



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

Vilnius,
2018

INTRODUCTION

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

1. EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT ANALYSIS

1.1 Legal environment

ZNP 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

ZNP participates in the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas activity, therefore, during the planning of strategic ZNP 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 ZNP tourism strategy for 2019-2023 is firstly harmonized with the currently effective General plan, while taking the new plan

preparation tendencies in account. ZNP 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 Zemaitija region is distinguished as one of the five areas with dominant historical heritage;
- Plunge-Telsiai area is distinguished as an area of exceptionally high and high recreational potential, creating recreational systems of national importance;
- “Zemaitijos parku ziedas” (Samogitian park circle) is distinguished as the priority national importance cognitive tourism tracks as a regional natural and cultural type state park circle.

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 ZNP 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 Zemaitija highlands region, including the Telsiai and Plunge 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 integrality with the Lithuanian tourism development program for 2014-2020: cultural and green (ecological) tourism development in ZNP 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 integrality 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 ZNP administration directorate, Plunge district municipality, and other institutions or bodies working in this area;

1.2.2.4. Protected territories' planning documents

Zemaitijos 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. Zemaitijos National Park planning scheme (approved by the 24 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 visitation;
- 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 ZNP include automotive tourism, water and horse tourism;
- stresses the need to develop a network of cognitive and learning tracks and directions for the development of the ZNP;
- 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 ZNP 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 Zemaitijos National Park is in the territory of the Plunge district municipality (the smaller one is in the Skuodas district). Therefore, while preparing ZNP tourism strategy, comparability with Plunges district municipality strategic planning documents, which are used to plan activities in the ZNP territory, is important. Plunge district 2018-2020 strategic plan distinguishes Zemaitijos National Park as a strength of the district and development of tourism and recreational activities as one of the aims. The following ZNP 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 Plunge from other districts.

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

ZNP is distinguished as the most visited area in Plunge district (Zemaitijos National Park hosts more than 2/3 of all guests in Plunge district). Therefore, ZNP is an important area, which is included in Plunge district tourism marketing strategy for 2015-2020. It specifies that ZNP objects are included in the Plunge district tourist routes, ZNP objects and events are strongly integrated in the Plunge district tourism marketing strategy and measure plan. Therefore, while planning ZNP tourism marketing, it is important not to copy the measures, which are already implemented by the Plunge 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.

Plunge 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. Plunge district local business development and business support according to the rural development program measure “Leader program” is planned according to the *Plunge 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 ZNP tourism strategy measures and help to achieve the ZNP tourism strategy goals/objectives.

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

- ZNP 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;
- ZNP is specified as the most visited place in the Plunge district, making it important to cooperate with the Plunge district municipality administration, Tourism information center, 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.

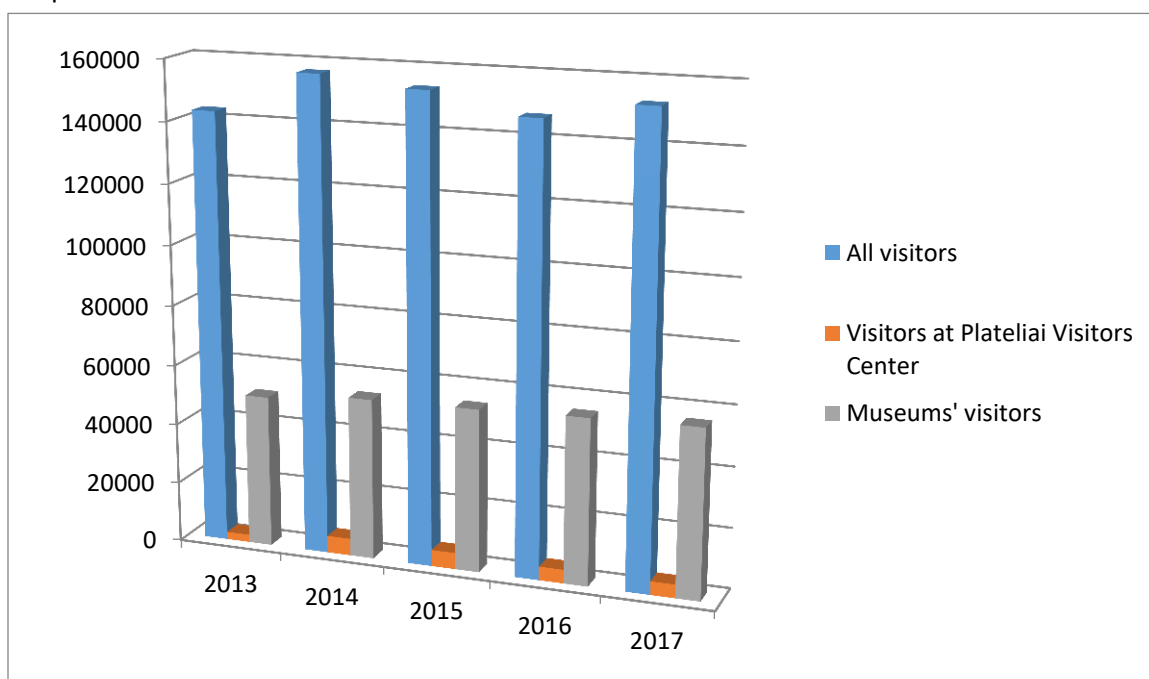
1.3. Target groups and their needs

1.3.1 Visitor flows and limits

According to the knowledge of the ZNP directorate, There were 152779 visitors in Zemaitijos National Park in 2017, of them 56046 have visited museums and exhibits and 4519 visitors have visited Plateliai visitor's center. Approximately 34-36% of all ZNP visitors visit museum expositions and 2-3% visit the Plateliai visitors' center.

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

Graph 1. Current visitor flows



Source: Compiled according to Zemaitijos 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: ZNP 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 ZNP visitors are from Lithuania and foreign tourists are a minority (8%). The characteristics of tourists visiting ZNP during the peak season (summer) are provided in the table below.

Table 1. ZNP visitors' characteristics

Nationality	Lithuanians (92%)
Place of residence	Close by - Telsiai (43%), Klaipeda (19%), Siauliai 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 visit to ZNP	the vast majority (86%) are not first-time visitors
Type of arrival to ZNP	by car
How did they know about ZNP	family and friends (96%), internet (22%)
How much time do they spend in ZNP?	1-3 days
Catering type	67% eat their own food, 33% eat at catering institutions
Entertainment	museums, biking trails, diving

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

ZNP is mostly visited by tourists from the counties nearby (Telsiai, Klaipeda, Siauliai), but according to the data from the Lithuanian Department of statistics regarding local tourism, the most frequent travelers in Lithuania are people from the Vilnius, Kaunas and Klaipeda counties. Compared to travelers 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, Klaipeda 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; • Internet is getting increasingly popular, electronic media, social networks.
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Source: Lithuanian tourism 2016-2020 marketing strategy.

According to the data of ZNP visitors' center, the number of visitors to ZNP from Vilnius and Kaunas counties has begun to increase in 2016-2017, this was supposedly caused by the following factors: 1) Plunge district municipalities' implemented marketing measures; 2) cooperation with www.pamatyklietuvoje.lt initiative; 3) ZNP 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 ZNP 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" ZNP visitor research data, the needs of the current ZNP 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 bathing);
2. good beach and bathing 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 in proper order, adapted to cognitive visiting (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 ZNP visitors (approximately 8%). According to the visitors' monitoring data, collected by ZNP directorate, the part of foreigners, who have visited the Visitors' center from the total amount of visitors is larger – 34% (1547 foreigners out of 4519 visitors). However, the following two aspects are important in the evaluation of this data: 1) The Visitors' center is visited only by 2-3% of all recorded ZNP visitors; 2) The Visitors' center employees notice that searching for information at the visitors' 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 ZNP tourism marketing objectives should also be the attraction of larger foreign tourist flows to ZNP.

According to the surveys of foreign tourists in Lithuania (executed in 2015 by UAB "Socialines 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, ZNP has one of the main advantages – nature, and this is its unused potential in the field of tourism marketing.

Currently ZNP 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 ZNP visitors' center;
- expert tourism potential assessment from each country with a tourism expert;
- strategic target market assessment during a strategic session with ZNP directorate representatives;
- target market assessment via interview with the ZNP 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 "Socialines 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 ZNP main city Plateliai to the Lithuanian-Latvian border is approximately 1 h. 20 m 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 ZNP are relatively small; the Visitors' 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 ZNP: 373 visitors in the Visitors' 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 ZNP 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 that 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 ZNP visitors at its visitors' center in 2017 (2016)	373 (343)	66 (189)	141 (189)	62(96)	16(27)
General objective	Product development with publication at the Visitors' center. It is necessary to actively offer ZNP 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
	Areas close to ZNP: Cross hill, Neringa, Klaipeda, Palanga	Areas close to ZNP: Cross hill, Neringa, Klaipeda, Palanga	Areas close to ZNP: Cross hill, Neringa, Klaipeda, Palanga	Areas close to ZNP: Cross hill, Klaipeda, Palanga	Areas close to ZNP: Neringa, Klaipeda, Palanga
	Families (≥ 2 pers.), 55+, "golden youth",	Families (≥ 2 pers.), youth (18-30 yrs.),	Families (≥ 2 pers.), 55+, "golden youth",	Families (≥ 2 pers.), 55+, "golden youth",	Families (≥ 2 pers.), 55+, "golden youth",

	Germany	Latvia	France	Italy	Sweden
	youth (18-30 yrs.), business (25-45 yrs.)	business (25-45 yrs.)	youth (18-30 yrs.),	youth (18-30 yrs.),	youth (18-30 yrs.), business (25-45 yrs.)
Main tourism products	Ecological tourism	Cultural and ecological tourism	Ecological tourism	Ecological tourism	Ecological 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), event (Road Show), seminars, journalist and KO cognitive tours, 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), event (Road Show), seminars, journalist and KO cognitive tours, etc.,	Complex marketing (advertising in media outlets, e-marketing, advertising campaigns, participation in exhibitions), event (Road Show), seminars, journalist and KO cognitive tours, etc.,	Complex marketing (advertising in media outlets, e-marketing, advertising campaigns, participation in exhibitions), event (Road Show), seminars, journalist and KO cognitive tours, 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 (especially in resorts)
	German language barrier (especially in resorts)		French language barrier.		

Source: Lithuanian tourism 2016-2020 marketing strategy.

The following general trends in tourists' behavior 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 writings 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, ZNP has a couple of objects adapted for the use of children (i.e. the exhibition at the Visitors' center) and cognitive excursions are organized for them. However, there is a lot of development possibilities (i.e. ZNP planning scheme provides the creation of a Nature school).

