



# Current development of tourism and recreation on Baltic Sea coasts: new directions and perspectives

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# **Current development of tourism and recreation on Baltic Sea coasts: new directions and perspectives**

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# ***Summary: Main research questions***

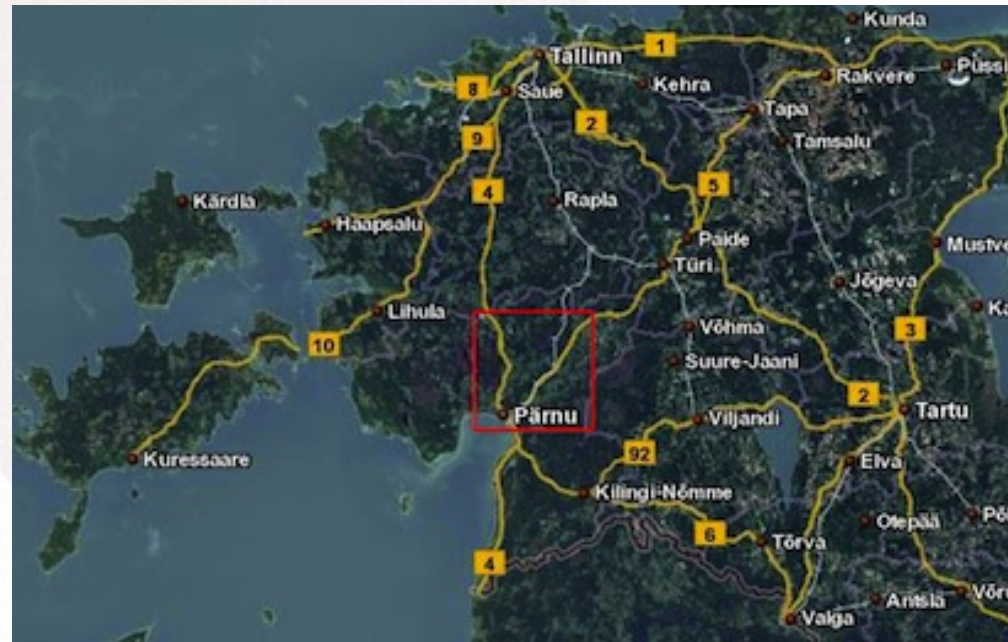
- What are the major trends in the current recreation activities in Baltic Sea ?
- How the tourism in the post-USSR countries (Estonia) is developing after the 1990s ?
- Is there an environmental balance between the nature and human activities ?



# ***Study area: Pärnu County, Estonia***



Estonia within the EU.



