

STATE NATURE RESERVE “CURONIAN SPIT” AS AN OBJECT OF UNESCO: ITS POTENTIAL AS A ZONE OF ECOTOURISM

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The Curonian Spit with the nature reserve located on its territory lies in the western part of Kaliningrad Region, between the Curonian Gulf and the Baltic Sea. The Spit is about 98 km, 47 km of which belongs to the nature reserve. Its width fluctuates between 0.4 – 3.8 km. The Spit has an area of 16,000 hectares, with 7, 890 hectares in Russia. The spit is the biggest offshore formation on the Baltic seaside. It is made of two main elements: products of defragmentation of the northern shore of the Sambian Peninsula and underwater glacier deposits. The climate is characterized by milder winters and warm summers. Average yearly temperature is about 7°C and has an annual precipitation of 670 mm. The striking attraction of the Spit is in the multitude of its opposite landscapes. Native plants include pine, spruce and oak forests and alder groves. Biovariety of the park can be explained by the types of soils and the specifics of the relief. The forest area occupies 72% of the park. Among the unique trees that were brought into this area are gigantic thuya and pseudothuya. There are over 700 flower-bearing species, of which only 78 species are native. There are 58 rare and endangered species. There are 296 types of ground invertebrates, 147 of which mate and raise their young here. Professor Tinnenman established the first ornithological station here in 1901. This station was given a status of Biostation of the Zoological Institute of the Science Academy of Russia. On the Curonian Spit one finds 280 species of birds, 102 of which make their nests and let their chicks hatch here. Every year thousands of tourists from different countries visit this area. Several routes through the spit allow visitors to see different aspects of the ecology by car, bike, or on foot.