1.4. Competitive environment

In order to determine the exclusivity of ZNP 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	Zemaitijos National Park
Park exceptionality	Cepkeliu-Dzūkijos National PAN park, which consists of the Cepkeliai state nature preserve and Dzūkija national park and where the Dainava forest ecosystems are preserved is one of the thirteen European PAN parks	Resort territory status is provided to the city of Ignalina, Strigailiskio and Paluses village parts are provided by the 4 July 2007 order of the Lithuanian Government No. 688. This resort territory is located in the Aukštaitija national park.	Zemaitija highlands region, including Telsiai and Plunge district municipalities is distinguished as one of the 6 priority tourism development regions in Lithuania.
Park's strengths/exceptionality in regard to nature objects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • River and stream park (Nemunas, Merkys, Ula, Gruda); • 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. • Ula's eye, Merkinė observation tower, cognitive trails 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network of popular lakes (White and Black Lakajai, Lusiš, Bebrus, Tauragnas, Baluosas); • Developed water tourism routes • Labanoras regional Park; • Ladakalnis, Ginučiai tower 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plateliai Lake (with a yacht club and islands); • Cycle routes;
Park's strengths/exceptionality in regard to cultural objects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional villages (Zervynos, Marcinkonys); • Merkiniai hillfort; • Native ethnic architecture (shutter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethno-cosmological Museum and Observatory • Paluse wooden church; • Ginučiai water mill; • Beekeeping museum • Ginučiai mound 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cold War Museum; • Mardi Gras mask Museum; • Plateliai Manor house; • Sacral objects: Zemaiciu kalvaria, wooden Plateliai,

	decoration)		Berzoras and Gegrenu churches; •Two pilgrimage routes (Zemaiciu Kalvarija and Berzore).
Park's strengths/exceptionality in regard to traditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditions of collecting and preserving forest goods; • Tree beekeeping; • Rafting; • Merkiniai hillfort 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNESCO heritage crossworks handicraft; • Educational sessions, organized in handicraft center, • Halloween celebration and Halloween mask 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 2 hotels 8 recreation and guest houses
Catering	3 cafes 2 programs of culinary heritage in homesteads	10 cafes - restaurants	5 cafes; Culinary Heritage Program at the craft center; A program of culinary heritage at the Zemaite Museum in Bukante.
Positioning	"Dzukija national park – for those who travel slow"; "Varena – 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 park webpages (www.anp.lt, www.dzukijosparkas.lt, www.zemaitijosnp.lt)

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

- ZNP has no possibilities to develop water routes like Dzukija and Aukstaitija 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;
- ZNP's exceptionality lies in cultural heritage – cross works and Mardi Gras traditions;

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

1.5. Cooperation environment on local and international level

1.5.1. Cooperation on an international level.

ZNP 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, ZNP Visitors' center cooperated with Finnish Laurea university, Metsähallitus, Parks & Wildlife Finland. ZNP 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 forestry agency (SE), Bleking region (SE), Bleking district administration board (SE), Gdansk regional forest stewardship (PL) and Pamarys tourism board (PL);
- Cooperation through the Interreg project "UniGreen" with partners from Latvia: Kurzeme planning region, Durbe municipality, Kuldyga municipality, Ruoja municipality, Salda 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

ZNP directorate cooperates with institutions on both national and local levels. Proven projects include cooperation with www.pamatyklietuvoje.lt team, which resulted in direct positive changes – increased ZNP recognition and attracted more visitors from large Lithuanian cities.

Table 5. Cooperation on local and national level

State institutions	Lithuanian Tourism Department, Ministry of Environment, Service for protected territories
Tourism information centers	Plunge Tourism information center
Tour operators and agencies	UAB "Klaipėdos meja", travel agency "Krantas travel"
Local self-government	Plunge district municipality Administration
Local communities	Plunge district Local action group
Tourism promotion initiatives	Team "PamatykLietuvoje" (A. Dotas)
Educational institutions	Plunge kindergarten "Pasaka", Plunge district municipality educational institutions, Skuodas municipality educational institutions, Plunge

	children's care homes
Disabled persons' associations	Lithuanian Association of people with disabilities
Scientific institutions	Klaipeda State college

Source: compiled according to the information f ZNP Administration activity reports of 2017

1.5.3. Cooperation with tourism-related business

ZNP directorate currently cooperates with tourism sector business in the following main forms: through the ZNP product sign, organization tourism forums and participating in Zemaitija tourism cluster activities.

Table 6. Cooperation with tourism-related business

Local business representatives, with whom the Visitors' center has cooperated in 2017	Zemaitija rural tourism association, Farmers (N. Makiejeviene, D. Abrutis, S. and D. Kakciai and others), ZNP Accommodation establishments (hotel, rest and guest houses), ZNP Tourist camps and campsites, ZNP rent and diving service providers, ZNP Catering institutions and other tourism service providers
Trademark	Zemaitija 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 Zemaitija 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. A total of 46 participants took place in 2017 April forum and 35 in the December forum.
Zemaitija tourism cluster	<p>It is a network of organisations, including the following Plunge (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.</p> <p><u>The cluster unites the following members at the moment:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UAB VVARFF, „Porto“ Entertainment center • ZUK "Teviskės žolynai" • S. Granauskas company „Mortos kalns“ • VJC „Džiaugsmo slenis“ • UAB "Oktopusas" • Plunge district public Library • UAB „Tingis“, Apartment complex "Saules slenis"

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UAB "Zemsodis" • E.A. Klimai homestead "Lesnale" • Samogitian art museum
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Source: compiled by authors

However, local businessmen point out that both the product (trademark) brand and the tourism form 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 ZNP

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' favorable 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 favorable to attract private investment for the planned ZNP 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 favorable 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.

Plunge 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 Visitors' center.

Most of the people have no higher education

The larger part of the district population have only basic (20,4%) or secondary (26,8%) education. Only 8,6% of all Plunge district residents have higher education.

Complaisance, benevolence

Visitors specify the complaisance and benevolence of the people. They leave such feedback at the Visitors' 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 13 nature reserves, 11 complex reserves, 4 cultural protected areas, 22 natural heritage sites, 204 cultural properties including 11 mounds, 16 repositories, 5 sacred hills, 3 ancient settlements. The park is covered by forest for 44.58 percent, with 26 lakes, and the Babrungo river.

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

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

	Object	Assessment (5 is the highest)	Number of reviews	Evaluation
1.	Cold War museum	4,5	112 (51+61) (reviews in two places – although there is only one object, some people review it as a „Plokstine 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 „Zemaitijos National Park“)	4,5	20	Excellent (45%) Very good (50%) Average (5%)

	category)			
3.	Diving academy	5	1	Excellent (100%)

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

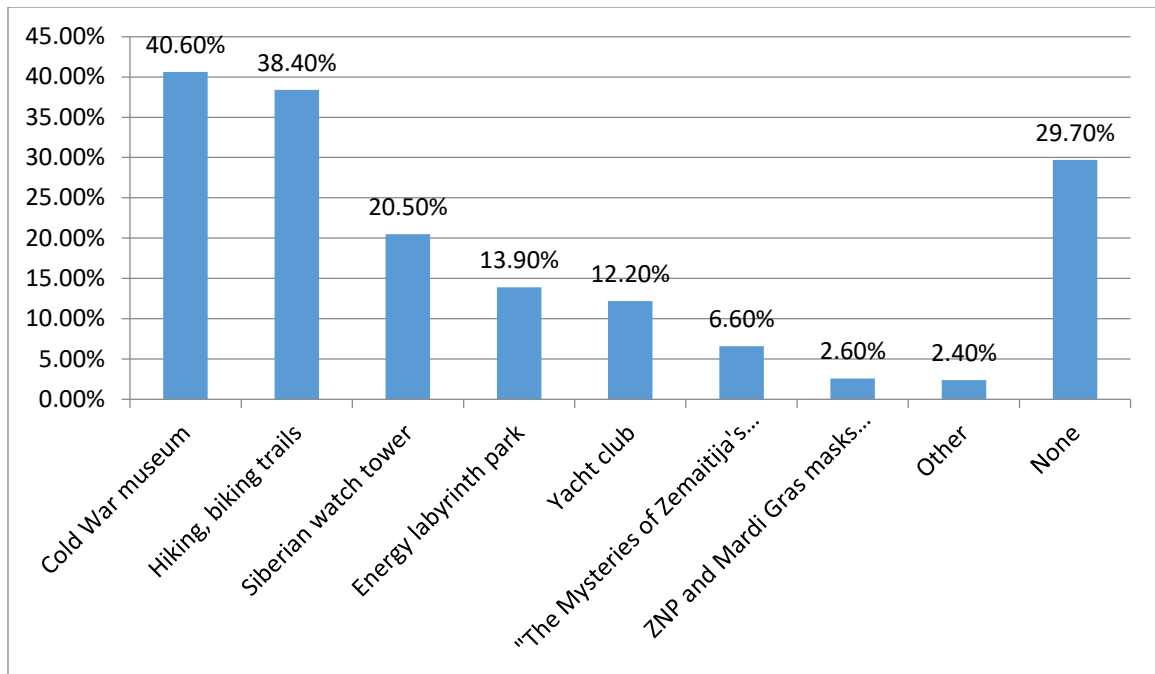
According to the quantitative ZNP visitors' research (executed in 2017), the most popular tourism object in ZNP is the Plateliai lake (most of the surveyed people, a whole 73% have visited ZNP since they would like to relax around the lake). Only approximately 25% of the visitors planned to visit the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

Table 9. Most popular ZNP objects.

Object	Part of the visitors, who planned to visit or visited the object
Plateliai lake	73%
Cold War museum	40,6%
Hiking, biking trails	38,4
Siberian watching tower	20,5%
Energy labyrinth park	13,9%
Yacht club	12,2%
"The Mysteries of Samogitian Land" exposition	6,6%
ZNP and Mardi Gras mask exposition	2,6%

Source: compiled according to quantitative ZNP visitors' research (executed in 2017 by "Sorbum Group", Ltd)

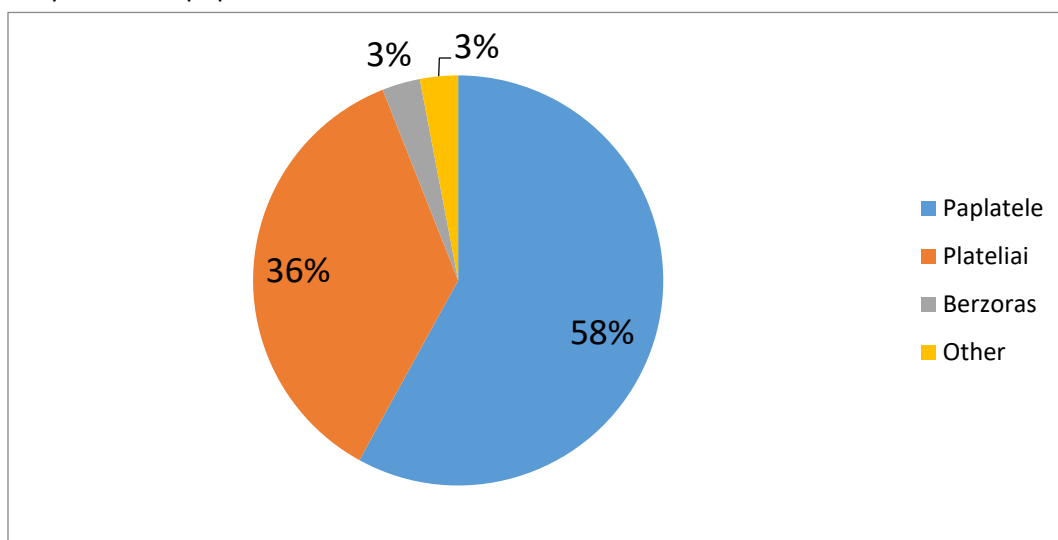
Graph 2. Most popular ZNP objects



Source: compiled according to quantitative ZNP visitors' research (executed in 2017 by "Sorbum Group", Ltd)

The most popular cities amongst the visitors are Paplatele and Plateliai: 94% of all surveyed people who have stayed overnight in the park, stayed at one of those small cities.