District of Pärnu in Estonia



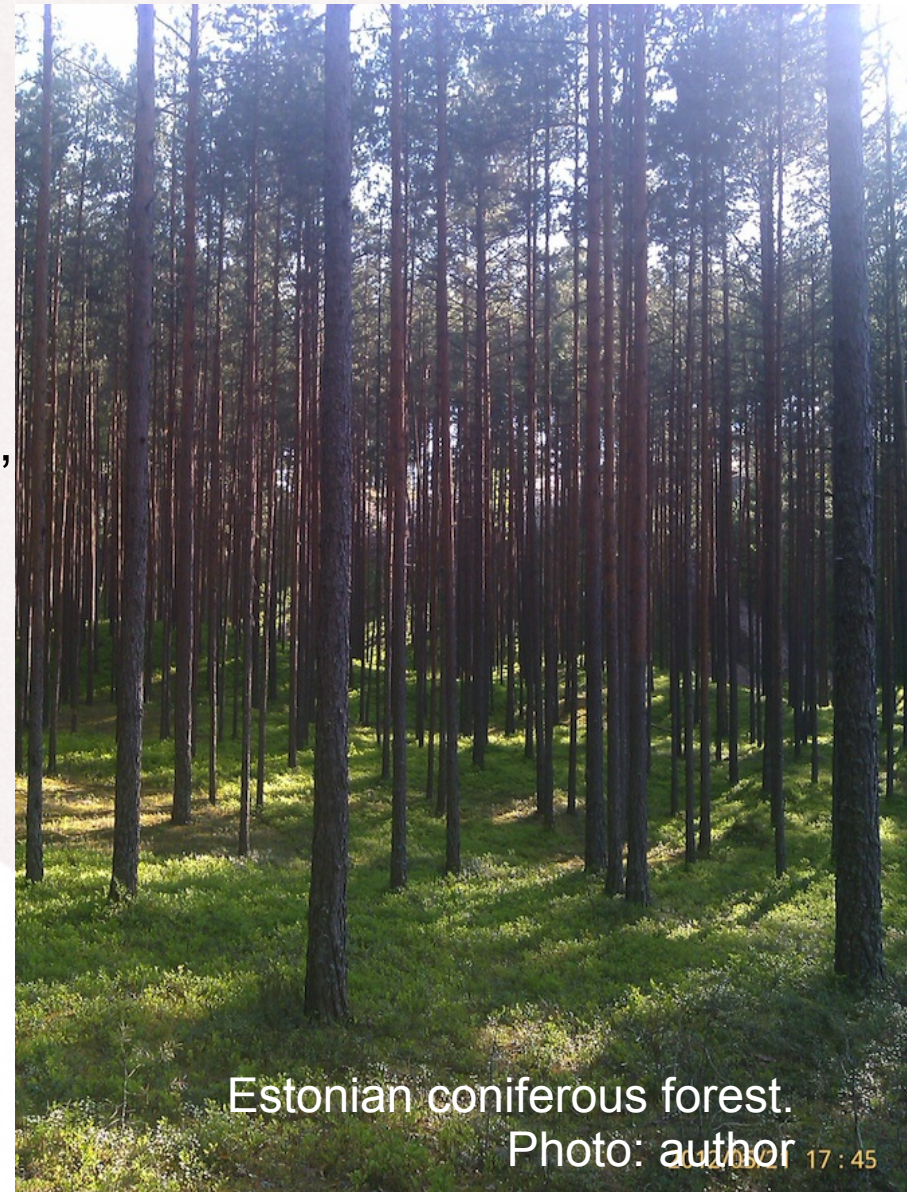
# ***Specific features of study area***

The region of Pärnu is valuable environmental and unique recreational part of Estonia.

- 1) Mild marine climate condition
- 2) Precious coniferous forests.
- 2) Landscapes:  
richness, biodiversity, variability and  
unique composition structure.

Example of types of landscapes:

- mixed and broadleaved forests,
- coniferous forests
- agricultural landscapes,
- wooded meadows,
- heathland, bogs and moors,
- shrublands and grasslands,
- birch-dominating coastal areas



Estonian coniferous forest.

Photo: author





Luitemaa Nature Conservation Area.  
Photos: author.

2012/05/21 17:12



2012/05/21 17:21



Lake landscape. Western Estonia.

2012/05/21 17:26



Pine forests in Pärnu district

2012/05/21 17:56



# ***What is specific for Pärnu Bay as a tourism destination place ?***

- 1) environmental value of the region (e.g. pine forests)
- 2) advantageous location on the Baltic coasts
- 3) facilities for tourism and long-year tradition



Beach at the Pärnu Bay. Photo: author. 2012/05/20 15:57.



***Comparison of modern  
touristic system in Estonia  
with Soviet one***



# ***Estonian Tourism in early XX. Quick historic overview.***

Late XIX: the history of Estonian Baltic starts.  
(Estonia—under protection of Russian Empire).

First World War 1914-18: the development of the resort was restricted.

1920s: quick re-development of tourism (e.g Rannapark was restored, new mud baths constructed).



# ***1930s: Active development of tourism***

Late 1920s – 1930s: Estonian hotels and restaurants - one of the cheapest touristic destinations in Baltic Europe.

Active advertisements of Estonian resorts in the tourist literature of Europe.



*Pärnu beach in the 1930s*

9  
Visitors of Pärnu beach. Estonia. 1930s.  
Source: [www.theeuropeanlibrary.org](http://www.theeuropeanlibrary.org)



Easy access to Baltic coasts in 1920s was facilitated by good railway communication with **Germany, Latvia, and Lithuania.**

As a consequence, the Pärnu region was widely visited by various international guests:

**Scandinavians  
(Swedes, Finns),  
Poles,  
Germans,  
Brits.**



Old picture of Pärnu beach. 1920s.  
Source: [www.theeuropeanlibrary.org](http://www.theeuropeanlibrary.org)



# ***Epoch of Soviet period.***

## ***I. Negative moments:***

During the totalitarian era of USSR the tourism industry in Baltic Sea region has been diminished.

