



Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2019-2023 for Žemaitija National Park

Plateliai,
2018

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2019-2023 for Žemaitija National Park (hereinafter – Strategy) is prepared by UAB “Eurointegracijos projektai” together with the Žemaitija National Park (hereinafter – ŽNP) Directorate. This strategy is prepared in order to develop sustainable tourism in the Žemaitija National Park. This strategy is prepared for a 5-year period from 2019 to 2023.

1. EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT ANALYSIS

1.1. Legal environment

ŽNP is classified as protected area, therefore, the activities in the park are regulated and limited by the Protected territories, Environment protection, Immovable cultural property protection, Forestry, Water, Territory planning, Construction, Tourism and other laws and legal documents. The development and expansion of tourism is regulated by: Law on tourism, Territory planning law, Tourism and recreation schemes and plans (project) preparation rules.

All of the strategic measures should be planned with the limitation, arising from the above-mentioned laws and legal acts, in mind. Thus, during the strategic planning, each measure is assessed from a legal perspective.

1.2. Political environment. Connections with international, national and regional level strategic planning documents.

1.2.1. International level documents

ŽNP participates in the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas activity, therefore, during the planning of strategic ŽNP directions, the development of areas, specified as high priority ones by the charter, is kept in mind:

- 1) The protection of valuable landscapes, biodiversity and cultural heritage;
- 2) Supporting conservation through tourism;
- 3) Reducing carbon dioxide emissions, pollution and resource waste;
- 4) Providing safe access, high-quality accommodation and special experiences to all visitors in the protected area;
- 5) Effective communication with visitors regarding the area;
- 6) Ensuring social cohesion;
- 7) Strengthening the prosperity of the local community;
- 8) Provision of training and competence development;
- 9) Monitoring tourism activities and impacts;
- 10) Promoting actions and engaging in Charter activities.

1.2.2. National level strategic planning documents

1.2.2.1. *General plan of the territory of the Republic of Lithuania*

The General plan of the territory of the Republic of Lithuania (approved by the 29 October 2002 Order of the Parliament No. IX-1154) (hereinafter – General plan) is mandatory in forming the regional policy, developing strategies and programs for the development of economy branches, as well as territory planning document projects. The current plan is effective up to 2020. The new document, which will be in effect until 2030 is currently being prepared. Therefore, the ŽNP tourism strategy for 2019-2023 is firstly harmonized with the currently effective General plan, while taking the new plan preparation tendencies in account. ŽNP holds the following national importance in the current General plan:

- Plateliai are distinguished as especially important areas of national importance in regard of cultural values (heritage);
- Middle and Northern Western Žemaitija region is distinguished as one of the five areas with dominant historical heritage;
- Plungė – Telšiai area is distinguished as an area of exceptionally high and high recreational potential, creating recreational systems of national importance;
- “Žemaitijos parkų žiedas” (ring route of Žemaitija parks) is distinguished as the priority national importance cognitive tourism routes as a regional natural and cultural type state park ring route.

The following aspects are important in seeking integrity with the General plan:

- development of cognitive and cultural tourism;
- strengthening the potential of recreation in the countryside;
- use of cultural heritage objects for tourism;
- using and integrating the historical heritage in to ŽNP tourism products;
- exploiting the recreational potential of the region for the development of natural tourism;
- renovation of existing holiday homes and camping development, developing rural recreation and entertainment services.

1.2.2.2. Lithuanian tourism development program 2014-2020

Lithuanian tourism development program of 2014-2020 (approved by the 30 November 2016 Order of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania No. 1206), determines the objectives, tasks and development priorities of state tourism development up to 2020, taking in account the sustainable tourism principles. In this program, the Žemaitija highlands region, including Telšiai and Plungė district municipalities, is distinguished as one of the six priority tourism development regions.

The following aspects must be taken in account, while seeking to achieve integrity with the Lithuanian tourism development program for 2014-2020: cultural and green (ecological) tourism development in ŽNP and decreasing seasonality of tourism services (mostly through countryside tourism homesteads).

1.2.2.3. Lithuanian tourism marketing strategy for 2016-2020

Lithuanian tourism marketing strategy for 2016-2020 specifies that Lithuanian strength is the pristine and unique nature (5 national and 30 regional parks), great conditions for eco-tourism with developed cognitive tourism infrastructure on protected territories. According to the data of foreign tourist survey (executed in 2015 by UAB “Social Information Center”), Lithuania’s association with nature (green country, lots of lakes, forests, beautiful countryside, etc.) is specified more than other foreign tourists’ associations with Lithuania.

The following aspects must be taken in account, while seeking to achieve integrity with the Lithuanian tourism marketing strategy for 2016-2020:

- Main tourism products: ecological and cultural tourism;
- Popularizing niche tourism products: tourist routes, culinary routes, recreation near water bodies, rural tourism, events;
- Seasonality reduction;
- Planning marketing activities oriented towards the family segment, student groups, youth and seniors;
- Targeted provision of information for potential tourists (both online and in other ways);
- Focusing on electronic marketing, transferring publications into electronic environment;

- Strengthening co-operation and co-financing between the ŽNP Directorate, Plungė district municipality, and other institutions or bodies working in this area;

1.2.2.4. Protected territories' planning documents

Žemaitija National Park is one of the 5 national parks created in Lithuania. According to its content, the strategic directions reflect the protected territory planning schemes. Žemaitija National Park planning scheme (approved by the 22 October 2014 Order of the Lithuanian Government No. 1148):

- aims to preserve and exhibit valuable natural objects;
- aims to develop eco-education;
- it is planned to organize and adapt cultural heritage values (complexes) for cognitive visits;
- the directions and provisions for the development of recreational use are distinguished, measures are envisaged for regulating the use of recreational resources and the layout of recreational infrastructure;
- It is planned to give priority to biking and hiking tourism. Other forms of visiting the ŽNP include automotive tourism, water and horse tourism;
- stresses the need to develop a network of cognitive and educational trails and prospective directions for the development of ŽNP;
- It is specified that water tourism is being developed in Plateliai lake and tourism restrictions in order to preserve cultural and natural values are planned.

1.2.2.5. National sustainable development strategy

During the planning of ŽNP tourism strategic measures, it is important to take the sustainable development principles in account. They are described in the National sustainable development strategy (approved by the 11 September 2003 Order No. 1160 of the Lithuanian Government (the 16 September 2009 version of the Lithuanian Government Order No. 1247). The strategy plans to make more extensive use of protected territories, firstly national and regional parks, for ecological tourism.

The following aspects are important while seeking integrity with the National sustainable development strategy:

- Ensuring protection and rational use of natural and cultural heritage;
- Cognitive tourism (hiking, biking, water, car, horse and other types of track and route) qualitative development and maintenance;
- Respect to the social and cultural authenticity, cherishing cultural heritage and traditional values.

1.2.3. Regional level strategic planning documents

The largest part of Žemaitija National Park is in the territory of the Plungė district municipality (the smaller one is in the Skuodas district). Therefore, while preparing ŽNP tourism strategy, comparability with Plungė district municipality strategic planning documents, which are used to plan activities in the ŽNP territory, is important. Plungė district 2018-2020 strategic plan distinguishes Žemaitija National Park as a strength of the district and development of tourism and recreational activities as one of the aims. The following ŽNP related objectives are planned in order to achieve this objective:

1. To restore and develop the regional tourism institutional and planning system;
2. To increase the attractiveness and accessibility of the region for local and foreign tourists
3. Encourage the development of accommodation and catering services;

4. To create a complex public tourism infrastructure;
5. To create the image of the district by preserving, strengthening and developing new physical and intangible products that allow separating Plungė from other districts.

Detailed measures planned for the implementation of these objectives are prepared with a large part of them directly related to tourism in ŽNP.

ŽNP is distinguished as the most visited area in Plungė district (Žemaitija National Park hosts more than 2/3 of all guests in Plungė district). Therefore, ŽNP is an important area, which is included in Plungė district tourism marketing strategy for 2015-2020. It specifies that ŽNP objects are included in the Plungė district tourist routes, ŽNP objects and events are strongly integrated in the Plungė district tourism marketing strategy and measure plan. Therefore, while planning ŽNP tourism marketing, it is important not to copy the measures, which are already implemented by the Plungė district municipality. It is also appropriate to plan inter-institution cooperation and activity coordination measures, so that resources would be focused on a common goal.

Plungė district municipality local activity group 2014-2020 area development strategy

Lithuanian tourism development program specifies that rural homestead tourism and other tourism activity related business (catering institutions, entertainment businesses, and handicraft) has an important place in the development of tourism in the priority territories. Plungė district local business development and business support according to the rural development program measure “Leader program” is planned according to the *Plungė district municipality local activity group 2014-2020 area development strategy*. This strategy plans to provide support to activities related to tourism. These measures can be integrated together with ŽNP tourism strategy measures and help to achieve the ŽNP tourism strategy goals/objectives.

We can provide the following conclusions after the completion of national and regional document analysis:

- ŽNP and its objects are recognized as especially important tourism objects on a national level (in regards to recreation, culture and historic heritage);
- There is not enough attention brought on a national level to the nature tourism product presentation on foreign markets, so it is necessary to implement independent marketing measures in target country segments;
- The main tourism products to be developed – is ecological and cultural types of tourism, it is important to integrate historical heritage in to them;
- Niche tourism products – culinary, tourist routes, recreation near water bodies, rural tourism;
- A lot of attention should be provided to:
 - Rural environment recreation and countryside tourism homestead potential strengthening, developing camping sites;
 - Developing bicycle and hiking routes/tracks;
 - Using cultural heritage objects for tourism;
- ŽNP is specified as the most visited place in the Plunge district, making it important to cooperate with the Plungė District Municipality Administration, Plungė Tourist Information Center (hereinafter – Plungė TIC), Local activity group. It would be purposeful to plan measures, so that the activities would not copy each other and resources would be focused on achieving the common goal.

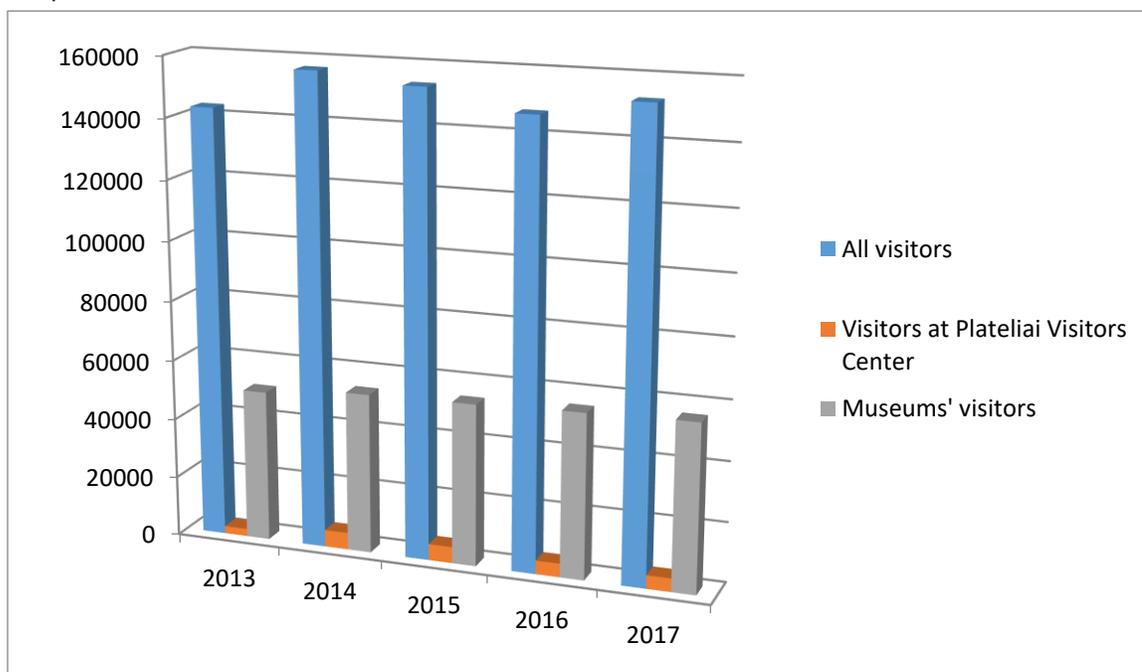
1.3. Target groups and their needs

1.3.1 Visitor flows and limits

According to the knowledge of the ŽNP Directorate, there were 152779 visitors in Žemaitija National Park in 2017, of them 56046 have visited museums and exhibitions and 4519 visitors have visited Plateliai Visitor Center. Approximately 34-36% of all ŽNP visitors visit exhibitions and 2-3% visit Plateliai Visitor Center.

The distribution of visitors during season and non-season time is as follows at the moment: 85% during season time and 15% during off-season time.

Graph 1. Current visitor flows



Source: Compiled according to Žemaitija National Park Directorate 2017 activity report data.

Taking in account that the increasing flows of local and foreign tourists can affect the local community both in positive and negative ways, including the nature and the countryside; the following aspects are important while planning marketing measures:

- The capacity of the park is not calculated at the moment, but according to preliminary assessments, if visitors would be distributed evenly in the park, it could host up to 200 thousand single-day visitors and tourists staying overnight;
- The attracted tourist profile is important: ŽNP is aimed at calm recreation in peace with nature, therefore people who prefer loud parties and consuming alcohol should not choose this place.

1.3.2. Target group segmenting

Analysis of target groups and separating relevant ones in order to segment the market and efficiently plan tourism marketing measures is targeted at a specific segment. When segmenting tourism

market **by geographic aspect**, the following two group segments are specified: *local tourism* market and *inbound tourism* market.

1.3.2.1. Local tourism market segment

According to the 2017 visiting tourist research, the main ŽNP visitors are from Lithuania and foreign tourists are a minority (8%). The characteristics of tourists visiting ŽNP during the peak season (summer) are provided in the table below.

Table 1. ŽNP visitors' characteristics

Nationality	Lithuanians (92%)
Place of residence	Close by - Telšiai (43%), Klaipėda (19%), Šiauliai counties (11%).
Age	21-40 years (44.4%) and 41-60 (29.5%)
Sex	women (56%), men (44%)
Traveling	with friends or family (3 people group). Another type of visitor is a person who is 21-40 years old and a child (29.1%) or adolescent (34.9%)
Number of visits to ŽNP	the vast majority (86%) are not first-time visitors
Type of arrival to ŽNP	by car
How did they know about ŽNP	family and friends (96%), internet (22%)
How much time do they spend in ŽNP?	1-3 days
Catering type	67% eat their own food, 33% eat at catering institutions
Entertainment	museums, biking trails, diving

Source: Žemaitija National Park quantitative research (28 of August, 2017). Sorbum Group.

ŽNP is mostly visited by tourists from the counties nearby (Telšiai, Klaipėda, Šiauliai), but according to the data from the Lithuanian Department of statistics regarding local tourism, the most frequent travellers in Lithuania are people from the Vilnius, Kaunas and Klaipėda counties. Compared to travellers from other Lithuanian counties, the part of their travel spending for accommodation are larger, and the total expenses for the travel are the highest. Therefore, this is the most attractive local tourist market segment. The main characteristics of this segment are presented in the table below.

Table 2. Characteristics of local tourists travelling in Lithuania.

Place of residence	Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaipėda counties
Type of travel	by car
Travel time	2.8 overnights
Where are they staying	at friends and relatives (40%), homesteads in rural tourism
Travel goals	visiting friends and relatives, leisure, leisure and holidays, business and professional interests
Holiday destination	Nature (48%)

Information dissemination channels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The main international tourism exhibition - Adventur, held in Vilnius in January; • Through the internet, electronic media, social media.
------------------------------------	--

Source: Lithuanian tourism 2016-2020 marketing strategy.

According to the data of ŽNP Visitor Center, the number of visitors to ŽNP from Vilnius and Kaunas counties has begun to increase in 2016-2017, this was supposedly caused by the following factors: 1) Plungė district municipalities' implemented marketing measures; 2) cooperation with www.pamatyklietuvoje.lt initiative; 3) ŽNP presentation at the "Adventur" exhibition. Therefore, it is essential to keep implementing measures that proved to be effective and to strengthen the marketing package for new initiatives in order to increase ŽNP tourist flows from large Lithuanian cities.

Apart from marketing measures, it is very important to ensure good tourism services quality and justification of tourist expectations. One of the main marketing channels remains to be "word of mouth" advertising; therefore, satisfied tourists will accelerate future flows.

In order to determine the expectations and other characteristics of people travelling through Lithuania with tourist intentions, UAB "Eurointegracijos projektai" has executed a representative Lithuanian citizen local tourism research during the months of July to August 2016 according to an order from the State Tourism Department under the Ministry of Economy. The factors influencing the largest part of the respondents in their decision of where to go for a trip with an overnight stay in Lithuania were as follows:

- cleanliness and order at the destination;
- personal security;
- the cost of services, travel and food;
- proper state of the environment and accommodation establishments;
- landscape (lakes, sea), peace and quiet;
- local people's friendliness.

Other factors are also quite important:

- opportunity to enjoy the pleasures of recreation near water;
- opportunity to visit cultural heritage sites;
- opportunity to taste traditional cuisine;
- sports infrastructure;
- possibility to enjoy wellness services;
- opportunity to experience educational programs.

According to the 2017 UAB "Sorbum Group" ŽNP visitor research data, the needs of the current ŽNP visitors are as follows:

1. clean, good quality lake water and clean lake access (the main object of visitation is the lake, the main activity is swimming);
2. good beach and swimming facilities;
3. cheaper accommodation establishments;
4. better waste handling, more trash bins (10%);
5. better roads (8%);
6. interesting museums (visiting museums);
7. good biking trails and bike rental (biking);
8. water equipment rental (enjoying water vessels);
9. natural objects adapted for educational purposes (increasing knowledge of natural objects);

In order to retain and increase the local tourist flows, measures, oriented towards fulfilling the above-mentioned needs should be planned, together with planned marketing, oriented towards increasing the flows.