Graph 3. Most popular ZNP small cities



Source: compiled according to quantitative ZNP visitors' research (executed in 2017 by "Sorbum Group", Ltd)

2.1.1. Cultural heritage

Zemaitija National Park is an exceptional area of the territory 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, Berzore and Samogitian Kalvare, with religious pillars 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 – Mardi Gras.

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 suppers 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 lessons in the handicraft center (Pancake baking, Samogitian yeast pie); - Tastings at the handicraft center; - Traditional suppers in some of the rural tourism homesteads; - Traditional dishes, which are included in catering establishment menus (i.e. the cafe „Edenas“ offers only traditional samogitian dishes, the „Bures“ restaurant offers a traditional „Smakalas“ dish or „Cibulyne“ dish. <p>The handicraft center provides the cooking of traditional samogitian meals during the educational lesson: cibylune, kanapyne, 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, all in samogitian dialect.</p> <p>Educational lessons 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 sessions are organized at the handicraft center throughout the year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candle casting; • Paper weaving; 	Cross works, which do not have a UNESCO heritage status.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embroidery; • Mardi Gras mask 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 accordance with the Traditional craft training programs, certified by the Ministry of Agriculture 	
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Source: compiled by authors

All of the non-tangible heritage and education, provided in table 10, is attractive for local tourism and traditional suppers in rural tourism homesteads, traditional samogitian dishes, Mardi Gras mask creation educational programs and cross works make Zemaitijos 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 on the ZNP 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 has 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, which holds the 2011 updated 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.
Small cities with authentic architecture	Plateliai	<p>This is one of the most beautiful and famous small cities of Samogitia – established at the western coast of Plateliai lake in Zemaitijos National Park. Mentioned in historical sources since the XV century, Plateliai manor, town and church were then built on the Sventorkalnis 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.</p> <p>Plateliai are interesting in their planned structure with a central square typical for Samogitian towns, St. Paul and Peter cathedral,</p>

		the manor and its homestead.
	Zemaiciu Kalvarija	<p>Zemaiciu (Samogitian) Kalvarija (formerly known as Gardai) is mentioned for the first time in historical sources in 1253 as a Kursiai town with a fort, a sacred religious place and a cemetery.</p> <p>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.</p>
	Berzoras	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.
	Sarnele	The Sarnele village starts approximately one kilometer to the north-west from Zemaiciu Kalvarija and expands for approximately 5 kilometers, 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 Macernis (1921-1944) was born and raised. He loved his native village and has expressed his childhood experiences in his poetry. He is buried in Sarnele. The places liked most by the poet are marked with "Akmenines vizijos" (Stone visions), according to the plan of the local ethnographer Konstantinas Bruzas.
Sacral heritage	Zemaiciu Kalvarija cultural value complex	Zemaiciu 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).
	Berzoras 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 Zemaitijos National Park territory or inside its protected area there are three wooden XVIII churches: Gintaliskes, Gegrenu, Alsedziu. Berzoro, Plateliu, Gintaliskes, Alsedziu, Gegrenu churches have been included in the "Plunge – Lithuanian cultural capital" historical-religious route project.
Archaeological and	Sventorkalnio archeological	Sventorkalnis archeological preserve has three cultural heritage objects: Plateliai mound (5483) at the Fort island, Plateliai manor

mythological objects	preserve	named as Manor mound and Sventorkalis (16208), Plateliai old bridge (27101) and Kumelkates peninsula, where a mythological object is presumed to be present.
	Gegrenai archeological complex	The unique Gegrenai archeological complex consists of: two mounds (5493; 17180), two burial grounds (16310; 17181) and an ancient settlement (2561) with barrows.
	Other archaeological objects: Sarnele mound with an old settlement, Grigaiciai mound, other mounds	The Sarnele mound (23903) has one of the poet's V. Macernis stone visions, a memorial board for the Sarnele village; Grigaiciai mound is not adapted for visiting. There are a total of 11 mounds in ZNP territory, the following are not mentioned as of now: Puckoriai I-III, Jazdauskiskiai, Mikytai, Uzpelkiai, St. John's (located in Zemaiciu Kalvarija),, some of which might be adapted for tourism later. There are two Christ's path chapels on the St. John's (Zemaiciu Kalvarija) mound, it is visited by worshipers and tourists.
	Other mythological objects: Mikytai sacred mound with a mythological rock (the devil's foot), Vilksai sacred mound	Mikytai sacred mound (5480), mythological rock (5481) (a rock with a devil's foot, prayer well) is presented by a cognitive pedestrian route (1 km), a parking lot is installed near the Salantai-Barstyciai road. Vilksai sacred mound is not adapted for tourism. The following sacred mounds were not mentioned: Gilaiciai, Visvainian, Paparciai, Gudaliai.
Jewish cultural heritage	Litvaks remembrance garden	<p>The charity and support fund named according to the last Jew in Plunge, the folk artist Jakovas Bunk, plans to build a Jewish ethnographic homestead on the land, purchased in the Zemaitijos National Park. As of now, the 12 acres of land plot is used to create a Litvaks remembrance garden.</p> <p>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" Arturas 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.</p>

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

All 11 of the Zemaitijos 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 Zemaiciu Kalvarijos (for pilgrims).

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

Object	How is the object presented on the ZNP webpage www.zemaitijosnp.lt
Cold war museum	This is the only exposition in Europe, which is installed in one of the first Soviet Union former underground ballistic missile launch silo complex. Museum's historical expositions tells 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.
Mardi Gras mask exposition	A "brick style" stable , built in the second part of the XIX century, hold the first Mardi Gras museum exposition in Lithuania which is presenting the famous Samogitian traditional Mardi Gras celebration, many various Mardi Gras masks, which are called "Iecynos" in the samogitian dialect. The masks were 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. Macernis birthplace and grave	Poet V. Macernis was born in the Sarnele village and is buried on a hilltop near his birthplace. A poet V. Macernis vision path has been created in Sarnele according to the initiative of K. Bruzas – a local ethnographer. This exposition tells about the tragic destiny of a Lithuanian poet Vytautas Macernis, his life and creativity. In 1987, according to the initiative of the poet Eugenijus Matuzevicius, a museum exposition has been created – with V. Macernis poetry books, pictures, documents and personal belongings of the poets being on display.
The writer Zemaite birthplace in Bukante	<p>A memorial museum of the writer is located in Bukante.</p> <p>Count Pliateriai mansion was the place where Lithuanian literature classic Julija Beniuševičiūtė – Zymantiene, well known under her pseudonym Zemaite - was born and raised. A memorial exposition is opened in her house, it shows ethnographic-historical objects, books, publications, photography, regular traditional writer Zemaite's birthday commemorations are held in this house.</p> <p>The reconstructed granary holds a memorial Stanislovas Riauba exposition, where you can familiarize with one of the most prominent Samogitian folk master and his unique works.</p> <p>The reconstructed barn offers tourists to familiarize with the sacral Plunge area heritage. Here the traditional crosses-suns and sculptures of the saints are exhibited.</p> <p>Educational lessons "Getting to know the samogitian culinary heritage" are recommended to those who would like to know the Samogitian region better.</p>
Folk artist small museums, expositions	<p>Babrungenu mill</p> <p>Babrungenu mill is the L. Cerniauskas arts gallery-workshop.</p> <p>The artist has repaired the mill and has installed his arts gallery and arts workshop in there.</p> <p>The artist sculpts sculptures of the saints and other sculptures, Mardi Gras masks, monumental works and paints.</p>
	<p>Kazys Straiupa small granary</p> <p>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</p> <p>The artist has set up his carving exposition in an old mansion barn. His sculptures and bas-reliefs picture ancient gods, Christian saints, mansions, rural images, Mardi Gras</p>

	masks.
	Vytautas Jaugela folk artistry exposition V. Jaugela 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, Mardi Gras masks, bass-reliefs etc.
	Jonusiai 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.
Handicraft center	Traditional handicraft center is installed in the Plateliai manor homestead former vegetable cellar. This cellar has been reconstructed and adapted for the activities of the handicraft 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. The handicraft center hosts various traditional crafts education, 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 of the Zemaitijos National Park museums, described in Table 12 are attractive for local tourism, however the Cold war museum and Mardi Gras mask museums are the most attractive on an international level (both objects have a large potential in priority foreign tourism markets).

In 2017 the Visitors' service section 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 (Jazdauskiskiu 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. Traditional ZNP events.

	Feast	Time
Festivities, events	Mardi Gras	February.
	Midsummer day	June 23-24
	Samogitian Kalvarija Church festival	July 1-12
	Samogitian mountain singing	March 24
	St. George's day on a blooming Rutene island	April 21
	Event for the public. Handicraft day	May 19
	Seeing birds leave in the Gegrenai archeological complex	September 29

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

All of the Zemaitijos National Park events, described in Table 13 are attractive for local tourism, however the Mardi Gras festivities 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. Greenery (forests, forest parks, parks, settlement area forestry),
3. Relief (hills, slopes, hillsides, lake pits) and related aesthetically valuable countryside complexes.

ZNP has 13 nature reserves, 11 complex reserves, 4 cultural protected areas, 22 natural heritage sites,. The park is covered by forest for 44.58 percent, with 26 lakes, and the Babrungas river.

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

ZNP has 26 natural lakes and small lakes, which were formed after the end of the ice age, a couple of larger ponds and 32 streams. ZNP 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 Zemaitija – Sarnele swamp in the Paparciau termologic reserve. Park has mostly intermediate type and non-acidic lowland swamps: Siberia, Seire, Stirbaiciu, etc.

Lakes. The most lakes found in the national park are small ones, taking up area from half to 5 hectares, like Lestis, Eserinis, Lydekinis, Piktezeris, Aklaezeris 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, Iesnalio, Burgio, Zedelio lakes. And approximately 90% of the general lake area is composed of three largest lakes – Plateliai, Ilio, Berzoro. The cleanest, most picturesque and deepest in Samogitia and national park is the Plateliai lake.

