various lands, unions and principalities to one big principality called **Grand Duchy of Lithuania**. It's interesting to note that Lithuania became a popular place for war tourism in the 14th century, attracting Westerners with the chance to demonstrate their knighthood, plunder and add to their exotic collections in their manors. The items in demand the most for manor collections were Africans, Arabs and pagan Lithuanians.



Besides the rocky start of Lithuanian tourism in many cases associated with war, with the official **adoption of Christianity in 1387**, Lithuania chose to follow the Western path of development: the following period saw the spread of the written language, schools were opened, Lithuanian students travelled to study to European universities. In 1410, when Poland in Lithuania joined their forces to fight order of Teutonic Knights, and defeated them, Duchy of Lithuania reached the peak of its power. In 1569 after the close relations with Kingdom of Poland, both countries joined the union and became **The Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth** (also called Lublin union), with its territory stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea and from Poland to Smolensk, thus emerging as an important political power in Eastern and Central Europe. Besides that, in 1579 Vilnius University was established. Its foundation was the most significant event in the cultural life of the 16th century Lithuanian Grand Duchy bearing high political and cultural importance. Vilnius University was the first higher education school not only in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, but in the whole Eastern Europe, attracting young minds from the region to study and work here. Most of the tourism these times were based on traveling to study, work or look for better opportunities within the country.

However, all the best things are not made to last, in **1795 the territory of the union was partitioned among the Russian Empire, the Kingdom of Prussia, and the Habsburg Empire of Austria**, leaving all Lithuania in Russian Empire. Unfortunately, the “rusification” of the country started - a forced integration of Russian culture. However, the free spirited lithuanians did not budge, even after banning the press in Lithuanian language, Lithuanians smuggled books from Kingdom of Prussia and had secret schools teaching the language to keep it alive.

In 1918 after the First World War, Lithuania regained independence, however up until 1923 the district of Klaipėda (near the baltic sea) belonged to Germany. During this time of independence up until 1940's Lithuania was building their tourism sector: **The Lithuanian Automobile Club started to develop organised tourism in Lithuania**. However, the conclusions clearly state that “the history of tourism development in Lithuania must begin with the establishment of the first national tourist organisations. Therefore, the date of the founding meeting of **the first Lithuanian tourist organisation - the Lithuanian Tourism Union - on 3 May 1929** should be considered as the beginning of organised tourism in Lithuania. Unfortunately quite new sector of monitored tourism faded when Lithuania was occupied once again in 1940's by Soviet Union or to put it simply - Russians, until in 1941 Lithuania was occupied by Nazi Germans and in 1944 once again by Soviet Union for the second time. Due to the long occupation of the country by the Soviet Union, the country was a part of touristic attractions in between the member countries of the union, however, not so much for the western world. Historically, Lithuania was known for medical and recreational tourism, attracting visitors from Russia and Belarus during the Soviet era.



After **independence in 1991**, the transition into reshaping the tourism sector was such unending challenges. The Eastern markets lost visitors and catered to a stiff, outdated infrastructure that could be even more easily accessible and visited in terms of the actual Western countries. Mid-1990s have witnessed the emergence of Lithuania as a new destination within Europe turned attractive to Western markets, that is Germany, and one of the neighbours Poland.

Since then, marketing strategies for tourism have diversified by targeting Central and Eastern Europe, as well as Scandinavian countries. As a consequence, international tourism to Lithuania has doubled over the years, particularly after the country became a **member of the EU in 2004**. Cumulatively, these factors will benefit a strategic geographical location; abundant cultural and natural heritage; and affordability of services. The role of tourism is critical in economic development, regional cooperation, and cultural preservation.

Lithuania is part of the wider Baltic tourism market along with Latvia and Estonia offering the likes of coastal resorts, nature parks, and historical sites. With all that, the inland capital city of Vilnius has faced initial challenges of accessibility but has since cascaded into a greater regional tourism network.

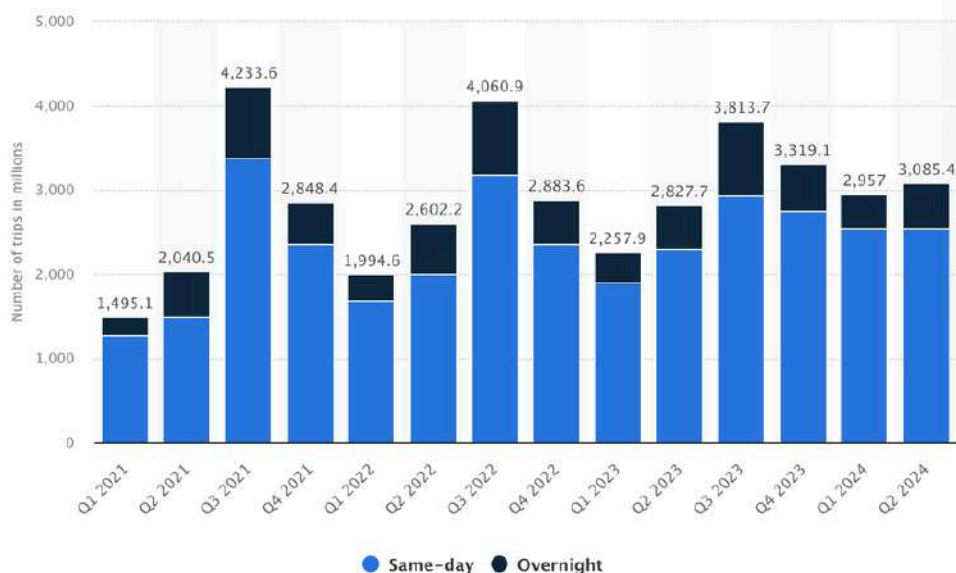
Economic significance

The Ministry of the Economy and Innovation is responsible for formulating national policy on tourism, resort and resort area development, it also implements the functions of international cooperation in the field of tourism. The main objectives are as follows: to identify tourism development priorities, to promote the development of competitive tourism products, to reduce seasonality in tourism, and to increase the number of tourists visiting our country.

Lithuania Travel is a national tourism development agency responsible for Lithuania's tourism marketing and promotion, acting **under the Ministry of the Economy and Innovation**. The strategic goal of Lithuania Travel is to raise awareness of Lithuania as an attractive tourism destination and to encourage inbound and domestic travel, and the main ambitions are enhancing international competitiveness of Lithuanian tourism sector and creating added value for the national economy.

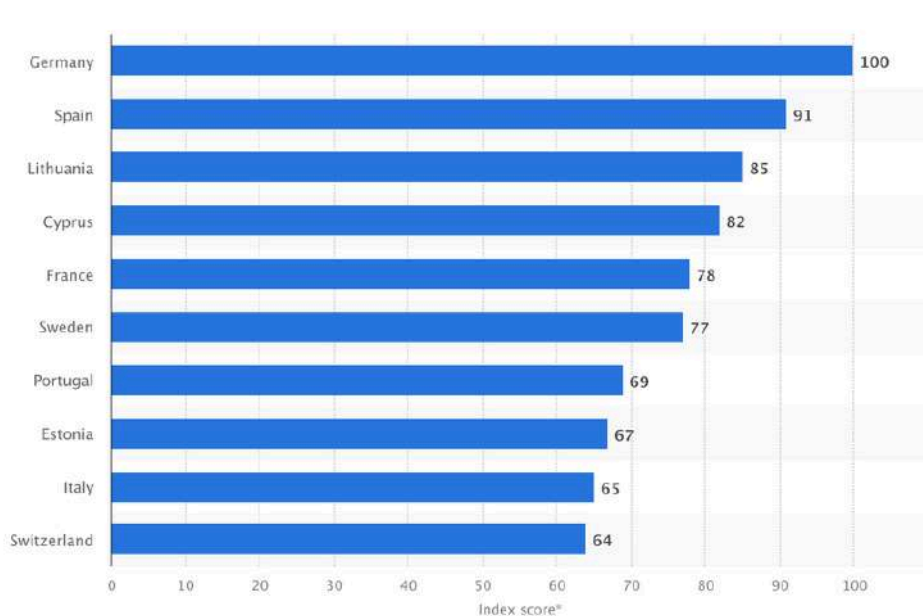
Tourism is a key contributor to Lithuania's economy, accounting for 5.3% of GDP and supporting 47,000 jobs, with international visitors generating EUR 1.3 billion in 2016. The country attracts tourists from neighbouring nations for shopping and wellness, while visitors from further afield come for its cultural and historical sites, with Vilnius being a major destination due to its affordability.

Domestic tourism has grown significantly, peaking in 2022, with Lithuanians making 12.8 million trips in 2023, mostly same-day visits. Domestic tourism plays a crucial role in the Lithuanian economy, supporting local businesses, creating jobs, and preserving cultural and natural heritage sites. The trend of exploring locally has grown since the COVID-19 pandemic.



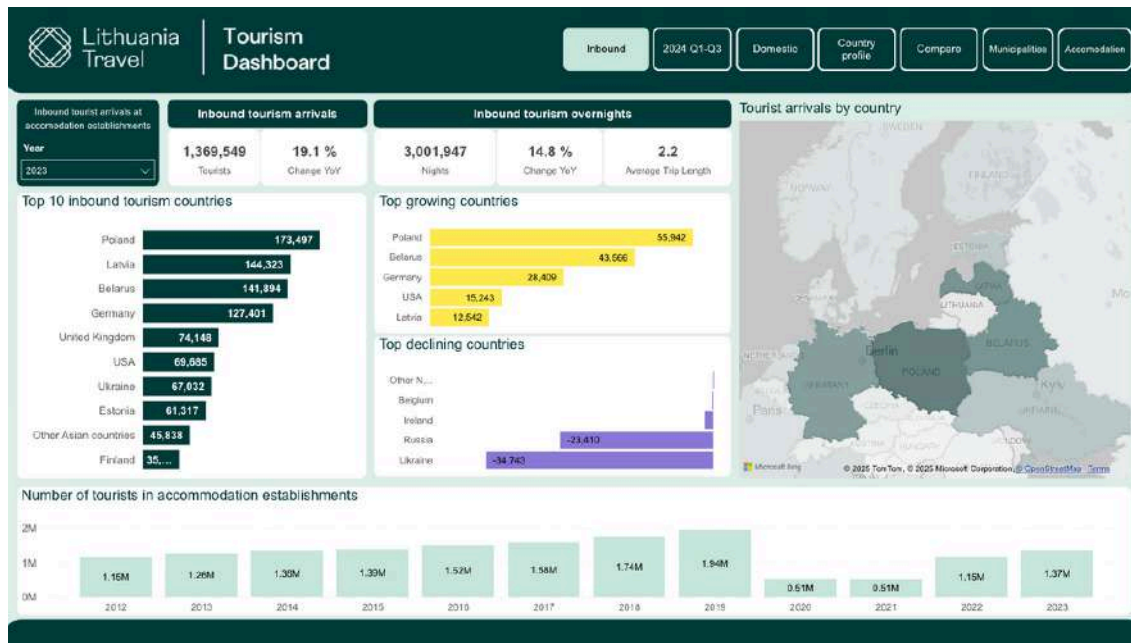
Number of domestic tourist trips in Lithuania from 1st quarter 2021 to 2nd quarter 2024, by type (in millions) by Statista Research Center.

Lithuania, in 2022 was ranked as the third-best region for road trips after Germany and Spain. In 2023, Lithuania welcomed over 1.1 million international tourists, and Vilnius was ranked the cheapest European travel destination in 2024, further boosting its appeal. Vilnius is a popular destination mostly among the neighbour countries, recording the most tourist arrivals from Belarus and Poland. In total, domestic and international travellers spent around 2.2 million nights in the capital's accommodation establishments in 2023.



Best countries for road trips in Europe in 2022 by Statista Research Center. 6 evaluated criteria (index score): weather, safety and infrastructure, pricing, traffic and sustainability, car hire, and nature and landmarks.

Lithuania, known for its cultural heritage, nature tourism, and historical sites, is a compelling destination for travellers, in part due to its affordability. From Vilnius to the Curonian Spit, the country's regions are gaining popularity among international tourists while still receiving high attention from the locals.



Travel Lithuania statistics, retrieved in 2025/02/17

It's evident that Lithuania is the most popular with the neighbouring countries coming for a visit, as well as Germany and United Kingdom adding to the TOP 5 countries of which tourists Lithuania has welcomed in 2023. According to booked accommodation in various establishments, Lithuania welcomed approximately 1,37 million of people from abroad. By Travel Lithuania statistics, overall amount of tourists has grown by 6% compared to data from 2023.

Tourism trends in Lithuania

The year 2024 saw Lithuanian tourism achieve international recognition through two significant awards. Lithuania achieved the status of the world's second-best travel destination according to Lonely Planet which also named it as Europe's top travel destination for 2025. The renowned Michelin Guide honoured Lithuanian cuisine by awarding four establishments with stars while recognising one restaurant with a Green Michelin Star and granting the Bib Gourmand distinction to four additional eateries.





The **Lonely Planet** evaluation system takes into account multiple factors which include tourism infrastructure quality, service standards, safety measures as well as destination uniqueness and sustainable practices. The combination of Lithuania's safety record and its affordable, environmentally friendly travel options with both lively urban scenes and untouched natural landscapes earned it a top spot in the ranking. A global network of travel experts together with journalists and local guides shapes Lonely Planet's annual recommendations. The final list goes through a strict evaluation process which guarantees a selection of destinations that provides diversity and inspiration to travellers.

The acknowledgment puts Lithuania ahead in the movement of modern travel preferences. Lithuania emerges as an excellent destination for global travelers who value sustainability and authentic cultural depth. The nation features vibrant city centers alongside peaceful natural escapes that provide visitors with a wide range of enriching opportunities.

"This year visitors can expect extraordinary experiences as they explore the newly opened Science Island in Kaunas and the AI-led tours at Raudondvaris Manor while celebrating M.K. Čiurlionis Year and discovering the Aviation Discovery Center" - Olga Gončarova, head of Lithuania Travel explains how technological advancements serve to elevate Lithuanian heritage instead of eclipsing it (*From manors and restaurants to sound journeys: What to visit and experience in Lithuania in 2025. www.lithuaniatravel.com, retrieved on February 6, 2025*).

1. Historic tourism in Vilnius region

Vilnius began to thrive beginning 1323 when Grand Duke Gediminas invited foreign artisans and traders to reside in the city by promising to allow free trade; exempt tax, and peaceful living regardless of ethnicity and religion. By the late 14th century, Lithuania was bordered by the Baltic to the North and the Black Sea to the south, while Vilnius was a bustling hub, celebrated for its architecture, trade, education, and multiculturalism.

As the political heart of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania from the 13th century to the late 18th century, Vilnius played a significant role in shaping the cultural and architectural landscape of Eastern Europe. Its historic center showcases a remarkable blend of Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, and Classical architecture, all beautifully preserved through the centuries. Vilnius is also home for one of the most legendary love stories in Baltic history.

At its peak in the 15th century, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was the largest country in Europe, and its capital, Vilnius, reflected this grandeur and harmony. The city's historic center flourished, leaving a lasting architectural legacy, particularly during the peaceful era of the late 17th and 18th centuries.

Vilnius is one of the great examples of a European city that grew with influences from multiple cultures, religions, and languages—and has been well preserved. In turn, it also influenced the cultural and architectural development of much of Eastern Europe. For those looking to explore historic side of Vilnius, it's full of culture, not only beautiful and different style buildings, but culture as well - traces of Jewish, Polish, Belarusian traditions, museums and other institutions can be found too.



Vilnius city, retrieved from Canva

Vilnius and the whole capital region offers a rich blend of many sites to visit - starting from museums, historic castles, streets, manors, and squares. Amongst the most popular: Pilies Street, Vilnius street, Trakų Vokė manor, The Bastion of Vilnius City Hall, Užupis district, Gediminas tower, Glass quarter, Vilnius University, Presidential palace, Town hall, Seimas palace, Gediminas avenue, Love arch, Jonas Mekas Draught Alley, Trakai castle, Verkiai manor, Medininkai castle, Užutrakis, National Martynas Mažvydas Library, The Old Crafts Workshop and many others.

The capital city of Lithuania Vilnius offers a rich historical background on every corner, highlighting the stories of the region, not forgetting to add the history based stories, to keep the visitors engaged. One of the most significant and romantic historical events that took place in the early stage of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth—is the royal love story between the King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania, Žygimantas Augustas, and Barbora Radvilaite, Grand Duchess of Lithuania in 16th century. Upon meeting Žygimantas Augustas they fell in love, and the couple dated in secret for two years. According to one legend, the King used to sneak from his royal palace to visit Barbora in her bedroom in the adjacent Radvila Palace, via a secret corridor he had built. Research has shown that such an underground corridor could have actually existed.

In 1547 they wed, but Barbora was only officially crowned as Queen of Poland in Wawel Cathedral in 1550. However, her position of the queen only lasted five months, and she died amid speculation that she was poisoned. According to her request, her body was transported back to Vilnius from their residency in Krakow, and it is said that the King was so grief stricken that he followed on foot for a good portion of the journey. It is also claimed that he was so distressed by the loss of his wife that he wore black almost every day for the rest of his life.

Their love story is an inspiration for many painting, films, theater plays, cafes and many more places and cultural acts.



Augustas and Barbora love story cafe (image from their Facebook page); Žygimanto Augusto and Barbora Radvilaikė legend in musical, Andželika Cholina Dance Theatre

The Old Town of Vilnius follows the medieval layout and it's easily walkable, letting you enjoy narrow little streets. Up on a hill near the river, you can find Gediminas tower- the first castle built here in the beginning of 15th century, when Grand Duke of Lithuania, dreamed of the iron wolf howling on a hill. After telling this story to his advisors, it was taken quite prophetically, and the castle with the surrounding buildings was built. On the ground below are royal palace buildings and the cathedral where Lithuania's beloved Grand Duchess Barbora Radvilaite was buried.

Nowadays, Vilnius have a more alternative side too, the self-proclaimed 'Republic' of Užupis - the city's Bohemian and artistic district. In the warmer months, festivals, music, art and theatre fill the streets, theatres and galleries of Vilnius.

2. Active recreation

Due to the Lithuanian geographical position it's noted that many visitors choose to spend their time in nature actively engaging in various activities.

Hot air balloons above Vilnius Old Town

If you have ever searched through photos of Lithuania, then one thing you'll always notice is the sight of hot air balloons floating in the sky. All year round the spectacle of these colourful balloons soaring high in the sky rewarding passengers with spectacular views over sun-drenched towns, lakes set within wooded nature, looping rivers, hidden castles and rooftops of Old Towns; but they really come into their own during the summer.

This bird's eye view of Lithuania is absolutely incredible. As most of the flights launch at sunrise or sunset, hot air balloons are the perfect way to start or end your day.

Vilnius is one of the few European capitals where hot air balloons can soar directly over its historic center. Each season paints a different portrait of the city—winter blankets the rooftops in snow, summer brings lush greenery, and autumn transforms the landscape into a vibrant mosaic of colours. No matter the time of year, Vilnius from above is a sight to remember.



Vilnius city, retrieved from Canva

Usually air balloon pilots are very good storytellers, sharing some local insights, stories and experiences of the region. During the flight, you can hear interesting tales and learn about all the objects you can see better than from on the ground. Lovers of adventure and thrills can experience the mind-bending height as you're lifted in the air balloon as high as seven kilometres.

Overall, hot air balloon ride over the capital city of Lithuania is unique adventure. Although, this activity is not limited only to the capital - you can choose a ride over Kaunas, Birštonas, Trakai or forests of Dzūkija region to compare and see the places from birds view to explore sun-kissed cities, beautiful lakes cradled by forests, meandering rivers or fog-shrouded castles and red Old Town roofs.

Cycling in Lithuania

As noticed, in recent years one of the most convenient way to get around is by cycling. In various cities we can find more and more cycling trails, streets and routes to explore Lithuania by greener transport option. Knowing that Lithuania is very flat, the cycling option is suitable for beginners, families and also the ones who are looking to improve their cycling by choosing longer routes. Also, we can not forget beautiful and green nature among the cycle paths: plenty of national and regional parks, green areas, lakes, parks and also - short distance and compactness making the transporting in between sites easy and quick.



The most significant route in Vilnius is around 19 kilometers, often referred as "Vilnius: Old and Modern", connecting the old town with new town and letting to visit the most important cultural sites.

Starting in the bohemian part of town, near The Talking Statue of the Angel of Užupis, the path leads you to Užupis Constitution wall, Cathedral square, down to Gediminas Avenue to explore yet another green neighbourhood, called Žvėrynas, crossing over the river to Vingis park, Tauro kalnas Hill, Museum of Occupations and Struggles for Freedom, Vilnius University, Presidential palace and many more places. The Bicycle path 90%, while the street is only around 10% of the path, so many cyclists feel safe and enjoy the views from paths while cycling.

The more detailed map can be found [here](#), also it's important to note that the map includes a few other suggestions for a stop, a few museums and traditional or best rated cafes to visit.

3. UNESCO



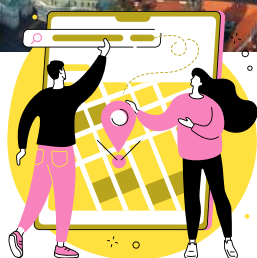
Vilnius Old Town was inscribed into the UNESCO World Heritage List back in December 1994 in compliance with the second and fourth criteria of uniqueness established for the properties of the World Heritage List:

- Between 13th and 18th centuries, Vilnius, as the capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, played an important role in the development of architecture and arts in the whole region (Lithuania, the present Belarus, Ukraine and Poland);
- Vilnius is the most easterly city of the Central Europe, subject to a strong influence of both Eastern and Western European cultures. The Old Town offers a typical example of medieval street patterns with valuable monuments of Gothic, Renaissance, Classical and Baroque architecture.

With its surviving essential features of urbanistic development, the Old Town is the most valuable part of the historic, urbanistic and architectural heritage of Vilnius.



Vilnius city, retrieved from Canva





The most important historic and cultural entity in the State of Lithuania.

Vilnius Historic Centre includes:

- Vilnius Castles State Cultural Reserve – the historic heart of the Lithuanian capital, the centre of the history and spiritual culture of the State;
- Central part of Vilnius Old Town within the boundaries of the former defensive wall;
- Historic suburbs of Vilnius that formed before the end of the 18th century, in the period of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

4. Vilnius European Green Capital 2025



Vilnius is often described as a city "where nature meets urban life." Nearly half of the city is covered in green spaces—parks, forests, and riverbanks—offering residents and visitors a refreshing connection to nature.

In 2025, Vilnius proudly hold the title of European Green Capital 2025, a prestigious recognition awarded by the European Commission to cities leading the way in sustainability, environmental innovation, and quality of life. This milestone highlights Vilnius' dedication to creating a greener, healthier, and more inclusive urban environment while maintaining its unique blend of history, culture, and modernism. Vilnius has set ambitious climate goals to become a carbon-neutral city by 2050.

