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Religious Pilgrimage Routes and Trails

Sustainable Development and Management

Edited by **Daniel H. Olsen** and **Anna Trono**

CABI RELIGIOUS TOURISM AND PILGRIMAGE SERIES

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A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library, London, UK.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Olsen, Daniel H., 1973- editor. | Trono, Anna, editor.
Title: Religious pilgrimage routes and trails : sustainable development and management / edited by Daniel H. Olsen, Anna Trono.
Description: Wallingford, Oxfordshire ; Boston, MA : CABI, 2018. | Series: CABI religious tourism and pilgrimage series | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2017054578 (print) | LCCN 2017059520 (ebook) | ISBN 9781786390288 (pdf) | ISBN 9781786390295 (ePub) | ISBN 9781786390271 (hardback : alk. paper)
Subjects: LCSH: Tourism--Religious aspects. | Pilgrims and pilgrimages. | Sustainable tourism.
Classification: LCC G156.5.R44 (ebook) | LCC G156.5.R44 R45 2018 (print) | DDC 203/.51--dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2017054578

ISBN-13: 978 1 78639 027 1 (hbk)
978 1 78639 028 8 (pdf)
978 1 78639 029 5 (ePub)

Commissioning editor: Claire Parfitt
Associate editor: Alexandra Lainsbury
Production editor: Shankari Wilford

Typeset by SPi, Pondicherry, India
Printed and bound in the UK by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY

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30 wagons, 40 outriders on horses, 10 handcarts, and 500 individuals riding and walking. The trek lasted 93 days and included 10,000 overall participants.

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9 Religious Pilgrimage Routes in the Baltic Countries: History and Perspectives

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Introduction

The Baltic countries are located on the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea, with an area of 175,015 km^2 and more than 6.2 million inhabitants in 2015 (2.9 million in Lithuania, almost 2 million in Latvia and 1.31 million in Estonia). The Baltic countries have similar histories over the past century, such as independence between the World Wars, Soviet occupation, and restoration of independence after the collapse of the Soviet empire. However, the Baltic countries differ regarding their religious traditions. For example, almost 80% of Lithuanians identify as Roman Catholics, as opposed to 25% of Latvians and less than 1% of Estonians. In Latvia, the predominant religious groups include Lutherans (one-third of the population), and Eastern Orthodox (about 20%), whereas in Estonia more than half of the population identify as non-religious, with the predominant religious confessions being Eastern Orthodox (about 15%) and Lutherans (about 10%).

The Baltic countries also have vast religious landscapes. More than 1000 Catholic churches and chapels exist in Lithuania, in addition to more than 200 places of worship belonging to other Christian and non-Christian confessions. There are contemporary monasteries located in 37 geographical locations, Calvaries in four places and Grottos of Lourdes in 33 places (Liutikas, 2014a). Lithuania also has a large number of roadside crosses, crucifixes and chapels. Latvia has almost 300 Lutheran churches, more than 250 Catholic churches, more than 130 Orthodox churches and almost 100 Baptist churches and prayer houses. Estonia has about 450 churches belonging to a number of religious faiths, including Lutherans, Orthodox Christians, Baptists and Catholics.

The above-mentioned figures directly correlate with the number of shrines and religious routes, with most of the developed pilgrimage routes being related to the Catholic tradition. Lithuania has many sacred sites of regional, national and international importance, compared to only a few pilgrimage sites in Latvia and very few in Estonia. However, no comprehensive research into the pilgrimage places and routes of the Baltic countries as a region has been conducted. However, individual studies of pilgrimage and religious tourism in each country are available. Lithuanian pilgrimage places and pilgrim journeys have been analysed by Liutikas (2009, 2012, 2013, 2014a,b, 2015), Mardosa (2003, 2006, 2007), Motuzas (2003), Vosyliūtė (1995, 1996), etc. Latvian pilgrimages to Aglona have been analysed by Juško-Štekele

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(2014, 2015). Estonian sacred places and pilgrimage traditions have been analysed by Pae and Kaur (2004) and Altnurme (2016).

This chapter highlights the main features of historical and contemporary religious pilgrimage routes in the Baltic countries (Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia). It considers the main factors responsible for their creation and seeks to identify the development opportunities they offer. It considers the historical context and the contemporary challenges of religious pilgrimage routes in terms of the preservation of religious heritage and development of tourism. Indeed, pilgrimage routes have become tourist attractions that allow visitors to enjoy new cultural experiences. The opportunities provided by religious routes in the three Baltic countries are highlighted by the SWOT analysis in the chapter's conclusion.

Creating of Sacred Space

The creation and meaning placed upon sacred spaces has been analysed by several scholars from many disciplines (e.g. Eliade, 1959; Lefebvre, 1991; Tuan, 1977, 1978, 2009; Cosgrove, 1984; Soja, 1989; Park, 1994; David and Wilson, 2002; Mazumdar and Mazumdar, 2004; Knott, 2005; Knudsen *et al.*, 2008). The main research focus among these scholars has been how to define sacred spaces and places and how to select them. Indeed, the production of social meanings of space and landscape is an important societal characteristic. The meanings of places are social constructs, helping to create and maintain social identity. Places can serve as an integral element in social relations, as both a determinant of those relations and a product (Bremer, 2006). Places gain their importance in narratives, while stories give places their meanings and influence their future. As such, terms such as 'sense of a place', 'spirit of a place', and the 'sacredness of a place' are given in efforts to socially form the attribute of these locations.

