

Guidelines for planners
of cultural routes

CULTURAL ROUTES

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INTRODUCTION

Why cultural routes?

1.1. THE CONCEPT OF A CULTURAL ROUTE

A route that we travel is a relationship in the first place. It is about connecting infrastructure, heritage, experiences, people, history, culture and everything what happens in between.

Cultural route is a project uniting different fields of culture, education, cultural heritage and tourism, which aims at development and promotion of one or more tourist itineraries linked to a historical route, cultural concept, personality or phenomenon of special importance, which is significant in promoting and respecting European values.

Routes lead to and open up new horizons, contributing not only to cultural, but to economic, social and ecological development on different geographical levels. In the beginning, it is essential to find what we have locally and build upon it – start from the bottom up. Because planning a route always begins from personal intentions and motivations.

1.2. GUIDELINES FOR PLANNERS OF CULTURAL ROUTES

These guidelines are based on the prime insights of the project “Cultural Routes for Regional Development”, which was implemented in Vilnius and Kaunas in the autumn of 2019 and which consisted of a series of theoretical and practical events. The project was funded by the European Economic Area and Norway Bilateral Cooperation Fund. It was aimed at the promotion of bilateral cooperation between Lithuania and Norway in the development of cultural routes and to exchange good practice and know-how among the planners of cultural routes. Different stakeholders shared their experiences and worked together on successful strategies for cultural routes. Best practices and main insights from these events formed the foundation of the guidelines.

The guidelines are written for the existing or future planners of cultural routes. It is a user-friendly guide, which introduces main principles of cultural route planning and guides its readers through the process. The guidelines will walk potential creators of cultural routes step by step: setting the goal and scope of the route, choosing best tools for the implementation, evaluating external factors that may affect the route, researching its context, and developing partnerships.



DEVELOP THE DESTINATION

What is your cultural route?

2 DEVELOP THE DESTINATION

What is your cultural route?

2.1. FINDING YOUR PURPOSE

Many artistic, creative and cultural projects often find it difficult to plan for sustainability. A lot of creative energy is directed to the end product, and not to the correct stages of its creation. Each project must have a clear purpose and a coherent strategy of different ways to achieve it. This guide first and foremost will encourage you to decide which direction you want to take with your cultural routes project and answer the main question - WHY?

There may be different motivations for creating a cultural route:

- Raising awareness on cultural heritage and its accessibility;
- Attracting local and / or international tourists;
- Creating cultural products of a high quality and making them accessible;
- Involving, engaging and empowering local communities;
- Fostering local identity and pride;
- Creating and enhancing values that are important for you;
- Aiming for sustainable development of the place;
- Encouraging synergies between different sectors.

However, it is important not to try covering all the aspects, but select only the relevant ones, that truly motivates you.



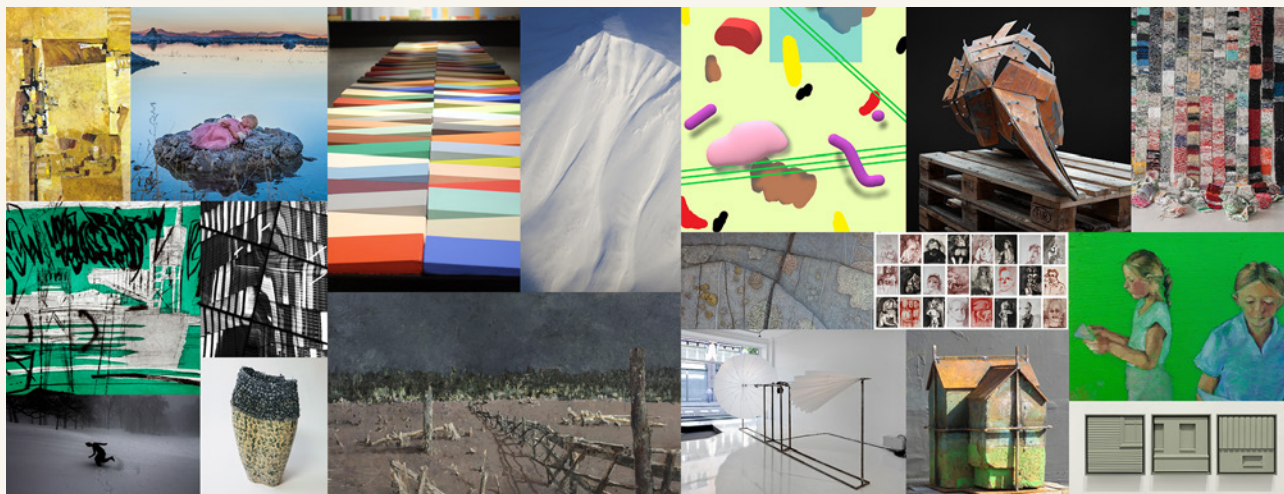
GOOD PRACTICE: Kunst Rett Vest: www.kunstrettvest.no