The city is implementing strategies to reduce air pollution, enhance biodiversity, and support local sustainability projects. From tree-planting initiatives to sustainable food programs, Vilnius is taking proactive steps toward a cleaner and greener future.

5. Tech Startups



For the ones who are ambitious and would like to work on an active start up business section, Vilnius offers to visit tech startup community. Vilnius offers Over 890 Startups that started or were scale-up and based in Vilnius.

Also, Lithuania offers even a Startup Visa, for the ones who are interested in developing their business here. Startup Visa Lithuania provides a streamlined entry process to the Lithuanian startup ecosystem for innovative non-EU entrepreneurs to build, grow and compete in our booming international community.

Start up ecosystem highlights:

Startup Lithuania contributes to the national startup ecosystem by facilitating collaboration between startups, venture capitals fund, accelerators, startup-friendly enterprises and the government.

- Vilnius TechFusion Startup Awards is one of the most important events for the local startups. The awards honour startups that bring the highest value, while also expressing gratitude to them for championing Vilnius and contributing to Lithuania's economic growth.

Interactive content



ACTIVITY 1: Reflecting on your goals - why do you want to become a guide?

Why?

Take some time to deeply think what's your purpose and why have you joined the project? Why are you interested in becoming touristic guide? What skills of yours are the strongest? What could be improved in the future? What was your experience while taking different tours? What did you enjoy?

Time to share!



After some consideration on your experience with tours and personal wish to join, share something with the group - maybe your motivation to becoming a guide, the things you are most excited to work on, your suggestions, experiences and even questions or fears you have that is related to the project, profession or topics. Maybe you already have some good experiences you can share with the group.

Discuss and agree



You are individuals joining on a course to become tour guides, each bringing unique motivations, expectations, and perspectives. It's important to explore the key reasons behind your journey, establish group guidelines, and create a structured training routine. Take the time to connect with others, have conversations and discussions in small groups to understand the motivations, and embrace the shared experience.

Chapter 2 the role of the tour guide

2.1. Understanding the role of a tour guide



According to Cambridge Essential Dictionary, tour guide is someone whose job is to show visitors a place or area. Tour guides are taking care of variety of tasks, ranging from caring for a group of people through to organizational management, resolving issues and addressing concerns, promoting informed and sustainable tourism and various practices, and sometimes even ensuring health and safety of the group. They also need to be able to communicate well, inform, explain and teach people about the historical, geographical, geological, political backgrounds of the area or place visited in engaging manner.

To fully ensure a magnificent experience of a tourist, guides specialise in different areas and cater to specific types of tours. Here are some common types of tour guides and a brief description of what they do:

- City tour guides are experts at giving tours inside a specific city or metropolitan area. They know plenty about the city's history, architecture, landmarks, and culture. Highlighting a destination's cultural features is the main goal of cultural tour guides. They offer comprehensive information on regional customs, festivals, and artistic expressions.
- Ecotourism guides are in charge of creating and organising culturally and environmentally conscious itineraries.
- Adventure tour guides lead trips that emphasise adventure sports and outdoor activities. They are knowledgeable and skilled in the particular activities being given, and they guarantee participants' safety while offering direction and training. Adventure guides can lead travellers to difficult and isolated areas while handling logistics and delivering an exhilarating experience.
- Historical tour guides are masters at delivering detailed descriptions of a place's past. They know a lot about particular historical eras, occasions, and noteworthy sites. These tour guides frequently work at monuments, historical sites, and archaeological locations, providing visitors with historical context and anecdotes that vividly depict the past.
- Specialised tour guides serve specific tour types or niche interests. Examples include wine tour guides who offer knowledge about vineyards and wine tasting, food tour guides who concentrate on culinary experiences, and art tour guides who lead tours of museums and art galleries while providing commentary on the artworks.



However, there is non standardised agenda, that teaching and training guides could follow, some countries, though, have established specific qualification frameworks and offer nationally accredited tour guiding training courses.

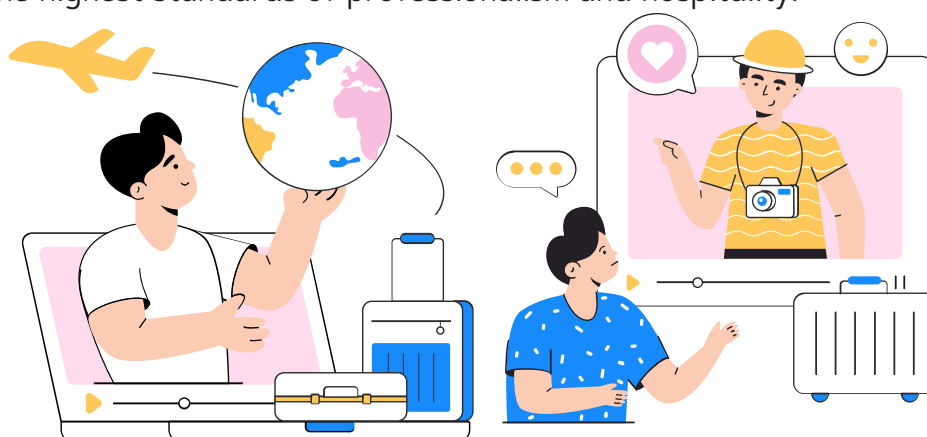
The following qualities have a strong influence on the success of a tour guide: awareness, responsibility, activity, honesty, integrity, morality, will, intelligence, intellectualism, demanding, creativity, curiosity, sensitivity, intuition, and tidiness. In today's knowledge-based society, the profession of tour guide requires continuous development, the ability to seek and assimilate information, and the ability to improve one's skills.

The profession of guide is characterised by the fact that its authority is built up over a long period of time and must be reaffirmed on each excursion. A guide is a person of high culture, professional ethics and competence. The specifics of a guide's work are therefore very varied. The qualities and professional competences required of a guide and the picture of a guide presented here confirm that the work of a guide is a complex process that requires continuous development in various fields of activity.

Tour guides must, however, make sure that the information they offer is accurate, interesting, and customised to the needs of their audience in addition to being assertive and having in-depth knowledge of the subject matter. They must be skilled storytellers who can create deep bonds between tourists and the locations they visit. For them to control group dynamics, handle unforeseen circumstances, and ensure that everyone has a good time, guides also need to be strong communicators.

Tour guides also play a crucial role in promoting responsible tourism by educating visitors about cultural sensitivity, environmental sustainability, and local traditions. They must be adaptable, able to navigate diverse cultural contexts, and respond to the varying expectations of different groups.

Ultimately, a successful tour guide is not just an information provider but an ambassador of the destination—someone who enhances travelers' experiences while upholding the highest standards of professionalism and hospitality.



2.1. Understanding the tourists



As Lithuania continues to grow as a travel destination, its tourism sector is becoming increasingly diverse. Visitors come not only to explore the country's historical landmarks and natural beauty but also experience its cultural and culinary scene. This diversity means that no two tour groups are alike, requiring guides to be highly adaptable in their approach and practice.

Catering to adventure seekers, history enthusiasts, or those looking for a refreshing retreat, understanding the varied expectations of tourists is key to delivering a memorable experience.

Taking into consideration the diverse backgrounds, interests, and expectations of tourists it is important for tour guides to provide memorable and unforgettable experiences.

Tourist behavior is influenced by multiple factors that shape decision-making, preferences, and overall experiences, but it can be divided into a few, according to research done by Yassine Sbair and Soumaya El Hassouni:

- **Decision-Making:** tourists' choices range from planned activities, to emotional and situational behavior. Some might have planned to join the tour, while others just joined it because it was available and "why not to join" factor.
- **Personal Value:** tourist's own values shape their preferences, with sustainability-conscious travellers favor eco-tourism, active and "in nature" experiences, aligning with personal values.
- **Motivation:** person's own internal wishes and pull factors (like destination attractions) drive touristic decisions. Understanding this dynamic helps guides to provide service that would allow for a person to see the attraction and fulfil internal motivation to visit and get to know it.
- **Perception:** tourists process sensory details through personal and social relations, yet research often overlooks emotional perception. A balanced approach to forming a tour can vastly make it more engaging.
- **Personality:** tourists value experiences aligning with their personalities, for example, thrill-seekers are choosing adventurous activities and most likely are more engaged with the person who is interested in active leisure. The same active, thrill seeking guide would tailor to them best, sharing same interests.
- **Expectations:** anticipations are shaped by past experiences, demographics, and external influences.
- **Past satisfaction:** one of the key factors of repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth can also influence people to attend the tour, driven by service quality in the past, value, and novelty.

- **Trust:** this factor is a starting point in securing tourist's attention. Strong connection to the tour, interest and credibility by the provided experience of guided tour can lead to repeat visits and recommendations.
- **Memorability:** memorable tourism experiences, shaped by unique emotions and positive feelings during the tours, significantly impact attitudes and revisitation.



A tour never a one-size-fits-all experience. Even with recommendations, sincere interest in the tour, previous knowledge, a tour can is not assured to be a positive experience for each and everyone. Every person coming to tour have different intentions, expectations, and past experiences, making adaptability a must. Through open dialogue, finding out the group's interests, expectations boosts engagement during the tour and overall satisfaction. While several guests might ask for more comprehensive historical backgrounds, others may go for interactive or leisurely activities. Overloading participants with extensive amounts of information may overwhelm them, so combining the content and interactive elements, sensory engagement, and reflection time will guarantee more satisfaction and success.

As a tourist, the experience of being guided by someone who is genuinely passionate about the location, topic, and the tour itself can make all the difference. A guide's enthusiasm and personal connection to the subject bring the tour to life, making it more engaging and interesting experience.

When a guide expresses a true interest in the place and its history, it creates an authentic space and atmosphere that easily resonates with tourists. Their excitement is contagious, letting people to be curios and immerse themselves in the experience.

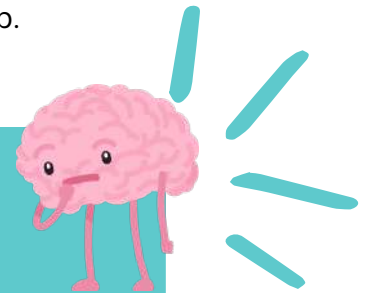
Visitors can easily sense when a guide is simply going through the tour like it's a routine versus when they are truly invested and interested in sharing their knowledge with the group. The attentive guide helps to build trust, ensuring that tourists feel their time and money are well-spent. Ultimately, a passionate and engaged guide can make a simple tour into a spark and highlight of discovery, leaving tourists with lasting, positive memories.

However, besides trying to understand and tailor the tour to the group, it's important to understand, that the tour itself is a service. A tour guide should have an understanding of the typical tourist profile for a particular location and the factors that attract visitors to that area, but people can have different intentions, questions and overall connection to the place, a tour guide should have a clear set of expectations on what they want for people to take from the tour, whether it's a few intriguing facts, personal insights of a tour guide, or a deeper emotional connection to the location. This clarity of purpose ensures the tour remains engaging, relevant, and impactful for everyone involved.

Without the general tips on planning a tour for it to be engaging, a guide should also foreseen that some objects might be closed, if the tour is in the city or outside - sometimes it might be very cold or rainy, sometimes making a tour not as enjoyable or a bit difficult to complete. In such cases, guide should have a strategy on how to adapt a tour and still make it fun, interesting and attainable for the group.

When engaging with tourists, guide should keep in mind:

- **Interest in the topic and tour of the group**
- **Knowledge of the group**
- **Adding personal touch to the history of the site**
- **Keep the conversation going - be open for questions, personal opinions and curiosity**
- **Think of how to adapt a tour to various settings - weather, group, available sites to visit**
- **Be open for feedback**
- **Work on suggestions - improve your tour.**





2.3 Qualities and Skills of a Successful Tour Guide

A tour guide for tourists often serve as both: a storyteller and a representative of the destination. To provide an fun, informative and memorable tour, a guide must possess a combination of essential qualities and practical skills.

- **Communication and interpersonal skills.**

A successful guide is an excellent communicator, possessing qualities to analyse and summarise information, ability to present it in an engaging, fun and informative way. Strong interpersonal skills help build rapport with diverse groups, ensuring that all participants feel included. Active listening is equally important, allowing guides to respond to questions, and adapt their approach accordingly.

- **Passion for the Subject and knowledge.**

People are drawn to guides who demonstrate genuine enthusiasm for the location and topic. A knowledgeable guide can provide historical context, cultural insights, and unique stories that bring the destination to life, also they are able to stay unbiased, sharing the information without their personal perception. Passion is contagious, making the tour experience more compelling and memorable.

- **Conflict solving abilities and adaptability**

Every tour is different, and unexpected situations may arise — such as changes in weather, logistical problems, or someone, who is attending the tour for the wrong reasons and making it unpleasant for others. A great tour guide remains adaptable, able to think quickly and handle challenges with confidence and professionalism.

- **Organisational and time management skills**

A well-structured tour requires careful planning and time management. A guide should be able to balance storytelling, activities, and breaks while ensuring that the tour stays on schedule. Being organized helps create a seamless and enjoyable experience for participants.

- **Cultural sensitivity**

Tourists come from various backgrounds and cultures, each with different expectations and perspectives. A successful guide must be culturally aware, respectful, and sensitive to different opinions. Emotional intelligence allows them to read the group's mood and adjust.

- **Storytelling and interest to be engaging**

A good guide is looking beyond facts and figures, they have the ability to tell engaging stories that captivate the audience by using humor, anecdotes, and interactive elements. The best guides transform information into an experience rather than just a lecture.

- **Leadership and Confidence**

A tour guide must be a confident leader, able to manage groups of various sizes while maintaining control in a friendly and professional manner. Clear instructions and a sense of authority help ensure the group's safety and smooth progression of the tour.

- **First Aid and Safety Awareness**

Ensuring the safety of tour participants is a key responsibility, especially if it's an active tour in nature. Basic first aid knowledge and an awareness of emergency protocols allow guides to handle minor medical issues or unexpected incidents effectively.

- **Language Skills**

In international tourism, multilingual skills can be a efficient advantage, allowing guides to communicate with a broader audience. Even basic proficiency in multiple languages can enhance the tourist experience and connection.

- **Enthusiasm**

A guide's attitude sets the tone for the entire tour. Enthusiasm, patience, and a positive outlook create a welcoming atmosphere that let's tourists to relaxed and safe space.



MUST DO!

- **Engage, Don't Lecture** – Use humor, questions, and interactive elements to keep the tour dynamic and enjoyable.
- **Be Clear and Concise** – Avoid overwhelming your group with extensive details—focus on key points and memorable stories.
- **Manage Time Well** – Stick to the schedule but allow flexibility for questions and unexpected situations.

2.4 Cultural awareness and local knowledge

Great tour guides do not just give the facts; they help visitors learn in a way that is both deep and respectful of the local culture, traditions, and history. Thus, guides must be both culturally aware and possess rich knowledge about the tour areas. This will enable them to not only tell compelling and authentic stories, but also to facilitate the interactions of the visitors with local communities, fostering mutual respect and interest.

In tour guiding, cultural awareness involves understanding the beliefs, attitudes, and points of view of both locals and tourists, going beyond simply recognizing the traditions and customs of a area. A culturally sensitive guide avoids stereotypes, respects cultural differences, and provides information in an interesting and inclusive manner. This is extremely critical in culturally diverse locations where various historical perspectives and cultures coexist.

For example, different cultures may interpret particular gestures or expressions differently. A well-informed guide guarantees that visitors understand social traditions, including proper attire, respect at religious sites, and ethical interactions with locals. Tour guides support the creation of a polite and respectful travel environment and the avoidance of misunderstandings by encouraging cultural sensitivity.

Beyond well-known locations, a tour guide's knowledge should contain fewer stories, regional folklore, and diverse perspectives that make a place come to life. Beyond what is accessible in guidebooks, tourists value guides who can offer unexpected observations, suggest unknown attractions, and discuss the cultural significance of places.

Guides can customize tours for diverse audiences by having in - depth local knowledge. A historian, for instance, might benefit a detailed description of historical events, but a family with children might prefer a more participation, storytelling form. This flexibility assures that the tour keeps entertaining and educational all while improving the visitor experience.

MUST DO!

A culturally sensitive guide avoids stereotypes, respects cultural differences, and provides information in an interesting and inclusive manner. This is extremely critical in culturally diverse locations where various historical perspectives and cultures coexist.



While how it will be is essential for a guide to deliver accurate historical and cultural knowledge, is presented is also crucial. Simply listing statistical data could perhaps make a tour appear dry and emotionless, but integrating stories, humor, and personal observations into the narrative strengthens the information's retention.

A skilled guide understands not just history of a site, but also its current significance, tourism industry, and ongoing cultural traditions. This detailed perspective helps visitors to see the location as a living, changing environment rather than simply a historical site.

In order to provide a positive and caring tour experience, cultural sensitivity and local knowledge are essential. Accepting cultural diversity makes travel more engaging and educational by enabling tours to facilitate meaningful encounters between visitors and local people. Significant information also enables guides to offer fascinating and culturally diverse encounters, guaranteeing that visitors depart with a profound respect for the region. In the end, the greatest tour guides are cultural ambassadors who enhance tourism while acknowledging the history and uniqueness of the places they visit.

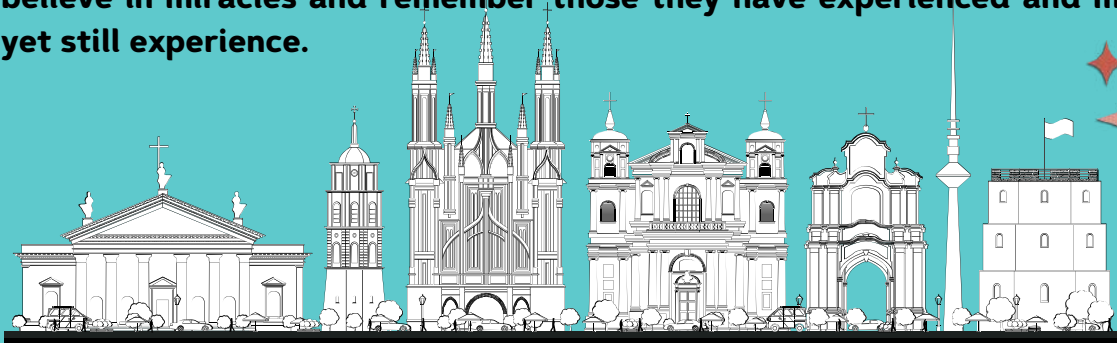


Some places may have weird (to you) suppressions, you should know before to show respect or be willing to learn about it. For example, in Lithuania:

- **Don't greet anyone at the doorstep or across the threshold, it brings bad luck. Older locals in many regions believe that that hugging or shaking hands over the threshold brings bad luck and may lead to severing ties with those you greet. Besides, it is considered more polite to first invite your guests into the house and then welcome them comfortably inside.**
- **Whistling indoors is considered a breach of etiquette in Lithuania. It's believed to attract ill fortune. It could lead to various unfavourable events. It's believed to rouse the wrath of restless spirits.**
- **It is believed that placing your bag on ground attracts bad financial luck and decisions, older generations even say that if you place a bag on the ground your money will walk away.**



- **Located in Cathedral Square (superstition forbids us from revealing the exact coordinates) between the Cathedral and the Cathedral Belltower, visitors will find a tile with the colourfully mosaicked word "stebuklas" ("miracle") on it. This tile, the work of Lithuanian artist Gitenis Umbrasas, supposedly marks the southern terminus where an estimated 2 million Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians linked hands in 1989 in a protest against Soviet occupation, creating a human chain stretching 650 km from Vilnius to Tallinn. Since then, the tile has become a symbol of hope and inspiration for Vilnius residents and visitors, encouraging people to believe in miracles and remember those they have experienced and may yet still experience.**



Knowing some “weird” or interesting superstitions, local stories, sayings or interesting facts can make a guide feel more connected to the audience, ease up the beginning of the tour and create the save space between the attendees and the guide.

2.5 Professionalism and ethics

Trying to make a guided tour as fun and easy experience can be quite challenging task, especially if you take into consideration that sometimes what is considered funny for one person can be insulting for another.

Ethics are at the heart of a tour guide's professionalism. Guests entrust guides with facts, cultural insights, and recommendations, so honesty and integrity are intrinsic to the profession. Providing misleading or inflated facts in the interest of entertainment can damage both the reputation of the guide and that of the destination. Ethical tour guiding also involves:

Respect for Local Communities – Tour guides are supposed to promote responsible tourism by encouraging tourists to respect local customs, traditions, and privacy. This includes educating tourists on the correct behavior in culturally sensitive or sacred sites.

Environmental Responsibility – Sustainability is gaining greater significance in tourism. Guides must encourage sustainable behavior, such as minimizing waste, respecting wildlife, and encouraging responsible interactions with nature.

Fair Business Practices – Guides should be honest when they suggest local businesses. They should provide unbiased suggestions rather than promoting services for their own interests so that visitors receive authentic and fair experiences.

Key Aspects of Professionalism

Professionalism in tour guiding is more than just knowledge—it is also about behavior, presentation, and being prepared for the tour. A professional tour guide is a prime example of:

Punctuality and Reliability – Arriving on time, following the itinerary, and ensuring a planned tour experience. Disorganisation can upset the tourists and diminish the overall experience.

Being prepared – A guide should have a thorough understanding of the sites they present, including historical, cultural, and contemporary aspects. Updating knowledge ensures accuracy.

Professional look and behavior – Dressing appropriately for the occasion and maintaining a friendly yet respectful demeanour enhances credibility and sets a friendly mood.

Effective Communication– A successful guide should be able to adapt and to engage with different attendees of the tour. Listening to people's needs and responding to questions patiently and clearly makes the experience easy and clear.



Building Trust Through Ethical and Professional Conduct Tourists expect guides to provide them with enriching and honest experiences. By adhering to ethical principles and maintaining professional standards, guides not only ensure customer satisfaction but also contribute to the reputation and sustainability of the tourism industry. Establishing trust through ethical conduct leads to positive reviews, repeat visitors, and a greater appreciation for the destination.

Professionalism and ethics are the foundation of responsible tour guiding. Upholding values such as honesty, respect, and reliability enhances the credibility of a guide and fosters a positive experience for both tourists and the local community. By being well-prepared, punctual, and maintaining a professional appearance, guides can provide meaningful and enjoyable tours while ensuring ethical and sustainable tourism practices.

From the very beginning, tourists rely on guides to deliver immersive and truthful experiences. Guides who observe ethical and professional practices not only fulfill customer expectations but also enhance the image and viability of the tourism sector. The maintenance of trust with clients through ethical behavior results in positive feedback, return tourists, and increased goodwill towards the place visited.