Religious buildings, crosses, statues and various religious images in the landscape are symbols of religious identity. Usually the meanings of a place are collective, constructed by the religious community and based on their understanding of religious tradition. People choose to visit religious places necessary for fulfilment of their spiritual needs. Pilgrims also create their own meaning for sacred places based on their beliefs, experiences, religious values and personal characteristics. According to Tuan (1977, p. 152), religion can either bind people to a place or free them from the same location.

The term 'sacred place' may be used to describe various components on different levels. Sacred on a macro-level are landscape elements (woods, rivers, hills), whole towns or cities (Rome, Jerusalem, Lourdes). Churches, chapels and other houses of worship belong to the category of sacred buildings, which brings us to the intermediate level of 'sacred place'. On the micro-level, we attribute holiness to particular items, such as images, relics, home altars, roadside shrines and crosses. However, important elements in the formation of sacred places include rituals occurring in particular places, stories (earlier myths and legends), special hymns, and during spiritual awakenings.

Sometimes places and spaces have the power to form values and identities, becoming free from one's wishes. They have their own character and strong identity. For example, symbols at sacred places are usually long-lasting and influence social imagination. Sacred sites serve as enduring symbols (Bremer, 2006, p. 30) of the continuance of the religious community itself.

Today, the important sacred places are being incorporated into the tourism industry. Marketing helps to shape the perception of places, and the experience of sacred places becomes a cultural tourism product consumed by mass tourists. New distribution channels, such as the internet, have opened up new opportunities for cultural attractions (Richards, 2001, p. 245).

Historic Context and Contemporary Routes

Christian pilgrimage sites in the Baltic countries formed quite late in comparison with Western Europe. One of the reasons was the late Christianization of the Baltic countries. Crusades came to Christianize the Baltic lands at the end of the 12th century. The city of Riga as the centre of the Brothers of the Sword (later the Livonian Order) was founded in 1201. The beginning of the 13th century saw the start of the conversion

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of the indigenous people of contemporary Latvia and Estonia to Christianity. Lithuania is considered the last pagan nation in Europe, the Christianization of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania having started only in 1387 by the will of the Grand Duke of Lithuania Jogaila and Vytautas the Great. However, the locals maintained their own pagan beliefs for several centuries after the establishment of Christianity. To reach the local people, new Christian sacred places were built on sites which had previously been associated with pre-Christian religions (for example Vilnius Cathedral, Vilnius Calvary).

Various classifications help to describe sacred places in the Baltic countries. First, we can divide sacred places into cultural (various religious buildings, images) and natural (springs, trees, stones, rocks, hills, etc.). The origin of sacred places can be organic (saints' places of work or death, their tombs, graves, etc.) and miraculous (mostly linked to apparitions of the Virgin Mary and miraculous images). Regarding worship, we can divide Christian sacred places into three categories, distinguishing between sites dedicated to the Virgin Mary (miraculous and crowned images in Lithuania and Latvia, apparition sites in Lithuania, the Madonna of Lourdes, statues), sites devoted to Jesus Christ (Calvaries in Lithuania, places of veneration of the Cross such as the Hill of Crosses, roadside crosses and crucifixes, images of Christ) and sites devoted to saints and spiritual leaders (the tomb of St Casimir in Vilnius, the homes of spiritual leaders, extraordinary images and statues).

In terms of tourist interest, we can classify the sacred places into five levels of importance:

(1) international (such as the Hill of Crosses, Vilnius Cathedral, the Gates of Dawn in Vilnius, the Image of Merciful Jesus in Vilnius, Šiluva, Aglona basilica);
(2) national (Samogitian Calvary, Kaunas Cathedral, Trakai, Vilnius Calvary, Skaistkalne, Kraslava, Pivašiūnai, St Paul and St Peter's Cathedral in Tallinn, etc.);
(3) regional (Vepriai Calvary, Krekenava Church, etc.);
(4) local or municipal (parish churches);
(5) individual (churches visited by fathers or forefathers of pilgrims, as well as places of baptism, first Holy Communion, Sacrament of Confirmation or marriage).

The network of sacred places is the basis for pilgrimage routes. Walking pilgrims use minor shrines as intermediate stations in their journey from the profane world to the sacred world. Some routes even include two or three main shrines. For example, pilgrims in Lithuania go from the Hill of Crosses via Tytuvėnai to Šiluva, and from Vilnius via Trakai to Pivašiūnai (see Fig. 9.2).

Lithuanian Sacred Places

The late Christianization of Lithuania and the slow establishment of Christianity influenced Christian pilgrimage traditions. The first churches in Lithuania were built in the late 14th and early 15th centuries. The first pilgrimages are recorded from the 16th century. From that time an important cause of pilgrim journeys became indulgence feasts. Some churches even celebrated several indulgence feasts during the year. Pilgrims travelled to the most well-known feasts from the furthermost parishes.

The first organized pilgrimage journey was held by the Jesuits, from Vilnius to the miraculous image of the Mother of God and Child in Trakai in 1604. That was a journey of reconciliation to ask God to protect them from coming disasters (plague, famine). The leader of the journey was the bishop of Vilnius, Benediktas Vaina, who travelled the whole distance barefoot. After the news of the Apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary in 1608, pilgrims started to flow to Šiluva. A new church was built there in 1627, and during a feast in 1629, 11,000 Holy Communion hosts were distributed.