Joint exhibitions, open ateliers through collaborative projects and creating of new art production and networking in the Western Region (Norway). The initiative has a clear focus towards making contemporary visual arts more accessible.

Key message – Cultural routes can strengthen and help to visualize the diversity of professional art life in the regions, making visual art accessible to a wide audience.

2 DEVELOP THE DESTINATION

What is your cultural route?



Source: <https://www.kunstretvest.no/>

2.2. SETTING THE SCOPE OF THE ROUTE

The purpose of the cultural route also dictates its scope. Usually, all initiatives start locally with only a few people, who have the vision and ability to implement it. Only a few of these initiatives will become cultural routes recognized by the European Commission. However, not all initiatives need to be international for achieving the desired result. Local ones can even have a greater impact for the place and its people. Four main levels of cultural routes can be distinguished:

1. Regional / local level

contains cultural cooperation project developed at the level of at least three municipalities, based on regional and local cultural resources - history, tangible and intangible heritage, personalities relevant to the country's history, the involvement of groups, their cultural education and the strengthening of their cultural identity. This level aims to create cognitive routes by constantly updating them with activities, events and other promotional campaigns in order to attract visitors from entire country.

2. National level

contains cultural cooperation project developed in at least three counties or involves at least six municipalities of a certain country. At this level, the theme of the route is based on historical processes and phenomena important to a country, reveals and promotes tangible or intangible cultural heritage and / or historical personalities, reveals links with common European experience, history and values. The aim at this level is to create continuous cultural tourism routes within and outside a country and to promote local and inbound tourism.

3. International level

contains a cultural cooperation project that is being developed on the territory of at least three states and in cooperation with organizations from some other country(s). At this level, the theme of the route should: refer to historical processes and phenomena relevant to several countries, reveal and promote tangible or intangible cultural heritage and / or historical personalities, and link to common European experiences, history and values. This level aims at creating continuous cultural tourism routes within and outside the project development areas and promoting them through local and inbound tourism.

2 DEVELOP THE DESTINATION

What is your cultural route?

4. Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe level

a cultural route part of which is being developed on the territory of several countries and is certified by EICR according to established procedures (connected to a certified European Cultural Route). The certification “Cultural Route of the Council of Europe” is a guarantee of excellence. Today there are 38 different Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe. The routes provide a wealth of leisure and educational activities for all citizens across Europe and beyond and are key resources for responsible tourism and sustainable development. They cover a range of different themes, from architecture and landscape to religious influences, from gastronomy and intangible heritage to the major figures of European art, music and literature. As indicated by the EICR¹, themes of the cultural routes must satisfy all of the following six eligibility criteria:

1. The theme must be representative of European values and common to several countries of Europe.
2. The theme must be researched and developed by groups of multidisciplinary experts from different regions of Europe so as to ensure that the activities and projects which illustrate it are based on consensus.
3. The theme must be illustrative of European memory, history and heritage and contribute to an interpretation of the diversity of present-day Europe.
4. The theme must lend itself to cultural and educational exchanges for young people and hence be in line with the Council of Europe’s ideas and concerns in these fields.

