

# WELCOME TO SLOW, UNIQUE AND CIRCULAR TOURISM EXPERIENCE

## INTERVIEW WITH **DAIVA TANKŪNAITĖ**

Interview by Panevėžys Training Centre

### CASE STUDY: SLOW TOURISM

Daiva Tankūnaite



I am Daiva Tankūnaite. My great passion, love, and work is tourism. I have been in this industry for over 30 years. I believe that I have found my vocation. I am a tour guide, tourism lecturer, giving lectures and various courses for guides. Together with like-minded people, we founded Slow Tourism Association in Lithuania.



Kelionių agentė  
**DAIVA TANKŪNAITĖ**





Images: Daiva Tankūnaitė personal album

## WHAT IS SLOW TOURISM?

There are a few important things about it. First, It should be mentioned that it is primarily like a social movement, born in cities and regions of the world. Maybe it started with food, fast food restaurants, when people wanted to eat differently, to eat better and tastier, to eat products grown in that region or country, made as always with love and warmth. And then obviously the idea spread to the concept of the slow city, and now we'd like to say that we'd all really like a slow lifestyle.

Slow food, slow way of life, and slow tourism.

A very important second essence is that 'slow' does not necessarily mean physically slow. Slow probably is an alternative to the experience, taste, sight, detention, feeling. For the senses, so that we could stop ourselves somehow, either in the pace of life, raise of the children, or in any kind of creativity, and thereby find rest or experience something profound.

It's just a movement, but still, everyone refers to the English word "Slow" and those four letters stand for "Sustainable", "Local", "Organic" and "Well-being". That is, what is called the spirit of place and we have also tamed another Latin name "Genius Loci". In some way, you feel good in one or another place because it has a certain energy, and it's not so simple to "unlock" it by clapping your hands.

## WHO ARE THE CUSTOMERS OF SLOW TOURISM?

They are not slow, but they can be defined by different criteria of maturity. They are experienced. In other words, they are experienced and perhaps they want to sense more than to see. They often travel for the experiences they will have. Of course, they have seen and visited various places, and are seeking novelty. They understand that they will need to put in some effort for things to happen.

We can go to [Pasvalys](#) (Lithuanian town). Near it can be found Riaubonių water mill and the carder has been restored. Together with the community, and the people who create there, you can observe the authentic spinning of wool using the water-powered carder, and how the sheep's wool is sheared. Our coarse sheep, that graze on the lawn, are carded, afterwards, the wool is tied to the spinning wheel and after it is spun at the same place. You simply can even spin your own souvenir and take it home. What is most fascinating about it – the charm of all the people who take part in it.

I have an example when we organized Heritage Days, and we took a trip to the Upytė Crafts Center. Mrs. Vilienė, a famous craftswoman, simply instructed everyone to braid a traditional ribbon, the one that the youth love to wear on their wrist. And it turns out, that can be truly magical. Years ago, when the woman had no other means to calm herself, she spent her time at that weaving loom from Christmas to Easter. It used to be a kind of work and meditation, as she hadn't many other options. And we fell into that meditation. Everyone braids, still wanting to braid something for a friend or for a husband to take home. And I had to ask "Let's go, let's go", and they said "Wait, where's that slow tourism?"

God is in the details, in the simplicity.



## WHO CAN BECOME PROVIDERS OF SLOW TOURISM?

People are already living in this way, and we find them. In other words, that person would develop that activity in one or another way. If we can say, this is where the structures of tourism businesses come into play. Guides and organizations come into action, actively seeking what to offer to clients. Most of the time, that person doesn't really want to sell himself. It's just like that. Or people meet each other at events, projects, conferences.

You have to love your city. If not, you have to respect it. First of all, you have to take responsibility, believe in what you are doing and then explore what you find interesting. It is essential to get to know the place and then, first and foremost, to look for people there. If you are heading to a lifeless place, either you must have something to say by yourself, or the view must be worth a million, or there must be a person there.

Small cities and villages  
People of all ages  
Artisans  
Tradition  
Cultural heritage  
Passion and experience

Photo by Indrė Stulgaitė-Kriukienė | Work by Remigijus Kriukas "[Glasremis](#)"



## WHAT EXAMPLE OF SLOW TOURISM COULD YOU GIVE?

As an example, we now have Bagotas [Ciba farm](#) in Kazlų Rūda. The family raises goats and they can't choose a path (whether milk or growths) and decided to organize family outings to the pine forest with goats. Children, together with their friends, go for a walk with the goat during their birthday celebration. Parents walk alongside, and later, then drink tea in the forest and talk about these animals. Photo sessions, which are essential mostly for everyone these days, are excellent.

Similarly, sustainability comes into tourism along with all other aspects.

Everyone gets very concerned when they arrive in Rozalimas (small Lithuanian town), where G. Petkevičaitė-Bitė's (1861 – 1943) Lithuanian educator, writer, and activist) mother is buried. People immediately start to worry that they didn't bring a candle to light.

Or in [Šiluva](#) (small Lithuanian town), where Eimantas Nekrošius (1952-2018) (famous director of theater) have been buried – “and here comes the worries from the group – we don't have a candle to light and put on the grave.” And then I ask everyone, “Who will carry that candle when we leave it here? Who will carry it? Should the relatives wait, gather them after six months at the graves?”

Mačernis (1921-1944) famous Lithuanian poet) is buried in the pine forest on a little hill overlooking his homeland. You have to walk several kilometers to get there and the candles are along all the way. So, when young people worry about a candle, I usually suggest, “Maybe it's better to gather them and carry those 3 kilometers to the containers?” It was greater than lighting a candle.

Photo by [Ciba farm](#)



The glass art studio “[Glasremis](#)”. The name Remigius Kriukas (Lithuanian glass artist) is known by many people. They have such an internal culture that the whole team carries that flag and we are extremely happy that they have rekindled their furnaces and opened for the public). And there's the situation when exceptional uniqueness comes into play. It's not necessary to hang a specific slow tourism flag here. We need to deliver a unique experience. Unique. And because it's like that, what we want for all groups. That's the most important thing – it's interesting for everyone. It's interesting for children, interesting for adults, and even for those who are harder to impress – for the generation in their forties. When there are jazz festivals, jazz music plays, furnace burns, and art pieces are born. We can also appeal to that complex segment, for whom we don't know what to offer, as it is just like that.

## WHAT WOULD YOU RECOMMEND AND WISH FOR FUTURE TOURISM SPECIALISTS AND THEIR TEACHERS WHO WANT TO STRENGTHEN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM?

We recently spoke with a student who was writing a science work about heritage. I had a simple recommendation. First of all, you need to go out into the city yourself. Yourself. And look at all this. Otherwise, it won't work. And the question from the teachers, the people who teach – have you been there? So, in short, first and foremost, those young people must experience it. They must experience it themselves.