1.3.2.2. Inbound tourism market

Currently, foreign tourists are a smaller fraction of all recorded ŽNP visitors (approximately 8%). According to the visitors monitoring data, collected by ŽNP Directorate, the part of foreigners, who have visited the Visitors Center from the total amount of visitors is smaller 34% (1547 foreigners out of 4519 visitors). However, the following two aspects are important in the evaluation of this data: 1) Visitor Center is visited only by 2-3% of all recorded ŽNP visitors; 2) Visitor Center employees notice that searching for information at the Visitor Center is more popular amongst foreigners and not Lithuanians.

The general objective of the Lithuanian tourism marketing is to increase the tourist flow in regions and present ecological tourism products to foreigners. Thus, one of the strategic ŽNP tourism marketing objectives should also be the attraction of larger foreign tourist flows to ŽNP.

According to the surveys of foreign tourists in Lithuania (executed in 2015 by UAB “Socialinės informacijos centras”), apart from Vilnius, foreigners has liked the following in Lithuania the most:

- food and beverage culture (coffee shops, restaurants, cuisine, beverages, etc.) (40%),
- nature (countryside, forests, lakes, etc.) (32%) and
- people (hospitality, friendliness, etc.) (27%).

Therefore, ŽNP has one of the main advantages – nature, and this is its unused potential in the field of tourism marketing.

Currently ŽNP attracts visitors from various countries of the world: mostly from European countries, but it also has visitors from Asia, Northern and Southern America. The following actions have been taken in order to specify the target inbound tourism markets:

- foreign visitor flows analysis at the ŽNP Visitor Center;
- expert tourism potential assessment from each country with a tourism expert;
- strategic target market assessment during a strategic session with ŽNP Directorate representatives;
- target market assessment via interview with the ŽNP business representatives active in the area of tourism.

After the assessment of the inbound tourism market potential, the following target inbound tourism countries are specified: Latvia, Germany, France, Italy, Sweden.

Latvia. According to the data of foreign tourists’ survey in Lithuania (executed in 2015 by UAB “Socialinės informacijos centras”), the main motives of tourists from Latvia to visit Lithuania is that Lithuania is viewed as a culturally close, acceptable country and that this country is comfortable in regard to travelling. The distance from the ŽNP main city Plateliai to the Lithuanian-Latvian border is approximately 1 h 20 min. and approximately 3 hours drive by car to Riga (i.e. even a little shorter than from Plateliai to Vilnius – 3 h 14 min.) Thus, making Plateliai a possible place not only for holiday destination for Latvian citizens, but also a weekend recreational destination. However, Latvian flows in ŽNP are relatively small; the Visitor Center has recorded only 66 visitors from Latvia in 2017, although it was 189 in 2016. Active marketing measures for the target audiences are needed.

Germany. Currently this is a foreign country with the largest tourist flow to the ŽNP: 373 visitors in the Visitor Center in 2017 (343 in 2016). Frequently (and more frequently than tourists from other countries) tourists from Germany come to Lithuania because they are interested in the country’s culture

and history, because of the cultural familiarity of the country, acceptance and after taking the recommendations of their accomplices into account. The owners of accommodation establishments in ŽNP notice that German tourists who stay at their establishments are interested in their Lithuanian roots and past. Compared to tourists from other countries, German tourists visit Lithuania because of the nature, good service price to quality ration and travel agency offers.

France. Tourists from France usually (and more frequently than tourists from other foreign countries) come to Lithuania because they have never been here before (54%) or because they have received recommendations to visit the country from the people they know (44%). Compared to other tourists coming to Lithuania, French people are more frequently travelling to Lithuania after receiving a trip offer from a travel agency. Therefore, they can be attracted through the offer of tourism packages to travel agencies and operators.

Italy. Lithuania is most frequently associated with the country's history by tourists from Italy and a colder climate. Tourists from Italy come to Lithuania because they have never visited this country before. Compared to other foreign tourists, Italians are more frequently drawn to Lithuania by travel agency offers. Therefore, tourists from Italy can be attracted through the offering of tourism packages for tourist agencies and operators.

Sweden. Swedish people usually associate Lithuania with its nature, history and Baltic sea coast. Swedes are motivated to come to Lithuania by the fact that Lithuania is a culturally close country and the fact that a travel to Lithuania was recommended by their friends.

Detailed tourist segments description is presented in the table below.

Table 3. Target markets for inbound tourism.

	Germany	Latvia	France	Italy	Sweden
Number of ŽNP visitors at its Visitor Center in 2017 (2016)	373 (343)	66 (189)	141 (189)	62(96)	16(27)
General objective	Product development with publication at the Visitor Center. It is necessary to actively offer ŽNP tourism packages and constantly communicate with the outside world (partners, tourism business). Ask visitors to leave feedback at trip advisor (in English)				
Current demand	Cultural tourism, national parks	Cultural tourism, national parks	Cultural tourism, national parks	Cultural tourism, national parks	Cultural tourism, national parks
	Areas close to ŽNP: Cross hill, Neringa, Klaipėda, Palanga	Areas close to ŽNP: Cross hill, Neringa, Klaipėda, Palanga	Areas close to ŽNP: Cross hill, Neringa, Klaipėda, Palanga	Areas close to ŽNP: Cross hill, Klaipėda, Palanga	Areas close to ŽNP: Neringa, Klaipėda, Palanga
	Families (≥ 2 pers.), 55+, youth (18-30 yrs.), business (25-45 yrs.)	Families (≥ 2 pers.), youth (18-30 yrs.), business (25-45 yrs.)	Families (≥ 2 pers.), 55+, youth (18-30 yrs.),	Families (≥ 2 pers.), 55+, youth (18-30 yrs.),	Families (≥ 2 pers.), 55+, youth (18-30 yrs.), business (25-45 yrs.)
Main tourism	Ecological tourism	Cultural and ecological	Ecological	Ecological tourism	Ecological

	Germany	Latvia	France	Italy	Sweden
products		tourism	tourism		tourism
Niche tourism products	Theme routes, gastronomic and culinary routes, active outside leisure, rural tourism	Culinary routes, active outside leisure, ecological tourism, rural tourism	Culinary routes and gastronomy, theme routes, active outside leisure	Pilgrimage/religious trips, culinary routes and gastronomy, theme routes, active outside leisure	Culinary routes and gastronomy, cultural routes, theme routes, active outside leisure
Marketing solutions	Complex marketing (advertising in media outlets, e-marketing, advertising campaigns, participation in exhibitions), events, seminars, cognitive tours for journalists, etc.	Separate marketing measures: creating and presenting new products, advertising and support measures: participation in Balttour exhibition, publications, e-marketing	Complex marketing (advertising in media outlets, e-marketing, advertising campaigns, participation in exhibitions), events, seminars, cognitive tours for journalists, etc.	Complex marketing (advertising in media outlets, e-marketing, advertising campaigns, participation in exhibitions), events, seminars, cognitive tours for journalists, etc.	Complex marketing (advertising in media outlets, e-marketing, advertising campaigns, participation in exhibitions), events, seminars, cognitive tours for journalists, etc.
Main problems	Lack of direct flights and comfortable connection by ferries		Wizzair and Airbaltic creates flights only to Paris, there are no direct flights to other large cities	There are only Wizzair and Ryanair flights, there are no traditional air transportation companies for direct flights	Lack of direct and comfortable connection by ferries
	Lack of tourist routes and tourism products, created for German people.		Lack of tourist routes and tourism products created for French people.	Lack of tourist routes and tourism products created for Italian people.	English language barrier
	German language barrier		French language barrier		

Source: Lithuanian tourism 2016-2020 marketing strategy.

The following general trends in tourists' behaviour and needs are expected:

- a more experience tourist will value authenticity, rather than fake created tourism attraction objects in the future, therefore, the tourist areas should cherish their unique traditions and create niche tourism products, related to arts, food, etc.;

- the increasing need in mobility will increase demand renting for cars, scooters and bicycles, therefore, special attention should be brought to ecological vehicles and ecological tourism products in protected areas (bicycle and water tourism, electrically driven cars);
- accessibility of IT technologies will play a key role, making it important to bring more attention to mobile technology possibilities when introducing tourism area;
- the regions, which will be able to provide a wider range of services while taking care of the environment will receive more tourist visits, making the development of sustainable tourism a key point (social, environment protection and economic benefits), including the benefits brought by tourism to local communities;
- leisure time spending will become more individualized; therefore, the demand for smaller accommodation establishments will increase. Boutique or family-run hotels will increase in popularity along with rural tourism objects, making it important to bring a lot of attention to present accommodation and tourism services;
- the popularity of organized group tours (tourism packages) with a guide or accompanying person will decrease, therefore tourism areas should provide possibilities for informational accessibility (information stands, links, e-marketing, guides) for tourists travelling individually, the safety of such tourists should also be taken proper care of;
- tourism service providers who will be able to create a new concept or an exclusive tourism product with a higher added value, will reap higher benefits, therefore, tourist areas should present exceptional tourism products, related to handicrafts, food, educational tourism, nature watching, etc.;
- more specialized providers will come to the stage, who will take care of specific users' hobbies and interests, therefore, this possibility should be used to cooperate with travel organizers or public sector tourism organizations active in the tourism area, who present Lithuanian niche tourism products (bird watching, bicycle tourism, rural tourism, etc.) in foreign tourism markets.

1.3.3. Specialized target groups

Taking the Lithuanian 2014-2020 tourism development program in account, the plan is to “adapt objects visited by tourists and services provided to tourists to be suitable for everyone taking their physical capabilities, disabilities or age in account, meaning persons with special needs, families with small children, people of old age and the like.” Thus, the following specific segments of the target group can be distinguished:

- Tourists with disabilities (adapt places visited by tourists for their use, provide audio guides at tourist destinations, as well as information in Braille, adapt tourist sites for people with movement impairment);
- Families with small children (install children’s playgrounds in visited objects, special mother and child rooms or cabins);
- People of old age.

Children and schoolchildren can also be distinguished as a separate target group. European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas specifies that providing information for children, youth and students is one of the priority activities. Currently, ŽNP has a couple of objects adapted for the use of children (i.e. the exhibition at the Visitor Center) and educational excursions are organized for them. However, there is a lot of development possibilities (i.e. ŽNP planning scheme provides the creation of Nature school).

1.4. Competitive environment

In order to determine the exclusivity of ŽNP in the context of Lithuanian tourism objects, it has been compared according to resources, accessibility and services with similar protected territories: national parks of Aukštaitija and Dzūkija.

Table 4. Comparative advantages of national parks

	Dzūkija National Park	Aukštaitija National Park	Žemaitija National Park
Park exceptionality	Čepkeliai – Dzūkija National/PAN Park, which is composed of the Čepkeliai state nature reservation as well as the Dzūkija National Park and in which the natural ecosystem of the Dainava Forest is preserved, is one of 13 PAN parks in Europe.	Resort territory status to the city of Ignalina, Strigailiškis and Palūšės village parts are provided by the 4 July 2007 order of the Lithuanian Government No. 688. This resort territory is located in Aukštaitija National Park.	Žemaitija highlands region, including Telšiai and Plunge district municipalities is distinguished as one of the 6 priority tourism development regions in Lithuania.
Park's strengths/ exceptionality in regard to the nature objects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • River and stream park (Nemunas, Merkys, Ūla, Grūda); • The development of water routes in the rivers; • 85% of the park - forests, mainly pine forests (they contain a lot of mushrooms and berries); • Old relict of beekeeping – old hollowed out trees. • Ūla river eye, Merkinė observation tower, educational trails 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network of popular lakes (Baltieji ir Juodieji Lakajai, Lūšis, Bebras, Tauragnas, Baluošas); • Developed water tourism routes • Labanoras Regional Park; • Ladakalnis, Ginučiai tower 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plateliai Lake with its islands • Cycle route; • Educational trails
Park's strengths/exceptionality in regard to cultural objects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional villages (Zervynos, Marcinkonys); • Merkinė hillfort; • Native ethnic architecture (shutter decoration) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethno-cosmological Museum and Observatory • Palūšė wooden church; • Ginučiai water mill; • Beekeeping museum • Ginučiai mound 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cold War Exposition; • Shrove Tuesday exposition; • Plateliai Manor house; • Sacral objects: Žemaičių Kalvarija, Plateliai, Beržoras and Gegrėnai wooden churches; • Two pilgrimage routes (Žemaičių Kalvarija and Beržoras).
Park's	• Traditions of collecting	• Educational sessions	• UNESCO heritage cross

strengths/ exceptionality in regard to traditions	and preserving forest goods; • Tree beekeeping; • Rafting; • Merkinė hillfort		crafting; • Educational sessions, organized in the Plateliai manor traditional craft center, • Shrove Tuesday celebration and Shrove Tuesday exhibition
Accommodation	1 camping (4 stars); 16 rural tourism homesteads 15 campsites	1 camping; 60 rural tourism homesteads; 51 campsites 3 guest houses 4 hotels 3 holiday homes 2 hostels 2 others (nature school, recreation center)	28 rural tourism homesteads 9 campsites and 9 tourist camps 1 hotel 8 recreation and guest houses
Catering	3 cafes 2 programs of culinary heritage in homesteads	10 cafes - restaurants	6 cafes (working only during the tourism season), restaurant; Culinary Heritage Program at the Plateliai manor traditional craft center; A program of culinary heritage at the Žemaitė Museum in Bukantė.
Positioning	“Dzūkija National Park – for those who travel slow”; “Varėna – moving at nature's pace”	“Best family holidays”; “Fishing heaven” “Nature's school” for schoolchildren; Skiing tracks during winter time. “Only we have such biking route diversity”.	

Source: compiled according to the information at the national parks webpages (www.anp.lt, www.dzukijosparkas.lt, www.zemaitijosnp.lt)

The following conclusions can be made while summarizing the data provided in the table:

- ŽNP has no possibilities to develop water routes like Dzūkija and Aukštaitija National Parks, but it could continue to develop proven pedestrian and bicycle paths around the Plateliai lake, and strengthen the positioning of these tourism objects;
- ŽNP's exceptionality lies in cultural heritage – cross crafting and Shrove Tuesday traditions;

- ŽNP's exceptionalism in regard to tourism objects – the Cold war exposition;
- The accommodation establishment network is comparatively large; however, it lacks a wider range of accommodation services, i.e. camping sites;
- ŽNP has to experience catering establishment development, and implement greater use of the culinary heritage potential;
- ŽNP lacks positioning.

1.5. Cooperation environment on local and international level

1.5.1. Cooperation on an international level.

ŽNP Visitor Service Department's 2017 report shows that cooperation has been established with different institutions on both local and international levels. On the international level, ŽNP Directorate cooperated with Finnish Laurea university, Metsähallitus, Parks & Wildlife Finland. ŽNP Directorate also participated and plans to continue participation in the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas and constantly executes international projects, which create cooperation with various foreign subjects:

- Cooperation through the Interreg project "Attractive Hardwoods" with Polish and Swedish partners: Swedish Forest Agency (SE), Region Blekinge (SE), County Administrative Board of Blekinge (SE), Regional Directorate of State Forests in Gdańsk (PL) and Pomorskie Tourist Board (PL);
- Cooperation through the Interreg project "UniGreen" with partners from Latvia: Kurzeme planning region, Durbe municipality, Kuldyga municipality, Ruoja municipality, Saldus municipality, Skrunda municipality and Ventspils municipality.

However, in order to attract foreign tourists from target countries (Latvia, Germany, Sweden, Italy and France), cooperation should be developed with tourism information centers and travel agencies/operators from those countries.

1.5.2. Institutional cooperation on a national and local level

ŽNP Directorate cooperates with institutions on both national and local levels. Proven projects include cooperation with Plungė Tourist Information Center and www.pamatyklietuvoje.lt team, that resulted in direct positive changes – increased ŽNP recognition and attracted more visitors from larger Lithuanian cities.

Table 5. Cooperation on local and national level

State institutions	Lithuanian Tourism Department, Ministry of Environment, Service for protected territories
Tourist information centers	Plungė Tourist Information Center
Tour operators and agencies	UAB "Klaipėdos mėja", travel agency "Krantas travel"
Local self-government	Plungė District Municipality Administration
Local communities	Plunge district Local action group
Tourism promotion initiatives	Team of initiative "PamatykLietuvoje" (A. Dotas)
Educational institutions	Plungė kindergarten "Pasaka", Plungė district municipality educational institutions, Skuodas municipality educational institutions, Plungė children's care homes

Disabled people associations	Lithuanian Association of People with Disabilities
Scientific institutions	Klaipėda State College, Klaipėda University

Source: compiled according to the information of ŽNP Directorate activity reports of 2017

1.5.3. Cooperation with tourism-related business

ŽNP Directorate currently cooperates with tourism sector business in the following main forms: through the ŽNP product brand, organizing tourism forums, seminars, trainings.

Table 6. Cooperation with tourism-related business

Local business representatives, with whom the Visitor Center has cooperated in 2017	Samogitian Rural Tourism Association, Farmers (N. Makiejevienė, D. Abrutis, S. and D. Kakčiai and others), ŽNP Accommodation establishments (hotel, rest and guest houses), ŽNP Tourist camps and campsites, ŽNP rent and diving service providers, ŽNP catering institutions and other tourism service providers
Trademark	Žemaitija National Park trademark is intended for local product producers, craftsmen, tourism services providers and other local residents, whose activities help sustainable tourism development in Lithuanian protected territories. Currently, this trademark sign is provided to 51 tourism business.
Tourism forum	The forum involves service and product providers, National Park employees and people interested in education and handicraft. This forum takes place twice per year in the months of April and December. Upcoming tourism season news from the Žemaitija National Park, Plunge city and district are presented on the April forum, good experiences are also shared, business representatives are invited to present tourism news.
Žemaitija Tourism Cluster	It is a network of organizations, including the following Plungė (Gandinga) and Plateliai area tourism sectors: river and lake water sports and leisure, bicycle and hiking, leisure centers, cultural and historical objects, accommodation in modernly equipped tourism homesteads, high-quality catering, route planning and organizing. By joining their strengths, the cluster participants offer more diverse tourism services.

