



THE LABEL
/ Gājējam draudzīgs
/ Hiker-friendly



**CRITERIA AND GUIDELINES
FOR TOURISM SERVICE
PROVIDERS**

The label

LATVIA



ESTONIA



LITHUANIA



What is the “Hiker-Friendly” label?

Hiking tourists are in close contact with the region in which they are and find it particularly important to feel that they are welcome and understood. This emotion is primarily created by visual information such as information stands, directional signs, appropriate information materials, thematic books and guidebooks. Hikers are expecting to find necessary products at local shops, as well as knowledgeable and helpful people who want to assist them.

In many places where hikes are popular, there are signs or stickers which read “*Hiker-Friendly*”. This may be a part of a certification programme, and the signs are only received by venues which meet the relevant criteria. The labels may also be used by responsible tourism organisations, with businesses being free to choose whether or not they want to post the label. In other cases, this can be the initiative of businesses as such.

The “*Hiker-Friendly*” sticker or label is an effective way of demonstrating that the target audience is welcome. The labels are well-known all over the world, and travellers who spot them clearly understand that their needs will be understood and that there will be someone who will be prepared to share valuable information.

If a tourism product is to be successful, involved parties must have the same hospitality quality principles. The criteria can help tourism companies to orient themselves. General criteria are appropriate for any tourism service provider, while criteria for accommodations only apply to accommodations.

Who can receive the label?

The “*Hiker-Friendly*” sign is available to any service providers for tourists in the Baltic States that want to be “friendly” toward hikers and to offer the relevant services to the target audience. The label is not linked to any specific pathway or route.

The “*Hiker-Friendly*” criteria are guidelines for service providers. Some of them are mandatory, while others are recommended. A company which wants to get the sign must satisfy at least 75% of the mandatory criteria.

Who awards the label?

During the course of the project "Long distance cross-border hiking trail "The Forest Trail"" (Nr. CB779), the label is awarded by the rural tourism association in Latvia "Baltic Country Holidays", rural tourism association in Estonia "Eesti Maaturism", and a series of partners, by nominating and evaluating the candidates. Decisions are made on the basis of the information which applicants have submitted about the "Hiker-Friendly" criteria. Decisions are taken at least 1-2 times per year or when needed.

Approved applicants are presented with the "Hiker-Friendly" label, and it must be posted somewhere where tourists can spot it. Applicants also receive an electronic version of the label for advertising and marketing purposes. During the course of the project, the label is free of charge.

Organisation responsible for issuing the label

in LATVIA

Latvian
Country Tourism
Association
"Lauku Ceļotājs"



Lauku Ceļotājs
www.celotajs.lv

www.celotajs.lv

in ESTONIA

Estonian
Rural Tourism NGO



www.maaturism.ee

in LITHUANIA

Lithuanian
countryside
tourism association



www.atostogoskaime.lt

Use and review of the label

The "Hiker-Friendly" label is awarded for a non-specific period of time. The cases in which the recipient of the label must be revisited so as to decide whether to leave the label in place or annul it:

- There have been negative responses from visitors;
- The service and/or service provider has changed.

If the offer has changed substantially and the quality and compliance with "Hiker-Friendly" criteria has been endangered, then a decision can be taken on annulling the label.

GENERAL CRITERIA:



1.	The topic of hiking is included in the service provider's advertising, with links to hiking routes that are in the neighbourhood.	RECOMMENDED
2.	There is visible and full information about the route (a map if it is a long distance, or a map of a specific part of the trail. The information should include the length of the route, the level of difficulty, the approximate time to cover the route, the road cover, starting and finishing points, obstacles, dangerous places, alternative phases, etc. There should also be information about available services such as accommodations, dining facilities, stores, rest areas, lavatories and tourism information centres). PS! If any of the trails is passing the protected area, where various restrictions may be present, there should be information available about this (both that there is protected area and that there are restrictions).	OBLIGATORY
3.	Information about routes and services is available in at least one foreign language (recommended in English).	OBLIGATORY
4.	The service provider speaks a foreign language	RECOMMENDED
5.	The service provider is familiar with local routes, but also the local area, interesting destinations, etc.	RECOMMENDED
6.	If the service provider has a dog, the dog must be kept behind a fence or kennel so that it does not threaten tourists (there should be a sign to say that there is a dog).	OBLIGATORY
7.	There is information about what to do if there are health problems (the closest medical institution, the closest pharmacy, etc.).	OBLIGATORY
8.	The service provider has a first-aid kit.	OBLIGATORY
9.	There is information about public transportation.	OBLIGATORY
10.	Wi-Fi Internet is available.	OBLIGATORY
11.	There is drinking water or a chance to purchase water or fill up existing water bottles.	OBLIGATORY
12.	There is an opportunity to charge up electronic devices.	OBLIGATORY
13.	There are possibilities for cleaning the footwear before entering the accommodation (special brushes or other solutions near the entrance).	RECOMMENDED