Among negative features of Soviet tourism...:

- restrictions upon foreign tourism in Pärnu region,
- poor management in the Soviet planned economy
- bad service facilities & undeveloped hotelier tradition

The business of private hotels and restaurants **diminished drastically.**

The existing touristic hotels were **reconstructed** to the **imperatively state-controlled** and **dictated.**

Existing organizations were merged into the “*All Union Voluntary Society for Proletarian Tourism and Excursions*”.



# ***Epoch of Soviet period.***

## ***II. Positive consequences:***

However, there were some positive moments of this era as well. To mention them... :

- 1) environmental protection: the coasts and beaches in Pärnu region were **protected** as “**public health zone**” for recreation, where only selected activities were permitted and vehicles prohibited.
- 2) reconstruction and maintenance of selected hotels. The most precious parts and areas of the Baltic Sea were protected and served as summer vacation places for high political leaders and for the employees from the strategic industrial sectors: spacecraft and cosmos exploration.





The Cosmonauts Hotel, a former Soviet resort for workers of space industry ([www.kosmonautika.ee](http://www.kosmonautika.ee)): maintaining history and cosmos topic in hotel design. Famous soviet cosmonaut Y. Gagarin was guest in this hotel. Photos: author.



# ***What happened after the socio-political changes in 1990s ?***

The end of the USSR epoch caused great economical and sociopolitical reformation of Estonia.

Estonia survived a difficult period of restructuring of economic and social system.

Alike to other post-soviet countries, this caused ...

- changes in the socio-economic structure,
- changes in the administrative regime
- changes in the touristic cluster.



# ***Rapid socio-economic development in Estoni caused...***

- 1) active formation of the middle-class society
- 2) personal economic growth
- 3) new style of life, increased well-being
- 4) increased Nr. of cars and private property
- 5) intensive constriction of private hotels, hostels, guesthouses, cottages for rent...



# ***Consequences of globalization: Estonia – a part of world society***

Consequences of globalization in tourism sector:

- 1) tourist flows into various country destinations
- 2) increasing world trade development
- 3) internationalization of production of food, goods, etc
- 4) improved hotel management system
- 5) improved touristic services
- 6) rapid exchange of information & computerization
- 7) standardization of touristic guides



# *Today's trends in tourism in Pärnu area*

Regaining the independency of Estonia has revolutionized Baltic tourism.

The new, revitalized era for tourism industry in Estonia is now started. It is mostly based on **privatization** and **foreign investments** (from Finland or Germany).

The modern, "western-looking" and quickly constructed hotels are now being created



# ***Privatization and reconstruction – new trends in modern Estonia***

After the end of the USSR since 1990s, the land management system and urban development of Estonia significantly changed, which reflects overall socio-economic and political situation in the country.

Currently, Estonia has intensive privatization process, which is caused by serious changes in state regulations on property and ownership.