5. The theme must permit the development of initiatives and exemplary and innovative projects in the field of cultural tourism and sustainable cultural development.
6. The theme must lend itself to the development of tourist products in partnership with tourist agencies and operators aimed at different publics, including school groups.

2.3. MAIN ELEMENTS OF THE CULTURAL ROUTE

Cultural routes should define a cognitive path through which, at individual stops and sites, the narrative is developed and presented by appropriate means (site visits, excursions, guided tours, cultural events, etc.). Routes provide a fertile soil for new innovative tourism ideas through intersections of culture, heritage tourism, creative professions and the use of information technologies. It is important to consider both tangible and intangible possible elements of cultural routes:

- Cultural heritage is a key motivator for tourists. Cultural route is a powerful way of using cultural heritage together with artistic, creative and cultural initiatives to create value;
- Points of interest and stops, including tangible and intangible cultural heritage, cultural activities, personalities, natural objects, as well as accommodation related to the theme of the route, other supporting infrastructure and human resources;
- Cultural routes may be linear – leading from one point to another, or network based – constituted of several routes, connecting geographically or meaningfully.

1 Council of Europe Portal: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/cultural-routes>

2 DEVELOP THE DESTINATION

What is your cultural route?

- The vitality of the route also depends on the involvement of different sectors, partnerships between private and public entities, involvement in the development and enhancement of a wide range of joint activities;
- A strong and integral theme - cultural routes are thematic routes, so, they must reveal a particular theme and be thematically integrated. The significance of the elements of a cultural path relates not only to the authenticity of the objects themselves but also to their interesting interpretation. The whole route must be developed and communicated as a brand, creatively interpreting and connecting individual points of interest;
- Clear geographical scope and representation - routes should be clearly geographically defined, to have a start and end, clear connections and easiness to navigate;
- Connectivity and accessibility of the route – it should serve to make culture accessible to a specific target audience, to provide the necessary infrastructure and services for it;
- Adaptability of the route – constant research, analysis and adaption to the needs of target audiences.



Source: www.pamatyklietuvoje.lt. Photo: © Projektas "Pamario švyturių kelias"



GOOD PRACTICE: The Weathervane Way: www.vetrungiukelias.lt

It is a cultural cognitive route, inviting to travel to Lithuania Minor ethnographic region. This route is a good example of how a wide network of stakeholders, partnerships and elements of the cultural route can work together towards one goal.

Key message: A network of cultural events and services enhances the travelers experience.

2 DEVELOP THE DESTINATION

What is your cultural route?

2.4. MANAGEMENT AND OWNERSHIP

A cultural route should be understood as a network, having a clear governance structure with a legal status. A Destination Management Approach should be applied - seeing and managing the route as a whole. It requires awareness of how visitors see things, coordinated management across sectors (public, private, voluntary sectors, heritage, museums, tourism, transport, media etc.). It is useful to legitimize partnerships through joint operating agreements, to allocate responsibilities and clear management roles and to:

- Create an association for specific cultural route, to elect a steering committee or board, to have a scientific committee, research council or a scientific advisory group.
- Ensure collaboration and communication between different stakeholders, public and private partnerships, involving local communities, local municipalities, young people and businesses in creating branding, planning, development and learning together;
- Set a membership fee, which always creates sense of commitment and helps to sustain daily activities;
- Provide comprehensive and systematic plan (financial, strategic, marketing, sustainability, etc.), and have it revised annually;
- Ensure political support from the municipality and eldership;
- Be open to new ideas, involve young people, students, volunteers, local people in contributing, developing and maintaining activities, spreading the message to as many people as possible;
- Integrate activities and ideas into the curricula of local educational institutions;
- Focus on financial and organizational sustainability with a long-term vision;
- Think ahead and have a risk management plan to create resilience for changing factors;
- Focus on research in collaboration with academia.

2 DEVELOP THE DESTINATION

What is your cultural route?



Source: <http://ciurlioniokelias.lt/>



GOOD PRACTICE: The M.K. Čiurlionis Route: www.ciurlioniokelias.lt

Management of this route is aiming to unite various stakeholders at different municipalities and could be considered as a good example of how to manage and administrate a complex cultural route at a national scale.