Source: compiled by authors

However, local service providers point out that both the product (trademark) brand and the tourism forum formats should be reviewed. Currently, they are not sufficiently effective and are not promoting real cooperation sufficiently enough.

1.6. Economic and social development possibilities

Trends of national economy relevant to the development of tourism in ŽNP

According to the data, provided by the Ministry of Economy, the improving financial situation of Lithuanian households and good consumer expectations have promoted the rise of household spending in the last years. In 2017, this growth has reached 5,6% - the fastest temp during the last 9 years (faster

growth has been recorded only in 2007). The Ministry of finance predicts that in case wages grow faster than the inflation, household consumption will remain quite large. Household consumption expenses in 2017-2020 will rise by 3,6% on average per year (this is higher than the EU average) and will strongly contribute to the growth of GDP. It is believed that expenses for tourism services and products will grow together with the growth of consumer expenses.

The Ministry of finance also forecasts that investment level will also grow in the country, which will be promoted in the medium term by banks' favourable crediting conditions, alternative sources of financing, a more active European strategic European investment fund money and EU fund investment use. The gross fixed capital formation expenses could grow by 5 percent annually for 2017-2020, although there was no such growth last year. Therefore, the situation is favourable to attract private investment for the planned ŽNP strategic measure implementation.

From 1 January 2017 the social insurance regulating laws, related to the new social model, have entered legal force. These laws extend the possibilities to insure (for heads of small companies, persons receiving bonuses) and increase the number of types of insurance accessible for persons (self-employed persons received sickness insurance). It creates favourable conditions to establish and develop small business, hire employees for seasonal or fixed-term work.

Social indicators of the region and their influence on tourism

The decreasing number of residents and negative natural increase in population. Ageing society.

Plungė district is characterized with a negative natural increase of population due to the low birthrate and high mortality rate. The district loses young (up to 25 years of age) persons, and there is an especially low number of people aged 16-18 in the district. Resident ageing trend is also present. This makes a great impact on the tourism development: people of older age find it hard to accept innovations, take part in general initiatives in a more passive way. Business representatives specify that it is hard for them to find proper employees.

Weak knowledge of foreign languages, lack of management and servicing quality knowledge.

The educational and resident ageing trends also affect the skills of the population. Tourists visiting the park notice a lack of English-speaking employees in the tourism sector establishments, however they receive high-quality information in English in the Visitor Center.

Complaisance, benevolence

Visitors specify the complaisance and benevolence of the people. They leave such feedback at the Visitor Center feedback book, tourism forums and webpages.

Table 7. www.tripadvisor.com reviews

Original review in its language
„The best part of the office is it's staff- very friendly and professional.“
„English is not commonly understood, and the nearest cash machine is quite far away. <..> If you have any problems, they have a helpful tourist information office in the center of the village where they speak English very well.“

Source: compiled according to information on www.tripadvisor.com website

The development of tourism infrastructure and products promotes the increase in inbound tourism, which affects the region's social and economic development. Tourism has a multi-vectored influence on people, communities, regions and countries.

Increasing local and foreign tourist flows can affect the local community, nature and countryside not only positively, but also in a negative way, therefore, planning processes are exceptionally important for the successful development of tourism.

2. INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT ANALYSIS

2.1. Tourism resource analysis, potential and use for tourism

There are 11 nature reserves, 12 landscape reserves, 4 cultural protected areas, 24 natural heritage sites, 204 cultural properties including 13 mounds, 16 repositories, 6 sacred hills, 3 ancient settlements. The park is covered by forest for 44.58 percent, with 21 lakes and Babrungas river.

Still, according to one of the most popular tourist sites in the world, www.tripadvisor.com, visitors distinguish and notice only 3 ŽNP tourist attractions: The Cold War exposition, Plateliai lake and the Diving academy.

Table 8. ŽNP objects distinguished by www.tripadvisor.com visitors

	Object	Assessment (5 is the highest)	Number of reviews	Evaluation
1.	Cold War exposition	4,5	112 (51+61) (reviews in two places – although there is only one object, some people review it as a „Plokštinė rocket base“ and other as the „Cold war museum“)	Excellent (69%) Very good (29%) Average (1%) Very bad (1%)
2.	Plateliai lake (the lake and its surroundings are evaluated in „Žemaitija National Park“ category)	4,5	20	Excellent (45%) Very good (50%) Average (5%)
3.	Diving academy	5	1	Excellent (100%)

Source: compiled according to information on www.tripadvisor.com website

According to the quantitative ŽNP visitors' research (executed in 2017), the most popular tourism object in ŽNP is the Plateliai lake (most of the surveyed people, a whole 73% have visited ŽNP since they would like to relax around the lake). Only approximately 25% of the visitors planned to visit the museums or ride in bicycle paths. The most popular visiting objects are detailed in the table and chart below.

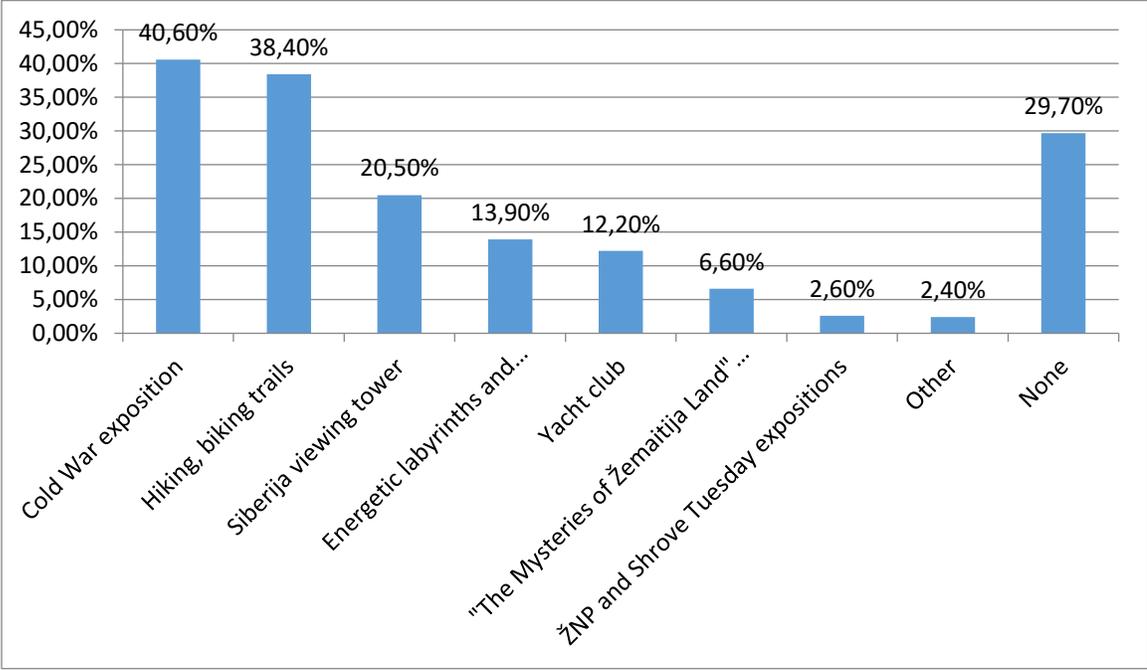
Table 9. Most popular ŽNP objects.

Object	Part of the visitors, who planned to visit or visited the object
Plateliai lake	73%
Cold War exposition	40,6%
Hiking, biking trails	38,4%
Siberija viewing tower	20,5%
Energetic labyrinths and geometrical figures park	13,9%
Yacht club	12,2%
"The Mysteries of Samogitian Land" exposition	6,6%

ŽNP and Shrove Tuesday expositions	2,6%
------------------------------------	------

Source: compiled according to quantitative ŽNP visitors research (executed in 2017 by “Sorbum Group”, Ltd)

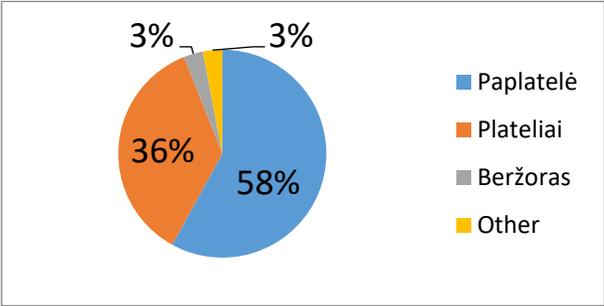
Graph 2. Most popular ŽNP objects



Source: compiled according to quantitative ŽNP visitors research (executed in 2017 by “Sorbum Group”, Ltd)

The most popular places to stay amongst the visitors are Paplatelė and Plateliai: 94% of all surveyed people who have stayed overnight in the park, stayed at one of those places.

Graph 3. Most popular ŽNP places to stay



Source: compiled according to quantitative ŽNP visitors research (executed in 2017 by “Sorbum Group”, Ltd)

2.1.1. Cultural heritage

Žemaitija National Park is an exceptional area of Lithuania, which most clearly reflects the hilly landscape of Samogitia, with small city architecture and planning, Samogitian homesteads with their

elements of decorations, sacral heritage monuments, calvaries in Beržoras and Žemaičių Kalvarija, with chapels common only to this region, pre-Christian period archeological monuments (which are few and scarce in Lithuania), a local dialect preserved by the people of the land, traditions, handicraft and celebrations with one of the most important ones – Shrove Tuesday Festival.

Table 10. Intangible heritage with tourism potential.

Heritage	Current cognitive opportunities for visitors	Development possibilities
Samogitian dialect, songs	Some of the rural tourism homesteads already specify that there is a possibility to organize Samogitian dinner with Samogitian songs.	Possible development and support of this tradition in other accommodation and catering establishments.
Culinary heritage	<p>Current possibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Educational activities in the Plateliai manor traditional craft center (Pancake baking, Samogitian yeast pie); - Tastings at the Plateliai manor traditional craft center; - Traditional dinner in some of the rural tourism homesteads; - Traditional dishes, which are included in catering establishment menus <p>The traditional craft center provides the cooking of traditional Samogitian meals during the educational activities: “cibulinė”, “kanapinė”, herring with hot potatoes. A local cottage cheese with honey or a Samogitian yeast pie and fragrant herb tea is offered for dessert. Educators tell in Samogitian dialect about the old feasting traditions, Samogitian eating habits and share secrets of producing local foods.</p> <p>Educational activities are organized for groups of 5 to 20 tourists.</p>	However, tourists’ possibilities to access the culinary heritage are very fragmented and require efforts being made by the visitor himself.
Handicraft	<p>The following educational activities are organized at the Plateliai manor traditional craft center throughout the year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candle casting; • Paper weaving; • Embroidery; • Shrove Tuesday masks production; • Easter classes (traditional egg painting, etc.); • Educational session "Christmas"; • Educational session, „Advent customs“; • Samogitian gloves; • Samogitian socks; • Small crown weaving; • Traditional crafts training is carried out in 	Cross crafting, which has UNESCO heritage status.

	accordance with the Traditional craft training programs, certified by the Ministry of Agriculture	
--	---	--

Source: compiled by authors

All the non-tangible heritage and educations, provided in the table 10, are attractive for local tourism and traditional dinners in rural tourism homesteads, traditional Samogitian dishes, Shrove Tuesday masks creation educational programs and cross crafting make Žemaitija National Park exceptional on an international level (high potential in priority foreign tourism markets).

Table 11. Material culture heritage objects

Type	Object	How is the object presented in the ŽNP webpage www.zemaitijosnp.lt ?
Manors, homesteads	Plateliai manor homestead (former barn, stables, cellar, threshing barn, park, natural monuments in park)	The XIX-XX century Plateliai manor homestead with preserved threshing bark, servants' house, stable, barn, cellar and park have architectural and landscape management value and is a state protected cultural heritage. Wooden manor halls burned down during the second world war (1943). A part of the buildings is in the process of restoration and are adapted to community needs.
	Plateliai homestead barn	Plateliai homestead barn is a second half of 19 th century architecture (with neo-gothic elements) homestead barn. Here in the 2011 were restored Plateliai manor history, old Plateliai, Pilies (fort) island history and this Samogitian area ethnographic exposition, a newly installed modern nature exposition and a hall of constantly changed exhibitions.
	Shrove Tuesday exposition	Shrove Tuesday exposition settled in the manor's stables. It is the first Shrove Tuesday exposition in Lithuania, featuring the famous Samogitian traditional Shrove Tuesday celebration, over 250 different Shrove Tuesday masks.
Small cities with authentic architecture	Plateliai	This is one of the most beautiful and famous small cities of Samogitia – established at the western coast of Plateliai lake in Žemaitija National Park. Mentioned in historical sources since the XV century, Plateliai manor, town and church were then built on the Šventorkalnis peninsula and it is then transferred in XVII century to the current place. Plateliai were provided with the Magdeburg rights and a coat of arms in 1792. Plateliai are interesting in their planned structure with a central square typical for Samogitian towns, St. Paul and Peter cathedral, the manor and its homestead.
	Žemaičių Kalvarija	Žemaičių (Samogitian) Kalvarija (formerly known as Gardai) is mentioned for the first time in historical sources in 1253 as a Kuršiai town with a fort, a sacred religious place and a cemetery. This town has preserved the road and street network characteristic for IX-XIII century towns, and hold quite enough of archeologic, architectural,

		arts, sacral and other types of cultural heritage and natural values. The town's relief is really impressive.
	Beržoras	This is an old street-based village, which is mentioned since the XV century and a state protected cultural heritage. The church village has preserved its natural landscape, interesting and sacral architectural heritage.
	Šarnelė	The Šarnelė village starts approximately one kilometer to the north-west from Žemaičių Kalvarija and expands for approximately 5 kilometres, it is known since the XVI century. It is almost a 20 km ² homestead village, famous for its busy farms. One of them was where the poet Vytautas Mačernis (1921-1944) was born and raised. He loved his native village and has expressed his childhood experiences in his poetry. He is buried in Šarnelė. The places liked most by the poet are marked with "Akmeninės vizijos" (Stone visions), according to the plan of the local ethnographer Konstantinas Bružas.
Sacral heritage	Žemaičių Kalvarija cultural value complex	Žemaičių Kalvarija holy site is a part of the John Paul II pilgrimage path places (Lithuanian Government has approved the John Paul II pilgrimage path creation and its object adaptation for pilgrim and tourism needs in 2007-2013 program in 2007).
	Beržoras cultural heritage complex	In 1759-1760 there were 14 new Jesus Christ's wooden chapels – Kalvarija road stations, which were demolished in the VII decade of the XX century and then rebuilt. There is an abundance of rebuilt or remaining chapels, crosses and chapel-posts.
	Wooden St. Paul and Peter's church	St. Paul and Peter's church is one of the oldest churches in Lithuania. It is a wooden, logged wood church, which was built in 1744. Close to it – a XIX century wooden bell tower. A lot of old paintings, liturgical clothes and accessories still remain preserved here.
	Other wooden churches	Not so far away from Žemaitija National Park territory or inside its protected area there are three wooden XVIII churches: Gintališkė, Gegrėnai, Alsėdžiai churches. Churches of Beržoras, Plateliai, Gintališkė, Alsėdžiai, Gegrėnai have been included in the "Plunge – Lithuanian cultural capital" historical-religious route project.
Archaeological and mythological objects	Gegrėnai archeological complex	The unique Gegrėnai archeological complex consists of: two fort hills, two burial grounds and an ancient settlement with barrows. There is a walking trail, in the future more infrastructure is planned.
	Other archaeological objects: Šarnelė mound with an old settlement, Grigaičiai mound, other mounds	Šarnelė mound has one of the poet's V. Mačernis stone visions, a memorial board for the Šarnelė village. There are 13 mounds in ŽNP territory, the following are not mentioned as of now: Pučkoriai I-III, Gegrėnai I-II, Jazdauskiškiai, Grigaičiai, Mikytai, Užpelkiai, Žerniai, St. John's (located in Žemaičių Kalvarija), Medsėdžiai. Some of which might be adapted for tourism later. There are two Christ's path chapels on the St. John's (Žemaičių Kalvarija) mound, it is visited by worshipers and tourists.
	Other	Mikytai sacred mound is presented by educational walking trail (1

	mythological objects: Mikytai sacred mound with a mythological rock (the devil's foot), Vilkai sacred mound	km), a parking lot is installed near the Salantai-Barstyčiai road. Vilkai sacred mound is not adapted for tourism. The following sacred mounds were not mentioned: Gilaičiai, Visvainiai, Gudaliai, Padegimė.
Jewish cultural heritage	Litvak memorial garden	The charity and support fund named according to the last Jew in Plungė, the folk artist Jakovas Bunka, plans to build a Jewish ethnographic homestead on the land, purchased in the Žemaitija National Park. As of now, the 12 acres of land plot is used to create a Litvak memorial garden. The Lithuanian contour is marked by evergreen bushes near a main road, used annually by approximately one and a half hundred thousand visitors from all around the world, and the places where Jewish communities were destroyed in 1941-1944 are marked by “sprouting” Artūras Platakis metal forged apple trees. They are ordered to remember their ancestors by Litvaks from all around the world. The apples on the trees commemorate the families who lived in the community.

Source: compiled by authors according to information provided on www.zemaitijosnp.lt website

All 11 of the Žemaitija National Park heritage objects are attractive for local tourism, however, only the following are attractive on an international level: Litvaks remembrance garden (for the Jewish segment) and Žemaičių Kalvarija (for pilgrims).