One of the most important centres for pilgrimage in Lithuania – the Samogitian Calvary – was created between 1637 and 1642 on the initiative of Samogitian Bishop Jurgis Tiškevičius. Since the mid-17th century, the Samogitian Calvary has also been famous for a miraculous image of Mary and the Child Jesus. The Vilnius (Verkių) Calvary was created between 1662 and 1669. Today Lithuania has four open landscape Calvaries (Vilnius, Samogitian, Beržoras and Vepriai), which are the most north-easterly Calvaries in Europe. All Calvaries established in Lithuania became pilgrimage destinations of regional or national importance.

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Fig. 9.1. Visitors to the Hill of Crosses. Courtesy of the author.

In 1636, St Casimir (1458–1484) was declared patron saint of Lithuania. Many pilgrims visited his tomb in Vilnius Cathedral. In the second part of the 17th century, the miraculous image of Mary the Mother of Mercy at the Gates of Dawn in Vilnius became famous.

In general, it can be stated that the main pilgrimage centres of Lithuania were formed in the 16th and the 17th centuries. In the middle of the 19th century a unique spiritual sanctuary was formed – the Hill of Crosses. The construction date of the first cross is not known but larger numbers of crosses are said to have appeared after suppressions of uprisings against the Czarist regime in 1831 and 1863. Relatives of rebels often didn't know the burial grounds of their deceased and so memorialized them on this hill. Other sources state that the beginning of the Hill of Crosses was in 1847, when a sick man in the village of Jurgaičiai made a promise to God to erect a cross on the hill in the event of his recovery. While making a cross, the man got well, and news of his recovery travelled quickly to nearest villages and this stimulated the building of more crosses (see Fig. 9.1).

The 20th century added apparition sites of the Blessed Virgin Mary to the Lithuanian pilgrimage map. Such places as Gulbinėnai, Imbradas, Keturnaujiena and Skiemonys are not officially recognized by the Catholic Church but are very popular as pilgrimage destinations associated with folk religiosity.

Presently, more than 20 major Catholic pilgrimage places can be recognized in Lithuania. The list is based on places visited by contemporary pilgrims and considers visiting traditions, geographical areas of attraction, the number of pilgrims who visit a place, the hierarchical importance of sacred places and their significance. The main and most popular places of pilgrimage today are also on tourist itineraries.

Most Lithuanian sacred places are related to the cult of the Virgin Mary (Šiluva, The Gates of Dawn, Pivašiūnai, Trakai, Pažaislis, Imbradas, Keturnaujiena, Krekenava, Janonys, the Cathedral of Kaunas). Other categories are Calvaries

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(in Vilnius, Vepriai, Beržoras, Tytuvėnai, Samogitian Calvary) and places related to saints and the cults of holy persons (the cult of St Casimir in the Cathedral of Vilnius and the cult of Blessed Jurgis Matulaitis in Marijampolė). In addition, there are places of worship of the Cross (the Hill of Crosses), holy springs (Alksnėnai) and the Vilnius Divine Mercy Shrine, which contains the first image of Merciful Jesus to be painted according to St Faustina's visions.

Some pilgrimage sites attract not only local pilgrims but also foreign visitors. Lithuania has very important pilgrim sites that are well known in the Christian world: The Hill of Crosses, the Gates of Dawn in Vilnius, Vilnius Cathedral Basilica, Šiluva, the Divine Mercy Shrine. These pilgrimage sites of international importance attract pilgrims from the entire Christian world.

Pilgrim Routes in Lithuania

Lithuania has many traditional pilgrim routes. Pilgrimage destinations that can be reached on foot include Šiluva, the Samogitian Calvary, the Gates of Dawn, Pivašiūnai, the Hill of Crosses, Krekenava and Trakai. The journeys begin in various Lithuanian regions, but the traditional pilgrim routes are from Vilnius to Trakai and Pivašiūnai, from the Hill of Crosses to Šiluva, from Kretinga to Žemaičių Kalvarija, from Raseiniai to Šiluva, from Alytus to Pivašiūnai, from Naujamiestis to Krekenava, from Alytus to the Gates of Dawn, from Šiauliai to the Hill of Crosses, etc.

In 2014 the Community of Lithuanian Pilgrims published a map guide called *Pilgrim Routes in Lithuania* with seven pilgrimage routes: (1) Vilnius–Pivašiūnai (via Trakai, Rūdiškės, Onuškis); (2) Kaunas–Šiluva (via Vilkija, Ariogala, Raseiniai); (3) The Hill of Crosses–Šiluva (via Šiauliai, Tytuvėnai); (4) Kražiai–Samogitian Calvary (via Varniai, Telšiai, Alsėdžiai); (5) Palanga–Samogitian Calvary (via Kretinga, Kartena, Šateikiai, Beržoras, Plateliai); (6) Panevėžys–Vepriai (via Krekenava, Paberžė, Kėdainiai, Šėta); (7) Sintautai–Sanctuary of Crosses (via Keturnaujiena, Alksnėnai, Marijampolė, Simnas) (see Fig. 9.2). The guide offers pilgrims more than 80 important pilgrimage sites in various regions of Lithuania.