Key message: A cultural route can serve as a means of fostering the memory of the historical personality and disseminating it across the country.



TELL A STORY

Tools for making it happen

3 TELL A STORY Tools for making it happen

After gathering all the information, it is time to make sense out of it – to tell the story of your cultural route. In general, storytelling is how we make meaning out of the chaos of human existence. A good story helps the visitor to interpret the route in a specific context. Visitors can also tell their own stories, making connections between the route and their own experiences, knowledge and interests. To tell a story, first you need to develop a strong theme, construct a narrative around it and find an original way to tell it.

3.1. THEME IS EVERYTHING

Themes are the big ideas that you want people to remember about your cultural route. They explain the reasons why your route matters. These big ideas must come from the essential qualities of the route and define what you want people to: encounter, think about, talk about and share with others.

Therefore, it is important to (re)create cultural route's theme, which:

- Is easily and widely recognized by the audience;
- Is exemplified by a number of key sites, places to visit, things to see and do;

- Includes cultural heritage sites, objects and events;
- Demonstrates authenticity of sites and their relation to the theme.

The theme around the cultural route needs to be based on historical sources and / or other materials, data, scientific research and / or analysis that demonstrates the significance of the cultural route.

3.2. NARRATIVE CONNECTS THE DOTS

Sometimes a story about the phenomenon is more important than the phenomenon itself. A clear narrative links elements of the cultural routes together and helps to communicate them inward (to yourself and with the partners) and outward (to your audience). A strong narrative is also what creates a consistent brand of a cultural route, which communicates:

- High quality of visitor experience;
- Consistency across all of the route;
- Constant adaptation and innovation;
- Effective and coordinated route management

3.3. MEANINGFUL (AND BOOKABLE) EXPERIENCES

If you want people to experience your cultural route in an easy way, culture and heritage needs to be turned into bookable experiences. After identifying some big ideas that help people to grasp the significance of the cultural route, the next step is to organize cultural activities and create cultural products around it. Packaging elements of the narrative into potential

3 TELL A STORY

Tools for making it happen

experiences for users will help to make your theme come alive.

The activities planned within the scope of the project are continuous, have clearly identifiable promoters and help to reveal the theme, to develop it in various ways and forms, and aim to attract the widest possible range of beneficiaries.

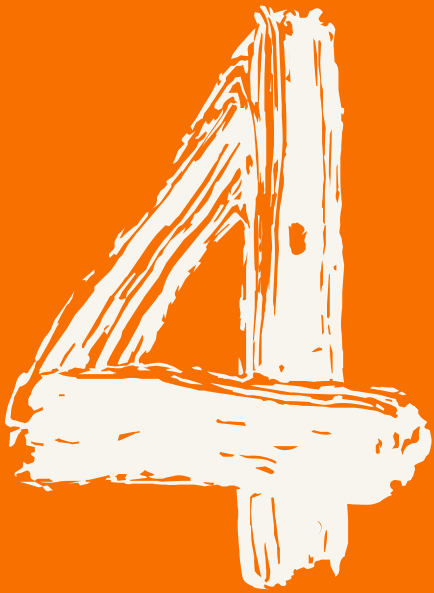


Source: <https://www.hanse.org/>

 **GOOD PRACTICE:** The Hansa network: www.hanse.org/en/

The Hansa is now a unique network of cities. It is a medieval network that revived in 1980. Today's network consists of 178 member cities in 16 countries. The network of cities has grouped possible experiences into easily understandable packages, such as biking, trekking, culinary city breaks, Hanseatic events and markets, city tours focused on Hanseatic heritage.

Key message: A cultural route enables the public to get to know the heritage of the city in various forms.



RESEARCH YOUR ENVIRONMENT

What are the external factors?

4 RESEARCH YOUR ENVIRONMENT

what are the external factors?

Each project is created in the specific place at a specific time – it does not function in a cultural, social, historical or economic vacuum. Therefore, it is essential to have a clear view of the factors that may influence the planning and implementation of a cultural route. These factors may be internal, such as specificities of the place, or external, such as global tendencies.

