

# Integrating Military Heritage into Tourism and History Education



[militaryheritagetourism.info](http://militaryheritagetourism.info)

## Program

### 10.01. 2025, Friday. The workshop in Riga.

The aim of the workshop is to foster collaboration among stakeholders, exploring new ways to bring military heritage to life for a diverse audience. Accessibility through understanding: making historical narratives accessible to all. Designing engaging military heritage tourism programmes, specially for youth.



The Latvian War Museum, Smilšu iela 20, Rīga, Latvia

09:30	Registration and coffee
10:00	<p><b>Military Heritage Project in the Baltics. Participant Introductions.</b> Strong Yesterday – Free Today! Telling the shared independence story of the Baltic States through military heritage tourism. <i>Asnate Ziemele, Baltic Country Holidays, Latvia, <a href="http://militaryheritagetourism.info">militaryheritagetourism.info</a></i></p>
10:30	<p><b>Transforming Military Sites and Sharing Their Stories with Diverse Audiences.</b> But who is the storyteller of the personal narrative? How can one ensure a credible personal story that is also historically balanced? And how do you make the stories relevant to a modern and international audience with no personal memories of the periode? <i>Thomas Tram Pedersen, Historian, founder of the Cold War Museum at Stevnsfort, Denmark. <a href="http://www.planscape.dk">www.planscape.dk</a></i></p>



11:00	<p><b>Times They Are A-Changin'. Learning from the Cold War.</b> Education, visits of school classes, and re-enactments of the Cold War in the Netherlands. <i>Ben de Vries, Historian and Programme Manager of Military Heritage at the Dutch Cultural Heritage Agency, Ministry of Culture, the Netherlands.</i> <a href="http://www.cultureelerfgoed.nl">www.cultureelerfgoed.nl</a></p>
11:30	<p><b>Cold War in the School Curriculum in the UK.</b> The practices around education and audience engagement through annual events and educational offerings aligned with the school curriculum to promote the Cold War heritage awareness and visitor engagement. <i>Milka Blagoeva Ivanova / Dr. Peter Robinson, The Cold War Network, UK.</i> <a href="http://www.coldwarnetwork.co.uk">www.coldwarnetwork.co.uk</a></p>
12:00-13:00	Lunch
13:00	<p><b>The Winter War Museum at the Battlefield Site: Sustaining Visitor Interest.</b> Europe's largest Winter War Museum focuses on sensory experiences and a human approach to the history of the war, sharing with visitors the lives of soldiers and civilians during wartime. <i>Reima Haapoja, Minna Torkkola, Winter War Museum Raatteen Portti, Finland.</i> <a href="http://www.raatteenportti.fi">www.raatteenportti.fi</a></p>
13:30	<p><b>Remembrance Tourism in Flanders Fields: a Meaningful Experience for Young People.</b> Remembrance Tourism is a key focus at Visit Flanders, with Flanders Fields attracting international visitors to its battlefields and war memorials. <i>Veerle Viaene, the heritage coordinator at Visit Flanders, Belgium.</i> <a href="http://www.toerismevlaanderen.be">www.toerismevlaanderen.be</a></p>
14:00	<p><b>Expeditions Retracing Some of the Most Famous Operations of WW2.</b> Company overview, upcoming expeditions, combining military expertise and history and tracing the paths of the brave men and women of the SOE, OSS, and WW2 Special Forces, covering Europe, North Africa, and Asia. <i>Matthew Smith, SOE Expeditions, UK.</i> <a href="http://www.soeexpeditions.com">www.soeexpeditions.com</a></p>
14:30	<p><b>Wrap up the workshop, discussions</b> led by <i>Valdis Kuzmins, Researcher, National Defence Academy of Latvia.</i></p>
15:30-17:30	<p><b>Coffee and excursion</b> in the Latvian War Museum.</p>
19:00-21:00	<p><b>Dinner</b> in Riga for international speakers and invited guests</p>

# The workshop speakers



**THOMAS TRAM PEDERSEN (DENMARK)**  
HISTORIAN, FOUNDER OF THE COLD WAR MUSEUM AT STEVNSFORT

Authentic historical locations offer a unique and immersive experience, allowing visitors to connect deeply with history. Thomas Tram Pedersen, a historian and urban planner, has dedicated years to identifying, preserving, and sharing historical sites with the public. He reviewed over 1,800 Cold War military sites in Denmark, selecting 25 to preserve for future generations. He also founded the Stevnsfort museum and contributed to the preservation of the Danish government facility, REGAN Vest. Thomas emphasises preserving the authenticity of historical sites with minimal alterations, as excessive design can make them feel less trustworthy. Instead, he advocates for guided tours and personal narratives, often shared by people with firsthand experience of the site's history.