Table 12. Museums and other objects created for tourism, which are using cultural heritage

Object	How is the object presented on the ŽNP webpage www.zemaitijosnp.lt
Cold war exposition	This is the only exposition in Europe, which is installed in one of the first Soviet Union former underground ballistic missile launch silo complex. Historical expositions tell the story about the Cold war, which lasted five decades. There were formerly 4 medium range SS-4 ballistic missiles located at the museum's site, which were armed with 2 MT thermonuclear warheads.
Žemaitija National Park and Shrove Tuesday exposition	Barn of Plateliai Manor built with neo-gothic elements of folk architecture on the second half of 19th century has been updated in 2011 with ethnographic expositions of Plateliai Manor history, the past of ancient Plateliai, Castle Island, reflecting this Samogitian region; newly equipped modern natural exposition, hall with constantly changing exhibitions. A “brick style” stable, built in the second part of the XIX century, hold the first Shrove Tuesday exposition in Lithuania which is presenting the famous Samogitian traditional Shrove Tuesday celebration, many various Shrove Tuesday masks, which are called “lečynos” in the Samogitian dialect. The masks were being collected for approximately 20 years only from Samogitian regions and they number over 300 pcs. Each year, the exposition is updated with new masks. All of the masks of the exposition are very different with no two alike, traditional and decorative.

Poet V. Mačernis birthplace and grave	Poet V. Mačernis was born in the Šarnelė village and is buried on a hilltop near his birthplace. A poet V. Mačernis vision path has been created in Šarnelė according to the initiative of K. Bružas – a local ethnographer. This exposition tells about the tragic destiny of a Lithuanian poet Vytautas Mačernis, his life and creativity. In 1987, according to the initiative of the poet Eugenijus Matuzevičius, a museum exposition has been created – with V. Mačernis poetry books, pictures, documents and personal belongings of the poets being on display.
The writer Žemaitė birthplace in Bukantė	A memorial museum of the writer is in Bukantė. Counts Pliateriai estate was the place where Lithuanian literature classic Julija Beniuševičiūtė – Žymantienė, well known under her pseudonym Žemaitė – was born and raised. A memorial exposition is opened in her house, it shows ethnographic-historical objects, books, publications, photography, regular traditional writer Žemaitė birthday commemorations are held in this house. The barn of the manor features the memorial exposition of Stanislovas Riauba, where people can learn about one of the most prominent folk artists of Samogitia and will see his unique creations here. The restored barn invites visitors to learn about the religious heritage of Plungė region: traditional Samogitian sun crosses, sculptures of saints, etc. Educational activities “Getting to know the Samogitian culinary heritage” are recommended for those who would like to know the Samogitian region better.
Folk artist small museums, expositions	<p>Babrunėnai water mill Babrunėnai water mill is the L. Černiauskas arts gallery-workshop. The artist has repaired the mill and has installed his arts gallery and arts workshop in there. The artist paints and carves sculptures of the saints and other sculptures, Shrove Tuesday masks, monumental works.</p> <p>Kazys Striaupa small granary You can get acquainted with the artist’s carvings in his reed-covered small granary, which he built in 1999 in the village of Dovainiai.</p> <p>Rimantas Laima folk artistry exposition The artist has set up his carving exposition in an old manor barn. His sculptures and bas-reliefs picture ancient gods, Christian saints, mansions, rural images, Shrove Tuesday masks.</p> <p>Vytautas Jaugėla folk artistry exposition V. Jaugėla is an organizer of many cultural events, a photographer, cinema enthusiast, wood carver, painter and antiquity collector. He was accepted in the Folk Artist Association in the year 2000. His wooden works are centered around Christian and pagan gods, Shrove Tuesday masks, bass-reliefs, etc.</p> <p>Jonušai folk art – ethnography museum This museum has accumulated a vast and diverse collection of wood carvings, paintings, metal crosses, provided by owners of the museum and other surrounding masters. You can also find wood sculptures of the famous Samogitian folk master and wood carver Stanislovas Riauba. The barn holds an installed antiquity exposition.</p>
Plateliai manor traditional craft center	Traditional craft center is installed in the Plateliai manor homestead former vegetable cellar. This cellar has been reconstructed and adapted for the activities of the traditional craft center with the use of European Union structural funds. It is located in a two-storey building with a mansard, hosting up to 80 people. Traditional craft center hosts various traditional crafts educations, ethno-cultural customs and rites education, as well as culinary heritage degustation educational activities. The cellar

	and first floor hosts 5 premises for educational sessions: the crafts training hall, culinary heritage kitchen, weaving hall and joinery workshop. The mansard holds 7 resting rooms, where up to 13 people can live at once. The handicraft center is adapted for the use by people with disabilities and has a functioning elevator.
--	--

Source: compiled by authors according to information provided on www.zemaitijosnp.lt website

All the Žemaitija National Park museums, described in Table 12 are attractive for local tourism, however the Cold war exposition and the Shrove Tuesday exposition are the most attractive on an international level (both objects have a large potential in priority foreign tourism markets).

In 2017, the Visitor Service Department has organized various events aimed at different participant groups, starting with families with children, people of old age and ending with children and youth. A total of 17 events has been organized and visited by approximately 700 people. The section's employees have also participated in voluntary help sessions (Jazdauskiškių mound cleaning, annual cleaning action "Darom" and others). Still, the events are not very attractive for inbound tourists and do not attract a lot of attention from visitors.

Table 13. Events taking place in ŽNP.

	Feast	Time
Celebrations, events	Shrove Tuesday Festival	February or March
	Midsummer day/ Saint John's Day	June 24
	Žemaičių Kalvarija festival	July
	St. George's day on a blooming rūteniai island	April
	Seeing birds leave	September
	European parks day	May
	Family festival "Miško burtai"	October

Source: compiled by authors according to information provided on www.zemaitijosnp.lt website

All the events taking place in ŽNP, described in Table 13 are attractive for local tourism, however the Shrove Tuesday Festival is mostly attractive on an international level.

2.1.2. Natural resources

Natural recreational resources are one of the most important resources for tourism and recreation organization, which consist of natural landscape elements and their compositions:

1. Water bodies (lakes, ponds, rivers and streams suitable for recreational use),
2. Green spaces (forests, forest parks, parks, settlement area forestry),
3. Relief (hills, slopes, hillsides, lake pits) and related aesthetically valuable countryside complexes.

ŽNP has 11 nature reserves, 12 complex reserves, 4 cultural protected areas, 24 natural heritage sites. The park is covered by forest for 44.58 percent, with 21 lakes, and Babrungas river.

2.1.2.1. Water bodies (lakes, ponds, rivers and streams suitable for recreational use)

ŽNP has 21 natural lakes and lakelets, which were formed after the end of the ice age, a couple of larger ponds and 40 rivers and streams. ŽNP territory is at the watershed of 3 rivers basins – Minija, Bartuva and Venta. It has a lot of swamps and bogs. A fine example of the highland marshes of western

Žemaitija – Šarnelė swamp in the Paparčiai telmological reserve. Park has mostly intermediate type and non-acidic lowland swamps: Siberija, Šeirė, Stirbaičiai, etc.

Lakes. The most lakes found in the National Park are small ones, taking up area from half to 5 hectares, like Lestis, Ešerinis, Lydekinis, Piktežeris, Aklaežeris and other such lakes. Thus, the most frequent swamp lakes located in the woods are devoid of tourism potential. The larger lakes (10-30 ha) are Luoka, Iešnalis, Burgis, Žiedelis lakes. And approximately 90% of the general lake area is composed of three largest lakes – Plateliai, Ilgis, Beržoras. The cleanest, most picturesque and deepest in Samogitia and National Park is Plateliai lake.

Rivers. Žemaitija National Park is located at the Venta, Bartuva and Minija river basins. The latter claims the largest part of the National Park waterways (streams, ditches, etc.). The largest and longest river of the National Park Babrungas flows out of the Plateliai lake. After swinging around the territory of the National Park for approximately 12,3 kilometres, it spends 47 more kilometres to pour its waters in to the Minija river. Another river flows through the National Park fields and forests for only a couple of hundred of meters shorter than Babrungas, it is the Uošna river (11,7 km). Most of the remaining natural streams flow through woods. Uošna, Bartuva, Juodupis, Pietvė, Šilinė, Blendžiava river streams either wiggle around trees or are searching for new ways around the beaver dams or hide in the swampy lowland vegetation.

Swamps. The hilly, pits and forest filled Žemaitija National Park relief allowed for the formation of swamps of various size. They take up 9,7% of the National Park's territory. National Park swamps preserve the most botanically valuable species and communities of plants. Approximately 40% of the Lithuanian red book plant species found in the National Park – grow at the swamps.

Table 14. Water bodies with tourism potential.

	Object	Description
Lakes	Plateliai lake	The largest and deepest lake in Samogitia, characterized by its natural, cultural and landscape value. The deepest place is about 48.5 m. There are 17 small rivers flowing into the lake, and Babrungas river is flowing out of the lake. The waters of the lake wash the shores of 7 islands: Pilis, Veršiai, Pliksalė, Briedsalė, Ubagsalė, Gaidsalė and Šončelis. All the lake islands and Kreiviškiai and Auksalė peninsulas are state protected natural heritage sites. Pilis island - the most famous island of Plateliai lake, where a castle belonging to Lithuanian nobles stood in the XV century. The island with the Šventorkalnis, where the old Plateliai settlement was located, was connected by a bridge of almost 300 m long, whose piles remained until nowadays.
	Ilgis lake	Lake length from northwest to southeast - 2 km, width up to 1 km. Depth reaches 5.1 m. The lake is located at a narrow gully. The coastline is very wavy (length 6.94 km), and has quite a large bay in the north. There are two islands (0.05 ha). Ilgis lake islands are state protected hydrographic objects of natural heritage. The shores are mostly steep and swampy only in the north. The surroundings are all covered in coniferous forests (Grigaičiai, Stirbaitinė, Beržoras forests). The nearby Beržoras, Žiedelis lakes, part of Plateliai lake - Laumalenka. Ilgės - the tributary of Babrungas river flows out of this lake.
	Beržoras lake	The lake area is 52 hectares, the length from west to east is 1.1 km, the width is 0.75 km. The deepest place is 6.3 m and the average depth is 4.6 m. Surface elevation 148.1 m. The form is irregular. Shores are mostly high except for the western part of the lake. It is surrounded by the Beržoras forest from the south and south-west, elsewhere – it is surrounded by

		cultivated fields. There are 2 islands (0.2 ha and 0.1 ha). The island of Beržoras lake is a state protected hydrographic object of natural heritage. Basin area is 2.4 km ² . Beržuoja river flows through Beržoras lake to Plateliai lake. Beržoras village is located on the northern shore of the lake. There is a road No. 3202 Pauošniai-Plateliai on the northern and the eastern coast.
	Luoka lake	The lake has the form of an irregular triangle, its length from the southwest to the northeast is 0.8 km and the width is 0.65 km. It is located in a thermokarst pit. The shores are mostly low and swampy, overgrown with trees, and the west and north east shores are steeper. The Rukundžiai forest stretches on the northern coast. The bottom of the lake is covered with clay sapropel. Šaltupis river flows in the Luoka lake from the north, and Luokupis (Uošna tributary, Babrungas basin) flows out of it. The villages of Paluokė and Šlečkai are situated near the lake.
	Iešnalis lake	The length in the northwest-southeast direction is 0,6 km, width up to 0,4 km. The pit of the lake is of thermokarst origin. The shores are low and the lake is surrounded by the Plokštinė forest from the north to the east. Barbungas river tributary Iešnalis flows out of the lake in the south. This lake is a part of Plokštinė nature reserve. The road No. 3202 Pauošniai-Plateliai goes by the southern coast of the lake.
	Burgis lake	Length of the lake from southwest to northeast - 0.71 km, width - 0.38 km. The shores are low, the lake is surrounded by the Paburgis swamp and Paburgis forest. Uošna River (the tributary of Babrungas river) runs through the lake.
	Žiedelis lake	The length of the lake from the northeast to the southeast is 0.67 km, the width is 0.24 km. The eastern shore is low and swampy, the other shores are steeper, overgrown with the forest (Beržoras forest). In the east - a stream flows towards Aklaežeris lake. Laumalenkos village, rural tourism homesteads are situated nearby.
	Maudutis lake	The length of the lake from the northwest to the southeast is 0.46 km, the width is up to 0.17 km. Northwest lake shore is swampy, north shore - steep. Surrounded by meadows and farmed fields. In the south, a stream flows towards Juodupis river (Plateliai lake tributary). The village of Virkšai and rural tourism homesteads are located nearby.
Rivers	Babrungas	Flows out the Plateliai lake. Streams to the south or to the southwest from Plungė. Flows in to Minija river 130 km away from its mouth at Stonaičiai. The valley is 100-150 m wide, the width of the river bed is 4-8 m in the higher part of the river and 10-15 m downstream. Length 59 km, basin area 270 km ² . The river is blocked in Plungė forming the Gondinga hydroelectric pond. The valley below the Gondinga hydroelectric power station is very deep, with steep slopes and the river stream is fast. 15.5 km from the mouth, the derivative Gondinga hydroelectric power station and the 87 ha pond are located. Babrungas valley enters the Gandinga landscape reserve. Gandinga mound is located below Plungė, on the right bank of Babrungas. The upper reaches of the river are in Žemaitija National Park.
Viewing platforms and	Plateliai lake viewing	The viewing platform is located on the northeastern outskirts of the town (address: Plateliai lake, coordinates: 56.046939, 21.828303). This platform offers great view on the islands (Pilis, Veršiai islands), peninsula

towers near the water bodies	platform	(Šventorkalnis), the famous Plateliai lake and the area beautified by the dark Plokštinė forest. The viewing platform has been repaired in 2017 with the implementation of the EU-financed project “Unigreen”. Project funds were used to essentially renovate it and adapt it for the use of people with vision and movement disabilities. Right now, the viewing platform is equipped with benches, bicycle racks, ramparts, eight information stands were built (telling stories of Plateliai lake and its islands). A tactile stand in Braille is also installed. It is the only one in the entire Žemaitija National Park. This stand has been adapted for people with visual impairment and is helping the person touching it to imagine the lake view.
	Siberija viewing tower	You can travel to the Beržoras church village by bicycle or on foot from Plateliai and climb on Cidabras hill where viewing tower is built (15 meters high). You can see Plateliai and Beržoras lakes from the tower, as well as the Siberija swamp, which is one of the most valuable swamps in Žemaitija National Park, declared a telmological reserve, Beržoras village, southern part of Plateliai town, Liepijos forest.
	Barstyčiai viewing tower	Barstyčiai swamp is one of the largest swamps in Žemaitija National Park. Its area is approximately 35 ha. The swamp is enclosed by the Barstyčiai forest. Water and swamp flora find refuge in the mosaic of small dry islands, together with an abundance of animals and plants, which can be seen from a 5 meter tall viewing tower.
	Jogaudai viewing tower	In case you could stand here in the eight decade of the XX century, you would see an almost 162 m high hill in the southern part, which was later excavated when the gravel career was opened. Since 2003 the career is not active, since according to the initiative of Žemaitija National Park, this territory has been declared as a specifically valuable recreational territory. Currently, an approximately 2 ha pond is located at the place of the excavated hill, which surface is 140 meters higher than the sea level.

Source: compiled by authors according to information provided on www.zemaitijosnp.lt website

The viewing towers and water bodies of Žemaitija National Park are attractive for the local tourism, however, on an international level it should be noted, that water bodies create additional value to the tourists, who stay at rural tourism homesteads.

Table 15. Water body adaptation for tourist needs.

Activity	Possibilities	Potential/development possibilities
Swimming	Swimming is possible on the lakes of Plateliai, Beržoras, Ilgis and Maudutis. Plateliai Lake has 6 public swimming sites, Beržoras - 1.	It is necessary to improve the infrastructure and quality of the swimming sites and to install quality beaches.
Underwater sports	The ŽNP has two diving clubs: the Diving academy and “Oktopusas”, which lease inventory and provides various diving-related services	

Activity	Possibilities	Potential/development possibilities
Water tourism	One to two hour long catamaran tour on Plateliai lake is organized.	There is a demand for a wider choice of lake tours (taking up to a whole day long)
Water recreation with motorized vehicles	Available options: rental of kayaks, windsurfers, yachts, boats, water bikes, catamaran.	Visitors note that there is lack of options and possible choices for vehicles rental. Possibilities: to install more piers and rental points (public or private), to organize lake tours.
Amateur fishing	There are 16 species of fish in Plateliai lake. 11 species of fish are bred in Ilgis lake. The shores are flat with the forest growing around them. Beržoras lake has up to 10 species of fish. Shores are mostly steep, with flatter coastline only in the western part. From the south and southwest, the lake is surrounded by forests. Beržoras village is located on the northern shore of the lake. Fishing is also possible on the Žiedelis, Skyplaičiai, Burgis, Burgalis, Ešerinis, Lydekinis lakes, as well as the Rotinėnai pond. The latter has bleak, tench, white bream and other fish. Fishing and visiting are prohibited in Endriuškaičiai and Iešnalis lakes, as well as in Aklaežerys lake (nature reserves). Due to the valuable swamp natural complexes with rare and endangered bird migration and feeding places, Pakastuva pond (Pakastuva telmologic reserve) can only be visited and you can fish there only from 1 st of August to 1 st of April.	

Source: compiled by authors according to information provided on www.zemaitijosnp.lt website

2.1.2.2. Green spaces (forests, forest parks, parks, settlement area forestry)

The forests spread for over half (54%) of Žemaitija National Park territory and are mostly conifer forests. Pine forests make up 42% of all forests and pines account for 21%. The largest forest massive spreads through the center of the national part. It consists of Plokštinė, Paplatelė, Miežlaukis, Liepkalnis and Paburgė forests. Deciduous trees are mostly spread in the Liepijos forest. Here you can find not only ordinary oak but also a large amount of ordinary hornbeam. These factors are important when planning tourism outside of peak season, which falls on summers. During autumn time, deciduous trees are more important since they turn to different colours, therefore, autumn activity offers should be planned predominantly in the central part of ŽNP. During winter time, conifer forests create a beautiful view, thus winter hiking, leisure or skiing offers should be oriented near the areas with wide spread conifer trees.

Green spaces use for tourism activities:

- Hiking;
- Bicycling;
- Observation of birds and animals;
- Collecting mushrooms and berries;
- Educational excursions;
- Active leisure in the nature.