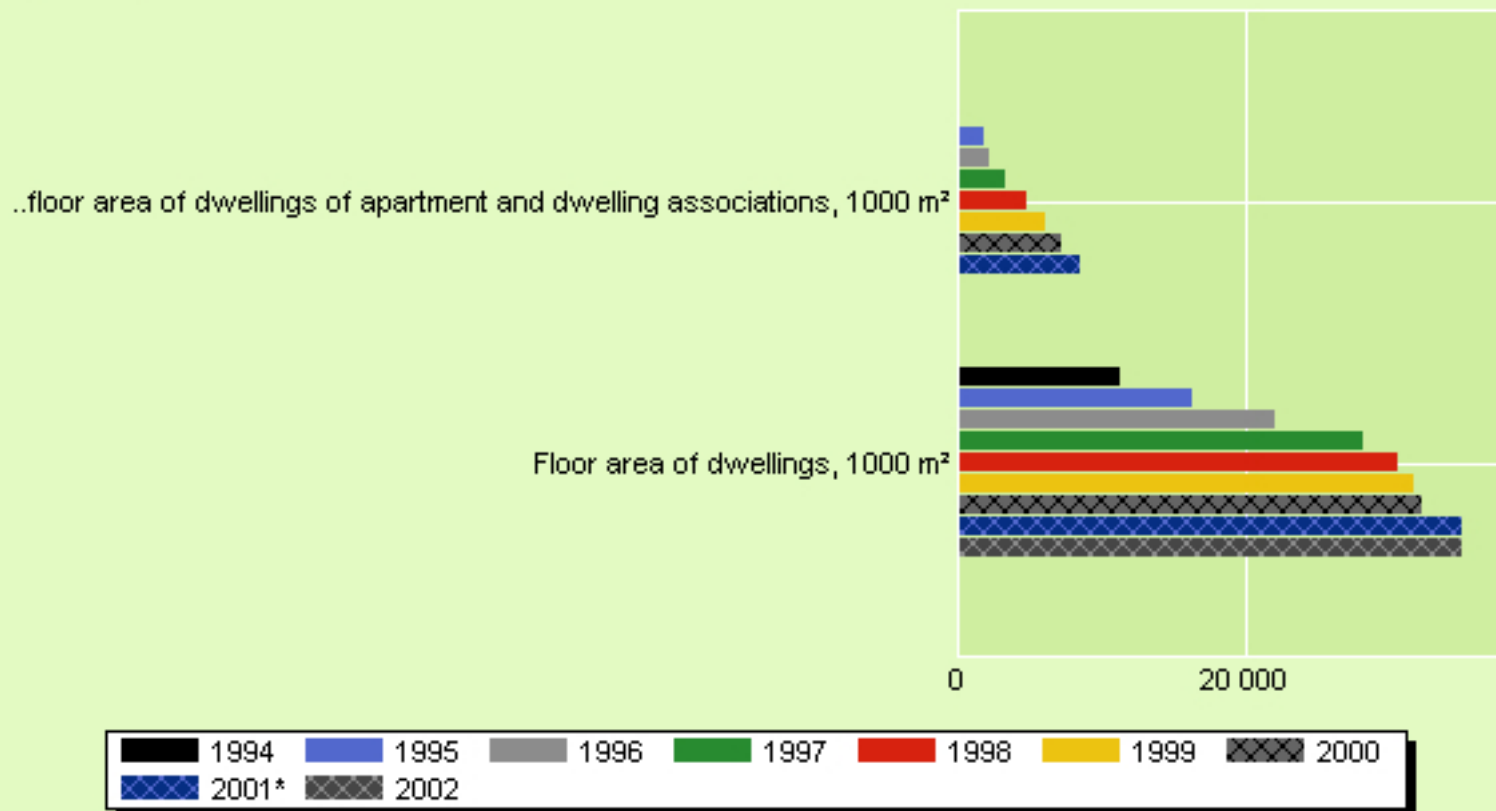
Naturally it caused intensification of construction of privately hold hotels and summer cottages, built both for personal (family based) needs for spending summer vacations, and for rent to incoming tourists, domestic and international.

Nowadays, suburbanization and development of second houses become the major and most evident processes in the current urban dynamics of modern Estonia.