Ethics and professionalism are critical for responsible tour guiding. Observing attributes of ethics and professionalism such as honesty, respect, and dependability increases the reputational capital of the guide and satisfaction of tourists and the local community. Being well-groomed, punctual, and professionally dressed enables guides to offer enjoyable and insightful tours in a responsible manner to ensure sustainable tourism.



Interactive content



ACTIVITY 1: Tourist Persona Research

Ask participants to identify at least four common types of tourists who visit their area. Some examples include:

- Adventure Travelers – love outdoor activities (hiking, diving, extreme sports).
- Cultural Tourists – interested in history, museums, local traditions and sites of culture.
- Family Tourists – traveling with children, need kid-friendly activities, stops and sites.
- Retirees/Senior Travelers – might prefer more relaxed pacing, comfortable logistics.

Create Tourist Personas (Small Group Activity 3-4 people)

- Background: (place they are coming from, age group, etc.)
- Travel Interests: (in what they are interested the most?)
- Expectations: (active leisure, historical sites, traditional experiences)
- Challenges: (considerations of various issues that might affect the group, for example heat, rain, distance)

After this step, participants shall have a short, written description (or infographic) of their tourist persona.

Role-Play

Participants take turns acting as:

The tour guide – tailoring their approach to a specific persona.

The tourist – behaving according to the assigned persona's traits (adventure seeker, a kid, senior traveler).

Interactive content



ACTIVITY 1: Tourist Persona Research

Ask participants to identify at least four common types of tourists who visit their area. Some examples include:

- Adventure Travelers – love outdoor activities (hiking, diving, extreme sports).
- Cultural Tourists – interested in history, museums, local traditions and sites of culture.
- Family Tourists – traveling with children, need kid-friendly activities, stops and sites.
- Retirees/Senior Travelers – might prefer more relaxed pacing, comfortable logistics.

Create Tourist Personas (Small Group Activity 3-4 people)

- Background: (place they are coming from, age group, etc.)
- Travel Interests: (in what they are interested the most?)
- Expectations: (active leisure, historical sites, traditional experiences)
- Challenges: (considerations of various issues that might affect the group, for example heat, rain, distance)

After this step, participants shall have a short, written description (or infographic) of their tourist persona.

Role-Play

Participants take turns acting as:

The tour guide – tailoring their approach to a specific persona.

The tourist – behaving according to the assigned persona's traits (adventure seeker, a kid, senior traveler).

3. Communication skills

Effective communication is more than just speaking—it's about ensuring the message is delivered clearly, understood correctly, and responded to appropriately. Both physical and emotional aspects of an interaction serve as an important tool helping a smooth communication. For tour guides, communication skills affects how the audience experiences the whole tour.

For a mutual understanding it is imperative for the message to be acknowledge, not only sent and seen. People tend to understand messages through speaking, gestures, and facial expressions that interplay of receiving and processing of the information. On the contrary, perceptions are not always accurate due to environmental distractions, different languages, or mismatched assumptions.

However, it all begging with active listening - how can you understand, if you are not actively looking and trying to understand what is being said or expressed? Active listening means that one has set their entire focus on the speaker, and takes into account their words and emotions, responding in an appropriate to the situation manner. For example, in the case of a tour guide, this implies observing their reactions, prompting people to ask questions, and modifying explanations depending on their level of interest.

Active listening can be overshadowed by distractions, biased expectations, and a language or dialect barrier. Guides may still be able to accomplish these tasks by keeping the tourists' attention, eye contact, smiling gestures, and repeating the head nods to indicate understanding of the tourists' language.

For instance, where a tourist asks a question in a louder place, a guide can use a head nod as an acknowledgement with the promise to get to a quieter place if suitable, and repeat the question before answering. Such actions goes a long way in demonstrating engagement and being present in the conversation.



In addition to the communication itself, body language engages both it's narrators and the audience on a whole different level. A big part of communication is made not only with words, but also with actions and gestures, body language and overall non- This means that if a speech is delivered without body is prepared, it can go wrong, even if it is prepared and thought through way in advance.

As people talk during conversations, speakers and listeners often provide various combined verbal and nonverbal reactions indicating they understand, what they intend or are emphasising, or to mask their intentions. Verbal and nonverbal behaviors get paired together.

The way a tour guide stands, moves their hands and face all impact the message in a positive or a negative way. Research indicates that the meaning of non-verbal signals frequently surpasses verbal expression, which makes a tour guide's job much easier.

How to improve your non-verbal cues:

A guide shows confidence and credibility through their strong posture and uses purposeful gestures.

Understanding and retention is achieved when body language supports spoken words.

Involving the group let's tourists to relate to the tour and story due to open branded gestures from the guide.

Hand movements can highlight main objectives, emphasize specific points, and make statements more vivid.



- ✓ **Use gestures that are natural and fluid and reinforce the message in speech.**
- ✓ **Stay away from movements that are distracting and excessive which shift focus from the core message.**
- ✓ **Do not point at a person directly. While this may be acceptable in some cultures, it is considered rude behavior in others. Rather, use clear but respectful gestures.**

A warm genuine smile can feel welcoming to tourists while a surprised facial expression when describing historical events can create curiosity.

3.1. Greeting and introducing yourself

It all starts with the introduction - and of course, the first thing the guide introduces is themselves, it might be a quick sentence about your name, your experience in being a guide or a longer speech about your career - how it started, why and what you enjoy. It can also be a joke, a quote or a quick chat with the audience about the places or countries they are coming from, something easy and engaging that would let them to feel more connected and personal to the tour.

As a tour guide you can share your journey into guiding, how you started, and what you love about it, your opening words should be warm, engaging, and memorable. A good introduction isn't about stating facts, it's more about creating a connection.

Best Practices for a Strong Introduction:

- ✓ Be warm and welcoming, add a friendly smile, welcoming tone to your introduction as it sets the mood to the entire tour.
- ✓ Keep it engaging, avoid sounding rehearsed or superficial make it natural and conversational, keep an open space for questions as people might have some questions regarding your experiences, qualification and interests.
- ✓ Adapt to your audience, check with whom are you guiding the tour, is it families, solo travellers or groups, it all may require a different approach.
- ✓ Encourage interaction, be interactive with your audience by asking an open question, create a sense of community within the group.

The introduction is more than just a formality, as it is the first step in building trust, setting the mood, asking some questions that might be beneficial to you - maybe your tourists share that they are very excited to visit something or that they have already visited some monument or a place of the tour, that you can think of a strategy how to spend less time in these sites or share some interesting facts the tourist hadn't had a chance to familiarize themselves with. Also, by the end of the day, all of them are people no matter what their intentions or wishes are, so make sure you create a trustworthy atmosphere that will let them to feel included and valued.

Also, add a friendly smile and an appropriate body language: avoid crossing hands, legs or fidgeting with your hands, looking around, as it makes you appear a bit unapproachable.

3.2 Public Speaking

Public speaking seems to be a tricky task for some people, as being in front of the crowd, the main point of attention might feel more threatening and exposing. However, the best solution to the fear of public speaking or generally wishing to improve the tour is to prepare. Do research, put it into a form of text, make some bullet points or oversee it by thinking of what questions other people might ask you or try it out with a friend, ask for feedback and points of improvement.

However, some technical aspects are non the less important. Public speaking is a fundamental skill for tour guides, as it ensures that all participants can hear, understand, and stay engaged throughout the tour. A guide's ability to project their voice, maintain eye contact, and use clear, simple language can make a difference between an amazing experience and a forgettable one.

A guide must be audible to the entire group, whether in a crowded city square or an open site. Speaking too softly can let attendees to lose interest quickly, while shouting can feel overwhelming and scare them.

Best Practices:

- ✓ Speak with confidence with a strong, steady voice.
- ✓ Adjust your volume based on the environment—louder in noisy settings, softer in more quiet spaces.
- ✓ Be clear, avoid mumbling or speaking too quickly.
- ✓ Use pauses strategically to let key points settle in and give some time for information to sink in.

Also, an eye contact builds trust and credibility for the audience. A guide who is not afraid to look in the eyes, keep the contact seems more relatable, confident and open.

Best Practices:

- ✓ Scan the group regularly, making a brief eye contact with different participants.
- ✓ Focus on one person at a time instead than looking over the group.
- ✓ Avoid fixating on one individual for too long, as this can make others feel excluded and the one person intimidated.



Using Non-Verbal Communication to Adapt to Different Audiences

Tour groups vary in size, background, and engagement, thus guides might adjust their non-verbal communication accordingly:

- For children: if you are trying to engage with and playful gestures, tone to keep their attention for longer.
- For older adults: speak clearly and calmly, maintaining gentle eye contact, have pauses for questions and open conversation.
- For international tourists: be aware of cultural differences in gestures and personal space, while some people might find direct eye contact too intense, others can be expecting it.

Observe the reactions of the group's and try to modify the body language in real-time to make sure that everyone stays engaged and comfortable with the tour.

3.3 Storytelling and engaging speaking

Tour guides are representatives of their local surroundings, some people who are attending the tour will be taking it as their first impression of the city, country or the place you are showing in the tour. Therefore, making an impressive and immersive story is an essential part of the tour. While storytelling is often associated with books and fictional tales, true storytelling in guiding is about connecting to your audience through captivating speech, transforming facts into understandable memorable experiences.

Storytelling works best when it's adapted to the audience, however in many cases it becomes almost impossible especially when thinking about large tours and connecting to everyone. However, the story can use relatable analogies and references to make the content more engaging. Having similar examples included can also let participants to feel more connected and understand the perception of a place better.

Another important part when planning the tour and developing a program or story, it's planning it. A strong story and tour should have a proper structure, as usual based on 3 crucial parts:

- A hook in the beginning: an intriguing fact, question, or anecdote to grab attention and lean in the participant.
- Clear context: setting the scene with historical or cultural background.
- End with an impact – leave the audience with a key takeaway or emotional connection.



Catching attention, actively engaging with audience and giving them the main points of the tour ensures that they not only attended the tour but actually brought something from it back home.

Let people feel

Don't be afraid to let people feel the history - describe it, sounds, smells, and visuals to make history tangible and relatable. Instead of just simply spitting out facts, let people make connections, for example, instead of saying "this building was constructed in 1800's" try to express yourself with different approach "could you imagine, that at the beginning of 1800's, exactly 5 years after the 3rd redistribution of Lithuanian- Polish commonwealth, this building was built. Around the time, the land and it belonged to Russian Empire." If the audience can imagine it's easier for them not only to understand things, but also to feel more connected to it and finally bring it back with them as a part of experience.

A good story connect with people, so focus on personal stories, legends, or historical figures and embrace their lives, events. Don't be afraid to use humor, suspense, or drama to keep your audience invested - after all, we connect to feelings things make us feel.

Ask for feedback and opinion

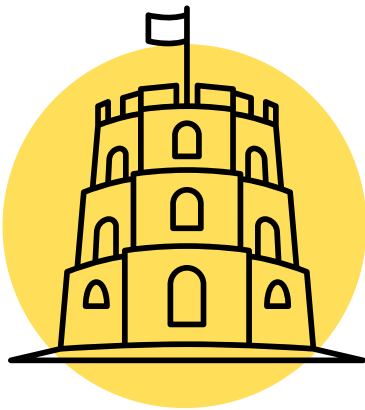
Don't reserve yourself only by getting feedback and engagement on your work, let tourists to connect with the tour by asking questions, reassuring and sharing a space for their opinion or answers. Don't feel threatened to use rhetorical devices like "What do you think happened next?" to build curiosity. Whenever possible, involve them in an activity—reenacting a scene, guessing an artifact's use and so on.

And most importantly, don't leave the tour unfinished. The story has to end somewhere and it has to have a memorable point. Leave your audience with a lasting impression—whether it's a thought-provoking idea, a quote, or a connection to the modern world - it all helps people to feel somewhat related to the happenings and the tour itself.

3.4. Adapting communication to the specific group

Different audiences require different type of communication or different approach to information, whether it would be a different topic, facts or information from your perspective or a selective narrative.

Tour groups will vary in size, background, interest level, so it's an essential part of being a touristic guide to make adaptations and adjusting their communication style accordingly. Both verbal and non-verbal cues may change in different settings and audiences, and it's always the different experience based on the group, their background, engagement and of course the type of tour you are providing. Below are strategies tailored to different types of tours and audiences that might be joining the tour:



Historical & Cultural Tours (expected audience are adults and history enthusiasts)

For this type of tour you have to keep in mind that they already might know some facts or have prepared questions in advance and expectations of the tour, thus keep in mind:

- Speak clearly and at a measured pace, allowing time for reflection and questions.
- Use vivid descriptions to paint a picture of historical events and figures.
- Encourage to ask questions and be prepared to answer or have a discussion about some point.

Outdoors/ adventure tour (expected audience: active young travellers)

This type of tour requires to match the energy - the group might be ready for a long walk, going to many places or even adding some additional steps to reach some place. Try to:

- Maintain a lively and energetic mood to match the group's enthusiasm.
- Encourage participation, whether it's through physical activities, photo opportunities, or local experiences.
- Use an engaging storytelling that complements rather than interrupts the adventure.



Family friendly tours (expected audience: kids, parents, grandparents, different aged group)

This tour will have to be suited for a diverse group of people, from smaller kids, to older parents or even grandparents. Some key notes to keep in mind:

- Involve everyone, pick an engaging tone of storytelling, and interactive questions to keep children engaged.
- Incorporate games, role-playing to make learning fun.
- Address parents with useful context while ensuring the information remains accessible to younger listeners.
- Be patient, expect that some points or activities might take some extra time or be not as interesting for children.



International visitors (expected audience: travellers from other countries and cultures)

Intercultural environment might be more of a challenge, however, it might be a very engaging experience as people who are joining are most likely sharing different culture and approach, therefore it's important to keep in mind:

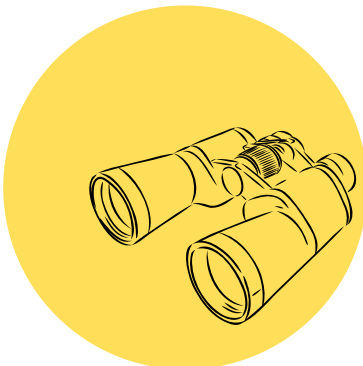
- Being mindful of cultural differences in gestures, humor, and personal space.
- Avoiding using slang or idioms that may not translate well to different languages or it's hard to understand.
- Speak clearly, use simple words, ensuring comprehension for non-native speakers.

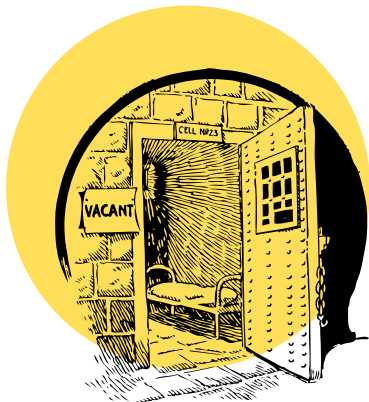


Sightseeing tours (expected audience:)

Who does not love to see the beautiful sites and unusual scenery to their eyes? Everybody is interested in exploring something special and interesting in that location. These tours will make a guide to:

- Use concrete and short storytelling, examples so guests have time to take photos.
- Be mindful of walking speeds, allowing time to stop and admire.
- Encourage interaction by pointing out hidden details or asking guests to spot unique elements in the scenery.





Dark Tourism (War Sites, Tragedy Memorials, Prisons, etc.)

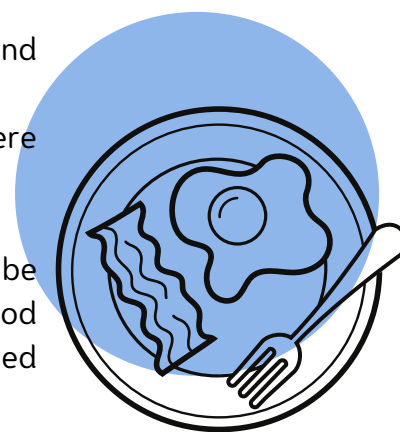
This type of tour is becoming more and more popular, emerging from niche category to the main. It's important to keep in mind:

- Use a measured, serious tone while maintaining empathy.
- Balance facts with personal stories to humanize historical events.
- Allow for moments of reflection and silence, rather than oversharing and dumping a lot of information.
- Be prepared to handle emotional reactions from visitors and provide a space for questions or discussion, debriefing.

Food & Culinary Tours (expected audience:)

A part of understanding the culture and traditions is trying the food, drinks and other culinary delicacies to immerse yourself with experience. While doing this type of tour, remember:

- Use descriptive language to evoke flavors, aromas, and textures to prepare people of what they should expect.
- Share local traditions and explain the dishes, maybe there are some related stories or reasons from history.
- Ask guests about their preferences.
- Ensure clarity when discussing dietary restrictions and be aware of cultural sensitivities around food - some food might contain allergens, ingredients that might be avoided due to cultural or religious reasons.



Bike tours (expected audience)

As Lithuania is becoming more and more bike friendly, the bike tours relevancy is increasing as well. For an active guide who is ready to lead the group doing a bike tour, it's good to know:

- Use short, clear explanations at stops since guests may be wearing helmets or moving quickly.
- Keep safety first, ensure everyone understands traffic rules and group is riding etiquttely.
- Use hand signals and body language for communication while moving.
- Maintain an upbeat tone, matching the fun and adventurous vibe of the tour.





3.5 Handling tough situations

Guides play a special role in ensuring a fun, informative and enjoyable tour experience, even when faced with unexpected challenges. Whether dealing with difficult questions, disruptive guests, or unforeseen disruptions, the key is to remain calm, professional, and adaptable. Tour guides sometimes encounter rude people and conflict situations, where they have to look for a solution quickly and handle it professionally.

Answering Difficult Questions with Confidence

Even the most knowledgeable guides won't have every answer, no matter how many years they are in the guiding, or how many different questions they have faced before, people sometimes have such different questions that it's not possible to know the answer to everything. If you can't answer and simply don't know, don't be afraid to:

- Admit it. "That's a great question! I want to give you the most accurate answer, so let me check on that for you" - might be a solution that lets you to investigate and to come up with the solution later.
- Offer to follow up. "I'll look it up and share the answer with you at our next stop" - it will give you some time to understand better and provide more accurate answer.
- Redirect to the group, maybe someone knows something, or have some insights - you will be surprised on how many guests join tours and are interested in improving their knowledge.
- Keep it real - you can share that it's the first time you hear this question, maybe a person themselves can pinpoint how they got it and why they think that way, so you can understand their perspective and hear the map of thoughts.

When faced with controversial or sensitive topics, don't get discouraged. Some people are curious and you seemed like a reliable person to ask, that will give them a true answer even to the most controversial topic:

- Remember to stay neutral and factual, stick to history and know facts rather than personal opinions.
- Acknowledge differing views, that some people might disagree or that it can be interpreted differently.
- Keep the focus on the tour's theme to avoid heated debates, because tough questions can sometimes raise even more opinions and thoughts on the topic.

Managing difficult attendees

The world is full of different people, who think and act differently. Sometimes, guests may be impatient, argumentative, or disruptive. The key is de-escalation:



Dealing with rude or challenging guests:

- Stay polite and firm, share that it's an open and safe space and everyone is allowed to have an opinion, it's not a necessity for all of the people to agree and believe one truth.
- If they dominate the conversation, offer to hear other opinions, create a dynamic for other guests to share something if they feel that they are up to it.
- Avoid arguments—maintain a calm, professional tone at all times.

Handling latecomers:

- Set expectations at the start and clearly communicate meeting times and locations, if you have a chat or a way of communication for the tour - send a quick reminder there.
- If someone is consistently late, address them privately, it's better to be direct and share it with them to make some improvement.

Managing overly talkative or distracting guests:

- Use gentle redirection, acknowledge their opinions, but remind that you are open for questions or sharing of stories after tour.
- Engage them positively by involving them in the discussion in a way that benefits the group.

Handling Group Disruptions

Tours can be unpredictable, so being prepared for unexpected challenges is a key element to avoid stress and approach situation with confidence.

- Background noise or interruptions:
 - Use a stronger voice and body language to maintain attention.
 - If possible, move to a quieter location to continue the tour.
 - Keep the mood light—sometimes humor can help ease the situation.
- Weather or location changes:
 - Always have a backup plan (indoor alternatives, shelter options, or adjusted routes).
 - Keep guests informed with a positive attitude, encourage to make the most of it."
- Medical emergencies or guest discomfort:
 - Stay calm, assess the situation, and follow emergency protocols.
 - Know the nearest medical facilities and have essential contacts (local emergency numbers, first aid resources).
 - Be attentive to other's well-being too, check in on anyone who seems unwell, stressed or overwhelmed.



Keeping Control

A good guide should be able to balance authority with being friendly and approachable to maintain group dynamics.

- Set clear expectations upfront, if you are going to have stops, breaks, free time - share it with the group.
- Use body language and positioning to maintain group focus, stand in the center, wave hand if needed.
- Adapt to group energy levels—if they seem tired, offer a short break or lighten the tone.

Handling tough situations is about grace under pressure - it can show how guide works under stress, unexpected questions and situations what happens rarely. In such situations it's important to note that it's not about the people or you or whatever is happening, it's about your mindset and how you approach the situation. Whether answering tough questions, managing difficult guests, or handling unexpected disruptions, the key is to stay calm, professional, and solution-focused, also making sure that the group remains engaged and comfortable.

Interactive content



ACTIVITY 1: First Impressions Role-Play

Each participant greets and introduces themselves as if meeting a tour group for the first time. They must include:

- A warm welcome (smile, eye contact, open body language).
- Their name and role as a guide.
- A brief, engaging preview of the tour ahead.

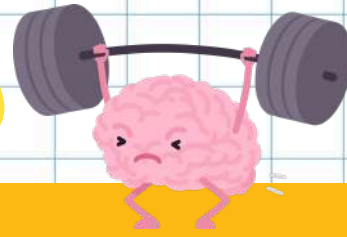
Have participants practice different greeting styles (formal, casual, enthusiastic) to match different audiences (families, seniors, adventure travelers). As well - explore feedback in pairs or groups to discuss what can be improved.

ACTIVITY 2: Match Your Audience

Each participant picks a target audience (e.g., families with kids, retirees, college students). They then deliver the same piece of information but adjust their tone, pace, vocabulary, and level of detail to match their audience.

- For families with kids: Use simple language, humor, and interaction (e.g., "Can you guess what this old tower was used for?").
- For history enthusiasts: Provide detailed context and facts.
- For adventure travelers: Highlight exciting stories and action.

Interactive content



ACTIVITY 3: Conflict resolution simulation

One participant acts as the tour guide while others role-play difficult tourists.

- Assign each of the participants a role - tour guide, simple travellers, misbehaving travellers.
- Give some time to prepare for the roles. The guide can start with introduction, going over an internally, etc.