Apart from forests, Žemaitija National Park has a formed Plateliai manor park and a private object – Energetic labyrinth and geometric figures park.

Table 16. Green spaces (forests, forest parks, parks, settlement area forestry)

Object	Description	Tourism application
Energetic labyrinth and geometric figures park	Walking through labyrinths, watching the “Life flower” mandala, which is located near the Merkabah, standing or sitting in the dome, all of these actions allow a person to relax, search for inspiration, thoughts, ideas, replies to his life questions and a possibility to understand what he really wants.	This is a private object, created and adapted for tourism.
Plateliai manor park	Plateliai manor park has been started to form in the XIX century on a 6,2 ha territory. Although the park is not that large, its relief and green spaces reflect the Plateliai area hilly landscape, rich with forests. The park is a mixed one, but landscape park elements are dominating. The alleys and pathways are winding, the small lawns are of not correct shapes. There are two small ponds in the park. Green spaces is dominated by local types of trees: maples, linden, mountain ash, hornbeam, ash trees. Most of them are quite large. Impressive trees, which have been named nature’s monuments, grow in this park: the thickest ash tree in Lithuania, named Witch ash-tree and the Plateliai Linden.	Currently the park is not attractively arranged. It can be restored in the future; more aesthetic walking paths and flower gardens could be installed.

Source: compiled by authors according to information provided on www.zemaitijosnp.lt website

Ecological tourism products related to rural tourism, water and bicycle tourism, bird watching tourism products creation and delivery gets more popular amongst both local and foreign tourists.

2.1.2.3. Relief (hills, slopes, hillsides, lake pits) and related aesthetically valuable countryside complexes.

The hilly relief of Žemaitija National Park was formed by the ice-age glacier, which has moved through the territory approximately 10-12 thousand of years ago, except for the Plateliai lake pit. It is believed that the Plateliai lake pit was formed quite earlier and is the oldest not only in Lithuania but in the whole area, affected by the last ice age.

Forests occupy more than half of the National Park territory, they are mostly mature and half-aged forests with a dominance of coniferous trees, specifically pine trees. The open landscape is dominated by fields. The hilly and forest-filled landscape is decorated with rivers and streams, larger and smaller lakes, swamps and marshes and wells. Hidden away amidst forests, hills and meadows is the old cultural heritage – ancient settlements, mounds, religious shrine hills, ancient burial grounds and burial

barrows. During the long years, all of this became an integral part of the national part landscape during the long years.

Single-house homesteads, villages and towns are decorated with chapel posts, crosses and chapels, old wooden churches, reflecting the Samogitian wood carving tradition. There are not many brick buildings, basilica of Žemaičių Kalvarija and former Plateliai manor buildings should be distinguished.

Gardai Esker is an exceptional part of the landscape. This is a geo-morphologically important and one of the brightest Lithuanian forms of relief. Esker is a long narrow hill, made predominantly from sand and gravel. This hill is made up of sediment, which was collected at the center of the glacier, in the water melting riverbeds 12 to 13 thousand years ago. Semicircle form mound-ridge elongates from the Varduva lake in Žemaičių Kalvarija town to northwest for a whole 3,5 kilometers. Gardai Esker height from the base to the highest places of the hilltop sometimes reaches 10-15 meters. In Soviet times there was a gravel career here, later – an illegal landfill. The area is dominated with open space landscape with hills looking like bread loafs and mounds. This is a hilly, northwestern part of Samogitia. Complex ice-age and post ice-age process have formed a wavy, impressive and mosaic relief. Gardai Esker is currently adapted to tourism and it has a walking trail.

2.1.3. Tourist trails

The cognitive tourism system of the National Park consists of educational trails and paths of various sizes and types, where objects of heritage can be visited and recreational infrastructure is placed for resting and leisure type (recreation facilities, viewing towers, recreation centers, campsites, etc.). In the National Park, the priority is given to cycling and hiking tourism. Other forms of visiting the National Park are car tourism, water and horse tourism.

2.1.3.1. Bicycle tracks

It is planned that the National park bicycle tourism tracks and sections will interconnect and form an integrated bicycle tourism system.

Table 17. Bicycle tourism track (path) description.

Route	Distance	Objects to visit
Cycling route around Plateliai lake	24 km	A circular route by using which a person will visit Plateliai lake and the most visited objects and places in the area, such as Cold war exposition, Beržoras village, origins of Babrungas river, Plokštinė nature reserve, Paplatelė and Paežerės Rudaičiai recreational areas.
Northern short car-bicycle track	32 km	The circular short northern route begins at Plateliai and leads to the north of Žemaitija National Park. It is a route for those who wish to admire the hilly landscape of Samogitia, its forests, historical and cultural objects. The route runs through 9 small villages of Plungė district. Travelers will meet natural farms alongside the roads. They can not only buy honey, tea, cheese, but also purchase training session, participate in tasting, or just get acquainted with the production process of the local goods. The route then follows the hill forests, ancient settlements with mounds, dating back to the 1st millennium. At the edges of the track, the eye is attracted by crosses, chapels, XVIII century wooden church of Gegrėnai. Traveling along the Gegrėnai

Route	Distance	Objects to visit
		mound walking trail (1.6 km) you can see the state protected beauties of the Gegrėnai archaeological complex: hill forts, the place of the ancient settlement, cemeteries and the impressive landscape of this area. Travelers arriving at Maudutis lake will be able to book their lodging at rural tourism homesteads here or return to Plateliai village by the Plateliai lakeshore. It is worthwhile to stop at the bird observation site located near the Pakastuva pond while taking this route.
Northern long car-bicycle track	58 km	It starts at the coast of Plateliai lake and leads to the northern part of Žemaitija National Park and its buffer zone. When traveling on this route, you will have the opportunity to see the characteristic terrain and landscapes of Samogitia, as well as historical, natural and cultural attractions, to visit farms offering their products and training, or stroll in the most beautiful corners of this park. The route runs through 17 villages and 3 small towns - Plateliai, Žemaičių Kalvarija and Barstyčiai. You can take a walk through one of them, looking at the beautiful landscape or you can stop for a longer time to take a walk for educational purposes. You will be able to visit the 1st millennium mounds, sacred hills and settlements of the old Pūčkoriai, Gegrėnai, Žemaičių Kalvarija, Šarnelė, Mikytai, etc.) or use the educational walking trails (Šeirė, Gegrėnai, Gardai Esker, walking trail at the homeland of poet V. Mačernis, Mykantai), learn about the lives of famous people in Lithuania (V. Mačernis, M. Valančius, bookbinder V. Juška). The route will include monumental natural objects (Dutkinė oak, Paparčiai black alder, Paparčiai chestnut, Barstyčiai rock, etc.), as well as churches (Gegrenai, Žemaičių Kalvarija, Barstyčiai), viewpoints and monuments.

Source: compiled by authors according to information provided on www.zemaitijosnp.lt website

The cycling route and bicycle-car tracks infrastructure are the exceptionality and competitive advantage of the Žemaitija National Park, creating an added value to the tourists, who have stayed in the rural tourism homesteads and other establishments providing accommodation. The bicycle tourism product prolongs the stay time of the tourists and adds up to the number of their overnight stays at a tourist destination.

Table 18. Bicycle tracks specified in the ŽNP planning

Track	Route
Plateliai bicycle track connection with Plunge city	Constructed with the Plunge-Plateliai sections of the old road: Plungė–Ruolaičiai–Žvirblaičiai–Babrunėnai–Grigaičiai–Plokščiai.
Bicycle tourism path from Plunge to Žemaičių Kalvarija	Constructed using the remaining old road sections, the infrastructure of the Rotinėnai and Luoka recreational functional priority areas and the campsite at the lake of Skyplaičiai.
„Northern ring route“	Paežerės Rūdaičiai – Virkšai – Getaučiai – Gegrėnai – Jazdauskiškiai –Rotinėnai – Žemaičių Kalvarija – Šašaičiai – Šarnelė – Padegimė –Gudaliai –Kruopiai – Mikytai sacred mound –

	Paežerės Rūdaičiai (alternatively – from Žemaičių Kalvarija to Šarnelė while travelling through Gardai);
A shortened „Northern ring route“ section from Padegimė to the northern end of Plateliai lake, without entering Mikytai sacred mound.	Padegimė–Gegrėnai–Pučkoriai–Paežerės Rūdaičiai (alternatively – the road from Pūčkoriai to Paežerės Rūdaičiai can go through Visvainiai or Uogučiai)
Alternative „Northern ring route“ section from Padegimė to Mikytai sacred mound, while going through Paparčiai and Barstyčiai town	This section features picturesque landscapes, cultural heritage values, as well as the visited naturally valuable northern part of Mikytai landscape nature reserve.
„Southern ring route“	Beržoras–Stirbaičiai–Bukantė–Godeliai–Grigaičiai; This route connects with the Plateliai cycling route and provides access to the countryside of Grigaičiai, Stirbaičiai and Godeliai, which are valuable in terms of landscape and cultural heritage, but it is difficult to construct due to the condition of roads: it is necessary to improve the road from Grigaičiai to Godeliai, from Stirbaičiai to Kadaičiai (Bukantė), additionally, a road should be built linking Bukantė with the village of Godeliai.
A shortened „Southern ring route“ section	Connecting the villages of Grigaičiai and Stirbaičiai.
A linking part of bicycle tourism tracks between Plokstinė to Vilkaĩ village	Installed with the use of the section of an old road to Alsėdžiai; this section connects the planned Plateliai and Plungė - Žemaičių Kalvarija bicycle tracks.
A section of the bicycle track, specified on the national level bicycle tourism track special plan	Salantai–Plateliai–Paežerės Rūdaičiai–Vilkaĩ–Alsėdžiai

Source: compiled by authors according to information provided in Žemaitija National Park's Planning Scheme

These route sections have great tourist potential and are the most favourable opportunities for cycling tourism development in Plungė district. It is planned to enlarge and diversify the route network by building new connections between tourist attractions.

ŽNP Directorate in cooperation with the IT specialists (UAB "Hint-Baltic"), have developed a mobile application named "Explore the Žemaitija National Park while traveling by bike!", which presented not only a mobile version of the bike route around Plateliai lake but also 2 completely new car/bike tracks in the northern part of the park. Mobile applications are programs intended to be used by smartphones, tablet computers and other mobile devices, which extend their possibilities.

Opportunities to rent a bike: Arūnas Raudys bicycle rental. The rent point is located in the center of Plateliai, near Žemaitija National Park Visitor Center building. Bicycles of different models are suitable for both young people and the elderly. In addition, rural tourism homesteads rent bicycles for their guests.

2.1.3.2. Pedestrian tourist trails

The ŽNP walking trails are better developed than motoring or cycling tracks. Žemaitija National Park Directorate is largely responsible for this. Currently, there are 9 routes for pedestrians in Žemaitija National park.

Table 19. ŽNP recreational area pedestrian tourist trails.

Route	Length	Description
Šeirė educational walking trail	4,1 km	The walking trail, 4.1 km long, with a segment of 1.4 km adapted to meet needs of mobility-impaired persons is located in the Žemaitija National Park, near the town of Plateliai, 1.3 km from the Žemaitija National Park Directorate Plateliai Visitor Center. A segment of the trail (1.8 km) coincides with the Cycling Path around Lake Plateliai. Walking this trail, which is located in the Plateliai Landscape Reserve, you can explore the relief characteristic of this region, the Šeirė forest, the Gaudupis Bog, lake Piktežeris, Lake Plateliai, usual and rare species of plants, fungi and animals, while the infrastructure installed will assist you in acquainting with the environment through the sight, smell, hearing, touch, moving and thinking.
Plokštinė educational walking trail	3 km	Plokštinė walking trail, 3 km long, is located in Žemaitija National Park, near the Cold War Exposition, 10 km from the Žemaitija National Park Directorate Plateliai Visitor Center. The walking trail is meandering on the hills in the Plokštinė forest, passes the territory of former soviet military base and runs along the Pilelis spring – a hydrogeological monument of nature occupying 2.4 ha. The spring does not dry up during the longest period of droughts and does not freeze in winter. It is thought that its water has healing properties.
Paplatelė educational walking trail	2,3 km	Paplatelė educational walking trail, 2.3 km long, is located in Žemaitija National Park on the eastern shore of Lake Plateliai, in the village of Paplatelė, 8.9 km from the Žemaitija National Park Directorate Plateliai Visitor Center. The walking trail is meandering on woody hills and the shores of the Sultekis pond. A playful appearance of the trail is created by wooden sculptures, while the viewing tower overlooks the pond and spruce forests encircling the pond.
Mikytai educational walking trail	1 km	A walking trail of 1 km long is located in the northern part of the Žemaitija National Park, 11 km from the Žemaitija National Park Directorate Plateliai Visitor Center. This walking trail provides the hikers with opportunities to explore the Mikytai Landscape Reserve and some valuable state protected archaeological finds. Here are Mikytai Altar Hill, Stone with a Devil's Footprint, Well of Prayers (Offerings).
"Giliukas ir Kaštoniukas" walking	1 km	In the Plateliai Manor Park, a walking trail for young hikers is located. A naughty Kaštoniukas with itching desire to break a branch or pluck a flower is ready to escort the children and

path		even strike the anthill! However, Giliukas, a kind-hearted one, disciplines his friend in time and teaches how to behave in nature. People can travel through this path independently or with the Žemaitija National Park Directorate guide.
Gardai Esker walking trail	1 km	This 1 km long walking trail is located in the Žemaitija National Park, 4.4 km from Žemaičių Kalvarija town and 25.6 km from the Žemaitija National Park Directorate Plateliai Visitor Center. Exclusivity of the trail: Gardai Esker, kame landscape. This trail is located on the Gardai Esker, the largest and most imposing esker in Samogitia. This is a unique in geomorphologic sense shape of land and one of the most picturesque in Lithuania. Open space landscapes with kame hills similar to loaves of bread predominate.
Walking trail of Gegrėnai mounds	1,6 km	The 1.6 km long walking trail is located in the Gegrėnai Archeological Complex within the Žemaitija National Park, 6 km from Žemaičių Kalvarija town and 14 km from the Žemaitija National Park Directorate Plateliai Visitor Center. When hiking on the walking trail, one can explore state protected valuables of the Gegrėnai Archaeological Complex: the mounds, the site of an ancient settlement, burial grounds and spectacular landscape of this location.
Walking trail at the homeland of poet Vytautas Mačernis	545 m.	Walking this 545 m long trail you will reach the grave of poet V. Mačernis. After his death, poet's relatives returned the deceased back to Šarnelė, to bury in his homeland.
Plokštinė nature treasure trail	3,4 km	It's a great entertainment for a family or a small group of friends. Secrets of Plokštinė forest and engaging tasks, whispers of gods and spirits, the eldest tree and echoes of partisans fights are waiting for visitors.

Source: compiled by authors according to information provided on www.zemaitijosnp.lt website

Pedestrian routes create added value to the tourists, who have stayed in the rural tourism homesteads and other establishments providing accommodation services, however differently from the cognitive routes in foreign countries, ŽNP pedestrian routes and pathways are short and are designed for short trips.

2.1.3.3. Water tourism routes

Plunge district, albeit rich in water resources, does not have many water bodies suitable for water tourism routes. The lakes in Žemaitija National Park are the most suitable for the development of water tourism. There is a yacht club next to Plateliai lake, offering water bikes, boats, kayaks, windsurfing and yacht hire services. There is also an "Oktopusas" diving center, which contributes to the variety of services in Žemaitija National Park.

However, not everything has been done while managing beaches and piers. Only the minimal needed recreational infrastructure is located at the swimming place near the Plateliai yacht club: a changing cabin and a gazebo with a table and benches. The situation is better at the beaches, which are taken care of by natural and legal persons in the recreational area on the east coast of Plateliai lake, but even there, a lack of toilets and dressing cabins can be spotted. There is also a lack of toilets and

changing cabins on the northern shore of the lake, where KLASCO recreation center “Plateliai” and the G. Jurčius tourist camp are located.

There are boat housings installed near the Plateliai lake, but they have only minimal infrastructure.

In order to expand the range of services, existing beaches should be taken proper care of and new beaches and piers should be built. Possibilities to rent canoes, sailboats and other water equipment should be arranged. Boat sailing can also be developed in Beržoras, Ilgis and other lakes and ponds. This would be a good additional service for rural tourism homesteads or accommodation establishments located next to these water bodies.

2.1.3.4. ŽNP accessibility by car and highways

ŽNP has executed a visitors survey in 2017 and the results have shown that a whole 92% of all visitors come to ŽNP by car. Therefore, the development of highways and improving accessibility by car is extremely important for the development of ŽNP tourism.

2.1.3.5 Highways

National park car tourism highway system includes the National park car tourism highway, sections of national and regional car tourism highway sections crossing the National park and entryways to the National park. Planned National park car tourism highways and sections are provided in the table below.

Table 20. Planned national park car tourism highways and sections.

Highway	Connected points
Žemaitija National park car tourism route	Plateliai–Paežerės Rūdaičiai–Pučkoriai–Gegrėnai–Žemaičių Kalvarija–Vilkai–Pauošniai–Plokščiai–Beržoras–Plateliai; the route can also include Alsėdžiai (alternative section: Žemaičių Kalvarija–Alsėdžiai–Vilkai), possibility to visit the Cold War Exposition (branch Plokščiai–Plokštinė).
An additional section in the northern part of the National park	Žemaičių Kalvarija–Šarnelė–Padegimė–Gudaliai–Kruopiai–Mikytai–Paežerės Rūdaičiai (alternative – to drive through Papatčiai and Barstyčiai town from Padegimė to Mikytai).
An additional section in the central part of the National park	Paežerės Rūdaičiai–Virksiai–Skurvydai–Platakiai–Vilkai, with a branch to Papatelė.
An additional section in the southwestern part of the National park	From Beržoras the road goes through Stirbaičiai up to Godeliai (Vydeikiai) and Bukantė (Kadaičiai).
A section of the tourist routes, specified on the general territory plan of the Republic of Lithuania – “Lithuanian history and culture” and “Samogitian park circle”	Plungė–Plateliai–Barstyčiai–Žemaičių Kalvarija, then the route should go towards Seda or Alsėdžiai.
A section of the tourist routes, specified on the general territory plan of the Republic of Lithuania – “Samogitian roads” and “Curonian road”	Plungė–Žemaičių Kalvarija–Barstyčiai–Skuodas.