In his presentation, Thomas will explore key questions: Who should tell these personal stories? How can they be credible and historically balanced? And how can these stories resonate with a modern, international audience lacking personal memories of the period?



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**BEN DE VRIES (THE NETHERLANDS)**  
HISTORIAN AND PROGRAMME MANAGER OF MILITARY  
HERITAGE AT THE DUTCH CULTURAL HERITAGE AGENCY,  
MINISTRY OF CULTURE

Since 2019, Ben de Vries is in charge of a listing program for national monuments regarding heritage from the Cold War (1945-1991), which includes traces, buildings and complexes built for military and civil defence, and their social impact, like the peace movement.

Knowledge about the heritage of the Cold War in the Netherlands is still limited and fragmented. Moreover, due to the advanced age of experienced experts, this knowledge and skills are in danger of being quickly lost. Events and heritage from this fearsome time of 'armed peace' deserve further (archival) research and require more explanation and context. In October 2024 a comprehensive report was published with six storylines on the Cold War in the Netherlands: [english.cultureelerfgoed.nl](http://english.cultureelerfgoed.nl)



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**MILKA BLAGOEVA IVANOVA (UK)**  
THE COLD WAR NETWORK

Milka is a qualitative researcher, and her work focuses on creative and innovative/disruptive methodologies, authenticity, and communist heritage tourism in eastern and central Europe as well as Cold war tourism in the UK. Milka's research predominantly explores the relationship between tradition and modernity, particularly within the emerging identity of 'New Europe' countries. She examines how heritage, particularly dissonant and difficult heritage is represented and negotiated through tourism, focusing on the dynamics of traditionality versus transitionality. Her work has provided significant insights into how post-communist countries, such as Bulgaria, are portrayed in the tourism industry and the evolving role of cultural heritage in this process. Her current work focuses on Cold War heritage in the UK with the aim to deconstruct visitor experiences at cold war sites via memory and nostalgia.



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**REIMA HAAPOJA AND  
MINNA TORKKOLA (FINLAND)  
WINTER WAR MUSEUM RAATTEEN PORTTI**

Europe's largest Winter War Museum, Raatteen Portti, is located in Suomussalmi, in the middle of an authentic battlefield in the eastern part of Finland, just 19 km from the Russian border. The museum showcases an exhibition on the Winter War of 1939–1940, along with several changing exhibitions, such as those on the Continuation War years (1941–1944), the German Field Track, also known as the Track of Death, the Partisan Corner, and the Ukraina Now exhibition. Surrounding the museum are 100 hectares of battlefield areas, a 19 km long museum route called the Raate Road, and about 7 km of trails with signs explaining the key events of the battles.

At Raatteen Portti, we focus on sensory experiences and a human approach to the history of the war sharing with visitors the lives of soldiers and civilians during wartime with authentic effects such as sounds, films, miniature models and dioramas to visualise the overall picture of events.



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**VEERLE VIAENE (BELGIUM)  
HERITAGE COORDINATOR, VISIT FLANDERS**

Remembrance Tourism is a key focus at Visit Flanders. During World War I, the front line was situated in the western part of the region for nearly five years. Since the war Flanders Fields is attracting visitors from abroad who come to witness the battlefields and pay their respects at their ancestors' graves. For over 25 years, the region has offered a diverse array of museums, visitor centres, accessible sites, and guided tours. The centenary from 2014 to 2018 served as a significant moment to showcase the heritage of Flanders Fields, and Veerle Viaene played a vital role in preparing and implementing an ambitious remembrance program. After 2018, Visit Flanders made the decision to continue attracting visitors from various countries to Flanders Fields. The region exemplifies the importance of maintaining peace and resolving conflicts through diplomacy.



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**MATTHEW SMITH (SCOTLAND, UK)  
FOUNDER, SOE EXPEDITIONS**

Matthew Smith served 22 years in the British Army, where he specialised as a Communications Operator. His extensive military background includes completing Airborne Parachute selection, Army Commando selection, and the highly demanding Special Forces Communicator (SAS) selection, where he served for six years. Matt also qualified as a Survival, Escape, and Evasion Instructor, providing him with critical skills in high-stakes environments.