CRITERIA FOR ACCOMMODATIONS:



1.	The accommodation is available for hikers during the active tourism season (May to October) and during the weekends despite other possible events.	OBLIGATORY
2.	There is an opportunity to spend just one night at the accommodations.	OBLIGATORY
3.	There is an opportunity to clean and dry wet or dirty clothing, boots and other personal equipment (a separate room or a place in a room with brushes to clean clothing and footwear).	OBLIGATORY
4.	There is a possibility to launder apparel and wash dirty hiking boots.	RECOMMENDED
5.	There is a shower or bathtub with hot water.	OBLIGATORY
6.	It is possible to make a last-minute reservation (if there are vacancies) by ringing the service provider, besides a reservation system that requires the Internet.	OBLIGATORY
7.	It is possible to enter or leave the accommodation if the traveller plans to arrive later or leave earlier than the normal opening hours of the accommodation.	OBLIGATORY
8.	Bedrooms and other rooms in the building are heated when it is cold outside (if there is no central heating system, then there are electric heaters or other types of heating).	RECOMMENDED
9.	Personal property can be left safely while the tourist goes to a store or a tourism destination.	RECOMMENDED
10.	The accommodation offer dinner or can point to dining facilities that are nearby (10-15 minutes away on foot).	RECOMMENDED
11.	Breakfast is offered starting at 7:00 AM.	RECOMMENDED
12.	Breakfast and lunch can be packed so that the hikers can take them along with themselves.	RECOMMENDED
13.	There is possibility to boil water at any time (including before and after meals).	OBLIGATORY

14.	There is a kitchen or kitchenette to prepare meals, including dish-ware, pots and pans.	OBLIGATORY if dining is not offered, RECOMMENDED otherwise
15.	If there is leased inventory, the owner is familiar with its use.	RECOMMENDED
16.	There is information about local guides and other service providers.	OBLIGATORY
17.	There is additional information about environmental and cultural tourism opportunities if they are nearby and can be reached quickly on foot. PS! If any of the trails is passing the protected area, where various restrictions may be present, there should be information available about this (both that there is protected area and that there are restrictions).	OBLIGATORY
18.	There is an offer to transport travellers and baggage to the closest public transportation stop, or there is information about who can do so.	RECOMMENDED
19.	Help is offered in terms of reserving the next accommodations or services if necessary.	OBLIGATORY
20.	There is possibility to buy necessary items for hikers (garbage bags, water bottles, protein snacks, packed lunch, bandages, sunscreens, repellents, protective lotions for the footwear, matches, raincoats, gas for the stove, dining utensils etc.).	RECOMMENDED
21.	There are massage and/or sauna services, or the accommodations partner with nearby neighbours to offer such services.	RECOMMENDED
22.	Options available for luggage transfer.	RECOMMENDED
23.	There is a possibility to make fire or to use a grill.	RECOMMENDED
24.	Travelers with pets are welcomed.	RECOMMENDED



Examples of other countries

QUALITY LABEL

EXPLANATION



The “*Hiker-Friendly*” quality certificate is awarded to hotels in **Greece**, and it has four levels (Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum) depending on the number of mandatory and elective criteria and the way in which the hotel has satisfied them.



The quality sign that is awarded to accommodations in **Austria**, with three categories - Bronze, Silver and Gold.