Rivers. Zemaitijos National Park is located at the Venta, Bartuvos 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 kilometers, it spends 47 more kilometers 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 Uosna river (11,7 km). Most of the remaining natural streams flow through woods. Uosna, Bartuvos, Juodupio, Pietves, Silinies, Blendziavos 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 Zemaitijos 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

		<p>lake.</p> <p>The waters of the lake wash the shores of 7 islands: Pilies, Calvia, Pliksale, Briedsale, Ubagsale, Gaidsale and Soncele. All of the lake islands and the Kreiviskiai and the Golden Sands peninsulas are state-protected natural heritage sites.</p> <p>Pilies island - the most famous island of Plateliai lake, where a castle, belonging to Lithuanian nobles, stood in the XV century. The island with the Sventorkalnis, where the old Plateliai settlement was located, was connected by a bridge of almost 300 m long, whose piles remained until nowadays.</p>
	Ilgio lake	<p>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). Ilgio lake islands are state-protected hydrographic objects of natural heritage. The shores are mostly steep, and swampy only in the north. The surrounding are all covered in coniferous forests (Grigaiciai, Stirbaitines, Berzoriai forests). The nearby Berzoras, Ziedeles lakes, Plateliai lake part Laumalenka. The tributary of Babrung Ilges is coming out of this lake. Gregaiciai village [1], a rural tourism homestead, is located on the south-east of Lake Ilgis</p>
	Berzoro lake	<p>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 Berzoras 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 Berzoro lake is a state-protected hydrographic object of natural heritage.</p> <p>Lake area is 2.4 km². Berzuoja river flows through Berzora lake to Plateliai lake.</p> <p>Berzoro village is located on the northern shore of the lake. There is a road No. 3202 Pauosniai-Plateliai on the northern and the eastern coast.</p>
	Luokos lake	<p>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 Rukundiai forest stretches on the northern coast. The bottom of the lake is covered with clay sapropel. Saltupis river flows in the Luokos lake from the north, and Luokupis (Uosna tributary, Babrung basin) flows out of it [2].</p> <p>The villages of Paluoka and Slecka are situated near the lake.</p>
	Iesnaliao lake	<p>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 Plokstines forest from the north to the east. A Barbungas tributary Iesnalis flows out of the lake in the south.</p> <p>The Southwest Iesnalis coast hosts the Endriuskaiciai village, rural tourism homestead. This lake is a part of the Plokstines nature preserve. The road No. 3202 Pauosniai-Plateliai goes by the southern coast of the lake.</p>
	Burgio	<p>The length of the lake from west to east is 0.49 km, and the width is up to</p>

	lake	0.35 km. The shores are low, the lake is surrounded by the Paburgis marsh, and Paburgis forest. The Uosna River (the tributary of Babrungas) runs through the lake. The Paburges village is situated nearby.
	Ziedelio 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 (Berzoras forest). In the east - a stream flows towards Aklezerio lake. The Laumalenkai village, rural tourism homesteads, are situated nearby.
	Mauducio 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 (Plateliai lake tributary). The village of Virksai and rural tourism homesteads are located nearby.
Rivers	Babrungas	Flows out the Plateliai lake. Streams to the south or to the southwest from Plunge. Flows in to Minija river 130 km away from its mouth at Stonaiciai. 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 Plunge forming the Godinga hydroelectric reservoir. The valley below the Godinga hydroelectric power station is very deep, with steep slopes and the river stream is fast. 15.5 km from the mouth, the derivative Godingia hydroelectric power station and the 87 ha pond are located. The Babrung valley enters the Gandinga landscape reserve. Gandinga mound is located below Plunge, on the right bank of Babrungas. The upper reaches of the river are in Zemaitija National Park.
Watch towers and towers near water bodies	Plateliai lake watch tower	<p>The watchtower is located on the northeastern outskirts of the town (address: Plateliai lake, coordinates: 56.046939, 21.828303). This watch tower offers great view on the islands (Pilies, Versiu islands), peninsula (Sventorkalnis) the famous Plateliai lake and the area beautified by the dark Plokstines forests.</p> <p>The watch tower 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 watch tower is equipped with benches, bicycle racks, ramparts, eight information booths were built (telling stories of lake Plateliai and its islands). A tactile stand with braille signs is also built. It is the only one in the entire Zemaitijos National Park. This stand has been adapted for people with visual impairment and is helping the person touching it to imagine the lake view.</p>
	Siberian watch tower	You can travel to the Berzoro church village by bicycle or on foot from Plateliai and climb on the Cidabro hill watch tower (15 meters high) on your way. You can see the Plateliai and Berzoras lakes from the tower, as well as the Siberian marsh, which is one of the most valuable marshes in Zemaitija National Park, declared a telmological reserve, Berzoras village, southern part of Plateliai town, Liepiju forest. The observation tower can be visited every day.
	Barstytaľiu	Barstytaľiai marsh (swamp) is one of the largest marshes in Zemaitija National

	watch tower	Park. Its area is approximately 35 ha. The Swamp is enclosed by the Barstyčiai forest. Water and swamp (marsh) flora finds refuge in the mosaic of small dry islands, together with an abundance of animals and plants, which can be watched from a 5 meter tall watch tower.
	Jogaudu watch tower	In case you would stand here in the eight decade of the XX century, you would see an almost 162 m high hill in the southern direction, which was later excavated when the gravel career was opened. Since 2003 the career is not active, since according to the initiative of Zemaitija 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 watch towers and water bodies of Zemaitija 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 to tourist needs.

Activity	Possibilities	Potential/development possibilities
Bathing	Bathing is possible on the lakes of Plateliai, Berzoras, Ilgio lake and lake Maudutis. Plateliai Lake - 6 public bathing spots, Berzoras - 1.	It is necessary to improve the infrastructure and quality of the bathing sites and to install quality beaches
Underwater sports	The ZNP has two diving clubs: the Diving academy and "Oktopusas", which lease inventory and provides various diving-related services	
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: 1. Rental of kayaks, windsurfers, yachts, boats, water bikes, catamaran (Plateliai yacht club); 2. Rent of the catamaran (Algirdas Plokstis); 3. Boat, water bike rental (hotel "Linelis") 4. Yacht rent (Murta Mikasauskiene rural tourism homestead, Holiday home "Saltinelis")	Visitors note that there is a lack of options and possible choices for hiring a vehicle. 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	

Activity	Possibilities	Potential/development possibilities
	<p>11 species of fish are bred in Lake Ilgis. The shores are flat with the forest growing around them.</p> <p>Lake Berzoras 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. Berzoras village is located on the northern shore of the lake.</p> <p>Fishing is also possible on the Ziedelio, Skyplaiciu, Burgio, Burgalio, Eserinio, Lydekinio lakes, as well as the Rotinenu pond. The latter has bleak, tench, white beam and other fish. Fishing and visiting is prohibited in Endriuskaiciu and Iesnalio lakes, as well as in Aklaezerys lake (nature preserves). Due to the valuable marsh natural complexes with rare and endangered bird migration and feeding places, Pakastuva pond (Pakastuva telmologic preserve) can only be visited and you can fish there only from 1st of August to 1st of April.</p>	

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

2.1.2.2. Greenery (forests, forest parks, parks, settlement area forestry)

The forests spread for over half (54%) of the Zemaitija 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 Plokstines, Paplateles, Miezlaukio, Liepkalnio and Paburges forests. Deciduous trees are mostly spread in the Liepiju 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 colors, therefore, autumn activity offers should be planned predominantly in the central part of ZNP. 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.

Greenery use for tourism activities:

- Footpath hiking;
- Bicycling;
- Observation of birds and animals;
- Collecting mushrooms and berries;
- Educational excursions;
- Active leisure time in nature.

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

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

Object	Description	Tourism application
Energetic labyrinth and geometric shape 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 greenery reflects 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. The greenery 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.	The park is currently in inappropriate state of management and greenery. 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 Zemaitija 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, the Zemaiciu Kalvarijos basilica and former Plateliai manor buildings.

The **Gardu ozas** is an exceptional part of the landscape. This is a geo-morphologically important and one of the brightest Lithuanian forms of relief. Ozas 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 the Zemaiciu Kalvarija town to northwest for a whole 3,5 kilometers. Gardu ozo 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. The gardu ozas is currently adapted to tourism and it has a hiking path.

2.1.3. Tourist trails

The cognitive tourism system of the national park consists of cognitive tourism trails and paths of various sizes and types, where objects of heritage visited, and recreational infrastructure is placed for resting and leisure type (recreation facilities, watchtowers, 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
Bicycle track around the 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 the Cold war exposition, Berzoras church mound, Babrungas river sources, Plokstines nature reserve, Paplatele and Paezere Rudaiciai recreational areas.
Northern short car-bicycle track	32 km	The circular short northern route begins at Plateliai and leads to the north of Zemaitija 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 Plunge 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 Gegrenai. Traveling along the Gegrenai mound-hiking trail (1.6 km) you can see the state-protected beauties of the Gegrenai 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.

Route	Distance	Objects to visit
Northern long car-bicycle track	58 km	It starts at the coast of Plateliai lake and leads to the northern part of Zemaitija 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, Zemaiciu Kalvarija and Barstyciai. You can take a walk through one of them, looking at beautiful landscapes, or you can stop for a longer time and take a walk for cognitive tourism purposes. You will be able to visit the 1st millennium mounds, sacred hills and settlements of the old Puckiriai, Gegrenai, Zemaiciu Kalvarija, Sarnele, Mikytai ,etc.) or use the cognitive hiking paths (Seire, Gegrenai, Gardu ozo, k house of poet V. Macernis, Vykytai), learn about the lives of famous people of Lithuania (V.Macernis, M.Valancius, book bringer V.Juskas). The route will include monumental natural objects (Dutkine oak, Papardiniai black Adler, Papardiniu chestnut, Barstyciai rock, etc.), as well as churches (Gegrenai, Zemaiciu Kalvarija, Barstyciai), observateion posts and monuments.

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

The bicycle track and path infrastructure is the exceptionality and competitive advantage of the Zemaitija 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 ZNP planning

Track	Route
Plateliai bicycle track connection with Plunge city	Constructed with the Plunge-Plateliai sections of the old road: Plunge-Ruolaiciai-Zvirblaiciai-Babrungenai-Grigaiciai-Ploksciai.
Bicycle tourism path from Plunge to Zemaiciu Kalvarija	Constructed using the remaining old road sections, the infrastructure of the Rotinenai and Luoka recreational functional priority areas and the campsite at the lake of Silute
„Northern ring“	Paezeres, Rudaiciai–Virksai–Getauciai–Gegrenai–Jazdauskiskiai–Rotinenai–Zemaiciu Kalvarija–Sasaiciai–Sarnele–Padegime–Gudaliai–Kruopiai–Mikytu sacred hill–Paezeres Rudaiciai (alternatively – from Zemaiciu Kalvarija to Sarnele while travelling through Gardai);
A shortened „Northern ring“ section from Padegime to the northern end of Plateliai lake, without entering Mikytai sacred mound.	Padegime–Gegrenai–Puckoriai–Paezeres Rudaiciai (alternatively – the road from Puckoriai to Paezeres Rudaiciai can go through Visvainiai or Uoguciai)
Alternative „Northern ring“	This section features picturesque landscapes, cultural heritage

section from Padegime to Mikytai sacred mound, while going through Paparciai and Barstyčiu town	values, as well as the visited naturally valuable northern part of Mikytai landscape nature reserve.
„Southern ring“	Berzoras-Stirbaiciai-Bukante-Godeliai-Gregaiciai; This route connects with the Plateliai bike path and provides access to the countryside of Greigaiciai, Stirbaiciai 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 Grigaiciai to Godeliai, from Stribaiciai to Kadaiciai (Bukante), additionally, a road should be built linking Bukante with the village of Godele
A shortened „Southern ring“ section	Connecting the villages of Grigaiciai and Stirbaiciai
A linking part of bicycle tourism tracks between Plokstine to Vilku village	Installed with the use of the section of an old road to Alsedziai; this section connects the planned Plateliai and Plunge-Zemaiciu Kalvarijos bicycle tracks.
A section of the bicycle track, specified on the national level bicycle tourism track special plan	Salantai–Plateliai–Paezeres Rudaiciai–Vilkai–Alsedziai

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

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

Employees of the Visitors' service department of the Zemaitija National Park Administration, in cooperation with the IT specialists (UAB "Hnit-Baltic"), have developed a mobile application named "Explore the Zemaitija 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.