A section of the car tourism Plunge district municipality General Plan	Plungė – Plateliai – Pučkoriai – Gegrėnai – Žemaičių Kalvarija – Alsėdžiai. The main task of bicycle tourism development is to install (build) a bicycle track around Plateliai lake and connect it with Plunge city. In the long run, the bike tourism system of the National park should be connected with the Seaside recreational area (The special plan of the national level bicycle trails provides that the route Palanga-Kretinga-Plungė-Plateliai is a national priority route).
--	--

Source: compiled by authors according to information provided in Žemaitija National Park Planning Scheme

Worldwide experience shows that tourists traveling by car are usually spend between 1 and 3 nights in the area. The majority of tourists who travel for more than three days are people aged 50 and over and they are traveling without children. Because of these various aspects, it is very important to identify segments of tourists in the development of the routes for car tourism. All groups in these segments have different hobbies and plan their trip differently. People who go on cognitive trips want to feel as travellers and researchers, to learn local culture, to taste local food and to communicate with local people. Car tourism routes encourage the creation of new businesses along the route, as well as cooperation between public establishments and private business, and encourages tourists to travel further from main roads. There are 4 types of car tourism routes: national routes, thematic routes, cognitive routes, and local tourism routes that are located in a small area.

The most common mistakes in creating car tourism routes: the creation of a route regardless of tourist segments and the market, ineffective planning, too few attractions, lack of route marking, inefficient route planning, management and advertising or the route not being viable. On the other hand, the factors that determine the success of the route are as follows: cooperation between authorities and business, unique entertainment and experience, a secure road network, labelling of objects, suitable public infrastructure, recreation areas, campsites, observation sites, detailed information at tourist centers and on the Internet and efficient route management.

Therefore, the above-mentioned recommendations should be taken into account when creating and developing tourism routes or auto-tourism routes in Žemaitija National Park.

2.1.3.6. ŽNP accessibility by car and other vehicles

There are favourable conditions to access Plateliai and other ŽNP objects from most of Lithuanian and Latvian cities **by car**:

- The shortest way from Klaipėda to Plateliai - 79 km;
- The shortest way from Šiauliai to Plateliai - 103 km;
- The shortest way from Mažeikiai to Plateliai - 53 km;
- The shortest way from Kaunas to Plateliai -211 km;
- The shortest way from Vilnius to Plateliai - 303 km;
- The shortest way from Riga to Plateliai - 221 km;
- The shortest way from Jelgava to Plateliai - 162 km.

The **train** can be used to reach Plunge, where the "Vilnius-Klaipėda", "Klaipėda-Vilnius" trains stop. Their timetables can be found here: www.litrail.lt. Plunge Railway station is located next to the bus station, and Plateliai can be reached by bus.

Buses from Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaipėda, Šiauliai, Telšiai, Mažeikiai and other cities can be used to reach Plunge bus station, from which a second bus can be used to reach Plateliai. Bus timetables: Plungė-Plateliai and Plateliai-Plungė. However, buses travel quite rarely and reaching Plateliai this way is complicated. Therefore, a solution is needed to facilitate the arrival of tourists, who arrived to Plunge by bus to Plateliai.

Cyclists who brought their bicycles by train or bus, are offered to travel from Plungė to Truikiai, according to a planned route, which will allow them to visit well-developed tourist tracks.

2.1.4. Bird watching tourism infrastructure

Bird watching is a niche for eco-tourism. The main purpose of this tourism is to observe birds in their natural settlements. 201 species of birds have been observed in Žemaitija National Park since the eight decade of the last century until now. Of these, 58 were recorded in the Lithuanian red book, 48 are important protected species of the European Community. The composition of species of birds in the National Park is changing. Žemaitija National Park is part of the “Natura 2000” network: the entire territory of the National Park, with the exception of Plateliai and Žemaičių Kalvarija urbanistic reserve areas and recreational priority areas, is included in the list of sites eligible for being selected as areas of importance for the conservation of natural habitats for submission to the European Commission and the list of sites of importance for bird protection.

Existing infrastructure. Currently, the ŽNP offers visitors to monitor the birds at the Pakastuva pond. In the year 2016 preparations were started for the reconstruction of the former bathhouse in a bird watching place. UAB “Archvizija” has developed a project that will allow the reconstruction of an existing abandoned building. Since the reconstruction project is not possible according to the project program, the project has been prepared as an activity plan that should be implemented in the future.

Brochures and leaflets about bird watching in Žemaitija National Park. Žemaitija National Park Directorate has executed leaflets, brochures, printing and layout services through the implementation of the “Attractive Hardwoods” project. According to this procurement - 5000 publications were purchased. A map of Žemaitija National Park is displayed on one side of the leaflet and on the other side it shows the objects where birds can be observed, as well as general information.

2.1.5. ŽNP service potential, offer and demand (including accommodation, catering and other establishments)

Main attraction objects might be the motive for traveling to a corresponding tourist destination, but additional factors such as the quality of accommodation services or the accessibility of the area have a significant influence on the choice of a tourist trip destination.

The factors determining the quality of tourism infrastructure are distinguished: preparation of cultural objects for provision of tourist services, adaptation of objects to the needs of disabled tourists, marking (labelling), access to information, employee competence in providing services.

The main criteria for determining the attractiveness and competitiveness of a tourist area are the quality of transport, road infrastructure, accommodation and catering services.

In assessing the attractiveness of tourism sites, not only tourism services and recreational infrastructure, but the surrounding environment should also be taken into account:

- community (residents speaking foreign languages, are hospitable, follow traditions and celebrate local holidays);
- buildings (tidy facades of buildings, flower beds, sculptures, monument plaques);
- shops (aesthetic appearance, working hours, showing hospitality);
- security (information about emergency phone numbers, safety signs installed);
- parks and trails/routes (active recreation, playgrounds, events);

- streets and sidewalks (cleanliness and tidiness, lighting, benches, trash bins, public phones, free drinking water);
- other (public toilets and information links).

2.1.5.1. Accommodation establishments

The network of accommodation establishments operating in Žemaitija National Park is relatively wide, but visitors point out that they do not stay overnight in ŽNP due to the shortage of cheaper accommodation choices.

Table 21. Number of tourists in accommodation establishments

Type of accommodation establishments	Number of establishments	Number of tourists 2016	Number of tourists 2017	Change
Hotels and rest houses	10	12.239	15.616	+3.377
Rural tourism homesteads	28	15.343	16.127	+884
Campsites and tourist camps	18	14.362	11.819	-2.543

Source: Concluded according to Žemaitija National Park Directorate 2017 visitors' monitoring report data.

According to a 2017 conducted visitor survey, the main visitors' needs related to accommodation establishments are:

- Cheaper accommodation establishments;
- Possibility to eat food prepared / brought in (from which it can be concluded that it is more relevant for visitors to have small kitchens, tables or catering facilities);
- The main object of the visit is the lake (making the distance of accommodation from the lake is relevant).

During the preparation of the strategy, an analysis of the ŽNP accommodation establishments was carried out. The following conclusions can be drawn from the assessment of companies providing accommodation services:

- Information about accommodation establishments can be found here: Žemaitija National Park webpage www.zemaitijiosnp.lt, rural tourism portals www.atostogoskaime.lt, www.priezero.lt, www.booking.com, Plungė Tourist Information Center webpage www.visitplunge.lt. There is, however, no platform for systemized information on all (or at least many) accommodation establishments. Since each business owner posts information regarding his establishment individually, it is difficult for the client to catch up with the offers and quickly choose an accommodation solution. Only a few institutions provide information about themselves on the international platform www.booking.com, and few others - www.airbnb.com. Thus, information on the supply of accommodation services is very limited and fragmented for foreign tourists.

- Accommodation rates range from 10 to 40 Euro per person, per day. In most cases, you need to rent at least a double room with a real minimum price of about 25 euro. 10 people can get a room for eight persons for 80 euros. Better quality hotel rooms or rural tourism homestead accommodation cost as much as rooms of this quality in Vilnius or European city resorts (Austria, Spain, Greece) – a double room costs 60-80 euros or more. Thus, in the international context, the cost of services is not competitive.

- When trying to book a room during the tourism season (July), it appears that most institutions are busy enough and have few or no vacancies at all. Thus, during the tourism season, their bid is at or

near the optimum point, when the reduction of price will not increase profit anymore (a lower price would lead to higher demand that could not be met).

- Accommodation establishments have their own separate client groups: for example, the old part of the yacht club is rented by rowers and yachtsmen, some holiday homes specialize in the reception of children's camps, a number of rural tourism homesteads have banquet halls and arrange personal celebrations (weddings, christenings, anniversaries) or business events (business meetings, etc.).

Thus, the development of cheaper accommodation establishments is required in order to meet the needs of visitors for such accommodation. This can be done in one of the following ways:

- Creating public infrastructure, or
- On the basis of public-private partnerships, or
- Encourage private investment by creating favourable conditions.

In order to better present the supply of accommodation, it is necessary to systematically submit accommodation variants to the most popular international reservation systems www.booking.com and www.airbnb.com. However, during an interview with business representatives, it was revealed, that social-demographic factors affect the situation: since owners of rural homesteads are mostly on a pension age, it is difficult for them to use new technologies. Thus, the solution could be that the systematic information would be provided by associate business structures - for example Samogitian Rural Tourism Association or the Samogitian Tourism Cluster.

2.1.5.2. Catering establishments

There are 6 catering establishments at the ŽNP: Cafe "Edenas", Cafe - restaurant "Burès", Cafe - Bar "Kampelis", Cafe - Bar "Banga", cafe "Grafinė" (all cafes work only during the tourism season) restaurant "Linelis" (works all year). Culinary heritage tasting is also organized in the Traditional crafts center and authentic Samogitian dinners can be ordered in several rural homesteads.

However, comments from www.tripadvisor.com point out that there is a shortage of food choices. This is also mentioned by rural tourism homestead owners and from the Visitor Center staff. Many tourists miss an adequate number of both catering establishments and the quality in available ones. The creation of a new high-quality catering establishment could become an additional tourist attraction.

2.1.5.3. Complimentary services – stores and ATMs

There are no **ATMs** in Plateliai. However, there is an option to cash out money at "Perlas" terminals in stores. Private banks point out that they have no plans to install ATMs due to their low turnover. Therefore, this problem could be addressed by increasing awareness of visitors and tourists of the limited ability to pay with bank cards and cash out, at the planning stage of their trip.

There are several small network **shops** and one private store, but local residents advise to go shopping in Plunge stores, because Plateliai stores have a small selection of goods and their prices are increased (knowing that tourists will be coming to shop there).

Farmers' market events are not held in Plateliai, local residents recommend to go to the Friday market in Salantai or to the Sunday market in Rietavas.

2.1.6. Tourism marketing (tourist image formation and marketing measures).

Tourism marketing in ŽNP mostly is implemented by several institutions – Plungė Tourist Information Center and ŽNP Directorate. Tourism marketing measures are found in the Plunge district tourism marketing strategy, a part of them are implemented by ŽNP Directorate Visitors Service

Department and other departments (the table containing measures, implemented in 2017 are shown below).

Table 22. Visitors Service Department implemented marketing measures (2017).

Area	Activities in 2017
Souvenirs	<p>The following souvenirs were produced:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 different types of magnets with ŽNP images or with a ŽNP symbol - 3300 pcs.; • Metal keychains with ŽNP images or symbol - 200 pcs.; • Plastic keychains with a ŽNP image or a symbol - 200 pcs.; <p>Many souvenirs were sold out due to their high popularity, and some were ordered with new images representing Žemaitija National Park.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An assortment of natural honey (210 pcs) has been updated. Visitors could purchase an attractive souvenir-sized glass jar of honey (350 g, 250 g and 130 g capacity). • The herbal mixture teas from a certified organic farm are gaining popularity and are being sold at ŽNP (200 pcs.) <p>In the year 2017, 100 pcs of souvenir pens and 40 USB flash drives, 500 document folders and 40 pcs of t-shirts with the project and ŽNP logos were purchased.</p>
“Adventur” exhibition	<p>Žemaitija National Park Directorate together with Plungė Tourist Information Center, Plunge district municipality and other providers of tourism services and products participates in the exhibition “Adventur” on an annual basis and presents the possibilities of tourism in Plunge district. Plungė Tourist Information Center introduces district tourism opportunities in other exhibitions or events such as “Baltour”, “Kaunas Hanza Days”, other.</p>
Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitors Service Department staff was interviewed regarding Žemaitija National Park, recreation and tourism opportunities by various media outlets: • Radio "Lietuvos radijas" interview regarding the topic of cultural heritage (D. Jakštienė and A. Kuprelytė). • "Lietuvos rytas" TV. “Vasaros reporteris” TV program (author D. Burkauskas) (A. Brazdeikytė). • LRT TV program “Atrask Lietuvą” (I. Urnikienė). • TV3 program „Pasaulis pagal moteris“ (I. Urnikienė) • TV3 program „Aplink Lietuvą“ • LNK program „Keliauk ir ragauk“ • Jolanta Jurkūnienė talked to the radio "Lietuvos radijas" on tourism opportunities in Žemaitija National Park, Plateliai Visitor Center exposition (A. Brazdeikytė). • Interview in the newspaper “Santarvė”: „The duties of the museum guide inspire to be interested in history) (E. Kajumovaitė) • Project manager V. Rumšaitė has given an interview to a Swedish TV channel regarding Žemaitija National Park, recreation and tourism possibilities.
Articles	<p>During the 2017, 37 articles were written, part of which was also published in the "Šventorkalnis" newspaper, posted on the ŽNPD website: www.zemaitijosnp.lt, on social networks, on other websites and in mass media.</p>
Messages	<p>During the 2017, Visitors Service Department has prepared and read 16 reports in various local events and educational facilities.</p>
	<p>During the 2016, a Project management department employees wrote 7 articles that were printed in the Plunge regional newspaper "Šventorkalnis", on the ŽNPD website:</p>

	<p>www.zemaitijosnp.lt, on social networks or other internet sites, as well as in mass media. The topics of the articles relates to the activities of the project being implemented, as well as with the events, news, and activities that were implemented. During the year, 3 reports have been prepared at various local and international events.</p>
Publications in cyberspace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the year 2017, the website of Žemaitija National Park www.zemaitijosnp.lt was completely changed. The department staff administrated the page, uploaded information, provided suggestions for the concept of a new website, and participated in provided training. • They also administrate the ŽNPD account on the Instagram, Facebook social network, they upload various articles, event announcements, news, photos, and more. • The department has also intensively developed proposals for various educational programs and sent them to educational institutions in the Samogitian region, starting from pre-school education to secondary schools and gymnasiums. They have shared information about services with tourism information centers, ŽNP tourism service providers and other organizations.
Movie about Žemaitija National Park creation	<p>Starting from June 2017, public procurement process was launched for the purchase of a film about the development of Žemaitija National Park. The aim of creating the film is to present Žemaitija National Park (hereinafter referred to as the Park), to introduce potential tourists to the services of Directorate and local residents and entertainment. To promote local and regional business cooperation, commercialization of local services, introduction of new products / services to the market. Encourage the promotion of more active involvement of local organizations and business units by promoting the Park and its surroundings. The video should present the park itself, the tourism and recreation opportunities of each season.</p>
Tourism information terminals installation	<p>During the implementation of the “Attractive Hardwoods” project in Žemaitija National Park, two tourism information terminals were installed. Terminals were installed near the Visitor Center and near the Cold War Exposition building. The terminals provide concentrated information for tourists on the services provided in the park area, as well as the other information.</p>
Activities planned to implement in ŽNP from 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobile application about Žemaitija National Park with tourist information. • Guides courses, including the certification. • Purchasing publicity services, issuing leaflets or brochures with tourism information. • Organizing a conference with interested organizations on tourism development in the territory of Žemaitija National Park

Source: compiled according to information on ŽNP Directorate activity reports of 2017

The state tourism department, having assessed Žemaitija National Park tourist potential on local and international levels, presents the following ŽNP attractions and service providers:

- Organizes cognitive tours for Lithuanian and foreign journalists, tour operators (rural tourism homesteads, Cold War Exposition, etc.);
- Žemaitija National Park is presented as one of the most visited tourist destinations in Lithuania on the www.Lithuania.travel webpage. Plateliai is one of the most attractive amongst EDEN areas, and Shrove Tuesday and Cold War expositions being presented as one of the main expositions of Lithuania;

- Tourist publications and information materials are published and distributed in events and exhibitions taking place in Lithuania and abroad. They present the Žemaitija National Park and attractions (i.e. in the National Geographic appendix "Unidentified Lithuania: 100 unexpected discoveries" presents the bicycle route around Plateliai lake, Plateliai and Shrove Tuesday Festival, Litvak Memorial Garden, rural tourism homesteads; "Lietuvos rytas" newspaper appendix "Lithuania, Keliuk ir ragauk" presents Samogitia as the land of manors, traditional dish "kastinys" and Shrove Tuesday masks; the "Jewish Heritage in Lithuania" publication includes Litvaks Memorial Garden as one of the most important objects; Lithuanian tourist maps presents Žemaitija National Park, Shrove Tuesday and Cold War expositions, Bukantė manor, etc.;
- Implemented TV projects featuring landmarks of Žemaitija National Park (for example, "Keliuk ir ragauk");
- In the 2018, rural tourism homestead "Pas tėvukus" was recognized as "The most successful rural tourism service provider in 2017".

Such information dissemination about Žemaitija National Park attractions and tourism service providers shows that the ŽNP has competitive tourism resources and services both locally and on the international level.