Scenarios include:

- A tourist keeps interrupting with off-topic questions.
- A guest complains loudly about the weather or the itinerary.
- Someone asks a question the guide doesn't know.
- A group member wanders off mid-tour.

The guide must respond calmly, professionally, and effectively.

Give some time to prepare for each role and simulate the situation.

After the simulation it's important to discuss what worked well and how guides can stay in control while keeping guests happy.



4. History & Culture of the region

4.1. A brief history of the area

Lithuania has had its fair share of complex history over the years—wars, ongoing conflicts, a union with Poland that made it the largest state in Europe, partitions, and repressions under the Russian Empire. It regained independence in 1918, only to face new occupations during World War II—first by Soviet Russia, then Nazi Germany, and once again by the Soviets. In 1991, Lithuania became the first country to break away from the Soviet Union, and in 2004, it joined the European Union. Its history is marked by both great achievements and deep struggles—moments of triumph as well as suffering and loss.

To understand historical context of Lithuania, it's easier to break it down to a few segments:

- **Prehistoric age:**
 - **Balts:** with the main tribal divisions of the Balts were the West Baltic Old Prussians and Yotvingians, and the **East Baltic Lithuanians** and Latvians.
- **Formation of Lithuania State**
 - Formed unions and military action to fight the raids by the Vikings and kinds from Denmark.
 - **Grand Duke Mindaugas uniting different tribes** to fight against main threats: Livonian and Teutonic Knights, who are constantly trying to invade the land. **Mindaugas becomes the one and only king of Lithuania**, uniting different tribes and gaining recognition as a country called Lithuania.
- **The age of Lithuanian Dukes**
 - Jogaila's Catholic Conversion and Union with Poland (1385–1386): **Jogaila's baptism, marriage to Queen Jadwiga, and crowning as King of Poland marked the official Christianization of Lithuania, laying the foundation for the Polish-Lithuanian Union.**
 - Vytautas the Great's Rule (1392–1430): **Under Vytautas, Lithuania reached its territorial peak, centralized its governance**, and repelled the Teutonic Knights, notably at the **Battle of Grunwald (1410).**
 - **Union of Horodło (1413):** Strengthened the ties between Lithuania and Poland, granting equal privileges to Catholic Lithuanian nobles and establishing administrative divisions.
 - Muscovite-Lithuanian Wars (1492–1537): A series of conflicts with Moscow that reshaped Lithuania's eastern borders and underscored its **need for closer cooperation with Poland.**

- **Union of Lublin (1569):** Established the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth:
 - In 1569, the Union of Lublin **united Poland and Lithuania** into the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, a joint state ruled by elected kings and shared institutions, though **Lithuania retained its own army, treasury, and legal system**. Despite formal integration, Lithuania's nobility resisted Polish dominance, as seen in their independent political actions.
 - The **Commonwealth weakened due to wars, political anarchy**, and foreign interference. The Constitution of 3 May 1791 (which was one of the first modern constitutions in Europe, adopted by the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, to ensure more freedom and political equality on its territory and introduce the constitutional monarchy system) attempted reforms but came too late. **Lithuania was gradually partitioned by Russia and Prussia in 1772, 1793, and 1795**, ending its statehood for over a century.
- **Lithuanian Renaissance (16th–17th centuries):** A flourishing period in arts, education, and literature, with **the first Lithuanian-language books published** and the emergence of prominent scholars like Martynas Mažvydas and Mikalojus Daukša.
- **Russian Rule & Rebellions (1795–1864)**
 - After the 1795 partition, most of **Lithuania fell under Russian control**, with Vilnius as part of the Vilna Governorate.
 - **Napoleon's invasion (1812)** was initially welcomed, but after his defeat, Lithuania remained under Russian rule.
 - Two major **anti-Russian uprisings (1830–31 and 1863–64) failed, leading to harsh repressions**, including the closure of Vilnius University and increased Russification.
- **Rise of Lithuanian Nationalism (1864–1918)**
 - Language & Identity: The **Lithuanian language and Latin alphabet were banned (1864)** as part of Russian attempts to assimilate Lithuanians.
 - Book Smuggling: Lithuanians resisted through illegal printing and **smuggling of books from East Prussia**.
- **World War I & Towards Independence**
 - **During WWI (1915), Germany occupied Lithuania**, planning to turn it into a puppet state.
 - **By 1918, Lithuanian nationalists aimed for full independence**, setting the stage for the restoration of statehood.

- **Independence (1918–1940)**
 - Can be divided into democratic and authoritarian periods.
 - During this period, the capital Vilnius is under Poland's control, **Kaunas becomes the temporary capital.**
- **World War II (1939–1945)**
 - Following the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, **Lithuania was placed under the Soviet sphere of influence.**
 - In October 1939, the Soviet Union transferred Vilnius to Lithuania in exchange for military bases, and **in June 1940, Lithuania was occupied by the Soviet Union**, and a puppet government was installed.
- **Nazi Occupation (1941–1944)**
 - The Holocaust in Lithuania was among **the deadliest in Europe—over 90%** of Lithuanian Jews **were murdered.**
- **Second Soviet Occupation (1944–1945 and Beyond)**
 - **Armed resistance** by Lithuanian partisans continued **until 1953.**
 - Between **1940 and 1954, Lithuania lost approximately 780,000 people** due to Soviet and Nazi occupation.
- **Soviet era (1953–1988)**
- **Independence restored (1990–present)**
 - In **March 1990, Lithuania became the first Soviet republic to declare independence**, with Vytautas Landsbergis as head of state.
 - The Soviet Union imposed economic and military pressure, including an economic blockade and violent January 1991 crackdown, killing 14 civilians in Vilnius.
 - Despite Soviet aggression, a **February 1991 referendum saw over 90% support for independence.**
 - **Lithuania sought Western integration, joining WTO (2001), NATO & EU (2004), and the Eurozone (2015).**

Although Lithuanian history is complicated, it's important to know key takeaways and contexts, as it often comes up when trying to understand art, literature, culture, architecture and overall position and feelings that may have occurred during the time - thus understanding a historical events for a guide is crucial.

Understanding history of Vilnius

After understanding the whole historical context, it's also necessary to take in to account the happenings of a location you are trying to analyse and become the guide of. In this case - Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania.

Historical background

The city was initially referenced in written documents in 1323 through letters from Grand Duke Gediminas, who encouraged Jews and Germans to settle there and constructed a wooden fortress on a hill. Vilnius acquired its city rights in 1387 following the Christianization of Lithuania and expanded as artisans and traders from various ethnic backgrounds moved into the area. It served as the capital of the Grand Duchy until 1795 and thrived during the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. Under the Commonwealth, Vilnius prospered, particularly after King Stephen Báthory founded Vilnius University in 1579. The city evolved into a significant cultural and scientific hub, drawing immigrants from both the East and West, and was characterized by its diverse communities, including Jewish, Orthodox, and German populations.

Under the governance of the Russian Empire, Vilnius emerged as the capital of the Vilna Governorate and experienced a series of cultural revivals. The 19th and early 20th centuries were characterized by national awakenings among Jews, Poles, Lithuanians, and Belarusians. Following World War I, Vilnius frequently became a battleground between Poland and Lithuania, resulting in its temporary occupation by Poland before being annexed by the Soviet Union during World War II.

After the war, Vilnius was established as the capital of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic, and subsequently, with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, it became the capital of an independent Lithuania. The city has since undergone significant transformation, evolving from a Soviet-controlled territory into a contemporary European metropolis. Notable occurrences, such as the NATO summit in July 2023, underscore Vilnius's continuing significance on the global stage.





Vilnius as a touristic destination

Vilnius is known from the 14th century and has undergone a number of trials in its history like wars and occupations but it has emerged strong preserving its rich heritage. Museums, alleys, architecture and various different memorials scattered throughout the city are reminders of its rich history and the community that inhabited here.

Tradition and innovation

Vilnius is also a city of innovation and creativity in addition to its historical importance. There is a lively art scene in the city with galleries, street art and cultural events celebrating the traditional as well as the modern. This juxtaposition of the old and the new is also evident in the architecture where modern structures stand alongside historical ones in harmony imparting a unique urban landscape to the city.

A Culinary Adventure

Foodies have plenty to try in Vilnius: traditional Lithuanian cuisine meets modern culinary twists, from its heart-warming dishes like cepelinai (potato dumplings) to its trending farm-to-table meals, the city offers a diverse culinary scene that reflects its cultural melting pot.

According to Lonely planet, Vilnius is amongst one of undiscovered destinations offering various activities ranging from history, representation of cultural minorities, difficult past, but modernity and active scenery in many subjects.

In summary, Vilnius is a city that connects its past so beautifully to a lively present and makes it a fascinating destination for travellers who are interested to explore its multi-faceted city and understand it better.

4.2. Architectural highlights of the region

Reading into the past can be used to enable a young guide to better see things from the locals' perspective, information vital to the background of things as they occurred and why they occurred in the way that they did. Such information can facilitate easier tours, enabling the guide to offer interesting, fact-based information that might be able to engage participants.

Vilnius and the area around it have a lot to see, as do many other places. From historical buildings for the history buffs, to local landscapes and unusual architecture, there's something for all. For those who want to make their visit special, there are a lot of unusual and interesting places that offer interesting facts and experiences.

Trakų pilis | Trakai Castle

The castle is well-known for being one of the projects involving exceptional gothic architecture. It is situated on an island surrounded by Lake Galve, which is one of the deepest lakes in Lithuania. The sight of the castle is like taken out of a fairy tale. You have to walk the wooden bridge that's very long to get to the castle. In the winter the lake freezes and turns into an incredible natural ice skating rink. The alternative way to get a perfect view of the castle is to come by a yacht.

Once inside the museum, you can explore the exhibits of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania, various archaeological findings and artefacts, as well as the art collection. The summertime catalog includes medieval festivals as well as other events and concerts in the castle courtyard.



Verkių rūmai | Verkiai Manor

After Lithuania became Christian in the late 1300s, a leader named Jogaila gave Verkiai to the bishops, who are church leaders. One bishop, named Ignas Masalskis, worked hard to rebuild the palace and make it beautiful, which is why it is compared to Versailles. Two architects, Martynas Knakfusas and Laurynas Stuoka-Gucevičius, designed the new style of the building that we still see today. People have known about Verkiai Manor since the late 1300s when it belonged to the Grand Duke. Long ago, it was a place where people practiced old pagan beliefs, and it is also known as the birthplace of a character named Lizdeika. Verkiai is a very important building in Lithuania and is often called the "Versailles of Vilnius," which means it's a really special and beautiful place. The most fancy part of Verkiai today is the eastern oficina, where they have fixed up the old rooms from a time called the Wittgenstein era. There are stories about a sacred oak forest that used to belong to the Grand Dukes but was later given to the bishops. By the end of the 1700s, a park was created in the area, which had two parts: a lower park that no longer exists and an upper park where greenhouses were built in 1786 to grow special plants from Italy.



Užutrakio dvaras | Užutrakis Manor

Užutrakis Manor is a beautiful and well-kept historical place near Trakai, sitting by Lake Galvė. The palace was designed by a Polish architect named Jozef Huss and has lovely decorations from a style called Louis XVI. There is also a special terrace where you can see the beautiful Trakai Castle. The park around the manor was designed by a famous French gardener named Édouard François André. It has many different kinds of trees and plants, with over a hundred species, and many of them were brought in just for the park. The park also has copies of old sculptures to make it even more special.

Juozapas Tiškevičius, together with his wife Jadvyga, established Užutrakis Manor at the beginning of the 20th century after being inspired by the unique Trakai landscape.



photos retrieved from govilnius.lt

Europos parkas | Europa Park

Just 19 kilometers north of Vilnius, there's a special place called Europa Park that's like an outdoor art gallery. It's a unique space where you can see lots of different kinds of art. The idea for Europa Park started in 1991 when one young art student named Gintaras Karosas made a sculpture. Now, there are over 130 pieces of art from 34 different countries! The park is really big—55 hectares—so one can spend a whole day exploring and enjoying all the amazing art around the part.

The location of each work of art has been chosen to create a harmony with the surrounding trees, flowers, and daily patterns of lights and shadows.

Imagine a 700-metre labyrinth in the form of a tree created from 3,000 old televisions and a decaying statue of Lenin at its centre. The LNK Infotree by Gintaras Karosas was included in the Guinness Book of World Records as the world's largest work of art in 1999. The 150-tonne monument symbolises the futility of propaganda spread on TV.

Gedimino kalnas | Gediminas' Hill

Legend tells Grand Duke Gediminas dreamt of a howling Iron Wolf on the hilltop, which he took as a prophecy of the great city that would one day stand in this place. The hill is where he built a wooden castle in the 14th century, later on turned into brick one and continued it's legacy amongst the dukes of Lithuania.

In 1989, Gediminas' Hill also served as one of the starting points of the Baltic Way, a historic human chain running from Lithuania to Estonia in protest of Soviet occupation.

In 2019, remains of the leaders and participants of the 1863-1864 rebellion were found on the hillside.



photos retrieved from govilnius.lt

Valdovų rūmai | The Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania

There was a wooden settlement in this ancient place throughout the 4th-8th centuries, and in the second half of the 13th century, one of the settlements was converted into a stone castle. Throughout the first half of the 14th century, it served as the center of the enormous area of Vilnius Lower Castle walled in. Ever since the reign of Gediminids, virtually all the monarchs of Lithuania lived here. They expanded the castle constantly, and at the end of the 15th century, they began its fundamental reconstruction.

Originally Gothic, the 16th-century Grand Dukes' palace became a grand Renaissance palace. In the first half of the 17th century, they also acquired early Baroque features. During the mid-17th century, the troops of Moscow destroyed the palace and from the late 18th century and the early part of the 19th century, the palace was completely burned to the ground.

The palace were reconstructed in 2013. The National Museum in the Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania nowadays has four ongoing exhibitions/ routes of the museum, a few being a permanent ones and 1-2 rotating to show diverse pieces of history and culture to the public.

Užupio respublika | The Republic of Užupis

In 1996 students from the Vilnius Academy of Arts started an art group in a house by the Vilnelė River. With strong help the idea grew as well as in 2002, the artists and the Vilnius Municipality made the Užupis Art Incubator official. The place shows different sculptures and displays in the open air; visitors can discover, smile along with feel creativity.

Legend tells that the Dalai Lama once told people to put the Angel of Užupis in that spot during his trip to Vilnius. In truth the statue honors Zenonas Šteinis - a local artist and leader - who helped turn Užupis into the vibrant art center it is today.



Stiklių gatvė | The Glass quarter

Once the center of a busy Jewish street, this 600-year-old square in the Old Town served goldsmiths, glass makers, craft workers as well as money handlers and bankers. The Goldsmiths Guild was founded there in 1495, followed by the first glass manufactory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in 1547.

In 2018 the place gained the official name Glass Quarter, to remind people of its past, connecting three Stiklo streets: Stiklo 1, Stiklo 2 and Stiklo 3. As if hidden among the bigger streets of the city, the quarter is still surrounded by jewellers, local artists, artisan shops and workshops, cosy restaurants, the headquarters of the chamber orchestra, art galleries, and Stikliai Hotel, one of the city's oldest.

photos retrieved from govilnius.lt

Vilniaus Universitetas | The Vilnius University

Vilnius University began its journey when the Reformation grew in Lithuania besides Jesuit monks arrived to oppose it. They took charge of education furthermore opened a college in 1569 before creating Vilnius University in 1579.

The Vilnius University campus evolved over many years and now shows Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque along with Classicist buildings. The old palace stands apart from the lively student mood. The campus holds thirteen inner courts, covered walkways along with galleries. The courts bear names of well-known students and teachers and memorial plaques in the main court honor them.

Vilnius University, has 12 faculties and around 23,000 students. The Old Campus houses the University administration and 3 faculties - History, Philology, and Philosophy. There is also a library which was founded in 1570. It contains more than 5 million prints and ancient manuscripts. Among them is one of two copies of the first Lithuanian book known to exist - the original Catechism of Martynas Mažvydas.



photos retrieved from govilnius.lt



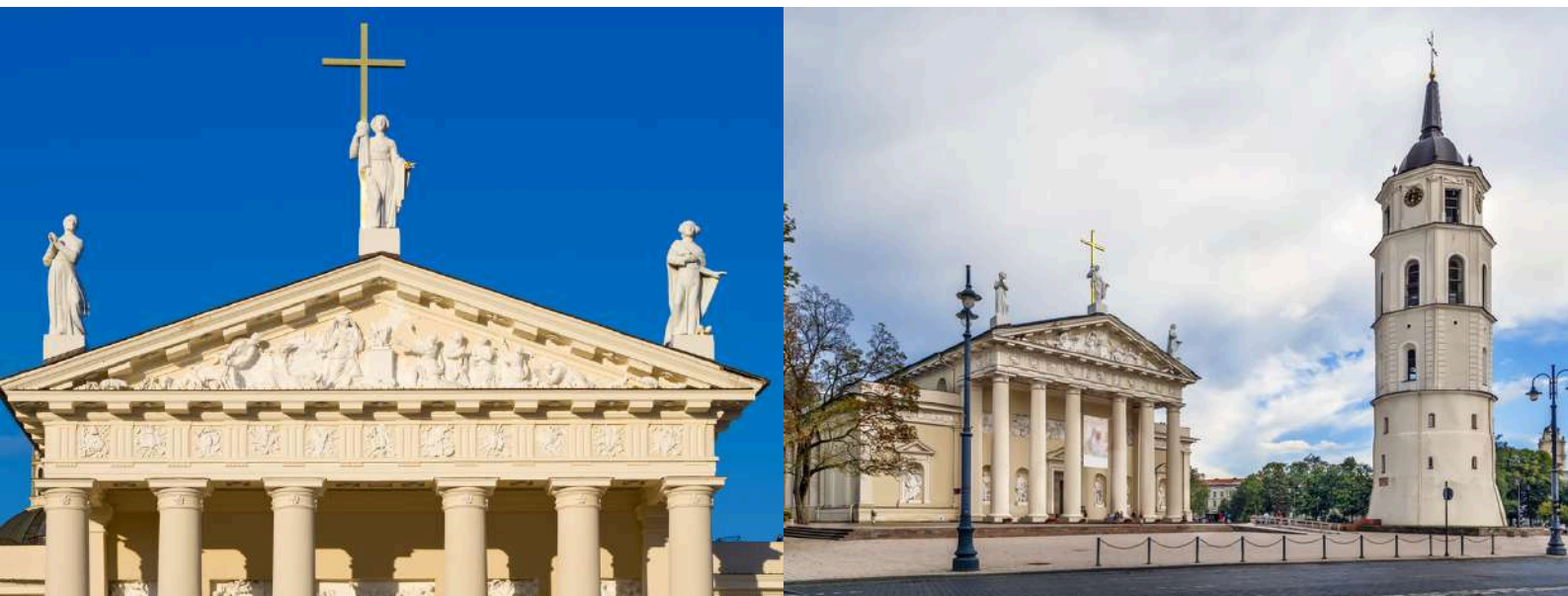
Vilniaus Arkikatedra | The Cathedral Basilica of St. Stanislaus and St. Ladislaus

This shrine is a symbol of Lithuanian baptism. The Cathedral Basilica of St. Stanislaus and St. Ladislaus is built in the very centre of the city on the site of a former pagan temple and next to Vilnius' defensive castle.

Vilnius Cathedral got rebuilt many times because fire, war, in addition to weak ground. Its design is Classicist by Laurynas Stuoka-Gucevičius. It shows hints of Gothic, Renaissance along with Baroque. This tells of its long past. Lithuania's patron saint St. Casimir lies in the Cathedral Basilica, where Bishop Jurgis Matulaitis lived from 1918 to 1925. On 4 September 1993, Pope John Paul II started his important trip in Lithuania at the cathedral.

Beside the cathedral the 57-meter-tall bell tower rises. It represents Vilnius. It was a defensive tower in the 13th century. In the 16th century they changed it to hold bells. In the 19th century it became as it is now. The city's oldest clock rings from its top. An exhibit shows its history plus gives views of the Old Town.

People can also go into the cathedral's catacombs, to discover the historical artefacts and also visit the graves of various dukes and famous historical figures of Lithuania. Here lie the family members of the famous Grand Duchy of Lithuania noble families: the Pacas, Kęsgaila, Manvydas, Goštautas, Chodkiewicz, Radziwiłł, Zaviša, Valavičius, Białożor, and others.



photos retrieved from govilnius.lt

Trijų kryžių kalnas | The Hill of Three Crosses

Located next to the Cathedral and Gediminas Tower, up on a hill, the Three Crosses memorial boasts three striking white concrete crosses that can be seen from great distances. The memorial offers visitors breathtaking panoramic views of Vilnius Old Town, with the picturesque Bernardine Garden and the tranquil Vilnelė River located at the hill's base. Standing proudly at 12 meters tall, the monument has become a symbol of national identity, but the crosses themselves are often illuminated in different colours to commemorate special events for Lithuania and the world. The hill's historical significance traces back to the 12th and 13th centuries when a wooden castle once crowned this elevated site. According to local legend, the hill was named in honor of Franciscans who, tragically martyred, were tied to crosses and cast down its steep slopes. Originally, those crosses were erected to honor their memory, while the monument we see today was crafted by architect A. Vivulskis in 1916 and underwent a reconstruction in 1988.



photos retrieved from govilnius.lt

Okupacijos ir laisvės kovų muziejus | Museum of Occupations and Freedom Fights

The former office of the KGB Deputy Chief of Internal Prison on the museum's first floor includes an exhibition of documents, photographs, maps and other items depicting the Sovietisation of the region in 1940-1941. The exhibition dedicated to the guerrilla war of 1944-1953 introduces the territorial structure and military organization of the guerrilla units, the aspirations of freedom fighters, their daily activities, and their everyday life. The NKVD-NKGB fight against armed resistance is revealed in the Unfair Fight exhibition. The Museum of Occupations and Freedom Fights was established in 1992. It is the only such museum in the Baltic States, housed in the same building where the repressive Soviet authorities NKVD and NKGB-MGB-KGB worked from the second half of 1940 until August 1991. The building's basement contains an internal prison-interrogation isolation cell where residents of Lithuania who seemed suspicious to the occupation authorities were imprisoned from the autumn of 1940 until 1987.

Open Gallery

The unique open-air art gallery "Open Gallery" is a long-term interdisciplinary project and cultural initiative that presents urban culture in an original way and creatively revitalizes the post-industrial New Town. This initiative aims to present alternative creations to traditional art forms, such as drawings on factory walls, installations, sculptures, performances, non-commercial film screenings, which are revealed in a new way in the industrial space, and at the same time to encourage Lithuanian and foreign artists from different fields to collaborate with each other.