Bicycle rental: Arunas Raudys' bicycle rental. The rent point is located in the center of Plateliai, near the Zemaitija National Park Visitors' 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 ZNP pedestrian trails are better developed than motoring or cycling tracks. The administration of Zemaitija National Park is largely responsible for this. Currently, there are 9 routes for pedestrians in Zemaitija National park.

Table 19. ZNP recreational area pedestrian tourist trails.

Route	Length	Description
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Seire nature observation trail	4,1 km	The Seire nature trail is located next to Plateliai town in the Seire landscape reserve. Hiking along a path of 4.1 km, visitors can see the landscape, which is typical for this land, as well as a wide variety of plants, mushrooms and animals. And the forest track, as it travels through the shady pine forest or light-colored deciduous trees, bypassing bird nests, bat tufts and ants, will lead to the mysterious Gaudupio swamp. The Piketezeris lake is also nearby, protected by a small wooden demon. It then returns to the Plateliai lake shore. It is possible to travel by this route independently or with a guide from the ZNP directorate.
Plokstine cognitive trail	3,2 km	The Plokstine cognitive trail (3.2 km) is located in the territory of a former military base, where the military plans and nature have intertwined: mature forests, swamps, springs ... Here the birds are singing, animals hiding and mushrooms and berries are sprouting. During the hike, you can see the remnants of the former military base fence, the nesting boxes for little winged animals – bats. After passing the pine trees and birches, you can enjoy the view of a hilly relief, the unfreezing Pilelio spring, which is a nature's monument in itself. It is possible to travel by this route independently or with a guide from the ZNP directorate.
Paplatele cognitive trail	2,3 km	When traveling on a 2.3 km long route, you can reach the Sultekis (Minija) pond, on the coast of which, sculptures were created by folk artists a couple of decades ago. You can see a beautiful panorama when you get to the watch place. In May - June, you can hear rare species of amphibians: the concerts of small pond bats and pearl frogs, listen to the humming of a rare bird - the Eurasian bittern. Protected high and red orchids grow on the edges of the pond. The forest is also full of life! Here are the names of a variety of large ungulates: elk, roe deer, wild boar tracks, abundance of woodpecker familia birds, ants and ant hills.
Milkytu cognitive trail	1 km	This trail is located at the Zemaitija National Park, at the Mikytu landscape reserve. While travelling by this path (1 km) you can see the Mikytu sacred hill (which was actively used as sacred grounds from the 2 millennia b.c. to the middle of the first millennia), a mythological rock and a praying well. The rock has a print of the devil's foot. On the northern shore of the sacred mound there is a pitched stone. The stories suggest it's a trace of devil. A prayer (sacrificial) well. On the eastern side slope of the sacred hill, there is a small funnel-shaped pit, covered in stones. It was a place for victim sacrifices.

Cognitive trail “Giliukas ir Kastoniukas travel through the Plateliai manor park”		A cognitive trail, named “Giliukas ir Kastoniukas travel through the Plateliai manor park” for the younger tourists. On their journey, they will be accompanied by a jolly fellow named Kastoniukas, who is always prone to break a twig, picking a flower or even kick an anthill! Only the good Giliukas calms his friend and teaches him the lessons of behaving when in nature. It is possible to travel by this route independently or with the guide from the Zemaitija National Park directorate.
Gardu ozo trail	1 km	<p>Exclusivity of the trail: Gardu ozas, kame landscape. Gardu ozas. The trail is located in the largest and most spectacular Samogitian Gardu ozas. It is geo-morphologically special and is one of the most expressive forms of relief in Lithuania.</p> <p>Kame landscape. 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.</p>
Gegrenai mound	1,6 km	This 1.6 km long trail is located in Zemaitija National Park, in the Gegrenai archaeological complex, 6 km away from Zemaitijos Kalvarija and 14 km from the Zemaitija National Park visitors' center in Plateliai. Exclusive features: castle mounds, graveyards, ancient settlements.
Poet V. Macernis birthplace route	545 m.	This 545 m route leads to the tomb of the poet who, died in 1944 in Zemaiciu Kalvarija from a projectile fragment.
Plokstine natural treasure trail		Plokstines forest secrets and engaging tasks, whispers of small gods and spirits, the Head tree and partisan fight echoes.

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, ZNP 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 Zemaitija 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 Zemaitija National Park.

However, not everything has been done while managing beaches and piers. Only the minimal needed recreational infrastructure is located at the bathing station near the Plateliai yachting 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 Amber Jurcius 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 Berzoras, 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. ZNP accessibility by car and highways

ZNP has executed a visitors survey in 2017 and the results have shown that a whole 92% of all visitors come to ZNP by car. Therefore, the development of highways and improving accessibility by car is extremely important for the development of ZNP 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
Zemaitijos National park Car tourism Route	Plateliai–Paezeres Rudaiciai–Puckoriai–Gegrenai–Zemaiciu Kalvarija–Vilkai–Pauosniai–Ploksciai–Berzoras–Plateliai; the route can also include Alsedziai (alternative section: Zemaiciu Kalvarija–Alsedziai–Vilkai), should offer to visit the Cold War museum (branch Ploksciai–Plokstine);
An additional section in the northern part of the National park	Zemaiciu Kalvarija–Sarnele–Padegime–Gudaliai–Kruopiai–Mikytai–Paezeres Rudaiciai (alternative – to drive through Paparciai and Barstyciai town from Padegime iki Mikytai);
An additional section in the central part of the National park	Paezeres Rudaiciai–Virksai–Skurvydai–Platačiai–Vilkai, with a branch to Paplatele
An additional section in the southwestern part of the National park	from Berzoras the road goes through Stirbačiai up to Godeliai (Vydeikiai) and Bukante (Kadačiai);
A section of the tourist routes, specified on the general territory plan of the Republic of Lithuania – “Lithuanian history and	Plunge–Plateliai–Barstyciai–Zemaiciu Kalvarija, then the route should go towards Seda or Alsedziai;

culture” and “Samogitian park circle”	
A section of the tourist routes, specified on the general territory plan of the Republic of Lithuania – “Samogitian roads” and “Curonian road”	Plunge–Zemaiciu Kalvarija–Barstyciai–Skuodas;
A section of the car tourism Plunge district municipality General Plan	Plunge-Plateliai-Puckoriai-Gegrenai-Zemaitijos Kalvarija-Alsedziai. 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-Plunge-Plateliai is a national priority route)

Source: compiled by authors according to information provided in Zemaitija National Park’s 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 travelers 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, labeling 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 Zemaitija National Park.

2.1.3.6. ZNP accessibility by car and other vehicles

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

- The shortest way from Klaipeda to Plateliai - 79 km;
- The shortest way from Siauliai to Plateliai - 103 km;
- The shortest way From Mazeikiai to Plateliai - 53 km;

- The shortest way from Kaunas to Plateliai - 211 km;
- The shortest route 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-Klaipeda", "Klaipeda-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, Klaipeda, Siauliai, Telsiai, Mazeikiai and other cities can be used to reach Plunge bus station, from which a second bus can be used to reach Plateliai. Bus timetables: Plunge-Plateliai and Plateliai-Plunge. However, buses travel quite rarely and reaching Plateliai this way 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 Plunge 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 or avitourism 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 Zemaitija 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. Zemaitijos National park is part of the "Natura 2000" network: the entire territory of the National park, with the exception of Plateliai and Zemaiciu Kalvarija urbanistic preserve 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 (BAST) and the list of sites of importance for bird protection (FTA).

Existing infrastructure. Currently, the ZNP offers visitors to monitor the birds at the Pakastuvio pond. In the year 2016 preparations were started for the reconstruction of the former bathhouse (sauna) in a bird watching place. UAB "Archivizija" 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 Zemaitija National park. Zemaitija National park Administration 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 Zemaitija 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 (aims, objectives, partners, budget, etc.) about the implemented project; project / program logos.

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

The main attraction is the main 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 (labeling), 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 hotlines for emergency calls, events taking place);
- parks and trails/routes (active recreation, children's playgrounds, runners-up);
- streets and sidewalks (cleanliness and order, lighting, benches, trash bins, public telephones, free drinking water);
- other (public toilets and information links).

2.1.5.1. Accommodation establishments

The network of accommodation establishments operating in Zemaitija National Park is relatively wide, but visitors point out that they do not stay overnight in ZNP 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 holiday homes	10	12.239	15.616	+3.377
Rural tourism homesteads	28	15.343	16.127	+884
Campgrounds and camps	18	14.362	11.819	-2.543

Source: Concluded according to Zemaitija 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 very relevant).

During the preparation of the strategy, an analysis of the ZNP 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 on: Zemaitija National park webpage www.zemaitijosnp.lt, rural tourism portal www.atostogoskaime.lt, www.priezero.lt, www.booking.com. 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 high season (July), it appears that most institutions are busy enough and have few or no vacancies at all. Thus, during the high 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 favorable 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 pensioners, 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. Zemaitijos rural tourism association or the Samogitian tourist cluster.

2.1.5.2. Catering establishments

There are 5 catering establishments at the ZNP: Cafe "Edenas", Cafe - restaurant "Bures", Cafe - Bar "Kampelis", Cafe - Bar "Banga", Restaurant "Linelis". Culinary heritage tasting is also organized in the Handicraft 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 staff from the Visitors' 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 Saturday market in Rietavas.

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

Tourism marketing in ZNP is implemented by a couple of institutions – Plunge district municipality, ZNP directorate and ZNP Visitors' center. Tourism marketing measures are found in the Plunge district tourism marketing strategy, a part of them are really implemented by ZNP Visitors' center and other ZNP directorate departments (the table containing measures, implemented in 2017 are shown below).