The “*Qualitätsgastgeber Wanderbares Deutschland*” quality certification that is awarded to accommodations and dining venues in **Germany**. The number of criteria that must be satisfied depends on the type of accommodations or dining facilities.



The “*Wandelaars welkom*” quality sign that is awarded to accommodations and dining facilities in the **Netherlands**.

About the project

The Forest Trail's Northern part (from Riga-Tallinn) is being currently developed under the **Central Baltic program project No. 779 'Long distance cross border hiking trail 'The Forest Trail'**, while the Southern part (from the Lithuanian / Polish border through Kurzeme to Riga) is being developed within the **Interreg V-A Latvia – Lithuania Programme 2014-2020 project LLI-448 "Development of Forest trail In Latvia and Lithuania and expanding the Baltic Coastal Hiking route in Lithuania"**. Both trails will be part of the E11 route of the European long distance hiking trail network by ERA – European Ramblers' Association. The total length of the Forest Trail in all three Baltic states will be more than 2000 km, and the trail will include all forest types and wildlife features typical of the Baltic States.

ORGANISATION RESPONSIBLE FOR ISSUING THE SIGN

ESTONIA



Estonian Rural Tourism NGO

Vilmsi 53 G, Tallina, 10147, Igaunija
T: +372 6009999;
E-pasts: eesti@maaturism.ee
www.maaturism.ee

LATVIA



Lauku Ceļotājs

www.celotajs.lv

Latvian Country Tourism Association "Lauku Ceļotājs"

Kalnciema iela 40, Rīga, LV-1046, Latvija
T: +371 67617600;
E-pasts: lauku@celotajs.lv
www.celotajs.lv

LITHUANIA



Lithuanian countryside tourism association

K. Donelaičio g. 2-201,
Kaunas, LT-44213
T: +370 37400354;
E-pasts: info@atostogoskaime.lt
www.atostogoskaime.lt

THE PROJECT "LONG-DISTANCE CROSS-BORDER HIKING ROUTE FOREST TRAIL"

The project "Long-distance cross-border hiking route FOREST TRAIL" (04/01/2019 - 06/30/2021) is partly funded by the European Union and the Central Baltic Programme of the European Regional Development Fund.

More information on the project: www.celotajs.lv/lv/project/19

PROJECT PARTNERS

ESTONIA



LATVIA



INFORMATION



ESTONIA
Metsa matkarada - Baltic Forest Hiking - Mežtaka



LATVIA
Mežtaka – Forest Trail



Meztaka

The publication reflects the opinion of the author, and the leading institution of the programme is not responsible for the possible use of the information contained herein.



EUROPEAN UNION
European Regional Development Fund



PROJECT LLI-448 „DEVELOPMENT OF FOREST TRAIL IN LATVIA AND LITHUANIA AND EXPANDING THE BALTIC COASTAL HIKING ROUTE IN LITHUANIA”

Project LLI-448 „Development of Forest trail In Latvia and Lithuania and expanding the Baltic Coastal Hiking route in Lithuania” (Hiking project) is funded by the European Union under the Interreg V-A Latvia – Lithuania Programme 2014-2020.

The project overall objective is to increase number of visitors to the Program area through developing and promoting two joint cross-border nature long distance hiking trails crossing Latvia and Lithuania. Project partners expect at least 5% increase in overnight stays in rural areas within a year after the hiking trails are developed and launched through marketing and promotion activities.

Expected project results

- The Forest Trail in Latvia and Lithuania, and The Baltic Coastal Hiking Route in Lithuania will be developed and promoted. Both will link with the existing long distance hiking trails in Latvia and Estonia filling the gap in long distance hiking trail network. Common trail titles and marking systems will be used.
- Maps and tourism guides will be developed to promote the routes. Information will be available also on the route websites.

Total projects size is **788 104,45 EUR**.

Out of them co-funding of European Regional Development Fund is **669 888,76 EUR**.

PROJECT PARTNERS

LATVIA



LITHUANIA



INFORMATION



LATVIJA
Mežtaka – Forest Trail



Meztaka



LIETUVA
Miško takas - Forest trail



This publication has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the author and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union.



WWW.BALTICTRAILS.EU