The open-air gallery "Open Gallery" is a project of the art factory "Loftas".

This is a long-term interdisciplinary project that unites talented Lithuanian and foreign artists for joint creative work and is turning into an international open-air gallery of street art, sculptures and installations. The gallery is located in the courtyard of the former factory "Elfa", which now houses the art factory "Loftas".

One of the most important goals of the Open Gallery in Naujamiestis is to bring former abandoned city areas to new life and thus reveal a never-before-seen face of the Lithuanian capital to Vilnius residents and city guests. Visiting the gallery is free, and the gallery is open to everyone at any time.



photos retrieved from govilnius.lt

LOFTAS Art Factory

It is located in the New Town district of Vilnius. It is a very versatile, unconventional space suitable not only for cultural events, but also for various business events: conferences, seminars, contact fairs, product presentations. The space is especially suitable for freer-format events, during which the aim is to provide participants with the opportunity for informal communication. For the convenience of guests, there is a car park, public transport lines and several newly built economy-class hotels nearby.

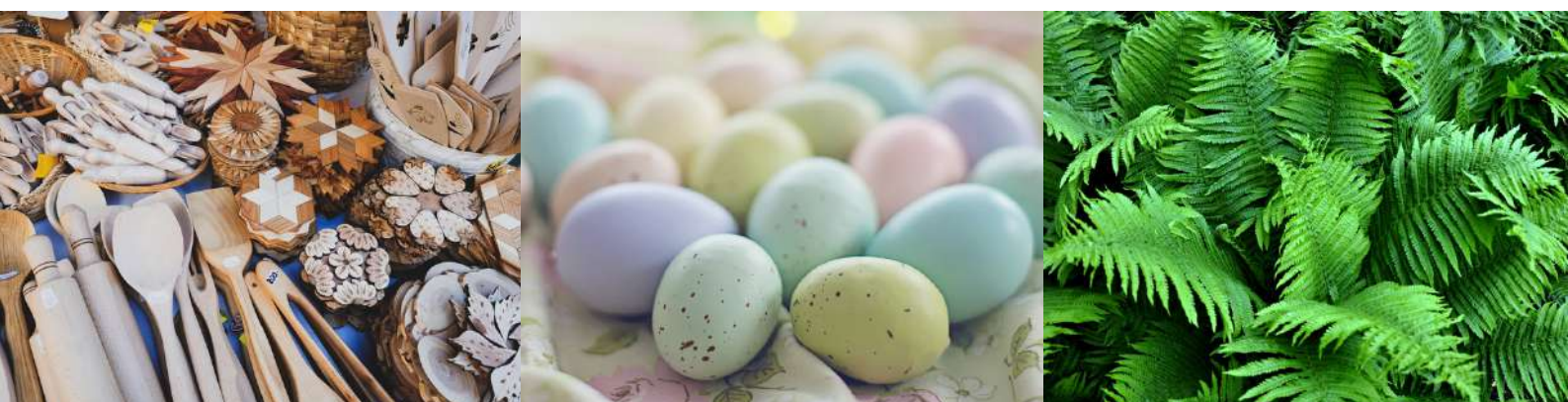
4.3. Local traditions, festivals, and cuisine

Vilnius and Lithuania itself have many cultural traditions, festivals and events representing the country and remembering local history and following many folk traditions. As well as delicious food, making Lithuania a small, but adventurous discovery.

Vilnius has a strong sense of heritage and folklore, craftsmanship, and community-driven traditions. Non the less is the annual Kaziukas Fair (or St. Casimir's Fair in english), held in early March. It's one of the city's oldest traditions, dating back to the 17th century. This vibrant festivity fills the streets with artisans selling handcrafted goods, traditional foods, and the famous verba—intricately woven palm decorations used to celebrate week before Easter.

Easter itself is marked by unique customs such as egg-dyeing with natural ingredients and egg tapping—a playful competition to see whose egg shell is the strongest. It is believed that if you go on an egg tapping and have the strongest egg that does not crack while tapped by other eggs - you will have very successful and prosperous year.

Joninės (or Rasos Festival), the Lithuanian version of Midsummer, another cherished tradition, where locals gather to celebrate the shortest night of the year with bonfires, songs, and the search for the mythical blooming fern - it is believed that if you find a blooming fern you will get magical powers, good fortune, love and luck.



photos retrieved from Canva



Vilnius is usually full of fun activities and events too. Besides cultural celebrations, Vilnius hosts a variety of festivals that reflect its artistic and cultural dynamism.

The Vilnius International Film Festival (VIFF), one of the region's most prestigious film events, showcases global cinema every spring. **Summer brings Christopher's Festival**, an open-air classical music series, while the **Vilnius Jazz Festival** attracts world-class musicians in the fall.

For a deeper dive into folklore, the **Dainų Šventė (Song Festival)**, held every 4 years, unites thousands of singers and dancers in a grand celebration of Lithuanian music and heritage, folk music and belonging to artistic community, keeping traditions and unique sound of music.

Meanwhile, the **Užgavėnės festival in February** is a lively pre-Lenten carnival where people wear masks, eat pancakes (blynai), and symbolically chase away winter - it's done to assure good harvest, beautiful spring weather, balanced summer and prosperous crops in autumn.

Vilnius is home for some quirky festivals as well. Recently, the city stars summer with Šaltibarščiai (cold traditional beetroot soup) festival. The festival first launched in 2023 and quickly gained popularity among locals and tourists, turning the city into a pink-themed extravaganza. Restaurants, cafés, and food trucks participate by offering unique variations of the classic dish, sometimes even experimenting with modern twists like vegan versions or fusion of flavours.

Besides the culinary twists and traditional flavours, the one can expect:

- Cooking demonstrations by top chefs showcasing different takes on šaltibarščiai.
- Food contests like "Who Can Eat the Most Šaltibarščiai?" or the best soup decoration challenge.
- Live music and performances.
- Themed activities, such as pink dress codes, photo zones, and even šaltibarščiai-inspired drinks.

Some local businesses and landmarks also join in the fun by lighting up buildings in pink or offering special promotions, the festival embraces the humour and the sense of community. The special and beloved soup brings everyone as a symbol to feel the connection and sense of being a quirky, unusual and still fitting in.

Vilnius celebrates Culture Night in June when the squares are filled with various types of artistic projects like music, dance, theatre, cinema, and photography.

In September, the Vilnius City Fiesta is held. It's the biggest and most spectacular festival of the city, with hundreds of events, great artists, high level performances, and exhibitions. Later in the month is the Vilnius Marathon, the biggest running celebration in Lithuania.

Lithuanian cuisine is hearty, seasonal, and deeply tied to agricultural traditions. Cepelinai, large potato dumplings filled with meat or curd cheese, are a national favourite. There is a national day of cepelinai, however no other traditions as just simply tasting it.

Another treat is kibinai, savoury pastries of Karaim origin, are a perfect snack on the go, and also a must to try in Trakai, as it was a part of minority group Lithuanian grand dukes brought over hundred of years ago.

For those who has sweet tooth, šakotis, a tree-shaped cake, is a highlight of festive tables. There are a few museums scattered around Lithuania offering an educational lesson to bake such a treat, it's believed that as a young lady, you have to learn how to make it, in order to find good and loving husband.

And no visit to Vilnius is complete without trying midus (mead), Lithuania's ancient honey-based drink, or a pint of locally brewed craft beer, which has gained international recognition in recent years.

Whether exploring lively street festivals, indulging in comforting local flavours, or participating in age-old traditions, Vilnius can offer a fun and unique cultural experience for every visitor.



photos retrieved from govilnius.lt; Šaltibarščiai festival



photos retrieved from govilnius.lt

Kaziukas fair; Vilnius International Film Festival; Užgavėnės carnival; Culture night; Song Festival; Vilnius Marathon

Interactive content



ACTIVITY 1: Interactive Timeline

Assign each participant or small group a specific historical period or key event.

They must:

- Research what happened during that time.
- Create a 1-minute guided tour explanation as if they were speaking to tourists.
- Present their part in chronological order, forming a human timeline.

Also, introduce participants that they can think of adding props to make presentations more engaging. Also, have a Q&A session where participants ask questions as if they were tourists.

ACTIVITY 2: Hidden Cultural Gems” – Custom Tour Creation

In small groups, participants create a mini-tour route focusing on lesser-known cultural spots. Their tour must include:

- At least 3 stops (e.g., a historic alley, a street art mural, a local market).
- A theme (e.g., “Underground Culture & Traditions” or “Local Legends & Myths”).
- An interactive element (e.g., a photo challenge, a short quiz, or a taste test).

Participants present their tour as a pitch for others. The group votes on the most creative or immersive tour.

5. Designing and leading tours

Leading a successful tour requires a combination of expertise, effective communication, and organisational abilities. This chapter is designated for Designing and Leading Tours, offers crucial insights into the planning and execution of engaging, well-organized tours. Participants will find out how to develop a program that harmonize cultural attractions with the interests of visitors, optimize time management, and enrich experiences through the use of visual aids and technology. Additionally, there is a strong focus on ensuring the safety and comfort of the group while remaining adaptable to evolving circumstances. By mastering these skills, guides can confidently deliver unforgettable and smooth experiences for their tour's participants.

5.1. Tour Preparation & creating engaging tour itineraries

For a tour to be enjoyable for everyone and interesting for the large amount of people preparation is key. To prepare an immersive tour, a guide has to take into consideration a few key points:

Research Group Demographics

- **Age Groups & Interests:** Some of the activities might be suitable and interesting for families, older tourists, or young adults, while others - not. Make sure that the activities are accessible for the group and engaging.
- **Cultural Backgrounds:** Be sure to consider different cultural sensitivities, dietary preferences or expectations based on the group's nationality or background while planning the route of the tour, once again, the tour should be adapted and inclusive for the majority of people joining.
- **Special Needs:** Be mindful of any physical limitations or specific requests such as dietary restrictions or accessibility needs, make sure they feel included in the group and their needs are met or make sure to have some alternatives if needed for them to enjoy the experience too.

Besides being mindful about the participants as a diverse group and trying to accommodate their human needs, think about the logistics of the tour too.

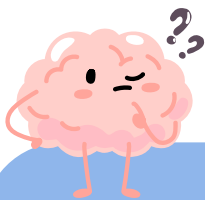
Logistical aspects:

- **Transportation and Timing:** Confirm transport schedules, double check the routes be sure when traveling between locations. Always account for extra time in case of delays of buses, trains, ferries or other type of transportation.
- **Local Partnerships:** Support to local businesses is not only ethical, but also beneficial for you as it might be easier to get good advice, help on bookings and reservations of various restaurants, accommodation and other services smoothly.

- **Weather:** Acknowledge that there might be weather changes and disruption, in such case have backup plans for outdoor activities. Also, it's a nice touch to remind the group about weather and suggest to take weather-appropriate clothing and other attire.

For a tour to be interesting and suitable for the majority of the group, don't forget to:

- **Balance Activities:** Provide a mix of active and relaxing activities, mix visits to historical landmarks with leaving some leisure time for cultural experiences, shopping, or exploration.
- **Hidden Gems:** Include some lesser known and off-the-beaten-path locations or facts to give a unique local experience, along with the planned tour. Although it's not necessary, but sharing some hidden gems can leave a lasting impression of the tour and give it a bit of personal touch.
- **Interactive Elements:** Whenever possible, include hands-on activities, such as a cooking class or craft demonstration, to let tourists "touch" or experience the culture in different way.
- **Local experiences:** Check if there are some events or festivals, events or local celebrations going on. This might be a thing to add or a thing to avoid during the tour - if the group is looking for immersive cultural setting and exploring as a local - such celebrations might be an essential part, however, if the tour is based on nature exploration, taking some time to enjoy local surroundings, or there are some people with accessibility needs in the group, it might not be so fun to deal with big crowds and delays or cancelations of local transport because of the celebration.
- **Rest places and breaks:** Schedule regular breaks for rest, snacks, and unwind, especially if the group includes children or older participants, take care into.
- **Emergency Plans:** Have a clear emergency plan for handling unexpected situations, such as sudden health issues of participants, or extreme weather conditions. It's better to know where and how to ask for help then to be stressed and just looking for a solution in the moment.



When trying to plan a tour, try to plan a tour make sure to think about attendees, their needs and expectations. Also, be sure to make reservations, look up schedules and overall circumstances - weather, resting places, celebrations and emergency strategy in case of an issue.



5.2. Timing and pacing your tour

Managing the time of tour is an essential skill for a guide, because you need to understand the perspective of a diverse group of people - have time to look around and discover the place, listen of interesting facts and wonder the unknown streets. **A guide has to be well prepared to manage the group's time** in different locations, plan out the route and set the limits of time attendees can spend in location for ultimate satisfactions and ability to learn and explore, also be prepared for delays, possible cancelations and time for additional questions.

To start planning the tour it's essential to **understand the route** - account for time needed to move between locations, considering factors like crowds, weather, and mobility needs and overall walking or transfer time. Leave some extra time for each of the steps, as it might differ from one group to another, and as always - it's better to have extra time instead of lacking it. Besides having some time to transfer, catch a bus or have a break, count the time in each of the locations. Ensure there's enough time at each stop for exploration, photos, and questions without feeling rushed.

As well, **set clear expectations** for participants, let participants know the schedule in advance so they can manage their own time accordingly if there is some free time planned.

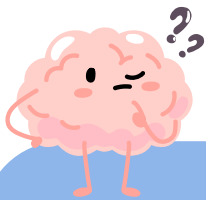
When planning, **keep in mind the breaks**, try to schedule them at scenic spots or cultural places with good infrastructure (bathrooms, shops, pharmacies nearby, some restaurants or coffee places) where guests can rest while still experiencing something interesting or having access to some of their needs at the time, like meals, water, medicine or a beautiful place to take photos and wonder around. A guide is not afraid to check in with the group and understand their energy, while some participants feel energised and ready to take on to another spot, others might be tired and in need of a break. Whenever unsure, ask the group for feedback on time management to know their needs and **compromise** with the group.

Flexibility is one of the main characteristics of a guide. Understanding the needs and expectations are needed to be flexible and able to adjust the tour according to the needs of group. If a site sparks curiosity, consider adjusting the time while ensuring the full itinerary is still covered. Also, be mindful that some delays might occur and have buffer time in the schedule some time dedicated (e.g., restroom stops, traffic, or extended discussions).



Also, sometimes people can spend hours on one location or want some extra time, however it's not always possible if you want to complete all the stops as indicated in the route of tour. Be sure to gently remind the group of time, give some cues, sometimes simple "does anyone have questions before we move?" can work wonders, also gathering at a focal point can help keep the group moving.

Also be sure to vary the tempo of the tour. Some activities might be more relaxed, allowing for more storytelling, more of a deep dive in to the topic and location, while other activities are more quick-paced to maintain the energy of the group. Also, try to give some guidelines for the attendees to help them better manage their time, attach the meeting to some specific point, for example say "you will have half an hour of free time, and at 14:30 let's meet at the front gate", this gives some time for people to rest, take care of their needs and self manage, if you are taking the bus, remind them then bus leaves and if you have a chat, pop in a quick message for those who might have missed crucial information about meeting and departure times and places.



Remember the golden rule - have more time when expected, sometimes it takes more for the group to manage their time, explore and enjoy the surroundings. It's better to have more time and in case everyone gathers on time, have a quick Q&A session or a point of discussion instead of feeling rushed, chasing a departing bus or feeling like you've left some places of the site unseen or the storytelling rushed. In this case, you will appear more professional as a guide and feel group more secure while being well managed.

While trying to accommodate everyone's needs, don't forget the schedule. Sometimes you have to remember, that it is not possible to fulfil everyone's wishes or accommodate everyone's expectations fully and sometimes you have to stay firm and keep up with the pace of tour. It's important to remind people that it's not the last time they visit and if there is a personal need, connection to the place, they are able to comeback on their own another time - it's their free will. Also, be sure to gently tell them that there are some activities taking place and they are expected to join in and continue the tour, if needed. Of course, be polite, engage them, but don't forget the bigger group and the plan of a tour.

5.3. Using visual aids and technology

In 21st century we have quite a few options to improve the tour and modernise it by adding various technologies, apps, AI solutions and other. When trying to plan a tour, consider visual technologies to help the guide:

- Think of a map being uploaded to google maps, share the link of the route with the group so they have access and can see what to expect.
- Add some photos from the locations, so the attendees see the places and can think of some questions or start to investigate early.
- If possible, try to add some artefacts, replicas, traditional objects, or interactive items make history and culture more tangible.

Those additional steps show true attention and persistence to make a tour more interesting and inclusive for everyone, letting see and feel a part of history. Besides, the guide should look into various options - maybe it's possible to include an application, that has more history about the exact site, an online tour or even an augmented reality exploration - whenever possible, share these resources with the group for them to remember the location and make connection with the story you created and shared.

In some environments, when it's busy and noisy, think of a possibility to have some wireless system and headphones for people to be able to hear the guide better. Also, if there is a possibility to have an audio guide - share it with the group, maybe a part of it would prefer the audio guide to hear it better or listen at their own pace.

However, don't abuse the technology - people are exploring and going on tour because they are interested in unique features of the place that is more likely has been touched by centuries than screens and modern innovations. Also, if you choose to use it, approach it as an additional tool rather than a replacement. It's your narration of the story that truly matters and such tools can only compliment it, not overshadow it.

Also, consider the group themselves - if they are teenagers, elders or more technology geeks? For different audiences you can add different tools to enhance the story.





5.4. Ensuring safety and comfort for tour participants

Handling a group of people can be an intense task. Everybody is different and the guide is never sure about their behavior in different setting, thus ensuring everyone's safety and having clear guidelines is a must.

Before the tour

While planning the tour consider it as a whole experience and make suggestions for the participants attire - maybe you are going for a long hike and they need some mosquito repellent, comfortable shoes or specific clothing. In such case, inform the tour attendees as soon as possible and remind them before the tour of such expectations and needs. Also, check the plan of the tour - is there any place that would require a permit? Anything that can be considered dangerous? Are all locations will be reachable by emergency services in case any accident happens? Plan it all in advance and look at your participants - evaluate what could happen, and prepare a plan in advance.

At the start of the tour

Explain not only the exciting parts, but safety too. It's better to seem boring, however in case something goes down - the participants are informed. During the safety introduction, cover emergency exits, meeting points, and first aid availability. If you are in the nature or the settings that are a bit tricky to navigate, demonstrate it - how to take tricky paths, cross roads, or interact with local wildlife/cultural sites. This assures that it's less likely to be misunderstood or get hurt by doing something dangerous. Also, it's easy to get into dangerous and life threatening situations when a person is alone and there is no one around to ask for help. Make sure that the group avoids leaving someone behind and encourage a buddy system for accountability, especially in large groups, so everyone at all times has someone for a group nearby in case any help is needed.

Also, have a first emergency kit - it's much more often used than one could expect. Thus, establish a strategy that would have a plan for lost participants, including a designated meeting spot, sharing your phone number or a way to reach you in case someone needs any assistance.

As always - be prepared for the unknown, like sudden weather changes - in such case, make sure to include it in the initial plan, in case people need to have rain jacket, a tube of sunscreen or a jacket because of a sudden change. Also, have an alternative or two, in case some sites can not be visited or some paths are closed - it would still give a different glimpse of local life.



And try to stay focused and composed in tough times. If you start stressing and panicking, all of the group will soon feel the dread and no one is able to address the situation and provide help needed. Try to react calmly, it's all possible to resolve if you just don't stress over it and approach situation neutrally, staying composed.

During the tour

If you are approaching dangerous area, remind participants of what is to come, stay calm and offer reassurance to the ones who are feeling hesitant towards the experience. Some people might be anxious, unused to a larger crowd, but at the same time - do not force people to complete all the steps if they don't feel comfortable to do it. Keep neutral mentality through the tour as much as possible.

After the tour

Don't forget to get feedback on those small things - maybe you should have approached the safety different, mention something additional or consider including extra preparation steps if needed to parts of tour. It's always good to know and continue to work on tour for ultimate satisfaction.

5.5. Adapting tours for different seasons and events

Depending on location and area you are having the tour, it needs to have a couple of alternatives to balance the tour when needed. Some disruptions of weather or events may occur and in some cases you will need to react quickly. However, it's always can be promoted as a bit of a different tour in different seasons or during some holidays - as tourists can experience unique vibe, or a cultural event. For instance, winter in Vilnius is totally different when spring in Vilnius, both of these seasons having different celebrations, weather and overall vibes.

Understand seasonal changes

In spring and summer you can have a longer tour, as generally days are longer, allowing participants to explore more. However, think of it as it also can be hot in the summer, which might require additional stops, water breaks and rest. During the autumn, think of ways you can honour harvest season, where to have those cosy and warm experiences and share some local traditions of the season. While in winter hide to indoor attractions (museums, historical buildings) and incorporate festive events like Christmas markets or winter sports. Of course, keep in mind weather while planning activities outside.



If there are any holidays in specific season - consider them, as mentioned before, it can be a part of the tour, or you should avoid it as it might be more crowded. However, these celebrations and some events can offer an unique take on the tour, as you can introduce it being additional thing to do. Like to explore Vilnius in the winter and check out the Christmas market, or lights in different courtyards.

Also, whenever planning a tour in autumn and winter, consider bad weather, cold and unpleasant weather. Include alternatives for bad weather, such as indoor venues or sheltered stops - some places you can explore or take a rest and warm up.

Also, if you are including some culinary delight stops, highlight seasonal food and drink, such as summer street food or winter mulled wine tastings, some traditional cookies and so on.

On the note of that, take advantage of the ongoing atmosphere and use it to set the tone of the tour. Maybe you are visiting the Grand Palace of Dukes just before the Christmas and can add some local traditions from those times that was a part of their holiday season routine, to share with the group. Or maybe you can make stops at some Christmas markets swiping some other ones.

Whenever planning, think of something people can easily connect to and feel relevant to the moment, once you point those things, include them as part of your tour during the changing season and check it before the next one, add new information, trending sports and some cultural happenings to be sure that each time a group of tourists have an exceptional and well-thought experience.



Interactive content



ACTIVITY 1: Build Your Own Tour – Itinerary Planning

Each participant or small group (3-4 people) create a half-day or full-day tour itinerary based on a specific theme (e.g., "Hidden Gems in the City," "Historical Landmarks of the region or Local Cuisine and Gastronomic Discoveries," or "Nature and Adventure in Vilnius").

Their itinerary should include:

- A logical route (mapping out stops efficiently).
- A mix of historical, cultural, and interactive experiences.
- Timing estimates for each stop to balance pace.
- Consideration of seasonal factors and accessibility.

Participants present their itinerary as if pitching it, while other participants provide feedback on how it was or what can be improved.

It's important to take into consideration the circumstances - is there any local festivals, celebrations in the time frame of the tour that can be added or offered as an option? If so, why it fits, what are the benefits and interesting key points related to offered tour programme?