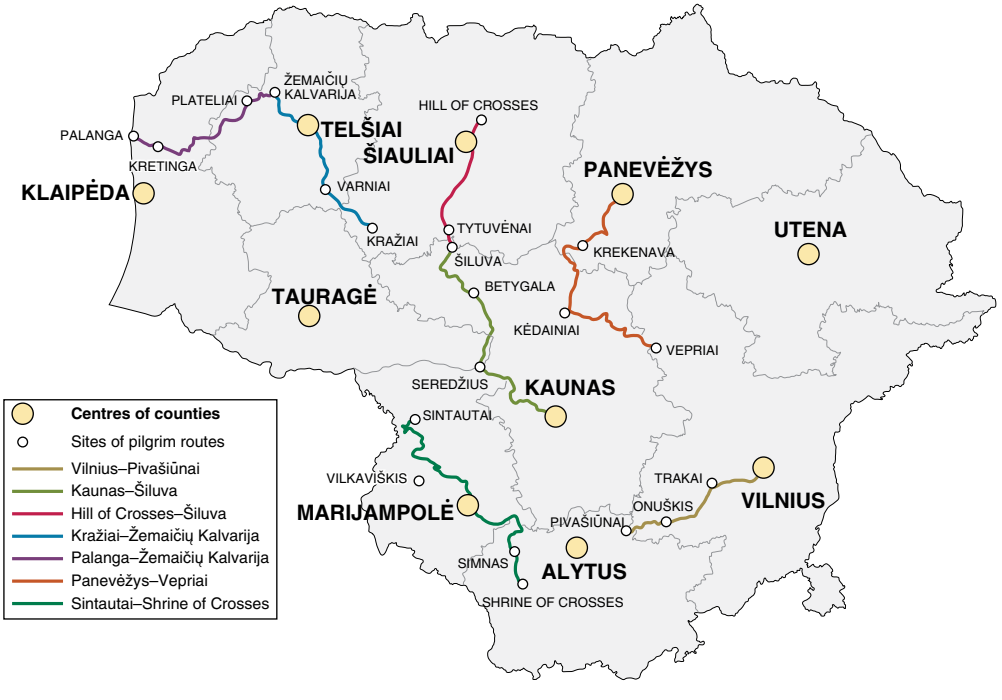

Fig. 9.2. Pilgrim routes in Lithuania. Courtesy of the author.

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Another important initiative was the establishment of the Pilgrim Route of John Paul II. With the coming of the 15th anniversary of the Pope's visit to Lithuania, the Lithuanian Bishops Conference decided to join all the sanctuaries which were visited by the Pope during his visit to form a single Pilgrimage route. In 2007, the Lithuanian Government confirmed the pilgrimage programme and it gained national importance.

Nineteen pilgrimage and religious places in Lithuania are now included in this route. Some of them are the traditional pilgrimage places, which the Pope visited in Lithuania, while others are sites of pious renown, which received the Holy Father's attention and are somehow connected with him. The most frequently visited religious places have significant pilgrimage traditions: the Chapel of St Casimir in Vilnius Cathedral Basilica; the Gates of Dawn Chapel and St Teresa's Church in Vilnius); Vilnius Calvary; the Trakai Church of the Visitation; Kaunas Cathedral Basilica; Pažaislis Church and Monastery; the Shrine of Šiluva; the Tytuvėnai Church and Monastery; the Hill of Crosses; Samogitian Calvary Shrine; Marijampolė Basilica and Chapel in Lūginė; the Pivašiūnai Church of the Assumption; the Divine Mercy Shrine in Vilnius; the Krekenava Shrine.

The newest initiative is the establishment of the St James route in Lithuania. In June 2016 the Lithuanian Government approved 32 objects (mostly Catholic churches) pertaining to the St James routes in Lithuania.

There are also pilgrimage places of other Christian confessions in Lithuania. The Orthodox Church of the Holy Spirit in Vilnius is probably the most famous site housing the relics and remains of three martyrs of Vilnius: Anthony, John and Eustathiosis.

In general, the network of Lithuanian pilgrimage places is clear and well established. The pilgrimage shrines falling into this network have spiritual significance and longstanding cultural and religious traditions of piety and visiting. However, many local travellers use both traditional and new pilgrimage routes.

Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in Latvia and Estonia

The most popular Latvian pilgrimage site, Aglona, dates to the 17th century, when the Dominican order founded a monastery and built the first wooden church. In 1699 the wooden church burned down. The present baroque style church was built in 1768–1780. The Church is famous for the miraculous image of Our Lady of Aglona, which is a copy of the Trakai Miraculous Image of the Virgin Mary in Lithuania. Pilgrims come to Aglona every year on 15 August to celebrate the day of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary into Heaven. Aglona is also the main destination in Latvia for pilgrimages on foot. Pilgrims start their journey from various cities: Riga, Liepaja, Jurmala, Valmiera, Jelgava, Daugavpils, etc.

An important place for Latvian Catholics is St Meinhard's island in Ikskile, where the first Livs were baptized by bishop Meinhard at the end of the 12th century, and the first stone church was built. The island is situated in the Daugava River and can be reached by boat or on foot (in summer). In 1993, Pope John Paul II declared Bishop Meinhard to be the first apostle and saint of Latvia. The church dedicated to St Meinhard was built in Ogre in 1997.

Another important Latvian pilgrimage centre is Skaistkalne near the Lithuanian border. In Skaistkalne, the baroque Virgin Mary Church was built in the 17th century. In the Church there is a miraculous image of the Virgin Mary – the Protectress of Latvian Families. Skaistkalne Church is the second most popular pilgrimage destination after Aglona.

In the Latgale region, pilgrims can also visit regional pilgrimage sites: Kraslava Church (famous for the relics of saint Donatus); Sarkani Church (famous for a miraculous image of the Virgin Mary); Indrica wooden Church near Kraslava (built 1655–1658, the oldest wooden church in Latgale); and Pasiene Holy Cross Roman Catholic Church (baroque church in Zilupe municipality, famous for its magnificent interior). Latvia also has some important monuments dedicated to saints (e.g. St Roland in Riga). The most important sacred place for Orthodox Christians is the Nativity Cathedral in Riga.

