

# Shadows over the beach: dark tourism potential of coastal areas

Mg.so.sc., Ilze Grinfelde,  
Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences,  
Latvia

11th of May, 2023



*Sector-Specific  
Skills Development in  
Coastal and Maritime Tourism*

Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union



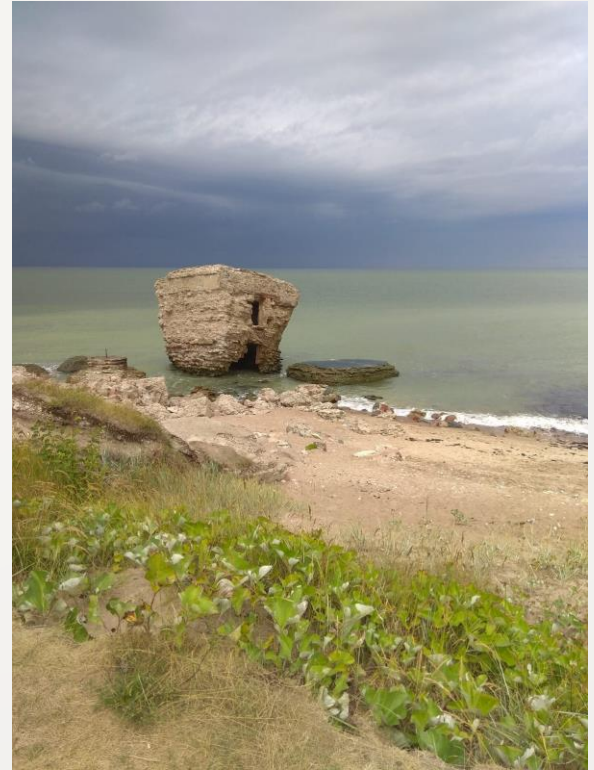
# Beach and seaside



**“At the beach, life is different. Time doesn’t move hour to hour but mood to moment. We live by the currents, plan by the tides and follow the sun.” - Sandy Gingras**

# Coastal areas, seas, oceans, lakes and riversides...

- The most attractive territories from tourism perspective are near the water bodies.
- Holidays, landscape, nature, sun, relaxing, healing, adventures, romantic evenings, fun, power of nature, frozen in winter, sound of waves.....



# But coastal areas as well are

- Strategic from military perspective
- Industrial (ports and related infrastructure)
- Mystic in a sense that we face there something, bigger and stronger
- Associated with a neverending struggle of mankind and nature forces



Contemporary street art, Liepāja Northern fort  
Source: Ilze Grinfelde, 2022

# Uncomfortable, hidden, ugly, scary coasts

## Dark heritage of coastal areas

Military heritage

Places for remembrance  
(memorials, cemeteries)

Abandoned buildings,  
sanatoriums, asylums

Places of imprisonment

Ship wrecks

Other natural or human-  
induced disaster or  
death related heritage



Boat refugee memorial on Puise beach, Lääne County, Estonia  
Source: Global Estonian, 2020



# Travellers interest and motivations

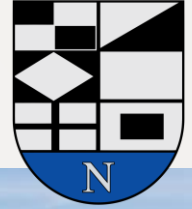
- Rising interest in general
- Education
- Rememberance
- Former «Iron curtain» sites
- Seeking the trace
- Specific interest (e.g. technical)
- Curiosity (incl. mortal curiosity)
- Need for emotional stimuli



Waterford sanatorium, Massachusetts, USA

Source: <https://theghostphotography.home.blog/2019/06/05/seaside-sanatorium/>

# Integration in overall offer



- Museums, expositions
- Events
- Thematic tours
- Included in other tour programs
- Suggested as objects for individual visitors



Sand dune in Nagli Nature reserve with burried villages, Curonian Spit, Lithuania  
Source: celotajs.lv

# Doubts of the destination managers, providers

- Weak maintenance – overall attractiveness
- Misinterpretation
- Safety issues
- Image of destination, negative narratives
- Interaction with local community
- High sensitivity
- Ethical issues, respect





# Potential positive outcomes of Dark heritage integration in Coastal tourism

- Richer destinations, diversity of offer
- Revitalization of heritage areas
- Recognition of history, correct interpretation of historical facts
- Indirect economic, social benefits for local communities



Memorial of the victims of ferry Estonia disaster, Pärnu, Estonia  
Source: Ilze Grinfelde



Memorial of the victims of ferry Estonia disaster, Hiiumaa, Estonia  
Source: TripAdvisor.com

# Shadows over the beach: dark tourism potential of coastal areas

Mg.so.sc., Ilze Grinfelde,  
Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences,  
Latvia

11th of May, 2023