Interactive content



ACTIVITY 2: Digital Tools Workshop

Each participant selects a digital tool (e.g., Google Maps, an audio guide app, a translation tool, or AR-based apps) and demonstrates how it can be used on a tour.

The participants think of the way the tool can be added to the created tour programme, why it is important, what it offers to the tour and how to present the innovation to the attendees of the tour.

Participants test each tool in a mock tour scenario.

Ideas:

- Pair participants up—one plays a tourist with a language barrier while the other must use a translation tool to communicate.
- Encourage participants to design a QR code stop where tourists scan a code for extra tour info.



6. Customer service

Guided tour is also a part of customer service, joining an excursion and being lead through a new location brings new experiences, feelings for both - the guide and tourist. In Lithuania tour organisation is regulated under Tourism Law of the Republic of Lithuania. This law establishes the principles of organizing tourism services, requirements for the provision of tourism services, protection of travelers' rights, and the competence of state and municipal institutions and bodies in the field of tourism. In the law, a guide is defined as a person who provides information about natural, cultural, scientific, religious and other objects or areas during excursions and who holds a guide certificate. The certificate is awarded to persons who have completed a special guide training course of at least 250 academic hours, covering the disciplines of organizing and conducting excursions, rhetoric, professional ethics, communication, psychology, Lithuanian culture, history and geography, legal regulation of guide activities and have passed a practical tour-leading exam. The completed guide training course and the passed practical tour-leading exam are valid for 2 years, during which the person must submit an application to the Service for a guide certificate.

Due to that there are quite a few courses or programs a person can attend in order to complete and do guided tours as a career.

Despite the increasing number of tourists, Lithuania lacks structure and a common policy for guide training, as well as clear guidelines and regulations to maintain the quality of tours. At the same time, there should be room for guides to have creative freedom and the flexibility to adapt their tours without going through a bureaucratic process or relying solely on existing frameworks, which could make tours feel scripted rather than like authentic experiences.

However, common practices from other customer service-based positions also apply to being a tour guide. This includes being attentive to detail, polite, and prepared to handle various situations, such as conflict resolution and answering diverse questions, all while providing excellent service and memorable experiences.





6.1. Understanding visitor expectations

Besides being a representative of a country or location of a tour, a guide is also providing a service to each of the participants attending the tour. Guides create experiences that align with what tourists are looking for. Due to that, understanding visitor expectations is key to delivering a tour that feels engaging, relevant, and memorable.

To begin the planning of the tour, guide has to understand participants expectations. Attendees come with different goals and expectations, while others are just interesting in visiting some places, taking nice pictures and getting to know a couple of topics, other are interested in deep explorations, getting to know all the nooks and facts of a place. **A good guide should be able to recognise the expectations of the participants and be able to deliver the tour based on them.** Most likely expectations may include:

- Educational prosperity. Some tourists want historical depth, cultural context, and expert knowledge.
- Entertainment. Participants may prefer an interactive, storytelling approach rather than a lecture-style tour.
- Adventure. Some seek hidden gems, unusual and unique experiences, or interesting photo opportunities.
- Relaxation. Travellers may prefer a slower-paced tour, insights about the environment, time to wander around and absorb the information through exploration.
- Unique experience. A lot of travellers expect unique emotions, feelings or activities, sights that might be only typical to that exact location and give them opportunity to visit or join something they cannot find easily in other places.

A guide can better understand visitor expectations by engaging with participants before and during the tour. Asking questions about what excites them and their main interests helps tailor the experience to their preferences. A well-balanced approach that combines storytelling with factual information keeps the tour engaging. Additionally, effective group management is key—guides should read the group's energy levels, anticipate their needs, and adjust accordingly. This means recognizing when participants need extra time at a location to fully absorb the experience, take photos and enjoy or when they are losing interest and the pace should be quicker or the storytelling shall include a joke or interesting fact.



Feeling the mood of the group, understanding and being able to provide something that would not only feel immersive, but also make sure to be accustomed to the group and mindful of language barriers, customs, and sensitivities.

6.2. Building rapport with tour participants

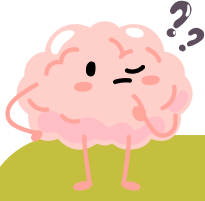
For the tour to feel interesting, informative and fun, it's important to establish the trust and connection between the group and the guide. If the audience trusts the guide, they are so much more willing to interact which in turn makes the whole tour more satisfying and personal, they are not afraid to answer the questions, ask them and participate in discussion when needed. Also, they can feel the mutual atmosphere between themselves, making a group so much more coordinated if any obstacle or crisis arise.

Even before the tour you have to establish connection with the participants. To do it, you need to know who they are, what they want, and what they expect from you - make a little investigation on who are your participants and what expectations they have. This means doing some research on their background, preferences, needs, and goals. This can be done by looking up information online, investigating the tour internally and adapting to the group (families with kids, adventure enthusiasts) or asking the participants directly - this can be done by asking the question of expectations or biggest excitement when registering to the tour.

Communication is the key to building connection with the attendees. You need to communicate clearly, respectfully, and professionally with them at every stage of their travel journey - whether they are interested in the tour before joining, having some questions or doubts during the tour or a few follow up remarks after finishing tour.

You should also use positive language, active listening, and open-ended questions to show your interest and attention. Moreover, you should avoid jargon, slang, or technical terms that might confuse or offend your clients - keep it simple, and also adaptable, as one group might speak the language better than other. **Tour should be inclusive.**

Empathy and appreciation are two important emotions that can help you build rapport with the participants. Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another person. Appreciation is the expression of gratitude and recognition for someone's efforts or achievements. You can show empathy and appreciation by acknowledging their emotions, concerns, and feedback. You can also thank them for choosing you, share the thoughts about questions and provide support in follow-up questions.



Diversifying Tour Offerings: To enhance competitiveness and sustainability, destinations should broaden their tourism products beyond traditional models to include cultural, ecological, and adventure experiences that align with tourist interests, the same applies to touristic guides, who's goal is to provide an insightful, well-rounded and interesting service for an attendee (Kyriakaki, 2022).

Providing detailed information about packages, additional costs, weather conditions, local customs, and potential challenges helps travelers prepare adequately.

Maintain Transparency:

- Being candid about attractions, accommodations, dining experiences, or destinations fosters trust. If certain options aren't suitable, offering better alternatives is advisable.
- Setting realistic expectations and then exceeding them can lead to memorable experiences, encouraging repeat visits and long-term loyalty.

Personalize Experiences:

- Understanding the client's market—be it seniors, students, or church groups—and offering familiarization trips (FAMs) for those unfamiliar with the destination can enhance satisfaction.
- Utilizing previous booking data to provide hyper-personalized experiences caters to individual preferences.

Foster Creativity:

- Thinking "out of the box" and finding alternative solutions (plans B, C, or Z) demonstrates a commitment to providing the best experience.
- Innovative approaches can uncover new opportunities for the destination.

Engage and Show Appreciation:

- Expressing gratitude to clients for choosing your venue or region fosters a positive relationship.
- Engaging with clients ensures they feel valued and appreciated, enhancing their overall experience.





6.3. Managing diverse groups and ensuring inclusivity

For the tour to feel interesting, informative and fun, it's important to establish the trust and connection between the group and the guide. If the audience trusts the guide, they are so much more willing to interact which in turn makes the whole tour more satisfying and personal, they are not afraid to answer the questions, ask them and participate in discussion when needed. Also, they can feel the mutual atmosphere between themselves, making a group so much more coordinated if any obstacle or crisis arise.

Even before the tour you have to establish connection with the participants. To do it, you need to know who they are, what they want, and what they expect from you - make a little investigation on who are your participants and what expectations they have. This means doing some research on their background, preferences, needs, and goals. This can be done by looking up information online, investigating the tour internally and adapting to the group (families with kids, adventure enthusiasts) or asking the participants directly - this can be done by asking the question of expectations or biggest excitement when registering to the tour.

Communication is the key to building connection with the attendees. You need to communicate clearly, respectfully, and professionally with them at every stage of their travel journey - weather they are interested in the tour before joining, having some questions or doubts during the tour or a few follow up remarks after finishing tour.

You should also use positive language, active listening, and open-ended questions to show your interest and attention. Moreover, you should avoid jargon, slang, or technical terms that might confuse or offend your clients - keep it simple, and also adaptable, as one group might speak the language better than other. **Tour should be inclusive.**

Empathy and appreciation are two important emotions that can help you build rapport with the participants. Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another person. Appreciation is the expression of gratitude and recognition for someone's efforts or achievements. You can show empathy and appreciation by acknowledging their emotions, concerns, and feedback. You can also thank them for choosing you, share the thoughts about questions and provide support in follow-up questions.



6.4. Handling complaints and providing solutions

Professional tour guides are responsible for leading, coordinating, and guiding groups of tourists (Mak, 2010). In addition to making, leading and overseeing tours they take on several other key roles (Tsaur, 2017), including providing in-depth information about destinations, fostering group cohesion, handling emergencies, ensuring the safety of all participants, resolving issues managing conflicts, and enhancing tourists' likelihood of joining future tours (Ap, 2001).

A core aspect of professionalism in tour guiding is the ability to address difficult situations and challenges effectively. To do so, they identify the issues quickly and are able to implement the best possible solutions. For instance, tour guides must recognize and resolve conflicts that may arise between themselves and tourists.

Strong, satisfactory relationships between guide and attendees are only possible when conflicts are managed quickly, skilfully and resolved accordingly. There are no one "fits all" conflict management technique that would work effectively, each situation presents unique challenges. Tour guides must continuously evaluate and refine their conflict resolution skills.

Despite the significance of conflict management in tour guiding, research on tour guide behavior—particularly their approaches to handling conflicts with tourists remain limited in tourism and travel literature, thus it's important to look back at the simple customer service advice and use the knowledge if needed.

Conflict resolution techniques

Assertive communication

This type of communication expresses one's needs and wants while taking into consideration other people's needs and wants is known as assertive communication. This type of communication first of all shifts the conflict from blaming other person to expressing one's feelings and thoughts: The first step in assertive communication is to use "I" statements. The difference between an "I" statement and a "you" statement is "I am feeling hurt by your actions." versus "You are out of control". Statements with a focus on own perception are designed to express and take responsibility for your feelings rather than blaming others. This way, a guide can take the leading position in the situation, not blaming the person who for example might be causing a conflict situation and express their own role in it.

Secondly, making a non-threatening description of the problem is essential. It is critical that while describing the problem or behavior that guide remains calm and collected (Washington State University,n.d). For example someone is disagreeing with guide's storyline and calling it out. A guide can shift it and instead of asking "to keep the comments to oneself" shift it to "I understand that this might make you feel different feelings, however, please wait until the end or a pause for discussion so we can continue with the excursion, I know that some of people might have questions and I'm up to it when we have the right time". Such position will give time to debrief and also not make rushed comments, also let other people to have a full tour and then move to discussions and Q&A.

Finally, let reality be the disciplining agent by asking these questions: If you continue the behaviour, will it make the tour more engaging for you and others? Do you think such actions is acceptable and respectful towards others? This gives people a chance to express why their acting that way, what are the thoughts behind it and sometimes even see the situation from another side, not centred on their "I need to, I have to" behavior.

Active listening

Both sides in conflict situations should rely on being an active listener and active participant in the conversation, it's impossible to solve something if you don't listen to the arguments or the position that is being expressed.

ACTIVE LISTENING RULES

- 1. Put all your attention on what the person is saying.**
- 2. Restate their most important thoughts, feelings, and concerns.**
- 3. Don't interrupt, correct mistakes, give advice, or tell your own story.**
- 4. Give the person time to speak. Don't immediately fill the space.**
- 5. Use non-verbal gestures to show support.**



While looking for a resolution use neutral words to help another person say more about the situation and how they feel. If needed, do not be afraid to repeat what you have said or restate their position in your own words what you thought you heard the other person say, including their feelings and needs. Clarify their position, it's better to have more information by asking nonjudgmental questions rather than jumping to assumptions.



Active listening is another valuable skill for conflict resolution. When tensions rise, people often want to feel heard above all else. A guide who prioritizes listening over responding quickly fosters an environment in which concerns are addressed. Expressing a willingness to contribute and compromise on a solution rather than engaging in a back-and-forth argument promotes trust and cooperation. Understanding the underlying cause of the situation, rather than just the surface-level complaints, enables more effective resolution.

In stressful situations, a professional tour guide maintains their composure. Maintaining composure is critical because it not only prevents further escalation but also establishes the tone for the group. Sudden reactions, defensive language, or signs of irritation can increase the conflict rather than resolve it. Instead, calm breathing, measured responses, and a neutral stance can help relieve tension. No matter how heated a situation becomes, a guide should avoid getting caught up in the emotional turmoil of others.

Another important aspect of de-escalation is to give people space. Nobody wants to feel cornered, either physically or emotionally. A skilled guide understands how to provide an exit strategy in a disagreement, allowing people to retreat gracefully rather than feeling forced into confrontation. Finding common ground—for example, shared interests can be an effective tool for shifting attention away from conflict and toward resolution. Sometimes taking a short break to allow emotions to settle is the most effective way to prevent escalation. In situations when it's not possible to continue the tour, it's better to take a short break - it's better to be flexible with breaks or miss a point rather than to have a whole group dissatisfied by how the guide handled the situation.

Clear communication is equally important. When establishing boundaries or redirecting a situation, a guide must avoid blaming the person. Statements that focus on facts or personal observations, rather than direct accusations are far more effective to reduce tension. Using neutral language, frame the issues objectively can keep misunderstandings from escalating further.

Finally, maintaining a sense of lightness can be extremely effective. A well-placed anecdote or a moment of humor can lift the mood during a long journey, and a calm and positive demeanour can de-escalate a potential conflict. For example, when someone complains of long journey, a guide can throw a light comment that "sometimes you have to sacrifice time if you want to see many places in one go".



Serious situations need cautious handling, but when appropriate, breaking the tension with a non-confrontational, reassuring approach can redirect the energy in a more positive direction.

If necessary, address the persons feelings, but don't fully take the blame - a guide can offer reassurance such as "I'm sorry that you feel that way" or "Excuse me, but I do not see the point of the comment". Keeping the neutral position and not taking the blame of the situation does not provide a way to continue the conflict.

Whenever conflict arises it's important not only to address it but also compromise on a possible solution. Effective negotiation is not about winning or losing; it is about finding a solution that benefits everyone while maintaining a positive group dynamics.

Successful negotiation begins with a determination to resolve the issue at hand. Establishing ground rules, whether explicitly stated or implied through behavior, serves as a foundation for productive discussion. Mutual respect is essential, and ensuring that all agree to refrain from interrupting, name-calling, or making dismissive remarks fosters a positive environment to solve the problem. Honesty is essential for conflict resolution because it requires openness about concerns and expectations. Once a respectful framework is established, the next step is storytelling. Each person involved in the conflict has a unique point of view, and it is important to include their perspectives. Being specific about what happened, expressing emotions clearly, and actively listening to the opposing point makes environment in which all voices are heard.

Clarifying needs is a critical step in the negotiation process. Beyond the surface-level disagreement, there are frequently deeper concerns that must be addressed. A skilled guide can separate facts from emotions, and that helps to avoid misunderstandings and keeps the discussion focused. The final stage of negotiation is identifying "win-win" solutions and reaching an agreement. Taking a flexible and collaborative approach increases the chances of success. Using open-ended phrases like "What if we...?" or "Maybe we could try..." can promote creative problem-solving and let everyone feel included. The goal is not only to resolve the immediate issue, but also keep a friendly and inclusive atmosphere.

A tour guide who masters the art of negotiation becomes more than just a facilitator; they are also a bridge between opposing opinions. Handling conflicts with professionalism and empathy ensures that conflict situations are resolved smoothly, allowing the journey to proceed with minimal disruption.

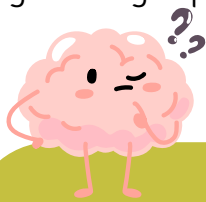
6.5. Creating memorable and positive visitor experiences

A successful tour guide does more than just provide information; they create an interactive, an involving, and emotionally powerful experience that leaves an lasting imprint on visitors. Research on this topic has identified the key elements that contribute to a memorable tour, such as storytelling, personalization, emotional engagement, and sensory experiences.

Studies on guided tours confirms that at heritage sites found that visitors remembered historical facts better when presented through a narrative rather than a list of dates and events. Guides who incorporated emotions and suspense saw higher satisfaction in the tour attendees (Chatterjee et al., 2023). Looking at the available date emotionally engaging tours result in stronger memories. Tours that evoke awe, nostalgia, or excitement are more likely to leave an indelible mark (Sahoo et.al, 2022).

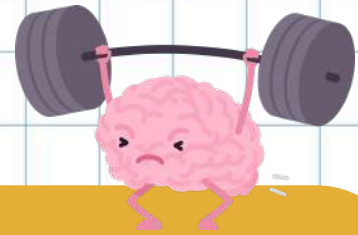
Unexpected elements, such as a surprise local delicacy tasting, add to memorability; hands-on activities or reenactments make experiences more immersive. The guide's ability to manage group interactions has a significant impact on the overall experience. According to research, enthusiasm, clear communication, and attentiveness all help to foster a positive group environment.

Creating a memorable and positive visitor experience requires more than just destination knowledge, it involves emotional engagement, storytelling, uniqueness and some multi-sensory elements, and of course - effective group management. Guides who connect with visitors on a personal and emotional level elevate the tour from a simple sightseeing trip to something nostalgic and worth remembering.



Being open and flexible, also making a story feel real, including some “touch, taste, hear, smell, see” experiences make a tour feel more interesting and a thing to remember from one’s trip. A great touristic guide can not only provide a personalised attentive experience, but also be able to accommodate and include everyone effortlessly, oversee the group and manage stressful situations. Such person can solve issues creatively, also be open and neutral in conflict resolution. A skilled guide can balance between attention to the whole group as a unit and providing attention to each individual and their personal experience.

Interactive content



ACTIVITY 1: Case Study - Turn A Challenge Around

Laura is an experienced tour guide leading a full-day city tour for a mixed group of tourists, including a retired couple, a family with 2 young children, an adventurous solo traveler, and a group of 5 international students. The itinerary includes historical sites, cultural landmarks, and a local food-tasting experience.

The group starts the day excited, but as the tour progresses, Laura faces multiple challenges:

1. **Unmet Expectations:** The retired couple expected more in depth historical tour, while the family with children finds the historical parts too long and not engaging enough.
2. **Language Barrier:** 2 of the international students have difficulty understanding Laura's explanations.
3. **Physical Discomfort:** One participant is feeling unwell due to the heat.
4. **Complaint from a Tourist:** A solo traveler complains that the local food tasting includes meat, which they cannot eat because they are vegan.
5. **Unexpected Delay:** Gediminas' Hill is unexpectedly closed for maintenance, causing frustration among the tourists.

Interactive content



Task for Participants:

As a tour guide, how should Laura handle each of these situations to ensure a positive experience for all visitors?

- How can she adapt her communication to meet different tourist expectations?
- What strategies can she use to ensure inclusivity and group engagement?
- How should she handle the complaints professionally?
- What immediate actions should she take to resolve the unexpected closure issue?
- How can she turn these challenges into a more memorable and enjoyable experience for everyone?
-

Reflection & Discussion

- **What customer service principles did Laura apply?**
- **How can these strategies be used in real-world guiding situations?**
- **What could be done before the tour to anticipate and prevent such issues?**

Interactive content



ACTIVITY 2: Check your itinerary

Ask participants to bring the itinerary they created in Module 5's interactive content section. Each participant will review their own itinerary, considering ways to enhance it for different tourist needs, expectations, and experiences.

Steps:

1. Self-Review: Each participant examines their itinerary and identifies potential improvements, keeping in mind the diverse interests and preferences of different tourist types.
2. Sharing & Discussion: Participants present their itinerary updates, explaining how they plan to make their tour more engaging and accessible while avoiding potential challenges.
3. Peer Feedback: Fellow participants and learning guides provide constructive feedback, offering new perspectives and suggestions for further improvement.

It's important that each guide learns how to use their critical thinking and adaptability to refine the tour experience.



7. Environmental & sustainable tourism practices

Sustainable tourism is quickly becoming an integral part of the travel industry, focusing on reducing environmental impact while promoting long-term benefits for local communities and ecosystems. This chapter is intended to provide tour guides with the knowledge and tools they need to promote environmentally friendly practices and raise visitor awareness about the importance of conservation. By educating tourists about local environmental issues and encouraging responsible tourism, guides can contribute to a more sustainability in the destinations they serve, by respecting local communities and supporting sustainable efforts to help preserve both cultural and natural heritage.

7.1. Promoting sustainability

The Lithuanian Tourism Roadmap, prepared and approved by the Ministry of Economy and Innovation and its partners, is a set of strategic guidelines for the tourism sector's long-term development. It outlines ambitious goals and targets to be met by 2030 in order to boost the tourism industry.

The strategy consists of four main strands. The first goal is to create an enabling ecosystem for the growth of sustainable tourism. This will be accomplished by developing a national certification system for tourism businesses and organizing communication campaigns about sustainability in tourism. Training for tourism industry personnel on the Green Deal.

The second goal is to ensure that Lithuania becomes an appealing tourist destination in the Baltic region. The goal is to position Lithuania as a green, sustainable tourist destination, to ensure effective and collaborative marketing of the country's major events, tourist attractions, and products, and to increase demand for Lithuania as a tourist destination.

The Lithuanian Tourism Roadmap's third direction is innovative and data-driven tourism. It ensures that tourism policy is based on current, comprehensive, and accurate information. It also encourages tourism service providers to use innovative solutions and collect, share, and utilize an increasing amount of tourism data. To this end, tourism professionals' skills will be improved through the use of IT tools.

The fourth goal is to help Lithuania become a resilient and competitive tourism destination. This includes improved cooperation among tourism regions as well as better training for tourism personnel.

The document also divides priority inbound tourism markets into four segments. High-intensity markets were chosen because they generate the most tourist flows and have high potential: Germany, Poland, United Kingdom and other European countries (Lithuanian Ministry of the Economy and Innovation, 2024).

In general, sustainability promotion in touristic tours are essential, and the guide should lead the group of tourists by example, explaining the situation and the policy of the site or country, for them to know the standards and rules of sustainability. Guides play a crucial role in promoting sustainable tourism by encouraging eco-friendly practices, such as reducing waste, minimizing carbon footprints, and supporting green tourism initiatives. Sustainable Tourism does not refer to a specific type of tourism, rather it is an aspiration for the impacts of all forms of tourism to be sustainable for generations to come. Another important term is responsible travel, it refers to the behavior and style of individual travellers. The behaviors align with making a positive impact to the destination rather than negative ones.