Estonia has some old churches and some pilgrim routes. The St Paul and Peter Cathedral in Tallinn dates back to the middle of the 19th century. Another well-known place is the ruins of St Mary's Chapel in Viru-Nigula. This chapel was built in the 13th century. Estonia also has some important Eastern Orthodox centres, such as Puhtitsa Convent in Kuremae near Lake Peipus.

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This convent was not closed during Soviet times and attracted pilgrims from all over the Soviet Union. Recently developed pilgrim routes go from Pirita monastery to Vastselina from the north-west to the south-east of Estonia. The St James Estonian route goes from north to south.

The Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church has set up a project called 'Wayfarers' Churches' which seeks to attract visitors to various churches (Teeliste Kirikud, 2016). The project involves short descriptions and sometimes photos of Lutheran churches and other churches from different denominations. In all, 448 churches are listed in the project.

Pilgrims from Baltic countries often visit each other's shrines. Altnurme (2016) noticed that during the Soviet period some Estonians were fascinated by religious activities in Lithuania and undertook pilgrimage to the Hill of Crosses. Pilgrims from Lithuania organize groups to visit the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary into Heaven in Aglona, Latvian pilgrims travel to the Samogitian Calvary, Hill of Crosses, Šiluva, etc.

It is interesting to see how many religious places are mentioned in travel guides dedicated to the Baltic countries. The DK Eyewitness travel guide for Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania (2015) mentions more than 100 religious sites (churches, cathedrals, chapels, monasteries and other shrines). The Insight Guide (2016) mentions more than 80 religious sites. The Lonely Planet travel guide (2016) mentions 39 churches, cathedrals and monasteries (see Fig. 9.3).

Nowadays various roadside chapels, crosses and monasteries mark pilgrims' routes from *profanum* to *sacrum*, and these structures seek to respond to the spiritual needs of travelling pilgrims. For example, in Lithuania about 50 crosses and wayside shrines were built near the road from Raseiniai to Šiluva shrine, and chapels of the Way of the Cross were established in 2012–2014. The Latgale region in Latvia is also famous for crucifixes and crosses, which symbolically mark the way to Aglona Basilica. In some places, they even reach 4 m high.

The main problem for Latvia and Estonia and even for Lithuania is the promotion of routes, both traditional and newly established, to international pilgrims. Locals travel to religious places mostly for special feasts. However, pilgrims' footpaths are not marked, and there is a lack of infrastructure and services for pilgrims.

Some of the reasons for the underdeveloped infrastructure in pilgrimage places lie in the 20th century history of the Baltic countries. For 50 years in the 20th century, all the Baltic countries were subject to Soviet occupation with communism and atheist propaganda. During the Soviet occupation, various obstructions were used to prevent people from visiting sacred places, and a campaign of physical destruction of sacred places was conducted. The revival of the sacred places of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia started after the restoration of countries' independence in the last decade of the 20th century.

From 4 to 10 September 1993, Pope John Paul II visited all three Baltic countries. He prayed in the most important religious pilgrimage places: the Gates of Dawn in Vilnius, Vilnius Cathedral, Kaunas Cathedral, the Hill of Crosses, the Virgin Mary apparition site in Šiluva, the Catholic Cathedral of Riga, Aglona Marian Shrine and the Church of Sts Peter and Paul in Tallinn. During his stay in Vilnius, the Pope also visited the Church of the Holy Spirit (a meeting was held there with members of the Lithuanian Polish community) and the Vilnius University Church of St John's (a meeting was held there with the representatives of the Lithuanian cultural and scientific community). Ecumenical meetings with the other Christian communities were held at the Lutheran Cathedral of Riga and the Lutheran Church of St Nicholas in Tallinn.

Sacred Places as Tourism Attractions

The Baltic countries constitute an emerging tourism region. In 2014, 2.063 million tourists (overnight visitors) visited Lithuania, 2.918 million visited Estonia and 1.843 million visited Latvia (OECD, 2016). There were 13.894 million domestic trips in Lithuania (2.649 million tourist trips and 11.245 million day trippers or people on excursions), 11.413 million in Latvia (8.155 million day trippers and 3.258 million overnight visitors or tourists) and 1.104 million domestic tourists in Estonia.

Today, all the main pilgrimage sites are included in the tourism routes. However, the numbers of domestic and international tourists travelling to sacred places are not known. Previous research by the author showed that 9% of Lithuanians travel to religious pilgrimage sites (Liutikas, 2013) at least once a year.

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Fig. 9.3. Pilgrimage places in the Baltic countries.

Pilgrimage sites in the Baltic countries are exceptional places of religious and cultural heritage. It is important that pilgrims not only receive spiritual favours but also get to know the culture and traditions of the various regions they visit. Visiting sacred places also has a significant economic impact on the regions. Shelters, inns and hostels were established along pilgrimage routes as early as the Middle Ages. However, there is a shortage of accommodation for pilgrimage routes, especially in remote rural areas. Possible solutions include using rural

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homesteads, asking locals for accommodation or staying overnight in tents.

Pilgrimage routes are also tourism attractions that draw tourists towards new experiences. Sacred sites can be used for leisure and as arenas for diverse traditional events. With their rituals, ancient traditions and symbolism, religious feasts (and indulgence feasts) highlight intangible cultural heritage, especially in rural areas, attracting tourists and other visitors.