# ***Boom on real estate in Estonia after the 1990s***

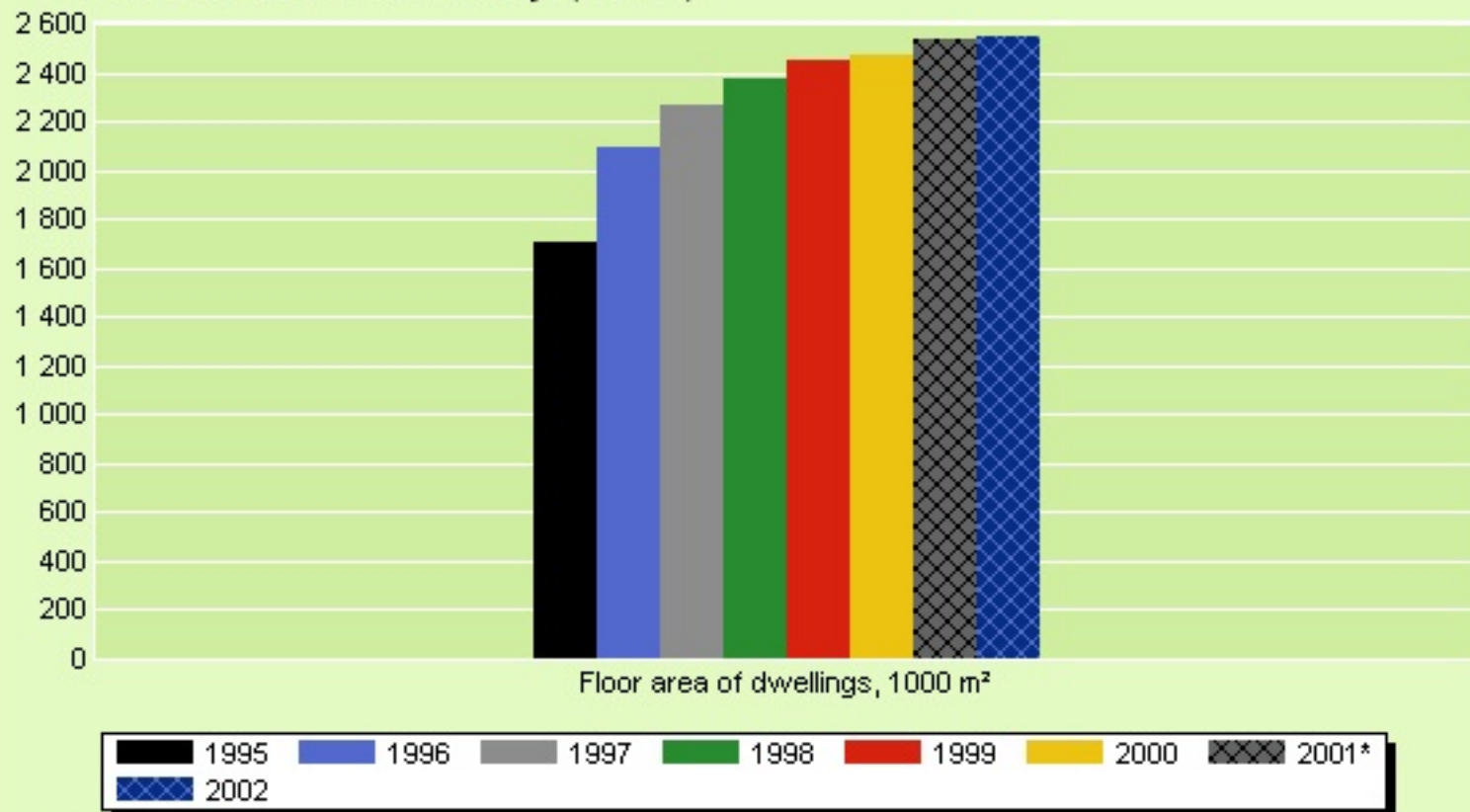
**RSE35: NUMBER AND FLOOR AREA OF PRIVATELY OWNED DWELLINGS, 1 JANUARY**  
**by Year and Indicator.**  
**(Value)**