4.1. LOCAL CONTEXT

When planning the route, we need to be aware of the international context, but also be sensitive to local context of the place. This will help to reveal a potential of the place and use it as a marketing tool. The initiative here should come from local municipalities, who are the best suited to overlook the process.

To begin with, before even planning a route it is very useful to gather as much information as possible about the project context, its stakeholders, existing local resources, etc. Visualizing it would help to identify the key links and create a workable action plan - cultural map of a place - for how to use them for the main goal. Cultural mapping will help to identify:

- Who are the local people, organizations, institutions and businesses and how they relate to each other?
- What is the local context surrounding the project?
- What are the local challenges and opportunities?
- What is the existing infrastructure that could support the project?
- What are the key cultural, natural and heritage sites that will comprise the route?
- What is the uniqueness of the place?
- How the potential resources can be connected?

Once the material has been collected and the preliminary idea is laid out, it is necessary to share this plan with the local stakeholders, making sure that the project assumptions are in line with actual local practices. Local community where you can find like-minded partners and local government are key players here. The project is only successful as long as it responds to specific local needs and receives support from local actors. Thus, the goals set must fit with the local context and needs. Here not only consultations, but continuous feedback is needed, understanding this process as a continuous cycle. Only when the local context is understood and the support of those around you is assured, will the implementation of the plan begin.

4 RESEARCH YOUR ENVIRONMENT

what are the external factors?



GOOD PRACTICE: Karmøy municipality (Norway):
www.visitkarmoy.no,
www.followthevikings.com

Approaching cultural heritage as a venture. Increased knowledge and awareness of cultural heritage, which in turn provides the basis for development of local identity and pride. When local history is made commercially interesting, the tourism industry cooperation and development of culture-based business in the region is strengthened.



Source: <https://www.followthevikings.com/>

Key message: Partnerships between cultural tourism and business in developing a cultural route help to create a living history.

4.2. NEW FORMS OF PILGRIMAGE

Traveling nowadays has become a personal experience, Motivation and goals of the trip has changed dramatically and, therefore, travelers now are looking for itinerary and thematic routes. People travel the route because they want to see their lives in a wider context, cultural encounters on a route and the way of experiencing them is a part of revolt against consumerism, business and stressful everydayness. Therefore, the core theme in planning a route become values that it is representing. It is no longer about the buildings and objects, but about how people interact with them.

There are three global trends that lead to this paradigm shift:

- **Ecology.** People started to care more about their impact on the environment. They want to experience and learn that they are part of the nature. New generation of pilgrims appreciate the importance of the small local communities, locally produced food, and sustainable tourism.
- **Back to basics.** People are looking for new ways of a simple living and incorporation of slowness in their daily lives. They want to experience the basics of life by concentrating on the basics of their travel experience: eating, walking, sleeping, being with oneself.
- **Spirituality.** People are discovering new forms of spirituality, feeling of community, sharing the unity with nature, etc. They search for meaning, for understanding their lives in a new and far more individual ways.

4 RESEARCH YOUR ENVIRONMENT

what are the external factors?

Regardless of the motivation, the common denominator for the pilgrim's experience seems to be the same as it always has been: spiritual journey, closeness to nature, meetings with fellow pilgrims, and common identity through culture and history.



Source: <https://www.acsow.org/>



GOOD PRACTICE: Association for the Cultural Route of St. Olav Ways (ACSOW - Norway): www.acsow.org

ACSOW is an association of members based on the democratic values of the European Cultural Routes. Members of association are striving to create personal hiking and cultural experiences, unique encounters with nature, culture, beliefs, people, and value along the cultural route.

Key message: it is important not to hurry along the cultural route - it promotes freedom, sensation and carelessness, and gives us silence, spirituality, and a willingness to share.



CREATE VALUE

How are you going to make it?

5 CREATE VALUE How are you going to make it?

Having an end goal is not enough. You will also need a map of how to get there. Therefore, it is crucial to know your target audience and what value you are going to create for them.