McGettigan and Burns (2001, p. 138) state that an attraction is magnetic, it draws people. First, magnetism exists in the eyes of the traveller, and each traveller has unique interests and preferences. Second, magnetism is also a product of design, development and management. This magnetism is influenced by the characteristics of the sacred places, which usually have exceptional locations or architecture, history or symbolic meanings.

The present authors' research shows that the real motivation and values of some 'pilgrims' are not related to religion or a quest for sacredness. These pseudo-pilgrims (Liutikas, 2009, 2015) travel for recreational, cognitive or social reasons. Such persons choose the journey in order to diversify their holiday or weekend, to experience new emotions or just for curiosity. Occasionally, the choice of a journey may be predetermined by its lower price (especially when travelling abroad) or by a desire to seek new social relations. Factor analysis conducted by Liutikas (2009) grouped all travellers into four groups. Up to one-third of 'pilgrims' associate the main values of the journey with good leisure time (pilgrimage is considered as a way of spending leisure time), and almost 30% – with personal growth (the journey is seen as an opportunity for inner change). Only one-third of travellers attribute to such journeys their primary and actual sense, which is a religious act during which the priority is communication with God and prayer (i.e. the journey is considered as an expression of religious values). About 3% of pilgrims understood the journey as a ritual requiring physical effort (Liutikas, 2012).

Cultural Heritage and Management

Sacred places account for a considerable portion of cultural heritage items. For example, more than 30% of Christian churches (322 churches) in Lithuania are included in the nation's list of cultural heritage. This status could help some of them to be included in tourism routes, creating pride among locals, and generating private and public funds for conservation.

The local community, tourism managers and the public authorities responsible for the preservation of cultural heritage all have different motives and objectives. Even local communities have varying approaches to pilgrims and tourists. Local entrepreneurs often express hostility to religious pilgrims, who are potential users of comforts and services and participants in the souvenir market. Others are unhappy with inappropriate tourist activities (e.g. a lack of respect for religious sites or inappropriate behaviour) or with the general commoditization of sacred places.

As Levi and Kocher (2009) point out, tourism provides a powerful political and economic justification for the conservation of sacred historic places. Tourism activities represent an important source of income for tourism planners, entrepreneurs, the Church and its related institutions, and local authorities. The negative aspects of tourism for cultural heritage are excessive numbers and inappropriate acts and behaviour, commercialization and changes to the environment surrounding heritage sites. Too many tourists could spoil the spiritual sense of a pilgrimage location.

For some authors (e.g. Nyaupane *et al.*, 2015), the greater the social distance between locals and visitors, the higher the possibility of misunderstandings, leading to annoyance and discord. One solution is the active involvement of the various stakeholders (travel guides, visitor group leaders, the media, guidebook authors, the managers of sacred sites, policy makers and service providers), who can play an important role in mitigating potential dissonance.

Another important role played by stakeholders (especially planners and managers of pilgrimages) is the creation of pilgrimage routes, including particular places and events, together with descriptions of the context of the journey. Not all religious pilgrimage sites are able to accommodate large numbers of visitors at one time. However, since pilgrimage routes are very varied, such dispersion can help to distribute the large flows of pilgrims.

In general, a shortage of tourism infrastructure in the regions is an important problem in the Baltic countries. On the other hand, visitors can have more authentic experiences. In some places along pilgrimage routes, there are opportunities

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for locals to accommodate pilgrims in their houses or privately run cottages. The absence of entertainment in certain places could actually encourage travelling on religious routes.

Appropriate management of religious pilgrimage sites is becoming very important. Pae and Kaur (2004) noticed that special management and maintenance is important in order to preserve religious places. Important elements of this management include market segmentation (the motives of pilgrims and tourists vary widely), selection and targeting (the needs of religious tourists and pure pilgrims differ), onsite translation and marking (different messages for tourists, pilgrims and locals), and physical or social constraints on visitor access, circulation and behaviour.

The behaviour of religious pilgrims depends on their motivation, cultural traditions, experience, perception of sacred places, etc. The key to successful management of religious sites is understanding pilgrims' experiences and the meanings that they attach to religious heritage.

Conclusions. Perspectives on Religious Pilgrimage Routes in the Baltic Countries

Sacred places have strong social meanings, and pilgrims give their own meanings to them based on their beliefs, experiences, religious values and personal characteristics. Usually sacred places also have pleasant scenic attributes. They are involved in tourism routes or could be tourist attractions in their own right.

The Baltic countries represent a very favourable area for the discovery and creation of new religious routes. For example, a fair number of religious tourism and religious heritage places exist in the Baltic countries (especially in Lithuania and Latvia). Some of these places are exceptional well-known pilgrimage sites, such as the Hill of Crosses. In addition, the region has attractive and scenic landscapes related to pilgrimage sites in the countryside and the rich architectural and historical heritage in cities that can encourage pilgrimages via walking, cycling, or driving. Also, there are various visiting traditions for Church events. Indulgence feasts in Lithuania and the Catholic part of Latvia are rooted in traditions. Many sacred places become walking pilgrimage destinations during these feasts or other special occasions.

Conversely, the development of religious routes faces some important limitations and weaknesses. The attraction of the region is fragmented, the image of the Baltic countries as places of religious routes is very limited, and tourism policies are more oriented to other goals. As such, the promotion of religious tourism sites and religious routes is very marginal, and there is a lack of coordinated efforts to promote the region as suitable for religious tourism. Also, the lack of tourism infrastructure in rural areas could create problems for some religious tourists (insufficient transport, accommodation, catering services, toilets). There is also a lack of entertainment and outdoor activities at pilgrimage sites in rural areas.