Table 22. Visitors' center 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 ZNP images or with a ZNP symbol - 3300 pcs .; • Metal keychains with ZNP images or symbol - 200 pcs .; • Plastic keychain with a ZNP image or a symbol - 200 pcs .; • Many souvenirs were sold out due to their high popularity, and some were ordered with new images representing Zemaitija National park. • 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 ZNP (200 pcs.)
	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 ZNP logos were purchased.
Adventur exhibition	The directorate of Zemaitija National park together with Plunge Tourist information center, Plunge district the municipality and other providers of tourism services and products participates in the exhibition on an annual basis and presents the possibilities of tourism in Plunge district.
Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Visitors service Department staff was interviewed regarding Zemaitija National park, recreation and tourism opportunities by various media outlets: • Radio "Lietuvos radijas" interview regarding the topic of cultural heritage (D. Jakstiene and A. Kuprelyte). • "Lietuvos rytas" TV. "Vasaros reporteris" (Summer reporter) TV program (author D.Burkauskas) (1 hour) (A. Brazdeikyte). • LRT TV program "Atrask Lietuvą" (Discover Lithuania) (I. Urkiene). • Jolanta Jurkuniene talked to radio "Lietuvos radijas" on tourism opportunities in Zemaitija National park, Plateliai Visitors Center exposition (A. Brazdeikyte). • The newspaper Santarve, „Muziejiaus gides pareigos paskatina labiau domėtis istorija" (The Duties of the Museum Guides inspire more interest in history) (E. Kajumovaite).
	The Head of the project Viktorija Rumsaite has given an interview to a Swedish TV

	channel regarding Zemaitija National Park, recreation and tourism possibilities.
Articles	During the year 2017, the department's staff wrote 37 articles, part of which was also published in the "Sventorkalnis" newspaper, posted on the ZNPD website: www.zemaitijosnp.lt , on social networks, on other websites and in mass media.
Messages	During the year, the Visitors' service department staff has prepared and read 16 messages in various local events and educational facilities.
	<p>During the year 2016, a Project management Department employee has wrote 7 articles that were printed in the Plunge regional newspaper "Sventorkalnis", on the ZNPD website: www.zemaitijosnp.lt, on social networks or other internet sites, as well as in mass media. The articles were written by V. Rumsaite. The topic of the articles relates to the activities of the project being implemented, as well as with the events, news, and activities that were implemented.</p> <p>During the year, the department's staff have prepared and read 3 reports at various local and international events:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 14th of December, Viktorija Rumsaite presented a report at the "Tourism Forum" and presented project objectives achieved in 2017. 2. 30th of September, Viktorija Rumsaite presented a report on the implemented project at a partner meeting. 3. 21st of April, Viktorija Rumsaite has read a report at the "Tourism Forum" and presented project objectives achieved in 2016 and activities, which had begun to be implemented in 2017.
Publications in cyberspace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the year 2017, the website of Zemaitija National park Administration 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 ZNPD account on the 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 Samogitia region, starting from pre-school education to secondary schools and gymnasiums. They have shared information about services with tourism information centers, ZNP tourism service providers and other organizations.
Creation of a movie about the Zemaitijos national park	Starting from June 2017, public procurement process was launched for the purchase of a film about the development of Zemaitija National park. The aim of creating the film is to present Zemaitijos National park (hereinafter referred to as the Park), to introduce potential tourists to the services of the park Administration 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. The procurement tender has been won by the company named UAB "Media Lab". With the help of its team, the first filming works were performed in September. All four seasons will be filmed, followed by 3 and 10 min video clips, followed by a 10 minute long three state film
Creating tourism information	During the implementation of the "Attractive Hardwoods" project in Zemaitija National park, we built two tourism information terminals. We built the terminals at Zemaitija National park information center and the Cold War Museum's administrative building.

terminals	The terminals will provide tourists with concentrated information on the services provided in the park area, as well as other information.
ZNP webpage update	Although the ZNP website has recently been updated, the staff of the Visitors' center notices that there is a problem with the ZNP website and the systematization of information on the Internet: the website is purchased through public procurement, it is very difficult to manage and is inconvenient, the support from project funds has expired, so the employees have to "work as programmers themselves" according to their statements.
Activities planned to be implemented in ZNP from 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of smart apps about Zemaitija National park with tourist information. • Organization of guides courses, including the awarding of certifications. • Purchasing publicity services. Writing articles in the press and social networks. • Issuing a leaflet or brochure with tourist information. • Organizing a conference with interested organizations (municipality, TIC, communities, State service for protected areas, etc.) on tourism development in the territory of Zemaitija National park

Source: compiled according to information on ZNP Administration's activity reports of 2017

The state tourism department, having assessed Zemaitija national park tourist potential on local and international levels, presents the following ZNP attractions and service providers:

- Organizes cognitive tours for Lithuanian and foreign journalists, tour operators (rural tourism homesteads, Cold War Museum, etc.);
- Zemaitija 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 the Mardi Gras mask exposition and Cold War museum being presented as one of the main museums of Lithuania;
- Tourist publications and information materials are published and distributed in events and exhibitions taking place in Lithuania and abroad. They present the Zemaitijos 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 Mardi Gras, Litvak Memorial garden, rural tourism homesteads; Lietuvos rytas paper appendix "Lithuania, Keliauk ir ragauk" (Lithuania, Travel and taste) presents Samogitia as the land of homesteads, wells and Mardi Gras masks; the "Jewish Heritage in Lithuania" publication includes Litvaks Remembrance garden as one of the most important objects; Lithuanian tourist maps present Zemaitija National Park, Mardi Gras exposition, Cold war museum, Bukante manor, etc.;
- Implemented TV projects featuring landmarks of Zemaitija National park (for example, "Keliauk ir ragauk" - Travel and taste);
- In the year 2018, the rural tourism homestead "Pas tevukus" (At your parents) is recognized as "The Most Successful 2017 project", in the nomination "The Most Successful Homestead of the Year".

Such information dissemination about Zemaitija National park's attractions and tourism service providers shows that the ZNP 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 a 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 ZNP should be disseminated with as many different channels as possible – radio, internet, etc., especially if the park 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 ZNP on webpages for travelers, i.e. Trip advisor, travelers' blogs, Facebook groups for travelers, 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 **oral advice** ("word of mouth" advertising). Therefore, ZNP 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 museum, Plateliai lake and Diving academy) visited objects in the most popular tourist site in the world - www.tripadvisor.com. 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. ZNP 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.

ZNP tourism product competitiveness

Natural and cultural tourism resources of ZNP provide favorable conditions for the creation of attractive ecological ¹and cultural ²tourism products. Cultural and natural tourism potential is large and 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 ZNP 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.

ZNP 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

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Strategic Documents identify the ZNP and its objects as priority tourism objects in Lithuania; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negative seasonal effects; Lack of camping and other cheaper accommodation facilities;

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.

² Cultural 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.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 museum attracting many tourists; • Sacral tourism attraction objects – Zemaiciu Kalvarija and Berzoras; • Sufficiently good tourist infrastructure; • Close public-private cooperation network (cluster). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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; • Troublesome transportation to Plateliai by public transport or taxi; • Unattractive and uncomfortable ZNP websites; • There is no tourism product offering for individual and organized tourists; • Lack of region positioning; • Insufficient cooperation with Lithuanian tour operators; • Event tourism is not sufficiently utilized (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 private tourism sector; • 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>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ZNP 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 resources; • Competition with Latvia and Estonia for the supply of similar tourism products, with more active marketing actions in neighboring countries; • Inefficient / Unrealized marketing tools.

4. ZEMAITIJA 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 Zemaitija National Park. The development of ecological tourism types: pedestrian and bicycle tracks, rest in parks and forests, ornithological tourism, rural (village) tourism, recreation near bodies of water. Cultural tourism types should also be developed, such as: culinary tourism, sacral tourism (Zemaiciu kalvarija and other sacral objects).

Pedestrian and bicycle tourism development possibilities

Longer pedestrian route 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 pedestrian path 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/>

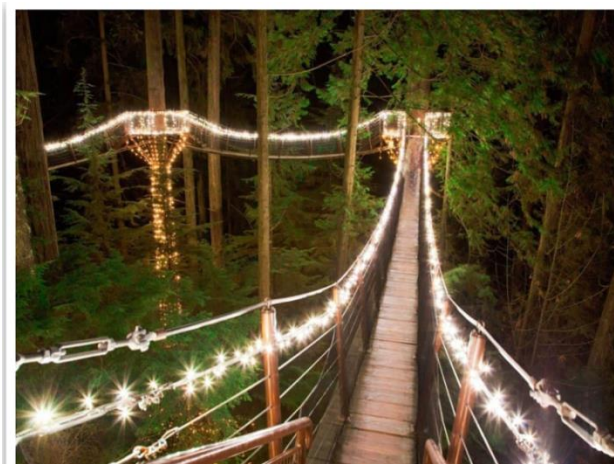




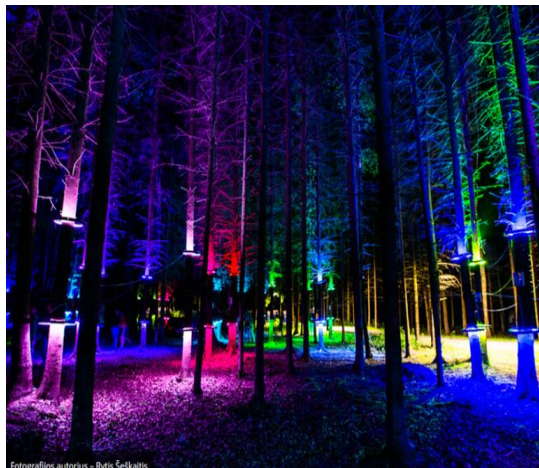
Source: <https://www.familywithkids.com/finland/en/photogallery/photo-torransuo-national-park-finland>

Developing recreation in parks and forests

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



Source: https://westcoastsightseeing.com/guided_tours/bridge-park-tour/



canyon-lights-vancouver-city-capilano-suspension-

Accommodation in wooden houses on trees (a tree-house park – hotel and restaurant)



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/>

Creating an active leisure park



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



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

Children's forest fairy-tale park creation



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

Forest sound/meditation park creation



Source: https://www.google.lt/search?safe=active&biw=1536&bih=779&tbm=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

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-karolio-dineikos-21965.jpg>

Bird watching (Ornitologic) 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.



Source: www.geodomas.eu

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 middle-aged and older travelers 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 travelers do not spend a lot and leave little value;
- Collect data on the segment, which comes to ZNP 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 bathing and beach infrastructure, increasing water transportation measure rent offer and accessibility, use Plateliu lake to reduce seasonality by attractive solutions (light installations, ice sculptures, augmented reality solutions recreating the Pilies island castle).



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

Aero pavilion at the source of Babrungas river

A glass floor building, as in Druskininkai Karolio Dineikos healthiness park.