5.1. KNOWING YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE

Today's cultural consumers seek for multiple experiences and identify themselves with certain moments, habits, values and style of living, and not with age, place of living or education. Therefore, it is important to get to know your target audience, transferring the focus from WHO to WHY, and trying to explain the customer's relationship with the cultural route itself. It is crucial to indicate, which target groups the route wants to address and plan accordingly by suggesting them specific themes, attractions, side activities, meaningful experiences and added value.

5.2. CREATING VALUE ON DIFFERENT LEVELS

Value creation is central to cultural life along the cultural routes. There is room here for diverse value creation of a non-commercial nature, as well as for more entrepreneurial cultural activities that contribute to livelihood of the place. As a complex network of services cultural route has a potential to create a diverse range of added value:

1. Cultural value:

- Providing visibility to encourage public interest, protection, conservation and management of heritage;
- Used as a way of 'packaging' the culture and heritage of a country or region;
- Making culture and heritage accessible – both physically and intellectually;
- Stimulating interest in cultural heritage through the engagement of local communities;
- Revitalising cultural heritage with diverse forms of arts.

2. Economic value:

- Stimulating tourism – domestic and international – with direct and indirect economic development opportunities for local small and medium enterprises.

3. Environmental value:

- Cultural routes support the development of a sustainable tourism industry through increased value creation, productivity and more viable districts.
- Exposing and helping to preserve natural heritage.

4. Social value:

- Giving voice to and empowering local communities;
- Foster dialogue between different social group;
- Encouraging local pride and sense of identity;
- Supporting ownership of local cultural resources.

5 CREATE VALUE

How are you going to make it?



GOOD PRACTICE: The Stavanger region (Norway):

www.facebook.com/regionstavanger/

The Stavanger regions – creates value for visitors and locals on different levels. It combines grand nature with steep mountains and deep fjords with rich local culture, shopping, traditional cuisine, modern nightlife and lifestyle.

Key message: The value of a cultural route can be created through the consistent application of all local resources.



Excerpt from video. Source: <https://www.facebook.com/regionstavanger/>



CREATE OWNERSHIP

Who can help you?

6 CREATE OWNERSHIP

Who can help you?

When visitors are expected to come to a new place, good planning and preparations is extremely important. Every cultural route project is implemented by the operator together with partners. For relevant stakeholders to become valuable partners, it is important to involve them, not only as passive observers, but also as active contributors.

6.1. STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Cross-sectoral partnerships can add a lot of value to cultural route:

- **Local government:** elderships and municipalities: act as a source of information on local infrastructure and human resources; mediate between businesses and communities; help with finding sources of finance, various permissions and recommendations.
- **Local business:** can offer financial or other type of support or investment.
- **Non-governmental organizations, religious institutions and governmental institutions:** Provide project experience; serves as a source of Ideas; attracts different community groups.
- **Similar initiatives from Lithuania and abroad:** provide knowledge of specific experience and exchange of good practices.
- **Local artists, craftsmen and cultural players:** ensures continuity of the project, can offer leadership and mediation with local community.
- **Local communities:** provides different type of support to the project; offer their know-how and local network.
- **Youth and educational institutions:** provide scientific research; energy and voluntary support;

6 CREATE OWNERSHIP

Who can help you?



Source: http://www.nordicgps.com/_tours/Oginskiu-kelias/map.html#



GOOD PRACTICE: The Oginski Culture Route:

www.nordicgps.com/_tours/Oginskiu-kelias/map.html

This cultural route is a good example of development cooperation when partners from different countries (even outside EU), can manage to create common cultural product and tell a unified story about it.

Key message: A cultural route helps to raise the awareness about the importance of co-operation.



ENJOY THE RIDE!

Traveling is an inherent human experience, which formed us as cultures, nations, and individuals. People travel, see, hear, touch and taste, learn and bring the knowledge back home. Traveling is not just about a journey through space and time, it is also about the journey through personal thoughts, emotions and finding yourself.

It takes a lot of empathy and authenticity to design meaningful experiences for others, but it is a rewarding task. Connecting people with their culture and heritage makes history to come alive.