

The European Network for Country Houses and Estate Research (ENCOUNTER) and the Baltic Manor Route are going to organize a common conference at the European University Viadrina in Frankfurt/Oder (Germany) at 25.-27. June 2026

Call for Papers for the Conference

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 the manor houses as a tourist destination and its 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? Who was actually willing to open up their home, why, and for whom?

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 evokes 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 sector, 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.

Suggested themes for the conference might include:

- **History of manorial tourism:** State of research, comparisons, new findings.
- **Sources for historical tourism research:** Spread of knowledge about destinations and social characteristics of travelers.
- **Interpretation of complexity:** Narratives, social, economic, ecological aspects.
- **Authenticity:** What does authenticity mean for manor houses in a post-feudal era?
- **Visitors and experience:** Social patterns of expectations and desires.
- **The manor, the village and the landscape:** opportunities, challenges, social innovations.

The conference language will be English. Presentations should not exceed a maximum of 20 minutes.

The conference is being organised by the Chair of Cultural Heritage Studies at the European University Viadrina in Frankfurt/Oder (Germany, at the border to Poland). Please send an abstract of your contribution (2,400 characters), a short CV and details of your current activities by 31 January 2026 to:

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