

A Sense of Place: Interpreting Manorial Culture in Modern Tourism

Manor or country houses are iconic symbols of European cultural landscapes, combining history, culture, architectural and natural beauty. Many now serve as rural tourism destinations, transforming from elite residences into commercial attractions mainly for the middle class. In the framework of the conference the development of manor houses as a tourist destination and their historical transition to becoming 'public property' should be highlighted first. How did some manors become famous for their gardens, libraries and collections, and how did they establish themselves as hubs of knowledge transfer?

The second part shall be dedicated to the sense of manorial tourism in our times. The prospect of a vacation in a castle may well be enticing and often evoke romanticised ideas of aristocratic life. The public's expectations are quickly identified and, of course, catered for. While this approach can be economically necessary – given the high maintenance costs – it risks reducing these sites to ahistorical, nostalgic fantasies, isolating them as middle-class enclaves.

This raises several questions: Where is the balance, and what dictates the strategy for development and preservation? How can manor house tourism contribute to sustainable, inclusive rural development? Where do we find good practices of social innovation and social entrepreneurship? What efforts are being made to achieve this through collaboration with educational sectors, environmental groups, and civil society? Are the historic houses also used to explain the complexity of national and social changes in the modern era? The political and social relevance of manors open to tourism is clear, as they often stand as the most attractive features in economically struggling regions. As educational resources, manor houses can illuminate social, economic, and ecological changes, fostering resilience thinking for modern challenges.

This conference explores the intangible value of manor or country houses beyond the necessary monetary gains. Values that distinguish the manor house sector from all other tourist offerings

Funded by:

Interreg
South Baltic



Co-funded by
the European Union



Organizers:



A Sense of Place: Interpreting Manorial Culture in Modern Tourism

10th ENCOUNTER Conference

25–26 June 2026

European University Viadrina
Frankfurt (Oder)
Germany

Thursday, 25 June 2026

09.00 Registration

09.30 Introduction
Paul Zalewski, Frankfurt (Oder)

Section: Early Modern Beginnings

10.00 *Visitors and Visits to Manor Houses in the Baltic Sea Region in the 18th and 19th Centuries*
Sabine Bock, Schwerin

10.30 *Castle and Country House Tourism in the Czech Lands, 1800–1918*
Filip Binder, Praha

Coffee break 11.00–11.30

Section: Transitions in the 20th Century

11.30 *Servants and Masters during the Musealisation of Löfstad Slott, 1920s to the 1950s*
My Helsing, Falun

12.00 *Arcadia In War Time: Country House Tourism in Occupied Netherlands, 1940–1945.*
Elyze Storm-Smeets, Nijmegen

Lunch break 12.30–13.30

Section: Difficult legacies — Poland

13.30 *The Hidden Potential of East Prussian Palaces and Manors in Poland - A Geographical Perspective*
Karol Bożek, Kraków

14.00 *The Long Road to a “Forum for European Dialogue” at Steinort Castle/Masuria/Poland*
Georg von Gayl, Berlin

14.30–14.50 Questions and Answers

15.00 *The Baltic Manor Route: Presentation of and Discussion about the Concept, Implementation and Impact of the Planned Route.*
Presenters: Manfred Achterhagen and Jens Masuch.
Discussants: Tomasz Wolender, Marius Daraškevičius, Izabella Parowicz

17.30–19.00 Guided tour, including the City Museum

19.30 Conference Dinner in Slubice, restaurant Villa Casino (Polish side of the border)

Friday, 26 June 2026

Section: Difficult Legacies — Baltic Countries

09.00 *Manor Heritage from the Perspective of Local Communities: Different Memories, Different Products. The Case of Lithuania.*
Salvijus Kulevicius, Vilnius

09.30 *“You can’t change your roots by putting on airs”*
Mirje Tammaru, Tallinn

10.00 *The Rebirth of Mežotne Manor: Redefining Heritage Strategy in a Post-Pandemic Landscape*
Laura Luse, Rundāle

Coffee break 10.30–11.00

Section: Narratives

11.00 *A Tale of Two Manors? Identifying and Utilizing the Parallel Narratives of a House Museum. Case: Håkansböle manor*
Eeva Kotioja, Vantaa

11.30 *Interpreting the Contemporary Irish Country House: Narrative Framing and Visitor Engagement.*
Karol Mullaney-Dignam, Limerick

12.00 *Nostalgia and Aspiration. Commercial Heritage at Danish Country Houses*
Mikael Frausing, Aarhus

Lunch break 12.30–13.30

Section: Site-Specific Approaches

13.30 *Badow: Connecting the Manor, the Village and the Landscape. Opportunities, Challenges and Innovations.*
Alexandra Lotz, Badow

14.00 *The Cultural Landscape of the Tagus Estuary and The Wine Tourism in the Metropolitan Area of Lisbon*
Rodrigo Alvez Dias, Lisboa

14.30 Final Discussion

15.15 Bus excursion to several manors in the region of East Brandenburg

19.00 Dinner at Castle Reichenow

21.00–21.45 Return to Frankfurt (Oder)

Location:

European University Viadrina
Große Scharrnstr. 59, 15230 Frankfurt (Oder)
Main building, room: HG 109 “Senatssaal” 1. Floor
(around 15 minutes’ walk from the train station)

Conference fee:

The fee includes conference preparation, lunches, coffee & refreshments.

Option 1:

Basic fee for two days conference participation including guided walk and dinner on Thursday afternoon
25 June: 80 EUR

Option 2:

Extended version, including additionally the bus tour and the dinner on Friday, 26 June: 130 EUR

Registration and payment:

<https://www.gammelestrup.dk/encounter/encounter-conference>

The registration deadline is 18 June 2026.

Accommodation:

Among other offers on booking.com we recommend: “City Park Hotel” in Frankfurt (Oder) or the “Hotel Villa Casino” in the twin town Slubice on the Polish side of the border.