As such, the development of religious routes could have several benefits to these countries, including increased numbers of religious tourists and greater attractiveness of the Baltic countries, and the development of new tourism products and services (e.g. sightseeing, accommodation, local crafts and souvenirs, etc.). However, such development may add to the commoditization of sacred places, giving potential for disagreements between tourists and locals at the sacred places. Intense competition from other regions in Eastern Europe such as Poland, the Czech Republic and Ukraine could also be a threat to the attraction of sacred places.

In conclusion, it can be stated that the various existing and emerging projects associated with religious routes show the potential of religious tourism in the Baltic countries. The production of religious meaning, the maintenance of religious artefacts and the 'sacred' environment of pilgrimage sites, and the development of awareness of religious heritage can all help to offer diversified religious experiences along religious routes in the Baltic countries.

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21 Discussion Points

Chapter 1: Discussion Questions

- Explain why there has been an increased interest in religious and pilgrimage travel. Why have religous pilgrimage routes and trails become so popular?
- Can you think of additional types of themes used in linear tourism development?
- What are the benefits of developing linear tourism routes and trails?
- What is the difference between a *route* and a *trail*?

Chapter 2: Discussion Questions

- The religious itinerary is rooted in the territories to which it belongs, becoming cultural capital that is made available by means of a mechanism of social identification. To what degree does this embeddedness (cognitive exchange with the outside) change the cultural characteristics of the religious itinerary?
- What is the role of the cultural product represented by the religious itinerary in developing the cognitive potential of the regions involved?
- From a geographical perspective, how do the places evolve in response to the effects of the intraglobal cultural product represented by the religious route?
- What could be the new indicators of the sustainability of the religious route and its impact on the regions and communities involved?

Chapter 3: Discussion Questions

- Why is scale such an important part of understanding heritage trails?
- What is the difference between 'organic' and 'purposeful' routes and trails?
- Why are participatory, community-based efforts important to the successful creation and maintenance of routes and trails?
- How can organic and purposive trails also help destinations and regions develop socially?

Chapter 4: Discussion Questions

- Why are experience and authenticity important factors in the promotion and management of pilgrimage routes and trails?
- What is the difference between taking a pilgrimage and the routes and trails associated with pilgrimages?
- Discuss ways in which effective communication help enhance the pilgrim/tourist experience along linear routes.

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- Try to list two or three pilgrimage routes or trails that fit within each of the scenarios in Box 4.1.

Chapter 5: Discussion Questions

- An ecosystem-based approach should be included in the sustainable tourism management plans. Is this a realistic assumption?
- In order to estimate religious tourism's 'long-term' impact on the environment, it is necessary to collect both ecological and economic data. What is the best way to achieve this goal?
- Is 'biodiversity loss' a key aspect to be carefully addressed in the development of religious routes?
- Economic development or environmental protection? What is the role of each aspect in a governance oriented to achieve the Sustainable Development goals as defined by the United Nations?

Chapter 6: Discussion Questions

- What are the strong points of the Saint Martin of Tours Route? Do the local regional actors recognize these assets?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Route as a network?
- How could government officials and tourism entrepreneurs in the regions interact to foster regional development?
- What social improvements from the projects are expected to increase sustainability and encourage slow tourism?
- What are the best practices in order to include all the itinerary's regions and local actors in the activities?

Chapter 7: Discussion Questions

- The Way of St James has always had a significant symbolic role in relation to the unity of Spain and Europe. Nowadays is it possible that the Jacobean routes serve as a historical symbolic asset to try to recover European cohesion and identity? And in that case, what are the strategies to follow?
- A second debate focuses on the sustainability of the Way. Can it be maintained in future years? Will it suffer problems of overcrowding, especially in the next Holy Year of 2021? How can these sustainability issues be overcome?
- In light of the success of the Way of St James, pilgrimage and cultural routes have proliferated. Should Santiago, from a leadership position, help promote these itineraries as they represent a singular travelling experience?
- A large part of the success of the Way of St James resides in its spiritual component, or at least in the mix of strictly tourism elements (relaxation, sport, fun, nature, art, etc.) and others that address people's inner lives (beliefs, values, vital concerns, etc.). Discuss how stakeholders could practically maintain a balance between the two.

Chapter 8: Discussion Questions

- Why is it important to involve stakeholders at various levels in the development of these tourism routes?
- Do you think that it is necessary for all the Holy Grail routes to hold to the same story regarding the origins and history of the Holy Grail? Would this help or hinder development?
- Do you think that the development of tourism routes based on the Holy Grail is a good or bad idea? Argue the pros and cons of this development.
- Discuss how the implementation of dimensions of service quality based on SERVQUAL, HOLSAT and HISTOQUAL principles may help make this Holy Grail project more sustainable and successful.

Chapter 9: Discussion Questions

- What are the keys to the successful management of religious sites along religious pilgrimage routes and trails?
- How is sacred space created? What role do religious buildings and pilgrimage play in the development of sacred space?

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- What are the main factors influencing the development of new religious routes in the Baltic Countries?
- How can religious tourism sites in the Baltic Countries be promoted more effectively?

Chapter 10: Discussion Questions

- Discuss the historical development of pilgrimage on Malta.
- Why do the most important pilgrimages occur during Lent?
- What are some of the modern attitudes of residents in Malta towards pilgrimage? What have church authorities done because of these attitudes to change their pilgrimages?
- Should the Malta Tourism Authority promote religious festivals and pilgrimages? What are the pros and cons of governments becoming involved in this manner?