# *...and statistics of real estate for Pärnu county (1995-2002):*

**RSE7: NUMBER AND FLOOR AREA OF DWELLINGS, 1 JANUARY**  
by Year and Indicator.  
Private sector, Pärnu county. (Value)





***...some examples of the  
new trends in the properties  
construction: eco-houses  
directly in forest area:***

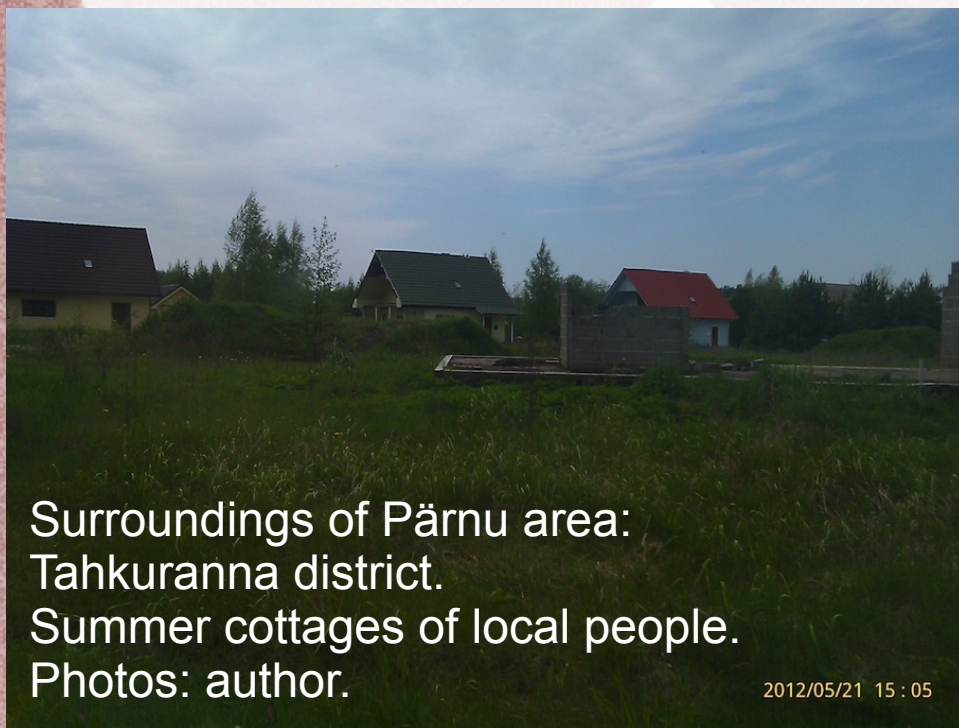
Examples of new eco-style houses, Reiu village, Pärnu County, Estonia. Photos: author.



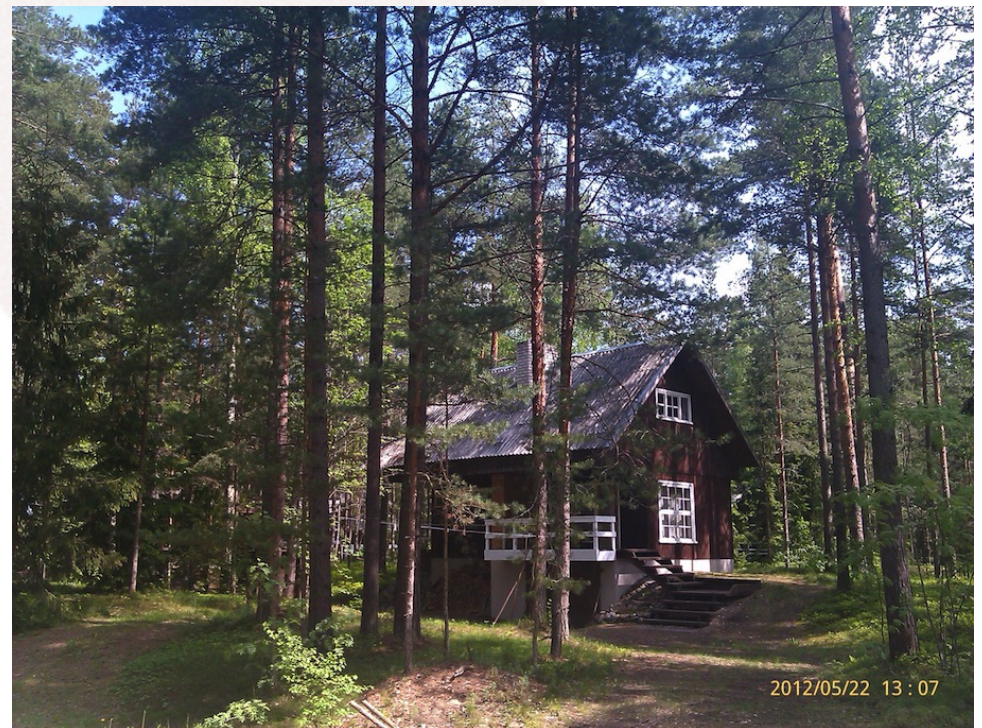














# ***Perspectives for the tourism development in Estonia***

...include active redirection towards eco-style sustainable tourism:

- Active development of modern world-class hotels
- Organized group sportive activities (e.g., biking)
- Sea side recreation,
- Construction of summer cottages for rent
- Organized tours to Natural Parks.
- Intensive developing of camping.