Sustainable tourism should:

- Make the best use of environmental resources, which are critical to tourism development, while also preserving important ecological processes and contributing to the conservation of natural heritage and biodiversity.
- Respect host communities' socio-cultural authenticity, preserve their built and living cultural heritage, and traditional values, and promote intercultural understanding and tolerance.
- Ensure long-term economic viability by providing equitable socioeconomic benefits to all stakeholders, such as stable employment, income-earning opportunities, and social services to host communities, as well as contributing to poverty alleviation (United Nations World Tourism Organization, n.d.).



7.2. Educating visitors on local environmental issues

The process of ensuring sustainable development is inextricably linked to the level of environmental awareness and education among the human population. It's also linked to environmental behavior and action. When it comes to society's focus on sustainable development, tourism is expected to help protect natural heritage and make the best use of environmental resources as a condition for tourism development. It is also expected to respect local communities by preserving their cultural heritage, traditional values, and lifestyles. At the same time, it is important to ensure that economic benefits are distributed fairly among tourism stakeholders. The use of sustainable tourism is emphasized, especially in protected areas where the main focus of tourism development is to optimize its impacts in relation to economic benefits, protect natural and cultural heritage, and improve the quality of life of local people, including visitors' experience quality (Šimková et.al, 2023).

Thus, how does one guide approach the topic of educating people?

One of the most effective ways to educate and engage tourists in sustainable tourism principles and behaviors is to **provide them with relevant and trustworthy information before they travel to their destination**. This can include advice on how to reduce their carbon footprint, respect local culture and customs, avoid over tourism and support local businesses, and preserve wildlife and biodiversity. Websites, brochures, videos, podcasts, and social media are all options for providing pre-travel information can be helpful to understand the broader perspective and set right expectations.

Another way to educate and **involve tourists in sustainable tourism principles** and behaviors is to incorporate them into tour design and delivery. This includes selecting sustainable modes of transportation, lodging, and activities, as well as collaborating with local guides, operators, and organizations that adhere to ethical and environmental guidelines - it's an indirect way to get the tourists involved in sustainable practices. It also entails giving tourists opportunities to interact with the local community, learn about their culture and history, and get involved in conservation and social projects.

A third method for educating attendees in sustainable tourism principles is to **provide them with feedback and incentives during and after their trip**.



Feedback and incentives can assist tourists in reflecting on their impact, appreciating their contributions, and motivating them to maintain their sustainable practices.

Besides the methods of actively involving the sustainable parts in logistics of tourism, a good guide **incorporates it in the storyline, providing some insights about green practices to the participants of the tour.** Storytelling employs narratives, characters, emotions to convey messages, values, or lessons about sustainability. Gamification and storytelling can assist tourists in connecting with the destination, locals, and issues in a more personal and meaningful way.

As other learning, to understand the sustainable practices is a process. This includes **giving attendees access to resources, tools, platforms, or networks that will help them stay informed, updated, and involved in sustainability issues** and initiatives. It also entails soliciting their feedback, suggestions, or ideas for improving the sustainability of the tourism industry and destinations. Supporting ongoing learning and improvement can help tourists retain their interest, commitment, and responsibility for sustainability after their trip.



Interesting to know:

The Swiss Foundation for Solidarity in Tourism (SST) is a non-profit organization that grew from one of Switzerland's leading tour operators. The foundation, established in 2001, supports projects and organizations in Switzerland and around the world that aim to improve the livelihoods of people in tourist destinations, contribute to sustainable tourism development, and foster "intercultural understandings" between visitors and locals.

The foundation hopes to promote sustainable tourism both online and offline by awarding grants to deserving projects.



7.3. Responsible tourism practices for tour guides

Tourism accounts for about 8% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Tour operators can reduce their environmental impact by using eco-friendly transportation, reducing waste, and encouraging travelers to use sustainable practices, such as carrying reusable water bottles.

Sustainable tourism can help to alleviate poverty by creating income opportunities for local communities. Creating tours featuring local guides, artisans, and small businesses, provides tourists with an authentic experience, but it also ensures that the community benefits economically from tourism. A guide should make sure to involve some parts of the tour that teach visitors about climate change and the importance of protecting natural habitats and cultural heritage. This may include visits to conservation projects or heritage sites with knowledgeable guides who can provide insightful commentary.

However, tour guide should also check the sustainable practices and options of sites, accommodation, services of the relaxation stops, transportation and other parts. Maybe it's possible to change the diesel vehicle to an electric one, instead of a popular restaurant chain, choose the stop at the local restaurant that chooses to cook from local and seasonal products. These small steps can make a difference then accumulated, assuring that the whole group learns something about sustainability through small implemented actions.

Avoid one time use things during the tours - if a tour guide knows that there is going to be a stop by the mineral water spring, it's better to ask participants before the tour to bring their own reusable water bottle cups instead of each one of them drinking of a plastic one time use cup. As well as think of meal situation and water refill stops, maybe it's already in the city and can be implemented in the tour as short the stops to restock and refill instead of having take aways and bottles of water.

In Vilnius, during the warmer months, 26 public drinking water stations are available where individuals can refill their water bottles for free. Additionally, most cafes offer free water refills for bottles on hot summer days. Incorporating these options into an itinerary can contribute to sustainability by reducing plastic waste and promoting eco-friendly practices. Including such stops in travel plans helps minimize the need for bottled water, ultimately saving significant amounts of plastic.



Similar practices can also be applied while thinking of a lunch stop, instead of picking up deliveries - make sure, an option to sit down and eat at the restaurant is feasible. As well if the guide is planning a tour outside in nature, be aware to mention that you encourage to take packed meals in reusable boxes.

In many cases tourists see the guide as local expert they can ask for advice on places, therefore it's important to keep a list of sustainable options. For example instead of souvenir places selling generic items produced unsustainably, it's more encouraged to suggest a local place where the items are made locally and in unique way. Such practise helps to avoid the sustainable cost of import and export, also assures an unique piece from the place.

To include the local practices of sustainability in the place is also important - it's important to introduce a tour attendee to some local policies and customs to sustainability. For instance, in Lithuania it's expected that one recycles the rubbish and throws it out in the specified containers. As well as to monitor the amount of thrown out plastic bottles there is a deposit system introduced, to encourage people to return the bottles for an additional 10 cent fee. Also, in major cities such as Vilnius, there is an active system on trolleys - a carriages powered by electricity instead of diesel, to cut down on CO2.

Getting such knowledge and advice from a respective guide can help a person to navigate the sustainable scene of the place. In some places, for example national parks it's forbidden to rubbish and one's who do it might face financial fines, so knowing it protects not only environment, but also a person's finances.

Interesting to know:

Discounts at the café

Many cafés, coffee shops, and gas stations provide discounts ranging from 5% to 15% for customers who bring their own reusable cups. The larger coffee shop chains, such as Vero Cafe, Caif Cafe, and Circle K gas stations, undoubtedly offer discounts to environmentally conscious customers. We cannot guarantee a discount from other smaller businesses, but the ultimate goal of the zero waste movement is to pollute less. Just remember to bring your travel mug when you visit Vilnius.





7.4. Collaborating with local communities for sustainable tourism

Successful sustainable tourism involves working closely with local communities. Guides can help create mutually beneficial relationships by supporting community-led initiatives and promoting locally produced goods and services.

Tour operators can help local communities in a variety of ways: by hiring local guides and collaborating with locally owned restaurants and travel agencies, they help to circulate tourism revenue throughout the local economy.

Implementing responsible tourism practices, such as paying fair wages and adhering to ethical business standards, helps host communities develop sustainably. Tour operators can collaborate with local governments and community leaders to ensure that responsible tourism development benefits locals, respects local culture, and contributes to economic stability.

To support the local community all year round, a tour guide might consider to offer an option for tourists to travel during off-season. It helps to mitigate the negative effects of mass tourism by spreading tourism activity more evenly throughout the year. This results in a more balanced use of natural resources and reduces strain on local infrastructure leaving the tourists with less waiting time to get into the sights and more room to move and explore. Also, the off season travel option might be slightly cheaper and more attainable for the travellers, assuring the longevity of income generation for locals.

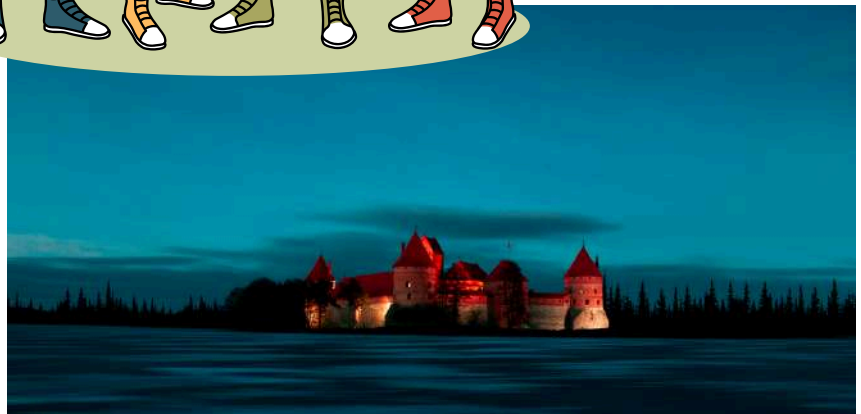
The sustainable tourism industry can contribute to a global solution by combating natural resource depletion on Indigenous lands by private interests (e.g., agro-industry, mining, and timber industries), which destroy human habitats and biodiversity in traditional societies. Furthermore, sustainable tourism can address the exploitation of local communities that exists in many parts of the commercial tourism industry, such as exploitative labor conditions and dangerously inadequate sanitation or waste disposal. Sustainable tourism projects have the potential to generate viable revenue, create jobs, and revitalize the economy and culture (World Economic Forum, 2023). They can connect isolated communities to the rest of the world by promoting digital inclusion and energy independence.

Interesting to know:

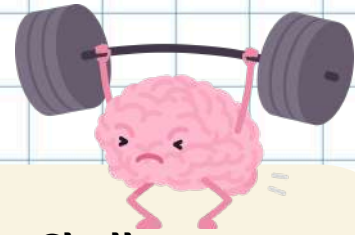
BE GOOD.

DO GOOD.

For example, Trakai Island Castle, located on an island in Lake Galvė, was reconstructed in the 20th century to restore its historical grandeur. This restoration transformed the castle into a major tourist destination, attracting visitors interested in medieval architecture and Lithuanian history. The influx of tourists has boosted the local economy by creating jobs in hospitality, guiding services, and local crafts, thereby benefiting the Trakai community.



Interactive content



ACTIVITY 1: Eco-Tourism Action Plan Challenge

Participants will create a sustainable tourism action plan. Divide participants into small groups (3-5 people). Assign each group a scenario (e.g., a coastal eco-tour, a hiking tour in a national park, a cultural heritage tour).

Task:

- Each group must create a sustainable tourism action plan by addressing:
 - Eco-friendly practices (e.g., waste reduction, carbon footprint minimization)
 - Visitor education strategies (e.g., signs, talks, interactive activities)
 - Responsible tourism guidelines (e.g., wildlife respect, leave-no-trace policies)
 - Community collaboration (e.g., working with local businesses, supporting local crafts)
- Presentation: Each group presents their plan in 3-5 minutes.
- Feedback & Discussion: The facilitator and peers provide constructive feedback, discussing real-world feasibility and improvements.

Interactive content



ACTIVITY 2: Spot the Impact

Set the Scene: Display images or short videos of different tourism scenarios (e.g., crowded beaches, over-tourism in cultural sites, littered hiking trails, unethical wildlife tourism). Divide participants into small groups and assign each one an image or scenario. Their task is to identify the sustainability issues present. **Detective Report:** Each group answers:

- **What are the negative environmental impacts?**
- **What behaviors contribute to these problems?**
- **How can tour guides help reduce or prevent these issues?**

Creative Solution Pitch: Groups present their findings and propose innovative sustainability solutions (e.g., implementing waste reduction initiatives, eco-friendly visitor guidelines, community-based conservation programs).

Debrief & Discussion: The facilitator leads a discussion on real-life applications of the solutions and encourages participants to think about how they can implement these strategies in their work.

8. Legal and safety responsibilities

This chapter provides tour guides with a foundation for successfully navigating the legal and safety aspects of their profession. It addresses critical issues such as tourism law compliance, adherence to local regulations, and the implementation of risk management best practices.

By mastering these responsibilities, guides can provide safe, enjoyable, and legally compliant experiences for travelers, fostering trust and contributing to a positive reputation in the tourism industry.

8.1. Understanding tourism laws and regulations

The Law on Tourism serves as the primary legislative framework for the tourism industry in Lithuania. This law, enacted in 1998, is still in effect, and it provides regulations and guidelines to ensure sustainable tourism development, protect consumer rights, and maintain industry standards.

The following are key points from the Lithuanian Law on Tourism that a tour guide should be aware of:

1. Tourism Policy and Management.

- The State Department of Tourism is responsible for tourism policies, market research, and promotion.
- Tourism is planned and managed by local governments at the county and municipal levels.

2. Function of a Tour Guide in the System

- Tour guides are part of the tourism services industry, which is registered and regulated by the government.
- They must follow tourism laws, maintain high service levels, and ensure visitor safety.
- They help to promote Lithuania's image by providing accurate and engaging content.

3. Protection and Use of Tourist Resources

- Natural sites (parks, lakes, forests) and cultural sites (heritage, museums, traditions) are examples of tourist resources, as is social infrastructure (exhibitions, recreation areas).
- Guides must respect protected area laws and ensure that tourists follow conservation regulations.
- Traveling and camping in private areas is only permitted with the owner's permission.

4. Tour Guide Responsibilities.

- Follow all sanitation, safety, and environmental regulations.
- Learn about Lithuania's history, culture, and nature.
- Provide tourists with information that is clear, accurate, and engaging.
- Ensure that the tourism experience complies with legal requirements and ethical guidelines.

5. Independent Tourism and Liability.

- Independent tourism (self-organized tours) must follow tourism laws.
- Tour guides should be aware of the legal consequences if they violate tourism regulations.
- If international agreements supersede Lithuanian law, the international rules apply.

These guidelines ensure that tour guides follow the law while providing safe, informative, and engaging experiences for visitors.

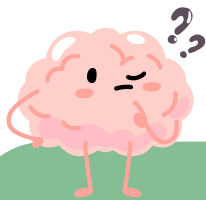
To legally operate as a tour guide, one must obtain a certification. The requirements and regulations for obtaining and using the tour guide certificate are outlined in Article 29: Guide Activities of Lithuania's Tourism Law, which can be summarised into a few key points:

- Only those who hold a guide certificate are permitted to conduct guide activities.
- To obtain a guide certificate, a person must meet the requirements listed in paragraph 3 of this article and submit an application to a government-authorized institution. The authorized institution, within 20 working days of reviewing the application and documents and assessing the individual's compliance with the requirement.

To issue a guide certificate, follow these steps:

- Decide to issue the certificate.
- Request missing documents or correct data within 5 working days.
- Refuse to issue the certificate if the applicant does not meet the requirements or fails to correct errors.
- The guide certificate is valid indefinitely for those with a higher education who have completed at least 250 academic hours of guide training in tour planning, rhetoric, ethics, communication, psychology, Lithuanian culture, history, geography, and legal regulation of guide activities. A practical exam in guiding must be completed. The training and exam are valid for two years, during which the individual must apply for the certificate.

- The Minister of Economy and Innovation determines the procedures for issuing, replacing, and revoking guide certificates.
- The certificate may be revoked by the authorized institution in the following circumstances:
- The certificate may be revoked if the individual requests it, the guide passes away, or it is determined that the certificate was incorrectly issued.
- Citizens of EU member states, EEA countries, Switzerland, or third countries with recognized professional qualifications are eligible to provide guide services in Lithuania.
- Guides from EU member states, EEA countries, and Switzerland may provide temporary and occasional guide services in Lithuania after submitting a preliminary declaration to the authorized institution.
- Citizens of the EU, EEA, Switzerland, or third countries whose guide qualifications have been recognized by the relevant authorities can provide guide services.



To operate as a guide legally in Lithuania a person must obtain a certificate. The guide certificate is valid indefinitely for those with a higher education who have completed at least 250 academic hours of guide training in tour planning, rhetoric, ethics, communication, psychology, Lithuanian culture, history, geography, and legal regulation of guide activities. Besides the cultural knowledge a guide must be aware of legal regulations, customs, and safety of the participants.





8.2. Health and safety protocols for tour guides

Besides being a true storyteller and explorer of a place, a guide is also the leader who knows place and can the safety protocols that are relevant in the location.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, staying informed about evolving health regulations was crucial for ensuring safe, inclusive, and engaging tours in global tourism. Currently, Lithuania has no special travel protocols in place.

However, a guide should still keep in mind the simple precautions and remind them to people from time to time, such as try to keep up with the group, respect local environment, look out for your belongings, act safely while crossing the road, pay attention in transport.

Safety Briefings and Equipment

Guides must conduct safety briefings and ensure that safety equipment, such as life jackets and seat belts, is available and in good condition - it's important to assure that the participants are safe in all stages of the tour - from the transportation to the activities according to internally.

The guide should also be ready and prepared to respond to emergencies such as sudden health issues, allergic reactions, injuries and etc. Guides should be familiar with emergency procedures and have access to first aid kits. The guide also has to remember all the necessary emergency contacts and be ready to call them, also have in mind an approximate time it takes to get to that location. For instance, someone is having an allergic reaction - asses to what they've might have been exposed to, ask if they have medication and what help they need - in some cases people are aware of their allergies and effective treatment. But there are cases people are not, and the response is critical - be sure to call the emergency services, ask the person to describe symptoms, situation and what is going on as much as possible, stay composed and assured, do not panic and try to comfort the person who is in the situation, don't make them stressed and worse, don't give them random medication, ask what they need - maybe water, to lay down or etc. In such critical situations a guide should try to keep calm and as much as possible console the person, as immediate panic or stress tend to exacerbate the symptoms.

Always comply with the regulations. The tourism industry in Lithuania is regulated, with enforced rules regarding best practices and safety inspections. Hazardous areas and activities are clearly marked, and professional staff are typically present to support organized activities.



As well, attendees should be informed about the local cuisine and drinkable water - maybe it's not recommended to drink tap water, maybe it's not recommended to consume one or another product. Guides should advise participants to practice safe food and water precautions, especially in rural areas, and to be cautious of insect bites by using appropriate repellents and wearing suitable clothing, and for those who might have an allergy to bug bites - have a medication on hand, in case they need it.

During winter in Lithuania, guides should carefully assess tour conditions, as dropping temperatures can make prolonged outdoor activities uncomfortable. Slippery paths and sidewalks pose a risk of falls, while black ice can create hazardous driving conditions, leading to slower and more challenging travel.

Each of the risks should be calculated and thought out, to assure their calm demeanour in case these situations arise, the guides should have some exist strategies or adaptability of the tour.

By staying informed about and adhering to these protocols, tour guides can ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for all participants in Lithuania.



Keep an informed as a guide at all times - be sure to check the regulations, weather conditions, first aid kit and the strategy on how to handle the situation.

8.3 Managing risks on tours

Everything in life comes with a risk, even the guided tour. A guide of the tour should be able to identify the risks before the start of the tour and have an plan how to overcome such situation.

As described in the last section, the risks might include dangerous path, place or weather conditions, and inform the group about safety precautions in ahead of time.

Tour guides in Lithuania are legally responsible for ensuring the safety of their participants and adhering to all applicable tourism regulations. Failure to adhere to established guidelines may result in legal consequences, such as fines or liability claims in the event of an accident.



Important legal and liability considerations include:

- **Compliance with Tourism Laws** - Guides must operate within the framework of Lithuanian tourism regulations, which include obtaining the necessary certification and adhering to health and safety guidelines.
- **Duty of Care** - Guides are expected to take reasonable precautions to keep participants safe from known risks. This includes providing accurate safety information, identifying hazards, and responding appropriately to emergencies.
- **Liability for Negligence** - If a guide fails to implement necessary safety precautions or ignores known risks, they may be held legally liable for any harm done to participants.
- **Insurance Requirements** - Guides should be aware of liability insurance options, which can provide coverage in the event of an accident or a claim from tourists.
- **Incident Reporting and Documentation** - In the event of an accident, guides should document the situation, notify the appropriate authorities as needed, and follow proper legal procedures.

Guides should also be aware of the laws, attention to the attendees, addressing the precautions and reminding them, as well as think of insurance for the tour or providing such option for the attendees when signing in to the tour, also, whenever the situation requires legal attention - have all necessary documentation, as well as all the permits to visit, a guide certificate and etc (Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, n.d.).

8.4. Legal responsibilities and ethical considerations

Tour guides have a duty of care to ensure the safety and satisfaction of their passengers. This necessitates attention to potential risks as well as adherence to legal and ethical standards. Key legal responsibilities include: avoiding negligence through precautions, safety briefings, and appropriate emergency response. Secondly, meeting contractual obligations by ensuring that tours match what was advertised or promised on the itinerary. Following that, it's keeping Lithuanian tourism regulations updated, including certification requirements and safety protocols. Being aware of potential liability issues and properly documenting incidents to reduce legal ramifications, also let's a guide to be aware of the current situation in tourism and potential risks of the tour. Guide's ethical considerations include maintaining professionalism, respecting all participants, and being culturally sensitive - it's key elements to keep good vibes while interacting with different people, gaining respect and trust. Also, a guide must provide accurate and transparent information about the tour's historical, cultural, and logistical aspects - it's not only ethical, but overseen by the laws of Lithuania.



Interactive content



ACTIVITY 1: Emergency Response Simulation

- Explain the importance of emergency preparedness for tour guides. Discuss the key principles of emergency response: staying calm, assessing the situation, taking immediate action, and following legal and safety protocols. Divide participants into small groups (3-5 people per group). Each group draws a scenario card detailing an emergency situation :
- A tourist faints during a guided walking tour.
 - How do you check for vital signs?
 - What first aid steps should you take?
 - How do you communicate with emergency services?
- A traveler gets lost in a crowded city tour.
 - How do you prevent panic?
 - What communication methods should be used?
 - What are the legal responsibilities for group safety?
- A participant suffers a minor injury on an adventure tour.
 - How do you administer basic first aid?
 - What forms or legal reports should be filed?
- A traveler refuses to follow safety instructions.
 - How do you handle the situation diplomatically?
 - What legal grounds exist for removing someone from a tour?

Groups have 5 minutes to discuss their initial response plan.

Interactive content



One person from each group acts as the tour guide, while others play the roles of tourists, emergency personnel, or bystanders.

- **Scenarios are acted out in real-time while the rest of the group observes.**
- **The "tour guide" must react, ensuring safety and managing the situation as professionally as possible.**

After each role-play, discuss:

- **What actions were taken?**
- **What went well?**
- **What could be improved?**
- **What are the legal and ethical considerations?**

Facilitator provides expert feedback and additional best practices.