Chapter 11: Discussion Questions

- For the construction of a cultural itinerary with a religious basis, knowledge of the historical background and the scientific accuracy of its presentation to the wider public are essential. Is it possible to transpose this to a transnational and possibly multi-religious route aimed at conveying messages of peace and intercultural dialogue?
- The route seeks to produce an authentic sacred landscape, in continuous liaison with the destination, but in some ways independent from it. What cultural heritage instruments need to be activated in order for this to happen?
- Why has Jerusalem been a spiritual magnet for pilgrimage in many cultures?
- Look at Figure 11.3. What might be some of the difficulties with creating and managing a religious trail that extends over multiple countries?

Chapter 12: Discussion Questions

- Is there a special need for development of marked religious tourism routes in Central and Northern Europe, located away from the most important European pilgrimage centres and the great peregrination routes towards Jerusalem and Santiago de Compostela?
- To what extent are Central and Northern Europe part of the Pan-European network of major pilgrimage routes to the Holy Land and the tomb of St James in Compostela?
- Do the larger local shrines in Central Europe and Scandinavia have a chance of becoming important European pilgrimage centres?
- What factors contribute to shrines' development and which factors give rise to restrictions?

Chapter 13: Discussion Questions

- Why is the Dnyaneshwar palkhi pilgrimage so important to the people in this region of India?
- What role does social politics play in deciding the roles different people play in the pilgrimage and where people sleep at night?
- What are some of the economic, cultural, and environmental pros and cons of this pilgrimage?
- Who should be responsible for cleaning the mess that is left behind by pilgrims? The towns through which the pilgrimage moves, or the pilgrim groups themselves? Explain your answer.

Chapter 14: Discussion Questions

- What is meant by circumambulate? How is this type of pilgrimage different from a linear pilgrimage?
- What role do religious calendars play in the development and timing of religious pilgrimages?
- Who participates in the Panchakroshi Yatra pilgrimage? Are their characteristics different than what you may have first thought?
- What efforts have been made to improve the infrastructure of the Panchakroshi

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Yatra pilgrimage route? What other things can be done to improve the route?

Chapter 15: Discussion Questions

- Why are physical features of the environment often seen as sacred? Why do the Tenggerese people believe Mount Bromo is sacred?
- What items do the Tenggerese throw in to Mount Bromo, and why?
- What are some of the ways in which tourism has changed the nature and management of the Yadnya Kasada pilgrimage?
- What would you do to better manage the Yadnya Kasada pilgrimage in the face of tourism development?

Chapter 16: Discussion Questions

- Do you think that Bruce Feiler is correct when he states, 'Today religion is more threatened than ever, yet sacred journeys are more popular than ever'? Explain.
- What is 'transaction', and why is this practice important in Japanese society?
- How does transaction take place within the Shikoku pilgrimage?
- Do these transactions differ from the types of transactions that take place when engaging in tourism? Explain.

Chapter 17: Discussion Questions

- How is heritage travel to discover one's ancestry like pilgrimage travel?
- Why are stakeholders in Cameroon interested in promoting their slave heritage?
- What have been some of the problems with creating slave trails in Cameroon?
- Do you feel that promoting slave heritage is the way Cameroon should go to increase tourist visitation? Discuss.

Chapter 18: Discussion Questions

- Why is the statue of the Virgin of the Rosary so important to the people living in Talpa de Allende and surrounding area?
- What role do religious festivals play in the seasonal visitation patterns of pilgrims to Talpa de Allende?
- Why is death such a prevalent theme along the Ruta to Talpa de Allende?
- Do you think that the building of the architectural interventions along the Ruta will lead to increased international tourist visitation in the long run?

Chapter 19: Discussion Questions

- Why is the Mormon Trail, as well as the history of the Latter-day Saint Church, so important to members of the Church?
- What challenges might arise in managing the Mormon Trail when it is also a part of the United States National Park Service?
- Why do young men and women in the Church participate in handcart reenactments?
- What would you do to preserve the original wagon ruts along the Mormon Trail?

Chapter 20: Discussion Questions

- Why does there seem to be a high level of uniformity among cultural and religious groups concerning the formal and informal practice of pilgrimage (Collins-Kreiner, 2010)?
- Why is the the development of religious pilgrimage routes and trails not ideal in the context of tourism attraction development?
- Do you agree that 'religious pilgrimages have been conducted for many centuries without causing environmental, cultural and social damage to local communities'?
- What are the changes that might occur to a person who travels along religious pilgrimage routes and trails.

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Religious Pilgrimage Routes and Trails

Sustainable Development and Management

Edited by **Daniel H. Olsen** and **Anna Trono**

For millennia people have travelled to religious sites for worship, initiatory and leisure purposes. Today there are hundreds, if not thousands, of religious pilgrimage routes and trails around the world that are used by pilgrims and tourists. Indeed, many religious pilgrimage routes and trails are today used as themes by tourism marketers in an effort to promote regional economic development.

Providing a holistic approach to religious pilgrimage routes and trails, this book:

- Addresses important conceptual themes such as sustainable local development, regional economic development, heritage identity and management, and promoting environmentally friendly practices;
- Includes global case studies to help transfer theory into good practice;
- Calls for further discussion of the importance of better planning, management, and maintenance of these routes and trails, so that the positive benefits of this type of tourism development can be fully realized.

An important resource for those interested in religious tourism and pilgrimage, this book is also an invaluable collection for academics and policy makers within heritage tourism and regional development.