During his career, Matt was attached to the Royal Marines and spent six years in Norway on joint winter exercises, which ignited his passion for cold-weather operations. He further honed his skills by completing Arctic Survival training with the Pathfinder Platoon and becoming a qualified Ski Tour Leader. With over 25 years of experience in global expeditions, adventure, and survival training, Matt has led numerous wilderness survival experiences worldwide.

In 2020, he founded SOE Expeditions, combining his military expertise with his love for history. Matt now leads immersive journeys tracing the paths of the brave men and women of the SOE, OSS, and WW2 Special Forces, covering Europe, North Africa, and Asia.

His expeditions honour the legends who shaped history by following in their extraordinary footsteps.



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**VALDIS KUZMINS (LATVIA)**  
RESEARCHER, NATIONAL DEFENCE ACADEMY OF LATVIA



Bachelor's and Master's degrees obtained from the Faculty of History and Philosophy at the University of Latvia. 18 years of professional experience at the Latvian War Museum in the Interwar and Second World War History departments. Current position: Researcher at the Centre for Security and Strategic Research, Latvian National Defence Academy. Research interests: Latvian military history of the 20th century. History doesn't have to be something merely "known." Instead, historical research serves as a powerful tool for building and sharpening skills in critical thinking, analysis, writing, public speaking, and more. With these abilities, knowledge—history included—remains enduring.



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**ASNĀTE ZIEMELE (LATVIA)**  
CHAIR OF THE BOARD, BALTIC COUNTRY HOLIDAYS

In 2020, Baltic Country Holidays launched the first initiative to tell the shared story of Baltic independence through military heritage tourism. Beginning with Latvia and Estonia, and with Lithuania joining in 2024, the web platform and network [militaryheritagetourism.info](http://militaryheritagetourism.info) now integrates over 600 military heritage sites across all three countries. These include museums, fortifications, military equipment, trails, bunkers, battle sites, military towns, infrastructural sites, and memorials that span the period from the start of World War I in 1914, the emergence of Latvia and Estonia as independent states, and the re-establishment of Lithuanian statehood in 1918, to the occupations, Soviet era, and the restoration of independence in 1990/1991, up to the present day.



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The current focus is on making the story of independence and its significance accessible to younger generations. Military heritage tourism offers an engaging and interactive way to present history, grounded in well-researched facts and personal experiences.

## Registration



## Follow us

Registration for 10.01.2025 workshop  
until December 15, 2024

 <https://forms.gle/fiYjrnQkmys6Adxf9>



[militaryheritagetourism.info](http://militaryheritagetourism.info)



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[Military heritage tourism](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)

More information and registration details:



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**11.01. 2025, Saturday.**

## **Christmas Battle commemoration event**

14:00-18:00 at Christmas Battles Museum and Memorial Park.

Excursion to the key sites of the Christmas Battles: Antiņi Brothers' Cemetery, Latvian Riflemen's field hospital, bunkers, and the battle site at Ložmetējkalns. Visiting stand of Military Heritage Tourism info stand.

**>>> Detailed program.** *No registration needed.*

<b>14:00</b>	<p>Meeting at the <u>Antiņu Cemetery</u>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Christmas battle reenactment with First World War soldier uniforms, weapons, and equipment;</li><li>• Visit to the bunkers and trenches.</li></ul>
<b>15:00</b>	<p>Gathering at the <u>Christmas Battle Museum "Mangaļi"</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Solemn pledge by the Youth Guard;</li><li>• Oath-taking ceremony of the 52nd Combat Support Battalion of the National Guard;</li><li>• Demonstrations of the National Armed Forces' weapons and equipment;</li><li>• Military Heritage Tourism project Military Heritage 2 tent and stand – Baltic States' military heritage tourism map;</li><li>• Meeting with the Military Heritage 2 project team from Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania;</li><li>• Bonfire with hot tea and pies.</li></ul>
<b>16:00</b>	<p>Torch-lit procession from the Christmas Battle Museum "Mangaļi" to Ložmetējkalns - the Machine-gun Hill.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Distance – approximately 7 km;</li><li>• Duration – about one and a half hours.</li></ul>
<b>17:30</b>	<p>Commemorative event and moment of remembrance at <u>Ložmetējkalns</u>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Speeches by state officials, representatives of the National Armed Forces, National Guard, Jelgava district municipality;</li><li>• Meeting with scouts at the tent camp;</li><li>• Arrival of the torch-lit procession;</li><li>• Orchestra and music;</li><li>• Army field kitchen (warm porridge and tea);</li><li>• Singing and music.</li></ul>

***Strong Yesterday, Free Today.***



**More information:**

[www.celotajs.lv](http://www.celotajs.lv)

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