UAB SORBUM, whose employees have interviewed 500 visitors of the park and asked them questions according to the prepared questionnaire, have made the following recommendations after receiving the answers and making conclusions:

- In order to attract a larger number of visitors from more distant districts or foreign countries, information regarding ŽNP should be disseminated with as many different channels as possible – radio, internet, etc., especially if the ŽNP Directorate wants to attract young audience up to 25 years of age.
- More attention should be paid to optimizing the web site for search engines according to targeted keywords in the most popular search engine queries for the highest ranking in those systems' ratings.
- More information should be posted about ŽNP on webpages for travellers, i.e. Trip advisor, travellers' blogs, Facebook groups for travellers, etc.
- More attention should be brought to outdoor advertising or information stands. Currently, only a very small part (about 1.5%) of interviewed people have mentioned that they had come to the park, after they have noticed the roadside information stand.
- Create tourist route plans that indicate attractions, places to eat, how long it takes to travel, etc. We suggest co-operating with other regional parks and creating similar routes for all parks.

A survey of visitors and in-depth interviews reveal that the main marketing channel is "word of mouth" advertising. Therefore, ŽNP should try to provide visitors with positive experiences, receive their positive comments and feedback on tourism publications, websites and blogs. However, there are only 3 (Cold War Exposition, Plateliai lake and Diving academy) visited objects in the most popular tourist site in the world - www.tripadvisor.com mentioned. Therefore, the list should be expanded in the future.

2.1.7. Product competitiveness

Tourism product concept

Tourism products are a set of resources, infrastructure and services. A tourism product is described as a collection of elements of a tourist area, which consists of the most attractive objects and its complementary services (accommodation, catering or transport services). In principle, tourism products can be defined as services for tourists, various activities, attraction objects or other experience.

A tourist product is understood as a whole of goods and services while meeting the tourists' needs during his travel.

Three product levels are distinguished:

- a basic product that meets the needs of tourists and motivates the tourist to travel;
- complementary products and services such as accommodation or transport;
- other factors that add value and allow products to compete with each other.

The development of tourism around the world promotes competition between regions in order to attract more tourists to tourist destinations. Prior to developing a marketing strategy for tourism products, it is very important to evaluate the competitive advantages of tourism products at the regional, national and international levels.

Product differentiation provides the opportunity to attract specific segments of tourists and provide a basis for sustainable tourism planning and quality assurance. Positioning the product is implemented to increase product awareness - this allows the tourist area to be identified by its relevant features.

The tourist's decision to travel and choose a particular tourist product is determined by personal interests, values, time and income, spent on recreation. These factors determine the choice of tourist destination, travel route, time and price. Many tourism products include a variety of different interests: the main attraction is the main motive for traveling to a suitable tourist destination, but additional factors such as the quality of accommodation services or the accessibility of the area have a significant influence on the choice of a tourist destination. The activity loved by tourists is an important factor in explaining the relationship between tourists' motivation and the choice of a tourist destination. Activities or hobbies are considered to be the main connection of a tourist with the tourist area.

Individually traveling tourists usually create their tourist product individually, depending on the motives and needs of their travel; tourists who travel in groups purchase a vacation package using tour operator offers.

It should be noted that traditional cognitive tourism packages are gradually losing their market share, while active and educational tourism is in increasing demand. ŽNP is a competitive attraction area, as global trends indicate an increase in demand for tourist areas that are uncontaminated and more environmentally friendly: rural and eco-tourism are becoming more popular; tourists prefer to go to tourist areas, which care about cleanliness and proper order, and where tourism products and services are environmentally friendly; the demand for areas with natural landscapes is also on the rise (the attendance of areas where the infrastructure overlooks the beauty of nature is declining); ecotourism remains demanded and popular, as people are increasingly becoming responsible for their actions and protect the environment.

ŽNP tourism product competitiveness

Nature and cultural tourism resources of ŽNP provide favourable conditions for the creation of attractive ecological¹ and cultural² tourism products. Cultural and nature tourism potential is large and

¹ Ecological tourism – a type of tourism preserving nature and providing local residents social economic activity possibilities. Includes cognitive, active leisure (bicycle, water, pedestrian, etc.) tourism and rural tourism services.

attractive, but is currently not exploited because of several main reasons: lack tourist products marketing (as well as lack of tourism information); insufficiently developed tourism services (active leisure, accommodation and catering); the qualifications of the employees in tourism sector (in terms of foreign languages and hospitality) is also lacking.

The implemented ŽNP situation analysis has shown that in order to attract more tourists to the tourist destination, more attention should be paid to searching for private investments in tourism business, tourism product development and tourist system participant cooperation promotion.

ŽNP is a tourist attraction area competitive with its resources and services, however, it is not using its tourism possibilities in local and foreign target markets due to insufficient dissemination of information about its tourism products and particularly due to insufficient awareness of the tourist area.

3. SWOT ANALYSIS

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Strategic Documents identify the ŽNP and its objects as priority tourism objects in Lithuania; • Sustainable tourism planning; • Developed bicycle tracks infrastructure; • Well-developed road infrastructure; • Abundant natural and cultural heritage; • Strong rural tourism sector potential; • Plateliai Lake, which is attractive for tourists; • The Cold War exposition attracting many tourists; • Sacral tourism attraction objects – Žemaičių Kalvarija and Beržoras; • Sufficiently good tourist infrastructure; • Close public-private cooperation network. 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative seasonal effects; • Lack of camping and other cheaper accommodation facilities; • Waste management is a major problem; • Low quality of services related to human resources. There should be more providers of services knowing foreign languages; • Improvement of service quality in catering establishments; • Complicated transportation to Plateliai by public transport or taxi; • Unattractive and uncomfortable ŽNP websites; • There is no tourism product offering for individual and organized tourists; • Lack of region positioning; • Insufficient cooperation with Lithuanian tour operators; • Insufficient use of event tourism (for example, hiking); • Insufficient attention to tourism in electronic marketing and advertising.
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is plenty of potential for attracting local tourists from major cities of Lithuania and geographically close towns in Latvia; • Increasing popularity of ecological and active tourism; • Cooperation between the public and 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ŽNP is located in one of the regions of Lithuania which is least visited by local tourists; • Low awareness of the tourist area, distrust of the quality of tourism services and the environment; • Quantitative and qualitative loss of natural

²Cultural tourism – a type of tourism focusing on getting to know the local cultural environment, landscape, cultural and natural heritage, traditions, exceptional local way of life, to see fine and scenic arts, visit cultural events and participate in entertainment.

<p>private tourism sector;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 different seasons allow the provision of different tourism products and reduce the seasonality of tourism flows; • Increasing tourism flows and finding new tourism markets; • EU structural support for tourism infrastructure, marketing, etc.; • Creation, development and commercialization of tourism products. 	<p>resources;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition with Latvia and Estonia for the supply of similar tourism products, with more active marketing actions in neighbouring countries; • Inefficient/unrealized marketing tools.
--	--

4. ŽEMAITIJA NATIONAL PARK DEVELOPMENT DIRECTIONS

Development of competitive tourism products. After completing the internal and external analysis it is suggested to develop 2 main tourism products: ecological tourism and cultural tourism. An important aspect should be noted in the development of these 2 products – the reduction of seasonality.

Development of separate tourism types in Žemaitija National Park. The development of ecological tourism types: pedestrian and bicycle tracks, rest in parks and forests, ornithological tourism, rural tourism, recreation near bodies of water. Cultural tourism types should also be developed, such as: culinary tourism, sacral tourism (Žemaičių Kalvarija and other sacral objects).

Pedestrian and bicycle tourism development possibilities

Longer walking trails creation. Pedestrian tourism, when tourists travel to a destination with a purpose to spend a couple of days at the site while actively hiking is currently on the rise. Therefore, it is purposeful to develop a network of longer hiking routes, allowing tourists to choose their routes lasting from a couple of hours to a couple of days. At this point of time, currently existing bicycle tracks can be used for that purpose.

Improving walking trails infrastructure. Strengthening visual solutions. The visual attractiveness is one of the most important factors for modern travelers in choosing the destination of their journey. It makes it mandatory to improve the visual attractiveness of the infrastructure and presenting the newly created infrastructure with the use of high-quality photographs and filmed materials. A couple of good foreign experience examples are shown below.



Source: <https://inhabitat.com/“a-path-in-the-forest”-by-tetsuo-kondo-is-a-floating-woodland-trail-in-estonia/>



Source: <https://www.familywithkids.com/finland/en/photogallery/photo-torrnsuo-national-park-finland>



Examples of recreation in parks and forests recreation

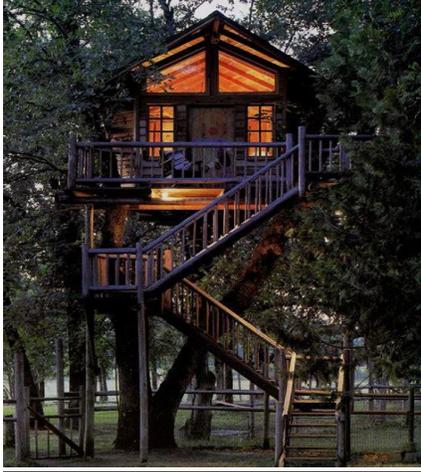
Improving attractiveness by light installations, together with creating attraction objects outside of high season.



Source: https://westcoastsightseeing.com/guided_tours/canyon-lights-vancouver-city-capilano-suspension-bridge-park-tour/

Source: Ray Bartkus installation in Prienai

Examples of accommodation in wooden houses on trees (a tree-house park – hotel and restaurant). It is important to note that the legislation currently prohibits the construction of trees in the forest.



Source: <https://www.lesothers.com/baumraum-treehouse-djuren/>



Source: https://www.dezeen.com/2017/11/27/studio-north-birdhut-wooden-treehouse-western-canada-camping-birds-humans/?li_source=LI&li_medium=bottom_block_1



Source: <https://www.lesothers.com/baumraum-treehouse-djuren/>

Examples of an active leisure park



Source: <http://www.tauruparkas.lt/>





Source: https://www.flowpark.fi/turku/kuvagalleria/kuva/?afg2_page_id=2#afg-2

Examples of children's forest fairy-tale park creation



Source: <http://www.latvia.travel/en/sight/tervete-nature-park>

Examples of forest sound/meditation park creation



Source: https://www.google.lt/search?safe=active&biw=1536&bih=779&tbn=isch&sa=1&ei=YwWZW43nCZD4wQKL17iABg&q=estonia+parks+woodens+infrastructure&oq=estonia+parks+woodens+infrastructure&gs_l=img.3...941108.947649.0.947824.23.23.0.0.0.0.290.2093.20j1j1.22.0....0...1c.1.64.img..1.1.97...0i8i30k1.0.7ezpLToJtY0#imgrc=5A69zLRje2KXwM:

Examples of an event scene at a forest site (attracting such events, as for example Christopher Summer Festival concerts)



Source: <https://www.priezero.lt/uploads/object1359/druskininku-karloio-dineikos-21965.jpg>

Bird watching (Ornithological) tourism development possibilities:

Research and planning. During the planning of the ornithological tourism nice development, it would be purposeful to firstly execute all needed research and prepare the bird population distribution and density maps, which would specify the prevalence and visibility of specific species in specific places, the ecological value of those species, the distribution of the park into zones according to bird watching possibilities and limitations for such actions. After the researches are finished, infrastructure, needed for bird watching, can be planned.



Infrastructure. Birdwatchers like to be very close to bird habitats, so good accessibility and infrastructure are important - tracks and bird tracking paths, observation sites, observation towers, billboards about the prevalence of specific species, their value and characteristics of birds.

Information. Information guides, books, leaflets with bird listings, their location and other interesting and useful information – all of this helps to develop a tourism niche.

Accommodation. Birdwatchers love to watch birds before dawn, so accommodation facilities should allow a person to watch birds directly from the terrace are in a much-demanded segment. It is popular abroad and allows the spectators to get an early breakfast. It is also a business niche for accommodation providers.

Guide services. Simplify the process of certification and accreditation of guides to enable more individuals to provide guiding services.

Marketing. Target segment: birdwatchers, eco-tourists, nature photographers. The following aspects are important for targeted marketing:

- Purposefully publicize the prevalence of local birds in the area, emphasizing and highlighting the most rare and exciting species;
- Highlight the quality of the bird monitoring infrastructure;

- Publicize through different channels (internet, festivals, events, social media, travel guides and magazines) in the languages of target countries;
- Present opportunities at target fairs (i.e. British Bird Fair);
- Marketing should focus on the middle-aged and older travellers and families.
- Publications should mainly focus on women, as they usually plan family trips;
- Focus on tourists who are likely to stay overnight, since cruise travellers do not spend a lot and leave little value;
- Collect data on the segment, which comes to ŽNP and improve value offers according to data results;
- Use of the willingness of the bird watchers “will to pay” to collect taxes or support for the conservation of bird species.

Development of recreation near water bodies

The following routes for development are distinguished in this area: improving swimming and beach infrastructure, increasing water transportation measure rent offer and accessibility, use Plateliai lake to reduce seasonality by attractive solutions (light installations in urban areas, ice sculptures, augmented reality solutions recreating the Pilis island castle).



Source: <http://www.harmoniypark.lt/naujiena-ray-bartkaus-sviesos-instaliacija-simtas-metu-simtas-medziu-jau-harmony-park/>

Examples of a bridge / footbridge station reconstruction / construction



Source: <http://www.poilsioaze.lt/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Skaidrė2.jpg>

Reduce tourism seasonality

Take advantage of the benefits of the landscape and create an entertainment complex with an all-weather catering facility located together with active leisure entertainment, i.e. for winter time it can be an ice-skating rink, wall climbing, cognitive spaces, mini zoo, etc.

Rural tourism. Strengthening genuine experiences.

Samogitian culture and traditions are what distinguishes ŽNP from other tourist attraction objects. Therefore, it is necessary to strategically revive and develop authentic experiences: through culinary heritage, national costume, authentic Samogitian architecture and interior, Samogitian dialect and songs, traditional crafts (especially cross works). This should be felt during the whole visit in ŽNP: in accommodation establishments, catering establishment and sites, visited by tourists. It is also important to fill the contents into cultural heritage objects, i.e. to create complex services in objects of cultural heritage by developing cultural tourism.

Mobile shop or e-shop of local farm production



It is important to promote possibilities to buy local farm production (herbs, cheese, honey). For this purpose e-shop and mobile shop-bus could serve as a solution.

Sauna tourism outside of tourist season – product creation and development

It is proposed to use the saunas in rural tourism homesteads to create a tourism offer / product for the winter season - "sauna program with education".

Žemaitija National Park tourism marketing measure and activity development: Marketing must be planned and implemented in 4-year time (in order to reduce seasonality). Tourism packages must be developed for each season. They must be communicated before the start of the season through targeted groups (local and targeted foreign markets) through channels oriented towards tourist information centers, travel agencies and tour operators.

After the evaluation of the current situation and competitiveness of the tourism products of ŽNP, the following tactical actions are identified:

- Creation and presentation of tourism products for individual travellers to the country's residents and foreign tourists (cooperation with tourist authorities, i.e. tourism information centers and national tourism organizations);
- Creation and commercialization of tourism products for people organized in groups for foreign tourists (cooperation with tour operators).

Better exploitation of channels granting access to individual tourists, marketing of content and increasing awareness of the ŽNP tourism products on the Internet, i.e. e-platforms (Booking.com, TripAdvisor, Lonelyplanet.com, Youtube, Facebook, Instagram, etc.).

Development of cross-border and national cooperation: in order to attract foreign tourists from target countries (Latvia, Germany, Sweden, Italy and France), it is mandatory to develop international cooperation with the tourism information centers and travel agencies/operators in these countries.

Product brand and tourism forum formats should be reviewed. They are currently not sufficiently effective and are not promoting real cooperation. It is purposeful to appoint a part of a post for consulting business and performing mentoring in order to strengthen cooperation. It is also purposeful to organize trainings in order to improve the quality of services and the qualification of specialists working in tourism sector.

5. ŽEMAITIJA NATIONAL PARK SUSTAINABLE TOURISM STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN FOR 2019-2023.

ŽNP VISION STATEMENT: The best protected area in the Baltic States according to its visitors.

- Best as: best rated;
- Best in what: ecotourism and cultural tourism;
- The best in which territory: in the Baltic States;
- Exceptional due to: Samogitian culture, customs, history / unique landscape of Samogitia;
- Exclusive for (TG): families, active leisure lovers, children and young people;
- Attractive due to: affordable recreation in the nature.

ŽNP MISSION STATEMENT: To preserve and convey the Samogitian culture, landscape and biological diversity to current and future generations.