ACTIVITY 2: Check your itinerary

Each participant checks their itinerary and thinks on how such situations can impact their program. What would be the solutions of each situation provided in the simulation above?



9. Career as a tour guide

9.1. Moving from training to guiding

Like in any other profession the training is important step of the journey. However, besides gaining the theoretical knowledge of being a guide it's important to actually try it and see how it all evolves in practice. To gain confidence while becoming a guide it's important to practice and evolve.

Thus, what to do after getting the initial training:

- Look for internship opportunities

Maybe a guide union or an organisation is looking for trainees, interns or other staff members to provide their services for tourists. Check out their pages, social media networks, or reach out directly asking for such opportunities. Sometimes directness and the newly trained guide this can be an essential way to get more experience.

- Volunteering

As in any other profession or job, volunteering can help to develop various skills, including soft skills, organisational skills, research and basic understanding of the scope. In Lithuania there are a few options to get more experience and confidence as guide/volunteer:

Open House Vilnius

People have been invited to explore Vilnius' distinctive architecture since 2015 through the Open House Vilnius weekend of open architecture. Every year, during this event, the public is given access to buildings of outstanding architectural quality, and they can learn more about them by taking free, volunteer-led tours.

The event, which is organized by Architektūros Fondas, has grown to be a major cultural event that draws professionals, architecture enthusiasts, and city people who are concerned about the quality of the urban environment.

More knowledge about the city's history and architecture can be gained by volunteering in the field of architecture. The majority of our volunteers come from a range of professions and are not architects. Don't worry if you don't know much about architecture; a mentor who oversees team coordination and tour preparation has trained and prepared the volunteers.



Besides giving an opportunity to lead excursions of one building and getting to know architecture, the volunteer guides get training and support of their preparation while getting to know history and specifics of particular building. Also, the Open House Vilnius have an interactive, open map that shows every architectural item on display during the festival. More than 140 notable Vilnius buildings, interiors, and urban areas that have been made public in the last ten years are featured in this digital archive.

The festival's goal of trying to bring architecture closer to people, inspiring curiosity, and assisting them in discovering Vilnius not just during the event but all year long is carried out and expanded with this digital guide. Every year, new participants in the event program will be added to the atlas, which will include the most recent factual data and visual aids. The atlas of locations can help a guide to understand complex building and locations that might be featured on their personal tour's itinerary. The atlas can be found [here](#).

Pastatai kalba

"Pastatai kalba" are open architecture weekends in Lithuania's smaller cities. Its primary objective is to give everyone the chance to learn more about architecture and to appreciate and experience the physical surroundings. City buildings that are normally closed to the public will open on these weekends.

The project's primary objective is education. In addition to giving people the tools to learn more about architecture in general, their goal is to educate the public so they will be more critical, aware, and interested in the architecture in their community.

The open architecture weekend is hosted by a different team of organizers in a different Lithuanian city each year. All events are free of charge and open to everyone.

The success of "Pastatai kalba" relies on many dedicated individuals who appreciate architecture. Volunteers who join our teams, help organize, and lead tours will have the chance to explore the buildings in depth, meet their designers, and connect with those who work there. More about the project [here](#).

Those two initiatives are not only help people to understand and join the local tours, but also help those who want to become guides to gain more experience, training and understanding of the profession better.

- 
- Job shadowing

A guide can learn a lot while helping a more experienced guide and be a co-leading person of the tour. Observing how the guide interacts, plans and leads can be a way more practical assignment to understand the complex parts and responsibilities of the guide profession.

- Organising small tours to practice

To learn how to manage the group, the tour guide should think of how they would manage a small group. To understand and manage large groups the guide first of all has to learn how to manage a few people, understand their needs and expectations.

9.2. Ongoing learning and development

The tourism sector is always changing as a result of new traveler expectations, technological advancements, and trends. Tour guides must update their knowledge regularly and keep improving their abilities to deliver top-notch experiences (Prakash et.al, 2010).

Following local trends and news of travel is essential part of guide's work. To navigate informative and up to date tour guide must research of new attractions, updates on their program of the tour and experiment by adding new facts, different stories and updates.

Besides it, to keep their skills, maintain confidence and build relations with different communities, guides should participate in professional development courses, seminars, and networking events enhances both knowledge and practical skills.

Additionally a guide should think of what is involved in their work that is not necessarily related to their knowledge on the topic, but more than useful to know while organising a tour. This might include various safety, first aid and other certifications. Obtaining specialised training, such as first aid, language courses, or cultural heritage certifications, can improve a guide's credibility and job opportunities.

Besides, understanding the expectations of different tourist demographics, such as eco-conscious travelers or adventure seekers, allows guides to tailor their approach effectively.



A guide should think of their additional competences such as foreign language, first-aid certificate, trainings and additional knowledge on their topics and locations to improve the quality of their tours and also increase employment opportunities.

9.3. YOUTH-ful-GUIDES App

A platform for creating and disseminating thorough, eco-friendly tour itineraries, the "YOUTH-ful-GUIDES App" is a specific and innovative tool created to assist young guides and environmentally conscious tourists.

Through multimedia content, the app enables guides to visually represent natural landscapes to interested tourists, showcasing eco-tours. Additionally, it serves as an interactive platform where attendees can schedule tours and leave reviews, assisting guides in continuously enhancing their services.

The app also encourages guides to work together, exchanging ideas and best practices for successful travel experience. The app not only increases the visibility of eco-friendly tours but also keeps guides informed and connected by incorporating social media tools and offering frequent updates on industry trends.

Main features of the app:

For a traveler:

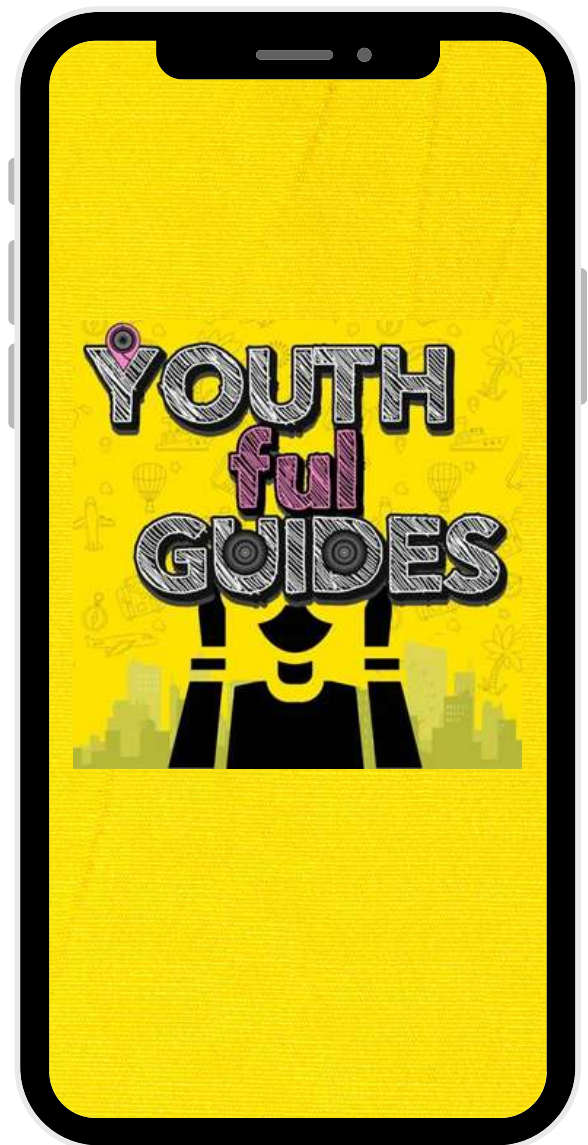
- **Filters and Search Options:** After logging in, visitors can use the user-friendly filters to browse eco-tours. Their trip planning is made simple by the ability to filter results according to particular destinations or desired dates.
- **Interactive European Map:** The application will have a dynamic European map that shows filtered results, providing users with a geographical overview of the eco-tours that are offered throughout the continent.
- **Booking and Comments:** Once a tour has been selected and finished, visitors can write reviews to share their experiences. This feature improves tours' overall quality and provides guides with feedback.

For the guide

- Profile Creation: Guides get the option to design unique accounts that showcase their expertise. This involves explaining the eco-tours they offer, uploading pictures and videos, and including a recap of themselves or their tour guide.
- Customized Tour Templates: To assist guides display their tours, the app offers templates.
- Tour Description: In-depth details about every tour package, backed by pictures and videos to attract tourists.
- Availability Calendar: Guides can show the times and dates that are available for reservations.
- Booking Management: Guides can choose to accept or reject a traveler's request for a reservation.

**The app serves as a way to manage the tours and also make planning of the tours easier for young and unexperienced guides, also allows networking opportunities and a channel to promote their offers and tours. Once released, the app could be found on the project's website:
<https://youthfulguides.eu/>**

Do not forget to visit project's website and join the app as a guide or an active tourist looking to improve your travel experience.





10. Practical training – preparing for the guided tours

Training is one of the essential parts for a guide to prepare breath-taking and informative tours. Besides learning the communication, ethics and different skills involved in leading a group of other people, it's important for a guide to familiarize themselves with the location, gaining knowledge on the layout of location, accessibility, and key attractions. It's a step while learning to understand the place and to what traveler it can be offered as an element in the tour. While getting to know surroundings a guide should think about planning the tour stops in a logical order, ensuring a smooth flow between locations, take in to consideration the time for walking, breaks, and potential delays.

Also, here comes the research about the planned elements of a tour. At this step guide prepares engaging and historically accurate information about each site and executes the plan while using a storytelling techniques to make the content memorable. It is essential to consider cultural sensitivity, diversity of tour attendees and also, balancing information - to avoid overloading the participants with a bunch of stories, just having clear key points and facts.

After getting to know the place and having a plan and story behind it in mind, comes the testing part. It helps to identify possible obstacles such as traffic, noise levels, or other things that may impact the experience. Also, a simulation of the tour helps to improve the guides comfort, public speaking skills, leadership and so on. Also, the attendees can express what they have liked and enjoyed and what can also be improved, or researched more to answer the arising questions about particular site. A key for the guide is to feel confident, comfortable and content with the tour - to know key information, be confident while leading and not stress about the different factors also impacting the experience. To avoid the stress it's also a good idea to have a few rounds with other peers about possible questions from tourists' perspective, different situations (conflict, medical emergency, one of the sites being closed of, being late and etc.) to help a guide in navigating difficulties.

Also, having an open mindset is also essential. To understand that it is fine to learn from mistakes, improve and change things. It helps in the situations when something goes wrong to debrief and not take things to personally, also allowing to have some changes and flexibility with the tour plan.

Two-Day Guided Tour in Lithuania

This two-day tour provides international representatives from Greece and Spain a detailed experience of Lithuania's cultural heritage and sustainable tourism practices. Led by young Lithuanian guides, the tour explores Vilnius and its surroundings, mixing history, architecture, and ecological consciousness. The project aims to improve the guiding abilities of young people while also encouraging sustainable tourism and cultural exchange.

Day One: Experiencing Lithuania's Cultural Heritage

First part:

The goal: To highlight Lithuania's historical and architectural gems, guides can practice storytelling techniques and boost international tourists' understanding of the country's rich history.

Start of the tour: 10 AM

Location of the start: Cathedral square on the benches near the bell tower.

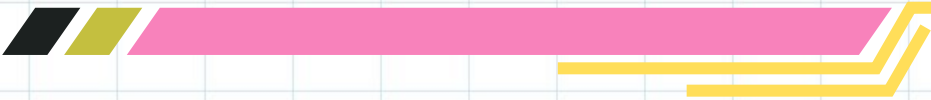
Duration of the first part: 2,5 - 3 hours (depending on the waiting time and weather)

The program of the tour:

1. **Welcoming the participants of the tour**, understanding the group, asking a few easy questions (are you for the first time in Vilnius, what are you excited about, etc.)
2. The program:
 - a. Vilnius Cathedral & Bell Tower
 - b. Gediminas Castle Tower
 - c. Pilies Street & Literatų Street
 - d. Vilnius University
 - e. St. Anne's Church & Bernardine Ensemble

A few different objects are considered as the symbols of the city, so getting to know them and exploring might be useful while understanding the city and feeling the general mood of the capital, getting some historical background and enjoying the architecture.

3. **Lunch stop. Traditional Lithuanian Cuisine Experience.** Around these objects there are plenty of Lithuanian cuisine restaurants, a good options to have in mind are ETNO Dvaras, Bernelių Užėiga, Ertilo namas, Šnekutis or others.



Also, consider reserving a table for a group as it might be quicker and more efficient. Also, dedicate some time for people to enjoy themselves. A local restaurant experience featuring classic dishes such as cepelinai, šaltibarščiai, and kugelis or other national dishes can take some time. Also, a traditional lunch can be a good sport for discussion on Lithuanian culinary heritage and its ties to historical events, specialities and other culinary related matters.

Second part of the tour

After grabbing a delicious lunch and enjoying some time, it's good to have a little bit of time for people to debrief, walk around, take photos and enjoy themselves in the city. Dedicate a couple of hours (or more, if the group is large) to have some time by themselves.

Start of the second part of the tour: 15:00 PM

Second meeting point: Cathedral square on the benches near the bell tower (same location).

Duration of the tour: Around 3 hours.

After the meeting group again, check in how they are feeling, maybe they have questions or something to share. After that, continue the tour. A good place to pick up could be:

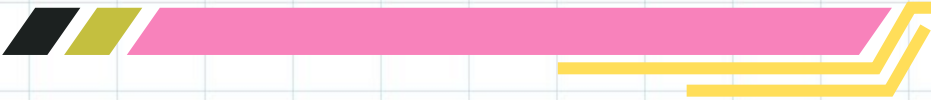
A Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania, however, consider that it takes time to look over 4 exhibitions, but there is always an option to pick 1 out of the exhibitions (3 are permanent, the 4th is rotating exhibition), always consider the ongoing thematic excursions, available in the museum of the palace, maybe it's also an interesting option to team up with the palace and take their approach and highlights of the excursion.

Continue over to Užupis - a charming bohemian district of Vilnius:

- Užupis Constitution & Wall of Philosophies
- Angel of Užupis
- Užupis Art Incubator & Street Art
- The Swing Under the Bridge
- Užupis Mermaid & Vilnelė River

Also, you can add:

Užupis Passport & Citizenship Ceremony and Užupis Café Break & Reflection for more reflection and entertainment in the afternoon.



Alternatively it's possible to lean more in to the sustainability part of the tour and instead of having a more historical and city based second part of the day, it can be arranged differently.

For example, after meeting in the same spot, the guests can visit:

- Bernardinai garden - to see one of greenest spaces in the city, relax, walk around and enjoy.
- From there, after the visit they can hop on a bus and go to the Vingis park. Here it can be a tour (or cycling tour by bike) visiting the main areas of the park, enjoying Vilnius university botanical garden part of the park, sit down at the green spaces.
- Also, as the additional a bit adventurous approach is to try kayaking on the Neris River.

To finish the tour, the guests can join for a dinner, however, if they are up for not only getting to know the traditions, but also experiencing them, it's possible to arrange folk-themed dinner with live music & storytelling or experiencing unique Vilnius Farmers' Market Tasting Tour (usually held as event in some locations, if possible, reserving the table).

Also, the finishing touch of the tour can be Open gallery, to take a look around as it is open all the time, getting to know how the city evolves and supports modern art initiatives.

Day two of the tour:

Start of the tour: 10 AM

Location of the start: Vilnius train station main entrance

Duration of the first part: half day

The program of the tour:

- Welcoming the participants of the tour, feedback from yesterday, quick chats.
- A trip by local train/ other transport or private transportation to Trakai (30 min - 45 min drive).
- Introduction to Trakai history (can be done while driving to the location)
- Trakai Island Castle & Museum Visit

- Exploration of Trakai's Nature & Karaim Quarter
- Traditional Karaim Lunch – Kibinai Tasting. A unique pastry local to Trakai and widely known as the cultural heritage of karaites.
- After lunch, the attendees have some free time and some optional activities, such as souvenir shopping, boat paddling in the lake, or simply enjoying the local nature.
- Tour finished with the return to Vilnius, sharing the final thoughts and questions.

A half day tour can be another option, which depending on an attendees can be replaced with visiting more Vilnius, focusing more on sustainable and new attractions. In such case the itinerary could look like this:

Day two of the tour:

Start of the tour: 10 AM

Location of the start: Vilnius train station main entrance

Duration of the tour: half day

The program of the tour:

- Welcoming the participants of the tour, feedback from yesterday, quick chats.
- A trip by bus/ bikes/ other type of transportation to Paupys district.
- In Paupys district, you'll see eco-buildings, urban gardens, and green architecture emerging as part of the city's move toward sustainable urban living.
- Explore hidden art spaces and murals focused on environmentalism and urban activism, showcasing the edgy, modern side of Vilnius in the district.
- If you are having bikes with the tour, consider moving by the waterfront of Neris, to see the landscapes of Vilnius.
- Pop-up Green Art Installations in Šnipiškės: enjoy green art installation or eco-tech space—a pop-up space where virtual reality (VR) meets sustainability.
- Lunch stopover in a local cafe that focuses on more sustainable options/ are a social business: Mano Guru, Pirmas Blynas, ETM roof terrace or etc.
- Finishing the tour after lunch with some final words, observations and advice.



11. Evaluation & Certification

Certification

After successfully completing the project, participants will receive the Certificate of Participation. The certificate can be used as formal recognition of the dedication, skills, and knowledge participants have developed throughout their involvement with the project, training and tour execution.

It affirms their achievement and validates the competencies gained during the program, enhancing their professional knowledge. The Certificate of Participation will be presented on the final day of the program, summarizing the key learning outcomes and confirming the participant's successful completion of the project activities. This certificate not only marks an important milestone in their journey but also becomes a valuable addition to their professional portfolio to pursue future opportunities in their field.

Impact assessment

To further understand a complex outcomes, success and relevance of the project, an impact assessment survey will be conducted at final stage of the program. This survey will help to gather feedback from participants and involved stakeholders, to help understand and improve the project's structure, content, and activities. The evaluation, aims to assess participant satisfaction, measure the achievement of learning objectives, and identify areas for improvement.

The feedback gathered will directly inform the refinement of future projects and similar activities, ensuring they continue to meet the needs of future participants, stakeholders, coordinators and other's involved. This survey will be an essential part of commitment to continuous improvement and creating more impactful programs in the future.



12. Closing remarks

Finally, the YOUTH-ful-GUIDES program has been effectively finished, therefore confirming to an essential turning point in the personal and professional growth of every participant.

This course has been carefully constructed to equip each individual with the key skills, knowledge, and insights required to succeed as a professional tour guide. Participants in this program have made an important move towards becoming valued providers to the global tourism sector, with a focus on providing culturally beneficial, educational, and exciting experiences to travellers.

The training included an extensive list of significant topics, from understanding local traditions and history to learning effective communication and guiding skills. A special emphasis was made on understanding the specific background of Vilnius, Lithuania's capital city.

Each tour has offered the opportunity to encourage cultural exchange, inspire, and educate travellers. Participants have learnt that their job as guides involves more than just displaying attractions; it is also about building meaningful relationships between visitors, the local people, and the environment. A guide's impact extends beyond the tour's duration, providing enduring impressions that improve the tourists' experiences long after they leave.

Constant interest, flexibility, and a commitment to quality are essential in a continuously changing industry. By embracing continuous learning and progress, these guides will not only meet the needs of the tourism sector, but will also help determine its future. For some, this is the end of their journey; for others, it's just the beginning of a life-long route, and we're honoured to watch the contributions these young guides in the future will make.



References

- Ap, J., & Wong, K. K. F. (2001). Case study on tour guiding: Professionalism, issues, and problems. *Tourism Management*, 22(5), 551–563.
- Barsade, S. G., & Gibson, D. E. (2007). Why does affect matter in organizations? *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 21(1), 36–59. [References](#)
- Chang, J. C. (2014). Tour guides' emotional intelligence and tourists' satisfaction. *Journal of Travel Research*, 53(3), 279–288.
- Geva, A., & Goldman, A. (1991). Satisfaction measurement in guided tours. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 18(2), 177–185.
- Lonely Planet. (2024). Lithuania: World's second-best travel destination. Retrieved from [References](#)
- Lithuania Travel. (2025). Discover Lithuania's rich culture and tourism initiatives. Retrieved from [References](#)
- Lithuanian Ministry of the Economy and Innovation. (2023, March 3). Lithuania's tourism roadmap approved. Ministry of the Economy and Innovation of the Republic of Lithuania. Retrieved from [References](#)
- Mak, A. H. N., Wong, K. K. F., & Chang, R. C. Y. (2010). Factors affecting the service quality of the tour guiding profession in Macau. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 12(3), 205–218. [References](#)
- Min, J. C. H. (2012). A short-form measure for assessment of emotional intelligence for tour guides: Development and evaluation. *Tourism Management*, 33(1), 155–167.
- Ministry of the Economy and Innovation of Lithuania. (2024). Tourism policy and economic impact in Lithuania. Retrieved from <https://www.ukmin.lt>
- Pond, K. L. (1993). *The professional guide: Dynamics of tour guiding*. Van Nostrand Reinhold.
- Prakash, M., Chowdhary, N., & Sunayana. (2010). Becoming a tour guide: Analyzing the motivations. *Journal of Tourism - Studies and Research in Tourism*, 9(9), 5–13.



References

Shalishvili, G. (2023). Environmental Education of Tourists for Sustainable Tourism Development. ResearchGate. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/378283890_Environmental_Education_of_Tourists_for_Sustainable_Tourism_Development

Sahoo, D., & Sahu, S. (2022). Impact of sensory marketing on the tourism industry: An empirical analysis. ResearchGate. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/363753151_Impact_Of_Sensory_Marketing_On_Tourism_Industry_An_Empirical_Analysis

Šimková, E., Kořínková, B., & Obršálová, K. (2023). Environmental education of tourists for sustainable tourism development. ResearchGate. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/378283890_Environmental_Education_of_Tourists_for_Sustainable_Tourism_Development

Tsaur, S. H., & Teng, H. Y. (2017). Exploring tour guiding styles: The perspective of tour leader roles. *Tourism Management*, 59, 438–448. <https://ideas.repec.org>

United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). (n.d.). Sustainable development. UNWTO. Retrieved from <https://www.unwto.org/sustainable-development>

Vilnius City Municipality. (2024). Vilnius: A UNESCO World Heritage City. Retrieved from <https://www.vilnius-tourism.lt>

Washington State University. (n.d.). Conflict resolution techniques. Retrieved from <https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/2070/2013/08/Conflict-Resolution-Techniques.pdf>