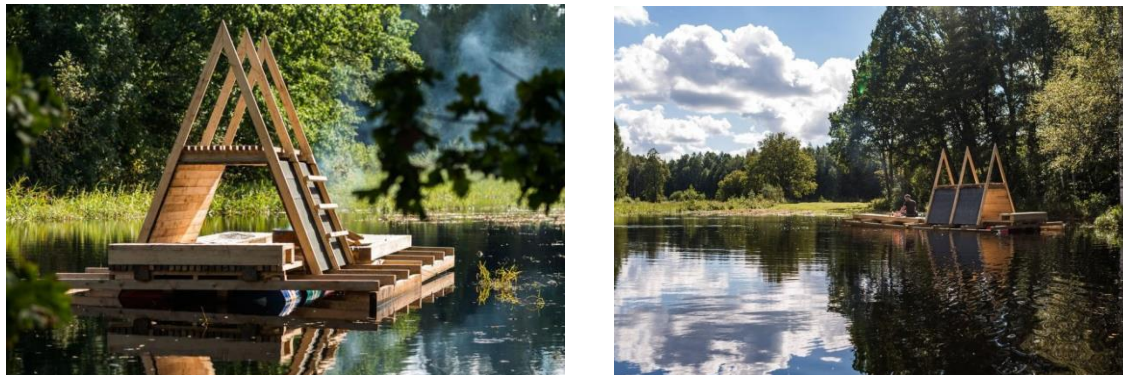
Source: <https://www.priezero.lt/uploads/object1359/druskininku-karloio-dineikos-21969.jpg>

Bridge / footbridge station reconstruction / construction at Plateliai lake



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

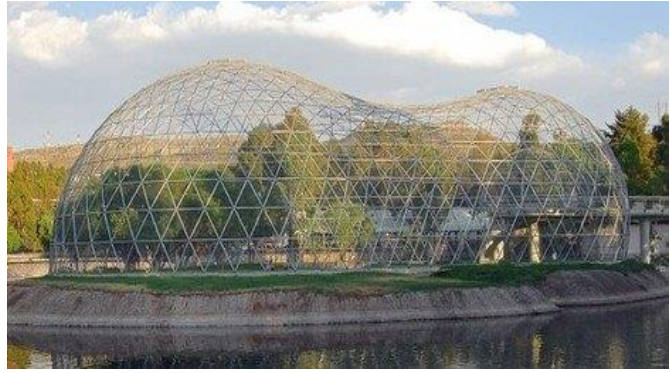
Floating lake houses



Source: <https://www.curbed.com/2016/10/10/13225928/floating-tiny-cabin-estonia>

Reduce tourism seasonality

Take advantage of the benefits of the landscape and create an entertainment complex in a glass manege (for example, a glass manege on an observation deck where an all-weather catering facility is located together with active leisure entertainment, i.e. for winter time it can be an ice skating rink, wall climbing, cognitive corners, mini zoo)



Source: Visualisations provided by Geodomas, Ltd

Rural tourism. Strengthening genuine experiences.

Samogitian culture and traditions are what distinguishes the ZNP 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 to the ZNP: 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".

Zemaitija 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 the ZNP, the following tactical actions are identified:

- Creation and presentation of tourism products for individual travelers 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 ZNP tourism products on the Internet, i.e. e-platforms (Booking.com, TripAdvisor, Lonelyplanet.com, Youtube, Facebook, Instagram, etc.).

Inter-state and national cooperation development: 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 sector workers.

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

ZNp VISION STATEMENT: The best ecological and cultural tourism synthesis offering object 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): for families, active leisure lovers, children and young people;
- Attractive due to: affordable recreation in nature.

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

Table 23. Aims and objectives of the strategy

Aims	Objectives
1. To develop nature-friendly (ecological) tourism infrastructure	1.1. Improve the infrastructure of public bathing areas and beaches
	1.2. Improve the public tourism information infrastructure (marking of tourist objects and tourist trails, information stands)
	1.3. Improve and develop active leisure facilities (biking and hiking tracks/trails)
	1.4. Establish a "Green class" - a school of nature (allowing children to study the diversity of animals and learn how to care for and wisely manage one of the largest ZNP assets – the forest)
	1.5. Create a zone of forest fairy-tale park for the children segment with "Misko Garveziukas" (a small forest train for tours along forest routes for children and others)
	1.6. Create an active recreational forest area - an amusement park with tree climbing (such as Loke peda, Taurus Adventure Park, etc.) to attract the target segment
	1.7. Create a passive - meditative rest zone in the forest - a forest sounds park
	1.8. Create an area of accommodation services in the forest (tree-house park/hotel)
	1.9. Establish light installation areas in the woods and Plateliai Manor house park
	1.10. Set up a scene for events at a site in the forest
	1.11. Build an Aero Pavilion at the outskirts of Babrungas river outflow
	1.12. Build 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. Improve foreign language knowledge amongst tourism service providers
	2.5. Promote the development of catering services, focusing on the quality of services and the region's authenticity
	2.6. 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 (for example, invite TrenkTuras with their organized hiking trips)
	3.4 Create a complex of sauna tourism services, to popularize them and to promote the provision of such services at rural tourism homesteads
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 at the resort
	4.2. Improve accessibility of ZNP 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	5.1. Create competitive offers in 4 years time 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

tourists	foreign countries (Latvia, Germany, Sweden, Italy, France)
	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 (ZNP website, social networking (Instagram, Facebook, Youtube)
	5.7 Create professional and high quality visual materials content about the ZNP (with the help of professional photographers, video artists);
	5.8. Encourage ZNP visitors to share video content on social networks
	5.9. Deliver tourist products to target segments (tour operators and tourists travelling individually)
	5.10. 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 mentoring program
	6.2. Initiate and develop a business advisory center
	6.3. Improve the tourism forum and product brand concepts in order to meet business expectations and to improve the form of cooperation
	6.4. Develop information packages for businesses working in the field of tourism (about ZNP tourism opportunities and their presentation to tourists)
	6.5. Organize information seminars before every season, presenting the ZNP tourism marketing package for the coming season and discussing changes, trends and other important aspects of the coming season.
	6.6. Conduct systematic monitoring of businesses operating in the tourism sector in order to identify their needs and problems
	6.7. Promote ZNP cooperation with tourism business representatives (tour operators, in order to present own products), deliver products to the Plunge TIC, Tourism Dept.
7. Reduce tourism seasonality	7.1. Develop entertainment that would be attractive outside of the high season time and execute their marketing (e.g. ice-skating rink, snow or ice sculptures, Mardi Gras week (tradition presented during that period))
	7.2. Develop tourist routes that are attractive outside of the season and implement their marketing
	7.3. Create an outdoor roofed entertainment complex for families with children (http://www.gimtadieniomuge.lt/portfolio/kunos-parkas-cia-visa-tikra/)
	7.4. Take advantage of the benefits of the landscape and create an entertainment complex in a glass manège (for example, a glass manège on an observation deck where an all-weather catering facility is located together with active leisure entertainment, i.e. for winter time it can be an ice skating rink, wall climbing, cognitive corners, mini zoo)
	7.5. Strengthen the positioning of Mardi Gras tradition and develop the Mardi Gras Week event complex
8. Ensure the protection of natural and cultural heritage and its rational use embodied in the sustainable tourism principles	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

9. Attract public investment	9.1. Develop a plan and strategy to attract investment
	9.2. Create an investment-friendly environment at ZNP
10. Ensure strategies	10.1. Appoint a person, responsible for the implementation of the strategy and achievement of the goals
	10.2 Call for quarterly 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 bathing areas and beaches	1.1.1. Installation of high-quality beach in Plateliai small recreational functional priority area	2019-2020	ZNP	EU funds
	1.1.2. Modernization of beaches, equipped with changing cabins, toilets, arbors	2019-2020	ZNP	EU funds
1.2. Improve the public tourism information infrastructure (marking of tourist objects and tourist trails, information stands)	1.2.1. Marking tourist trails	2019-2020	ZNP	Budget funds
	1.2.2. Installation of information stands	2019-2020	ZNP	Budget funds
1.3. Improve and develop active leisure facilities (biking and hiking tracks/trails)	1.3.1. Adapting biking trails for pedestrian tourism	2019-2020	ZNP	Budget funds
	1.3.2. Reconstruction of the Sutelkio cognitive path and building an observation tower	2020-2021	ZNP	EU funds
	1.3.3. Constructing a Plateliai town cognitive path	2020-2021	ZNP	EU funds
	1.3.4. Constructing a Pilies island cognitive path	2020-2021	ZNP	EU funds
	1.3.5. Constructing a Gegrenai cognitive path	2020-2021	ZNP	EU funds
1.4. Establish a "Green class" - a school of nature (allowing children to study the diversity of animals and learn how to care for and wisely manage one of the largest ZNP assets – the forest)	1.4.1. Project preparation and feasibility analysis	2018-2019	ZNP	EU funds
	1.4.2. "Green class" / nature school creation in Laumalenkiai landscape reserve	2019-2020	ZNP	EU funds
1.5. Create a zone of forest fairy-tale park for the children segment	1.5.1. Project preparation and feasibility analysis	2018-2019	ZNP	Budget funds
	1.5.2. Attracting investors	2019	ZNP	Budget funds

with "Misko Garveziukas" (a small forest train for tours along forest routes for children and others)	1.5.3. Project implementation	2019-2020	ZNP/Private investor	EU/Private investments
1.6. Create an active recreational forest area - an amusement park with tree climbing (such as Loke peda, Taurus Adventure Park, etc.) to attract the target segment	1.6.1. Project preparation and feasibility analysis	2019	ŽNP	Budget funds
	1.6.2. Attracting investors	2019	ŽNP	Budget funds
	1.6.3. Project implementation	2020-2021	ZNP/Private investor	EU/Private investments
1.7. Create a passive - meditative rest zone in the forest - a forest sounds park	1.7.1. Project preparation and feasibility analysis	2019	ŽNP	Budget funds
	1.7.2. Attracting investors	2019	ŽNP	Budget funds
	1.7.3. Project implementation	2020-2021	ZNP/Private investor	EU/Private investments
1.8. Create an area of accommodation services in the forest (tree-house park/hotel)	1.8.1. Project preparation and feasibility analysis	2019	ŽNP	Budget funds
	1.8.2. Attracting investors	2019	ŽNP	Budget funds
	1.8.3. Project implementation	2020-2021	ZNP/Private investor	EU/Private investments
1.9. Establish light installation areas in the woods and Plateliai Manor house park	1.9.1. Project preparation and feasibility analysis	2019	ŽNP	Biudžeto lėšos
	1.9.2. Attracting investors	2019	ŽNP	Budget funds
	1.9.3. Project implementation	2020-2021	ZNP/Private investor	EU/Budget funds/Private investments
1.10. Set up a scene for events at a site in the forest	1.10.1. Project preparation and feasibility analysis	2019	ŽNP	Budget funds
	1.10.2. Attracting investors	2019	ŽNP	Budget funds
	1.10.3. Project implementation	2020-2021	ZNP/Private investor	EU/Private investments
1.11. Build an Aero Pavilion at the outskirts of Babrungas river outflow	1.11.1. Project preparation and feasibility analysis	2019	ŽNP	Budget funds
	1.11.2. Attracting investors	2019	ŽNP	Budget funds
	1.11.3. Project implementation	2020-2021	ZNP/Private investor	EU/Private investments
1.12. Build a pedestrian bridge / footbridge at Plateliai lake	1.12.1. Project preparation and feasibility analysis	2019	ŽNP	Budget funds
	1.12.2. Attracting investors	2019	ŽNP	Budget funds
	1.12.3. Project implementation	2020-2021	ZNP/Private investor	EU/Private investments
2.1. Install a modern camping site	2.1.1. Project preparation and feasibility analysis	2019	ŽNP	Budget funds