Table 23. Aims and objectives of the strategy

Aims	Objectives
1. To develop nature (ecological) tourism infrastructure	1.1. Improve the infrastructure of public swimming sites and beaches
	1.2. Improve the public tourism information infrastructure (marking of tourist objects and trails, information stands)
	1.3. Improve and develop active leisure facilities (biking and hiking tracks/trails)
	1.4. Establish "Green classroom" – nature school (allowing children to study the diversity of animals and learn how to care for and wisely manage one of the largest ŽNP assets – the forest)
	1.5. Create a zone of forest fairy-tale park with tiny forest train for the children segment
	1.6. Create an active recreational forest area - an amusement park to attract the target segment
	1.7. Create a passive - meditative rest zone in the forest - a forest sounds park
	1.8. Establish light installation areas in Plateliai Manor Park
	1.9. Set up a scene for events at a site in the forest
	1.10. Prepare a feasibility study for building a pedestrian bridge/footbridge at Plateliai lake
2. Develop tourism service infrastructure and improve the quality of services	2.1. Install a modern camping site
	2.2. Encourage the development and delivery of private accommodation services on international accommodation service platforms (i.e. airbnb.com, etc.)
	2.3. Increase the competence of tourism service providers in respective fields of services;
	2.4. Promote the development of catering services, focusing on the quality of services and the region's authenticity
	2.5. Promote organized sales of local products by local producers to visitors (mobile store or e-store)
3. Create competitive tourism products	3.1. Create a bird watching (ornithological tourism) product
	3.2. Create attractive tourist products for organized tourists and commercialize them
	3.3. Organize hiking trips
	3.4. Promote the provision of sauna tourism services at rural tourism homesteads, to

	popularize them
4. Promote a network of complimentary services for tourism products	4.1. Encourage the installation of ATMs and / or improve visitor awareness of cash settlement options
	4.2. Improve accessibility of ŽNP by public transport or private initiatives (Uber, Taxify, etc.)
	4.3. Organize more efficient waste management during the tourist season
5. Implement tourism marketing measures in order to increase the flows of responsibly traveling tourists	5.1. Create competitive offers of 4 seasons and make their marketing relevant before each season
	5.2. Implement tourism marketing measures in order to attract local tourists from the major cities of Lithuania (Vilnius, Kaunas regions)
	5.3. Implement tourism marketing measures in order to attract tourists from targeted foreign countries (Latvia, Germany, Sweden, Italy, France) and/or others.
	5.4. Create proposals for tourism products for specific target groups (families with children, bird watchers, disabled people, elderly people, young people)
	5.5. Combine the resources of cultural and national heritage, creating visitor experience based on the authenticity of the region (through dialect, songs, culinary heritage, national costume, etc.) and to strengthen the positioning of the region
	5.6. Implement e-marketing tools (ŽNP website, social networking (Instagram, Facebook, Youtube)
	5.7. Deliver tourist products to target segments (tour operators and tourists travelling individually)
	5.8. Evaluate the efficiency of tourism marketing
6. Improve cooperation between public sector tourism employees and service providers of the private sector	6.1. Create and run a business consulting measures
	6.2. Improve the tourism forum and product brand concepts in order to meet business expectations and to improve the form of cooperation
	6.3. Develop information packages for businesses working in the field of tourism (about ŽNP tourism opportunities and their presentation to tourists)
	6.4. Organize information seminars before every season, presenting the ŽNP tourism marketing package for the coming season and discussing changes, trends and other important aspects of the coming season.
	6.5. Conduct systematic monitoring of businesses operating in the tourism sector in order to identify their needs and problems
	6.6. Promote ŽNP cooperation with tourism business representatives (tour operators, in order to present own products), deliver products to the Plungė TIC, Tourism Dept.
7. Reduce tourism seasonality	7.1. Develop entertainment that would be attractive in off-season and execute their marketing (e.g. ice-skating rink, snow or ice sculptures, Shrove Tuesday week (tradition presented during that period))
	7.2. Develop tourist routes that are attractive off-season and implement their marketing
	7.3. Strengthen the positioning of Shrove Tuesday tradition and develop the Shrove Tuesday week event complex
8. Ensure the protection of natural and cultural heritage and its rational use embodied in the sustainable tourism	8.1. Develop the institution of rangers
	8.2. Implement educational activities to educate visitors
	8.3. Promote volunteering and implement active measures by attracting volunteers

principles	
9. Attract public investment	9.1. Develop a plan and strategy to attract investment
	9.2. Create an investment-friendly environment at ŽNP
10. Ensure strategy implementation and monitoring	10.1. Appoint a person, responsible for the implementation of the strategy and achievement of the goals
	10.2 Call for annual discussions on the implementation of the strategy

Source: made by authors

5.2. Action plan for 2019-2023

Table 24. Action plan 2019-2023

Objectives	Measures	Period	Responsible	Financing
1.1. Improve the infrastructure of public swimming sites and beaches	1.1.1. Installation of high-quality beach in Plateliai small recreational functional priority area	2019-2021	ŽNPD, Plungė District Municipality Administration, Plateliai community	EU funds
	1.1.2. Modernization of beaches, equipped with changing cabins, toilets, arbors	2019-2021	ŽNPD, private investors, State Forest Enterprise	EU funds, private investment
1.2. Improve the public tourism information infrastructure (marking of tourist objects and tourist trails, information stands)	1.2.1. Marking tourist trails	2019-2021	ŽNPD, private investors	Budget funds, private investment
	1.2.2. Installation/renewal of information stands	2019-2023	ŽNPD	Budget funds
1.3. Improve and develop active leisure facilities (biking and hiking tracks/trails)	1.3.1. Reconstruction of Paplatelė educational trail	2020-2021	ŽNPD	EU funds
	1.3.2. Constructing a Plateliai town educational trail	2020-2023	ŽNPD	EU funds
	1.3.3. Constructing a Pilis island educational trail	2020-2023	ŽNPD	EU funds
	1.3.4. Constructing a Gegrėnai educational trail	2020-2023	ŽNPD	EU funds
1.4. Establish a "Green class" – nature school (allowing children to study the diversity of animals and learn how to care for and wisely manage one of the largest ŽNP assets – the forest)	1.4.1. Project preparation and feasibility analysis	2019-2023	ŽNPD	EU funds
	1.4.2. "Green class" / nature school creation in Laumalenkos landscape reserve	2019-2023	ŽNPD	EU funds
1.5. Create a zone of forest fairy-tale park for	1.5.1. Feasibility analysis	2019-2021	ŽNPD	Budget funds
	1.5.2. Project preparation and	2021-2023	ŽNPD, private	EU funds,

the children segment with "Miško Garvežiukas"	implementation		investors	private investment
1.6. Create an active recreational forest area - an amusement park	1.6.1. Feasibility analysis	2019-2021	ŽNPD	Budget funds, EU funds
	1.6.2. Project preparation and implementation	2020-2023	ŽNPD, private investors	EU funds, private investment
1.7. Create a passive - meditative rest zone in the forest - a forest sounds park	1.7.1. Feasibility analysis	2019-2021	ŽNPD	Budget funds
	1.7.2. Project preparation and implementation	2021-2023	ŽNPD, private investors	EU funds, private investment
1.8. Establish light installation areas in Plateliai Manor park	1.8.1. Feasibility analysis	2019-2021	ŽNPD, private investors	EU funds, budget funds, private investment
	1.8.2. Project preparation and implementation	2020-2023	ŽNPD, private investors	EU funds, budget funds, private investment
1.9. Set up a scene for events at a site in the forest	1.9.1. Project preparation and implementation	2020-2023	Plungė District Municipality Administration, communities	EU funds, private investment
1.10. Build a pedestrian bridge / footbridge at Plateliai lake	1.10.1. Feasibility analysis, project preparation	2019-2023	ŽNPD	Budget funds
2.1. Install a modern camping site	2.1.1. Feasibility analysis	2019-2021	ŽNPD	Budget funds
	2.1.2. Project preparation and implementation	2021-2023	ŽNPD, private investors	EU funds, private investment
2.2. Encourage the development and delivery of private accommodation services on international accommodation service platforms (i.e. airbnb.com, etc.)	2.2.1. Prepare memos on how to use international platforms	2019-2020	ŽNPD, Plungė TIC, Samogitian Rural Tourism Association	Budget funds
	2.2.2. Introduce access to international accommodation platforms (through events, newsletters) to business and private persons	2019-2020	ŽNPD, Plungė TIC, Samogitian Rural Tourism Association	Budget funds
2.3. Increase the competence of tourism service providers in respective fields of services	2.3.1. Survey of tourism service providers, competence research	2019-2020	ŽNPD	Budget funds
	2.3.2. Organizing trainings	2020-2023	ŽNPD, Plungė TIC, Samogitian Rural Tourism Association	Budget funds
2.4. Promote the	2.5.1. Feasibility Analysis	2019-2020	ŽNPD	Budget funds

development of catering services, focusing on the quality of services and the region's authenticity	2.5.2. Attracting investors, implementation of project	2021-2023	ŽNPD Plungė TIC, Association of Žemaitija Country Homesteads	Budget funds, private investment
2.5. Promote organized sales of local products by local producers to visitors (mobile store or e-store)	2.6.1. Project preparation and implementation	2019-2023	ŽNPD, private investors	Budget funds, private investment
3.1. Create a bird watching (ornithological tourism) product	3.1.1. Product development	2019-2020	ŽNPD	EU funds, budget funds
	3.1.2. Product commercialization	2020-2023	ŽNPD	Budget funds
3.2. Create attractive tourist products for organized tourists and commercialize them	3.2.1. Feasibility analysis and product development	2019-2020	ŽNPD	ES funds, budget funds
	3.2.2. Products commercialization	2021-2023	ŽNPD	Budget funds
3.3. Organize hiking trips	3.3.1. Route selection and analysis	2020	ŽNPD	Budget funds
	3.3.3. Organization of hikes and its commercialization	2020	ŽNPD, private investors	Budget funds, private investment
3.4. Promote the provision of sauna tourism services at rural tourism homesteads, to popularize them	3.4.1. Product creation	2020	Private investors	Private investment
	3.4.2. Product commercialization	2021	Private investors	Private investment
4.1. Encourage the installation of ATMs and / or improve visitor awareness of cash settlement options at the resort	4.1.1. Informing people regarding cash settlement options	2019-2023	ŽNPD, private companies	Budget funds
4.2. Improve accessibility of ŽNP by public transport or private initiatives (Uber, Taxify, etc.)	4.2.1. Preparation of memos on the use of private transportation initiatives (Uber, Taxify) for tourists and residents who could provide shuttle services	2019	ŽNPD, private investors	Budget funds
	4.2.2. Informing people on the use of Uber or Taxify platforms (for tourists and residents)	2019-2023	ŽNPD, private investors	Budget funds
4.3. Organize more efficient waste management during the tourist season	4.3.1. Encouragement of composting and recycling of degradable waste at its origin place	2019-2023	ŽNPD, Plungė District Municipality Administration	Budget funds
	4.3.2. Mediation between business and municipality to improve waste management	2020-2023	ŽNPD	Budget funds

5.1. Create competitive offers for 4 seasons of the year and make their marketing relevant before each season	5.1.1. Preparation of marketing tools	2019	ŽNPD, Plungė TIC, tourism services providers	Budget funds, private investment
	5.1.2. Implementation of marketing tools	2019-2023	ŽNPD, Plungė TIC, tourism services providers	Budget funds, private investment
5.2. Implement tourism marketing measures in order to attract local tourists from the major cities of Lithuania (Vilnius, Kaunas regions)	5.2.1. Preparation of marketing tools	2019	ŽNPD, Plungė TIC, tourism services providers	Budget funds, private investment
	5.2.2. Implementation of marketing tools	2019-2023	ŽNPD, Plungė TIC, tourism services providers	Budget funds, private investment
5.3. Implement tourism marketing measures in order to attract tourists from targeted foreign countries (Latvia, Germany, Sweden, Italy, France)	5.3.1. Preparation of marketing tools	2019	ŽNPD, Plungė TIC, tourism services providers	Budget funds, private investment
	5.3.2. Implementation of marketing tools	2019-2023	ŽNPD, Plungė TIC, tourism services providers	Budget funds, private investment
5.4. Create proposals for tourism products for specific target groups (families with children, bird watchers, disabled people, elderly people, young people)	5.4.1. Creation of tourism products	2019	ŽNPD, Plungė TIC, tourism services providers	Budget funds, private investment
	5.4.2. Commercialization and publicity of tourism products	2019-2023	ŽNPD, Plungė TIC, tourism services providers	Budget funds, private investment
5.5. Combine the resources of cultural and national heritage, creating visitor experience based on the authenticity of the region (through dialect, songs, culinary heritage, national costume, etc.) and to strengthen the positioning of the region	5.5.1. Preparation of a plan or project for strengthening the cultural authenticity of ŽNP	2020	ŽNPD	Budget funds
	5.5.2. Finding and receiving financing for activities aimed at enhancing the cultural authenticity of the ŽNP	2020	ŽNPD	Budget funds
	5.5.3. Implementation of active measures	2021-2023	ŽNPD	Budget funds
	5.5.4. Publication and positioning	2021-2023	ŽNPD	Budget funds
5.6. Implement e-marketing tools (ŽNP website, social	5.6.1. Provision of positioned information on the tourism products targeted at specific	2020	ŽNPD, Plungė TIC, tourism services	Budget funds, private investment

networking (Instagram, Facebook, Youtube))	target groups on the ŽNP website		providers	
	5.6.2. Publication of active social messages on social networks	2020-2023	ŽNPD, Plungė TIC, tourism services providers	Budget funds, private investment
5.7. Deliver tourist products to target segments (tour operators and tourists travelling individually)	5.7.1. Creation of tourist products according to target segments	2020-2023	ŽNPD, Plungė TIC, tourism services providers	Budget funds, private investment
	5.7.2. Active presentation of tourist products to tour organizers (sending information before the season, event or after installing an innovation)	2020-2023	ŽNPD, Plungė TIC, tourism services providers	Budget funds, private investment
	5.7.3. Active presentation of tourism products for individual tourists (both in travel planning and in travel stages)	2020-2023	ŽNPD, Plungė TIC, tourism services providers	Budget funds, private investment
5.8. Evaluate the efficiency of tourism marketing	5.8.1. Media monitoring implementation	2019-2023	ŽNPD, Plungė TIC	Budget funds
	5.8.2. Conducting surveys of tourists and visitors on how they found out about ŽNP	2019-2023	ŽNPD, Plungė TIC	Budget funds
6.1. Create and run a business consulting measures	6.1.1. Create and run a business consulting measures	2019-2023	ŽNPD, Plungė TIC	Budget funds
6.2. Improve the tourism forum and product brand concepts in order to meet business expectations and to improve the form of cooperation	6.2.1. Tourism forum and product brand concept analysis and discussions with business sector	2019	ŽNPD	Budget funds
	6.2.2. Development of new concept of tourism forum and product brand	2019	ŽNPD	Budget funds
6.3. Develop information packages for businesses working in the field of tourism (about ŽNP tourism opportunities and their presentation to tourists)	6.3.1. Preparation of information packages for tourism businesses (regarding tourism opportunities of the ŽNP and their presentation to tourists)	2019	ŽNPD, Plungė TIC	Budget funds
6.4. Organize information seminars before every season, presenting the ŽNP tourism marketing package for the coming season and discussing	6.4.1. Organizing informational seminars before every season (presenting the ŽNP tourism marketing package for the coming season and discussing changes, trends and other important aspects during the coming	2019-2023	ŽNPD, Plungė TIC	Budget funds

changes, trends and other important aspects of the coming season	season)			
6.5. Conduct systematic monitoring of businesses operating in the tourism sector in order to identify their needs and problems	6.5.1. Execution of a survey of businesses, operating in the tourism sector	2019-2023	ŽNPD, Plungė TIC	EU funds, budget funds, private investment
	6.5.2. External evaluation of businesses, operating in the tourism sector (mystery shopper method, etc.)	2019-2023	ŽNPD, Plungė TIC	EU funds, budget funds, private investment
6.6. Promote ŽNP cooperation with tourism business representatives (tour operators, in order to present own products), deliver products to the Plunge TIC, Tourism Dept.	6.6.1. Partner list creation	2019	ŽNPD, Plungė TIC	Budget funds, private investment
	6.6.2. Identification of collaborative activities (meetings, exhibitions, presentations, joint projects)	2019	ŽNPD, Plungė TIC	Budget funds, private investment
	6.6.3. Implementing cooperation activities	2019-2023	ŽNPD, Plungė TIC	Budget funds
7.1. Develop entertainment that would be attractive off-season time and execute their marketing (ice-skating rink, snow or ice sculptures, Shrove Tuesday week (present traditions during this period)	7.1.1. Creating entertainment for each season (in winter - ice sculptures, Shrove Tuesday week, in autumn – festival for families “Miško burtai”, hiking tours, in spring – flowering celebration, etc.)	2020-2023	ŽNPD, Plungė TIC	EU funds, budget funds, private investment
	7.1.2. Active marketing of entertainment	2022-2023	ŽNPD, Plungė TIC	EU funds, budget funds, private investment
7.2. Develop tourist routes that would be attractive in off-season and implement their marketing	7.2.1. Creation of routes	2020-2022	ŽNPD, Plungė TIC	EU funds, budget funds, private investment
	7.2.2. Marketing of routes	2020-2023	ŽNPD, Plungė TIC	EU funds, budget funds, private investment
7.3. Take advantage of the benefits of the landscape and create entertainment complex	7.4.1. Entertainment complex project preparation for financing	2019-2023	Private investors	EU funds, budget funds, private investment
	7.4.2. Entertainment complex creation	2019-2023	Private investors	EU funds, budget funds,

				private investment
7.4. Strengthen the positioning of Shrove Tuesday traditions and develop the Shrove Tuesday week event complex	7.5.1. Creating a Shrove Tuesday week event program	2019	ŽNPD	Budget funds
	7.5.2. Attracting support from private sponsors and funds	2019-2023	ŽNPD	EU funds, budget funds
	7.5.3. Execute event marketing	2019-2023	ŽNPD, Plungė TIC, communities	EU funds, budget funds
8.1. Develop the institution of rangers	8.1.1 Ranger activity coordination	2019-2023	ŽNPD	Budget funds
	8.1.2. Implementation of the Young rangers' program	2019-2023	ŽNDP	Budget funds
8.2. Implement educational activities to educate visitors	8.2.1. Development and dissemination of educational material in places of tourist and visitor gathering	2019	ŽNPD	EU funds, budget funds
	8.2.2. Inclusion of educational information in the content of popular events and excursions	2020-2023	ŽNPD	Budget funds
8.3. Promote volunteering and implement active measures by attracting volunteers	8.3.1. Execution of cooperation with volunteer centers	2019-2023	ŽNPD	Budget funds
9.1. Develop a plan and strategy to attract investment	9.1.1. Preparing an investment attraction strategy and plan	2019-2022	ŽNPD, Plungė District Municipality Administration	Budget funds
10.1. Appoint a person, responsible for the implementation of the strategy and goals achievement	10.1. Appointment of responsible person	2019	ŽNPD	Budget funds
10.2 Call for annual discussions on the implementation of the strategy	10.2 Strategy implementation discussions	2019-2023	ŽNPD	Budget funds

Source: made by authors