

A Tour of the Suiti Cultural Space and the Livonian Cultural Space

Introduction

Information about both cultural spaces

Suiti

The Suiti is a small Catholic community living in three parishes of Northern Kurzeme – the Western part of Latvia: Alsunga municipality, Gudenieki parish and Basi village as well as Jūrkalne parish. The total area of the Suiti region is 402 km². The region is quite remotely located. It is a 2.2 hour-drive from Riga to Alsunga and the distance is 177 km. Gudenieki is situated 184 km from the capital city and Jūrkalne - 189 km. A unique cultural space and identity has developed in the region due to the strong influence of the Catholic church and to the historic interaction of Latvian, Liv, Polish and German cultures. The total population of the territory is around 2 800 people. The synthesis of pre-Christian traditions and religious rituals has created this unique intangible cultural heritage of the Suiti community.

Numerous distinct features characterise the Suiti cultural space, such as vocal drone singing performed by Suiti women, wedding traditions, colourful traditional costumes, the Suiti language, local cuisine, religious traditions, celebrations of the annual cycle, and a remarkable number of folk songs, dances and melodies recorded in this community.

Sources:

- Alsungas novads. (2016). The official webpage of Alsunga municipality. Available on: <http://alsunga.lv/lv/> [26.12.2018]
- Jūrkalne. (n.d.) The official webpage. Available on: http://www.jurkalne.lv/?page_id=325 [26.12.2018]
- Gudenieki. (2018). The official webpage. Available on: <http://gudenieki.lv/> [26.12.2018]
- [Suiti Cultural Space. \(n.d.\) Latvian National Commission for UNESCO. Available on: http://latvijasdargumi.unesco.lv/en/detailed-information/internationally-recognised-objects/suiti-cultural-space/](http://latvijasdargumi.unesco.lv/en/detailed-information/internationally-recognised-objects/suiti-cultural-space/) [26.12.2018]
- [Suitu kultūrtelpa. \(2018\). UNESCO Latvijas Nacionālā komisija. Available on: http://www.unesco.lv/lv/kultura/nematerialais-kulturas-mantojums-6/suitu-kulturtelpa/suitu-kulturtelpa-1/](http://www.unesco.lv/lv/kultura/nematerialais-kulturas-mantojums-6/suitu-kulturtelpa/suitu-kulturtelpa-1/) [26.12.2018]

Livonians

Traditional Livonian culture has been preserved to nowadays due to the last consolidated territory in the Northern Kurzeme – 12 fishing villages by the Baltic Sea (Melnšils, Kolka, Vaide, Saunags, Pitragi, Košragi, Mazirbe, Sīkrags, Jaunciems, Lielirbe, Miķeļtornis and Lūžņa), traditionally called

the Livonian coast. Exactly geographic isolation of villages – their location in a narrow sandy coastal region, separated from the mainland with swamps and bogs and other natural barriers as well as the distinctly different style of living which is also reflected in the Livonian language, have helped to preserve this unique territory.

The unique Livonian cultural space of Kurzeme Livonians has developed therein. This Livonian cultural space in conjunction with the Livonian language, ancient traditions and customs and the features of Latvian traditional culture and distinct Finno-Ugric motives forms the basis of traditional Livonian culture.

Sources:

- Traditional culture of Livonians. (2018). Latvian Cultural Canon. Available on: <https://kulturaskanons.lv/archive/libiesu-kultura/> [27.12.2018]
- Lībiešu tradicionālā kultūra. (2011). Letonika.lv. Enciklopēdija, Latvijas kultūras kanons. Available on: <https://www.letonika.lv/groups/default.aspx?cid=1005437&r=264&lid=1005437&q=&h=1008> [27.12.2018]

Situation

Young people, aged 20 – 24, students from Lithuania are visiting Latvia. They have frequently visited Latvia so they have already visited the main tourist attractions in the country. They are interested in culture and languages. They are fond of folklore, especially singing and dancing and celebrations.

The University Students' Council is organising their visit and they want to include a two-day tour of Latvia that suits the interests and wishes of their guests.

Task

Read the basic information about the Suiti Cultural space and Livonian Cultural space and the preferences of the guests.

Then split into groups of 3 and share your experiences when travelling abroad.

Discuss possible activities and attractions that would be suitable for young people.

Discuss what kind of information you have to search for. Consider the following: transport, catering, attractions, activities.

Study the information available on the Internet addresses provided below and/or conduct your own search and create a two-day excursion to the Suiti region and the Livonian coast. Create a list of 'must do and see' attractions and activities providing the main information on the attraction/activity, their history and meaning. Arrange this information in an easy to perceive table format.

Make a presentation of the excursion programme and present it to other student groups.

Process

First, conduct the web search of the materials available. Second, research the information on them. Next, create the list of 'must do and see' attractions and activities and their history and meaning. Finally, create the table and make a presentation.

Web Resources:

Information about the Suiti and their cultural space:

<https://www.suitunovads.lv/en/>

<https://www.suitunovads.lv/en/municipalities/>

<https://www.suitunovads.lv/en/Who are Suiti/>

<https://www.suitunovads.lv/en/Suiti flag/>

<http://latvijasdargumi.unesco.lv/en/detailed-information/internationally-recognised-objects/suiti-cultural-space/>

<https://latviansonline.com/unesco-adds-suiti-culture-to-list-of-heritages-in-need-of-safeguarding/>

http://www.unesco.lv/files/USL_Report_LATVIA_Suiti_Cultural_Space_2013_c18a0afc.pdf

https://static.lka.edu.lv/media/cms_page_media/853/UNESCO_Suiti_cultural_space_2017.pdf

<https://theculturetrip.com/europe/lithuania/articles/suiti-latvias-island-of-singers/>

Information about the Livonians and their cultural space:

http://virtuallivonia.info/?page_id=47

<http://www.livones.net/en>

<https://www.latvia.travel/en/tourism-center/dundaga-tourism-information-centre>

<http://www.latvia.eu/latvians/latvian-livs>

<https://valoda.lv/en/updated-portal-about-livonian-history-language-and-culture-www-livones-net/>

<https://www.hiddeneurope.co.uk/livonian-culture-in-latvia-mazirbe>

<https://deepbaltic.com/2017/01/09/keeping-alive-an-extinct-language-the-finno-ugric-tongue-of-latvias-remote-fishing-villages/>

Conclusion

You have done research on the Internet and learnt about geography, history, culture, UNESCO decision on inscribing the Suiti Cultural Space to the UNESCO Cultural Heritage list and the geography, culture and language of the Livonians and why their cultural space has to be preserved. The search for information was restricted as most of the information is available in Latvian only. However, you have managed to do the task and have decided on an excursion programme for young people visiting Latvia. You have developed your IT skills, ability of analysing and synthesising information, language and presentation skills that will be helpful in your future life.