	2.1.2. Attracting investors	2019	ŽNP	Budget funds
	2.1.3. Project implementation	2020-2021	ZNP/Private investor	EU/Private investments
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	ŽNP	Budget funds
	2.2.2. Introduce access to international accommodation platforms (through events, newsletters) to business and private persons	2019	ŽNP	Budget funds
	2.2.3. Include associated structures (Samogitian business cluster, Samogitian rural tourism association) in the consultation network	2019	ŽNP	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	2020	ŽNP	Budget funds
	2.3.2. Organizing training	2021	ŽNP	Budget funds
2.4. Improve foreign language knowledge amongst tourism service providers	2.4.1. Survey of tourism service providers, competence research	2020	ŽNP	Budget funds
	2.4.2. Organizing training	2021	ŽNP	Budget funds
2.5. Promote the development of catering services, focusing on the quality of services and the region's authenticity	2.5.1. Feasibility Analysis	2019	ŽNP	Budget funds
	2.5.2. Attracting investors	2020	ŽNP	Budget funds
	2.5.3. Project implementation	2021	ZNP/Private investor	Budget funds/private investment
2.6. Promote organized sales of local products by local producers to visitors (mobile store or e-store)	2.6.1. Feasibility Analysis	2019	ŽNP	Budget funds
	2.6.2. Attracting investors	2020	ŽNP	Budget funds
	2.6.3. Project implementation	2020	ZNP/Private investor	Budget funds/private investments
3.1. Create a bird watching (ornithological tourism) product	3.1.1. Feasibility Analysis	2019	ŽNP	Budget funds
	3.1.2. Attracting investors	2020	ŽNP	Budget funds
	3.1.3. Project implementation	2020	ŽNP	Budget funds
3.2. Create attractive tourist products for organized tourists and commercialize them	3.2.1. Feasibility Analysis	2020	ŽNP	Budget funds
	3.2.2. Attracting investors	2021	ŽNP	Budget funds
	3.2.3. Project implementation	2021	ŽNP	Budget funds
3.3. Organize hiking trips (for example, invite TrenkTuras with their organized hiking trips)	3.3.1. Partner selection and Analysis	2020	ŽNP	Budget funds
	3.3.2. Route selection and analysis	2020	ŽNP	Budget funds
	3.3.3. Organization of hikes and publicity	2020	ŽNP/private companies	Budget funds/private investments

3.4. Create a complex of sauna tourism services, to popularize them and to promote the provision of such services at rural tourism homesteads	3.4.1. Feasibility analysis	2020	ŽNP	Budget funds
	3.4.2. Product creation	2020	ŽNP/private companies	Budget funds
	3.4.3. Product commercialization	2021	ŽNP/private companies	Budget funds/private investments
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	ŽNP/private companies	Budget funds
4.2. Improve accessibility of ZNP 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 accommodation services	2019	ŽNP/private companies	Budget funds
	4.2.2. Informing people on the use of Uber or Taxify platforms (for tourists and residents)	2019-2023	ŽNP/private companies	Budget funds
4.3. Organize more efficient waste management during the tourist season	4.3.1. Installation of degradable waste disposal sites	2020	ŽNP	Budget funds
	4.3.2. Composting and recycling of degradable waste	2020	ŽNP	Budget funds
	4.3.3. Mediation between business and municipality to improve waste management	2020-2023	ŽNP	Budget funds
5.1. Create competitive offers in 4 year time and make their marketing relevant before each season	5.1.1. Preparation of marketing tools	2019	ŽNP	Budget funds
	5.1.2. Implementation of marketing tools	2019-2023	ŽNP	Budget funds
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	ŽNP	Budget funds
	5.2.2. Implementation of marketing tools	2019-2023	ŽNP	Budget funds
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	ŽNP	Budget funds
	5.3.2. Implementation of marketing tools	2019-2023	ŽNP	Budget funds
5.4. Create proposals for	5.4.1. Creation of tourism	2019	ŽNP	Budget funds

tourism products for specific target groups (families with children, bird watchers, disabled people, elderly people, young people)	products			
	5.4.2. Commercialization and publicity of tourism products	2019-2023	ŽNP	Budget funds
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 ZNP	2020	ŽNP	Budget funds
	5.5.2. Finding and receiving financing for activities aimed at enhancing the cultural authenticity of the ZNP	2020	ŽNP	Budget funds
	5.5.3. Implementation of active measures (dissemination of costumes, events)	2021	ŽNP	Budget funds
	5.5.4. Publication and positioning	2021-2023	ŽNP	Budget funds
5.6. Implement e-marketing tools (ZNP website, social networking (Instagram, Facebook, Youtube)	5.6.1. Provision of positioned information on the tourism products targeted at specific target groups on the ZNP website	2020	ŽNP	Budget funds
	5.6.2. Publication of active social messages on social networks	2020-2023	ŽNP	Budget funds
5.7 Create professional and high quality visual materials content about the ZNP (with the help of professional photographers, video artists);	5.7.1. Organization of tours for photographers	2020	ŽNP	Budget funds
	5.7.2. Finding and receiving Financing (from private sponsors or funds) for professional ZNP nature photo sessions	2020	ŽNP	Budget funds
	5.7.3. Photo sessions of nature and objects of attraction of ZNP during different seasons	2020-2023	ŽNP	EU/Budget funds
5.8. Encourage ZNP visitors to share video content on social networks	5.8.1. Installation of informational stands reminding people to leave feedback on social networks in tourist destinations (Visitors' Center, Cold War museum, etc.)	2019	ŽNP	Budget funds
	5.8.2. Making attractive visualizations with hashtags, encouraging visitors to take selfies and photos and to upload them to social networks	2019	ŽNP	Budget funds
5.9. Deliver tourist products to target segments (tour operators and tourists travelling individually)	5.9.1. Creation of tourist products according to target segments	2020	ŽNP	Budget funds
	5.9.2. Active presentation of tourist products to tour organizers (sending information before the	2020-2023	ŽNP	Budget funds

	season, event or innovation)			
	5.9.3. Active presentation of tourism products for individual tourists (both in travel planning and in travel stages)	2020-2023	ŽNP	Budget funds
5.10. Evaluate the efficiency of tourism marketing	5.10.1. Media monitoring	2019-2023	ŽNP	Budget funds
	5.10.2. Surveys of tourists and visitors about how they learned about ZNP	2019-2023	ŽNP	Budget funds
6.1. Create and run a business mentoring program	6.1.1. Creation of content for the business mentoring program (main topics, questions)	2020	ŽNP	Budget funds
	6.1.2. Finding and receiving funding for the business mentoring program	2021	ŽNP	Budget funds
	6.1.3. Implementation of a business mentoring program	2021-2023	ŽNP	EU/Budget funds
6.2. Initiate and develop a business advisory center	6.2.1. Creation of a consulting center concept	2020	ŽNP	Budget funds
	6.2.2. Finding and receiving funding for a consulting center	2021	ŽNP	Budget funds
	6.2.3. Executing consultation center activities	2021-2023	ŽNP	EU/Budget funds
6.3. Improve the tourism forum and product brand concepts in order to meet business expectations and to improve the form of cooperation	6.3.1. Tourism forum and product brand concept analysis and discussions with business sector	2019	ŽNP	Budget funds
	6.3.2. Development of new concept of tourism forum and product brand	2019	ŽNP	Budget funds
6.4. Develop information packages for businesses working in the field of tourism (about ZNP tourism opportunities and their presentation to tourists)	6.4.1. Preparation of information packages for tourism businesses (regarding tourism opportunities of the ZNP and their presentation to tourists)	2019	ŽNP	Budget funds
6.5. Organize information seminars before every season, presenting the ZNP tourism marketing package for the coming season and discussing changes, trends and other important aspects of the coming season.	6.5.1. Organizing informational seminars before every season (presenting the ZNP tourism marketing package for the coming season and discussing changes, trends and other important aspects during the coming season)	2019-2023	ŽNP	Budget funds

6.6. Conduct systematic monitoring of businesses operating in the tourism sector in order to identify their needs and problems	6.6.1. Execution of a survey of businesses, operating in the tourism sector	2019-2023	ŽNP	Budget funds
	6.6.2. External evaluation of businesses, operating in the tourism sector (covert buyer, etc.)	2019-2023	ŽNP	Budget funds
6.7. Promote ZNP cooperation with tourism business representatives (tour operators, in order to present own products), deliver products to the Plunge TIC, Tourism Dept.	6.7.1. Partner list creation	2019	ŽNP	Budget funds
	6.7.2. Identification of collaborative activities (meetings, exhibitions, presentations, joint projects)	2019	ŽNP	Budget funds
	6.7.3. Implementing co-operation activities	2019-2023	ŽNP	Budget funds
7.1. Develop entertainment that would be attractive outside of the high season time and execute their marketing (ice-skating rink, snow or ice sculptures, Mardi Gras week (tradition presented during that period)	7.1.1. Creating entertainment for each season (winter is ice sculptures, illuminated pedestrian walkways, the Mardi Gras week, autumn bicycle festival and TrenkTuras march through autumn landscapes, spring - flower festival)	2020-2022	ŽNP	EU/Budget funds
	7.1.2. Active entertainment marketing	2022-2023	ŽNP	EU/Budget funds
7.2. Develop tourist routes that are attractive outside of the season and implement their marketing	7.2.1. Creation of routes	2020-2022	ŽNP	EU/Budget funds
	7.2.2. Route Marketing	2022-2023	ŽNP	EU/Budget funds
7.3. Create an outdoor roofed entertainment complex for families with children (for example http://www.gimtadienio.muge.lt/portfolio/kunos-parkas-cia-visa-tikra/)	7.3.1. Preparation of the entertainment complex project to receive financing	2019	ŽNP	Budget funds
	7.3.2. Establishment of entertainment complex	2020-2022	ŽNP	EU/Budget funds
7.4. Take advantage of the benefits of the landscape and create an entertainment complex in a glass manege (for example, a glass manege on an observation deck where an all-weather	7.4.1. Preparation of complex project for financing	2019	ŽNP	Budget funds
	7.4.2. Complex creation	2020-2022	ŽNP	EU/Budget funds

catering facility is located together with active leisure entertainment, i.e. for winter time it can be an ice skating rink, wall climbing, cognitive corners, mini zoo)				
7.5. Strengthen the positioning of Mardi Gras tradition and develop the Mardi Gras Week event complex	7.5.1. Creating a Mardi Gras week event program	2019	ŽNP	Budget funds
	7.5.2. Attracting support from private sponsors and funds	2020-2023	ŽNP	EU/Budget funds
	7.5.3. Execute event marketing	2020-2023	ŽNP	EU/Budget funds
8.1. Develop the institution of rangers	8.1.1 Ranger activity coordination	2019-2023	ŽNP	Budget funds
8.2. Implement educational activities to educate visitors	8.2.1. Development and dissemination of educational material in places if tourist and visitor gathering	2019	ŽNP	EU/Budget funds
	8.2.2. Inclusion of educational information in the content of popular events and excursions	2020-2023	ŽNP	Budget funds
8.3. Promote volunteering and implement active measures by attracting volunteers	8.3.1. Execution of cooperation with volunteer centers	2020-2023	ŽNP	Budget funds
9.1. Develop a plan and strategy to attract investment	9.1.1. Preparing an investment attraction strategy and plan	2019	ŽNP	Budget funds
9.2. Create an investment-friendly environment at ZNP	9.2.1. Implementation of investment attraction strategy and plan	2020-2023	ŽNP	Budget funds
10.1. Appoint a person, responsible for the implementation of the strategy and achievement of the goals	10.1. Appointment of responsible person	2019	ŽNP	Budget funds
10.2 Call for quarterly discussions on the implementation of the strategy	10.2 Strategy implementation discussions	2019-2023	ŽNP	Budget funds

Source: made by authors