# ***What are the main trends in the Estonian tourism nowadays ?***

Expanding touristic dimensions is highly profitable for the country (evident income of financial flows).

Now tourism in Estonia becomes eco-oriented, often family-run small business with actively developed cottages for rent, restructured and renovated old hotels.



Rural environmental tourism: eco-style new cottages built since 1990s in Pärnu surroundings.  
Photos: author.



Marine views in Pärnu Bay region.  
Photos: author.





# ***Who are the main frequent tourists and guests in Estonia ?***

Dominating nations **Russians** and **Finnish** (for the whole country).

- Finnish tourists traditionally visit western Estonia (Baltic Sea coasts);
- Russians preferably concentrate near Russian border, in eastern Estonia, on the Finnish Gulf.

These two nations are notably the most representing tourists, while others visit Estonia significantly lesser.



## *...a bit of statistics on touristic portrait in Pärnu:*

About 90,000 foreign tourists/year visit Pärnu.

- of which about 50,000 are **Finns**,
- followed by 7,200 **Swedes**,
- 4,500 **Russians**,
- 2,700 **Americans**,
- ...and ca. 17,100 of other nationalities.



# ***Difficulties in development tourism in Estonia***

Main problem in the touristic cluster in Estonia consists in...

- its specific **location** on the Baltic Sea with cold climate in summer period. It causes low popularity among tourists, comparing to Mediterranean.
- low **investments** into tourism (comparing to other European countries) due to the ongoing development of the country.



# ***Why does Estonia has low popularity as a touristic place?***

The non-popularity of Estonia among other nations, (comparing to touristic giants, like France or Italy) can be explained by various factors:

- Insufficient quantity of world-level hotels, possibilities for recreation and spa-centers (e.g. as in Finland)
- Weather & specific climatic conditions: cool waters in Baltic Sea (even in summer); windy & cold winters.
- Lack of sights of world-known heritage.
- Under-developed touristic cluster, e.g. bad service facilities, caused by long Soviet history<sub>31</sub> (now in process of growth and development).



# *As a result...*

- Touristic cluster now rapidly develops in new directions:
- Soviet touristic areas is abandoned & re-constructed,
    - New hotels are being actively created,
  - Intensive privatization of summer houses is ongoing,
  - New eco-style and modern design is dominating in the touristic hotels



Newly built houses, Reiu village,  
Tahkuranna Parish, Pärnu County.  
Photos author.



# *Examples of the today's tourism in Hädemeeste*



Private new Estonian spa hotel (Lepanina Hotell) created on the Baltic Sea coast. A successful combination of 1) modern European hotel design, 2) location on the seaside with maritime landscapes 3) and coniferous forests in the near - make it a valuable health resort area. Photos: author.



# ***Perspectives for the tourism development in Estonia***

...include active redirection towards modern, flexible & eco-style sustainable tourism:

- Family business, family-run hotels / hostels, which often implies direct host-guest interactions.
- Active development of modern world-class hotels
- Intensive reconstruction and modernization of the old, Soviet-style hotels
- Organized group sportive activities (e.g., biking)
- Seaside recreation activities and small business
- Developing of camping and low-cost recreation
- Construction of summer cottages for rent
- Local-scale tourism, a special benefit for Estonia
- Organized tours to Natural Parks.



# Conclusions

This research investigated... :

- 1) current socio-economic development of Estonia
- 2) post-socialistic heritage of Estonia as ex-USSR country
- 3) today's development of tourism in Pärnu region
- 3) cultural and environmental changes in the country

Methods included:

- 1) Study of numerous relevant literature
- 2) Analysis of statistics
- 3) fieldwork monitoring and *in-situ* observations



# ***Acknowledgment***

Current work has been during my 2-month visiting research stay at the University of Tartu.


It included fieldwork, excursions in Pärnu area, research work with GIS and statistical data in the lab of Faculty of Geography.

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- 3) Dr. **J. Roosaare**, a lecturer of the University of Tartu.





*Thank you for attention.  
Questions ?*

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