

Website Design for Abja Rural Tourism Destination

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<p>This bachelor's thesis is about creating a website for Abja Rural Tourism Destination. The project is commissioned by Non-Profit Organization (NPO) Mulgimaa Development, which operates in southern Estonia.</p> <p>The objective of this thesis is to build a multilingual website, which would function as a source of information for tourists. In addition, the purpose is that it increases the recognition of Abja and starts to build brand awareness for Abja as a tourist destination. The Abja area has great potential to be a competitive destination, thanks to its beautiful nature and historical sites, provided that its resources are strategically utilized.</p> <p>The theoretical part starts by describing a destination, destination marketing, destination online marketing and tourist's behavior before visit. However, the main focus is put on website-building principles, for instance choosing a domain name, defining the website's objectives, tips for content planning, selecting visual design elements and so on. The project development part describes in detail the website development tasks, like comparing website building principles, benchmarking and planning, gathering and editing content and design element, building the website and testing it.</p> <p>This project-based thesis has resulted in the development of a website in two languages, Estonian and English. The development process took place between June and November 2012.</p>	
Key words website, website design, destination website development, destination marketing, rural tourism website	

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1 Introduction

The growth of Internet usage has pushed the communication, marketing and business transaction methods to a new playing field. According to Internet World Stats (2012), there were 2,406 million Internet users in June 2012 worldwide and with the advances in technology, the number of users is most likely to increase. With online marketing accessible for anyone who has a device, whether a computer, TV, Smartphone or a tablet, connected with the Internet, increasing online visibility has become an important aspect in marketing strategy (Thomas 2011, 7).

Prior to planning a holiday trip, people try to seek out as much information as possible. This is often done online, for instance by browsing blogs, destination website, various travel advisor pages, and so on. Consequently, it is clear that a destination's website plays an important part in attracting visitors to a destination. Because of this, Destination Marketing Organizations (from here onwards abbreviated as DMOs) invest significant amounts of money to improving the effectiveness and usability of their official websites (Park & Gretzel 2007, 46).

This project-based thesis is focusing on developing a multilingual website for Abja Rural Tourism Destination, which would offer tourism related information for both local people and visitors. The project is commissioned by NPO Mulgimaa Development, which operates in south Estonia.

The theoretical part of this thesis starts by discussing about destinations and carries on with destination marketing, destination branding and destination online marketing aspects, and finishes with analyzing tourist's behavior before visit. Theory part continues with examining the website building principles, such as deciding on domain name, defining website's objectives, planning the content, choosing visual design elements, enhancing website with third-party tools, setting up Search Engine Optimization (from here onwards abbreviated as SEO) and connecting a site with website analytics system.

The product development part describes in detail the actual process behind creating the website. For instance, it starts with describing the planning stage, which explains how the design elements were chosen, what programs were used for image editing, how the copyright issues were followed and so on. Development stage carries on with describing the implementation process. For instance, the paragraph starts by mentioning aspects related to font and text, like which font types were used and how the text was aligned, and continues with section about photo usage on the site. Moreover, website content section explains shortly about the header and footer of the website and continues with describing how the different content elements were searched and placed on each page. Final sections in the paragraph are dedicated to describing how the SEO was implemented, reasons for building the mobile version of the website and how the testing was carried out.

The final product is a website with ten pages, in both Estonian and English languages, and a mobile version of the website in Estonian. The Abja Rural Tourism site is designed to be fully functional and it is up to the commissioning party, whether and when they decide to publish the website.

1.1 Background information

The author of this thesis was hoping to co-operate with a company operating in Estonia, specifically with an organization which would be located in her home region, Viljandi County. Right from the beginning the aim was to design a plan and possibly to create a website for a company which would be involved in developing a rural tourism in the area and would be willing to collaborate throughout the process. Through the search for prospective partners in the region, the author found out that after the closing of the Abja Tourist Information Point, there is a need for a website which would function as an information facilitator about Abja and its region.

Thesis author contacted local representatives involved with the work of the Abja Tourist Information Point via e-mail and inquire about their plans for developing a website, as well as possibility for co-operation in this process. E-mail was presenting them with a proposition that the author would be gathering the content information, designing

and building the website as part of her thesis project. Reply was received from Ms. Leskova, who is currently working as an executive director in NPO Mulgimaa Development and she was positive about collaborating in this project and discussing more about the details during our first meeting.

NPO Mulgimaa Development

NPO Mulgimaa Development was established in 2006 and it is one of the Local Action Groups (from here onwards abbreviated as LAGs) operating in southern Estonia.

LAGs are made up of public and private partners from the rural territory, and must include representatives from different socio-economic sectors. They receive financial assistance to implement local development strategies, by awarding grants to local projects. (European Commission, 2009.)

It actively operates in five local municipalities such as Abja, Karksi, Halliste and Paistu parish and the city of Mõisaküla, and has members from local entrepreneurs and NPOs. At the moment the organization has 62 active members throughout the regions. The organization focuses on three main strategic goals: Supporting Small Entrepreneurship, Developing the Village Environment and Increasing the Competitiveness and Originality of Mulgi County. (NPO Mulgimaa Development.)

Abja-Paluoja

Abja-Paluoja is situated in the southern part of Viljandi County and shares its border with Latvia (see Figure 1). Abja Rural Municipality area is 290,2 km² in size, it has 15 villages and 2424 registered citizens (last updated 01 Jan 2012). The city currently has a high school, kindergarten, community centre, new sport centre, several shops, 2 dining places (Mulgi Tavern and Kilpkonna Inn) and 3 accommodation providers (Abja boarding schools hostel, Paluoja holiday home and Mulgi Tavern guesthouse).

Abja region is full of various historical places, such as Abja manor, Abjaku and Põlde stone grave sites, old buildings, Atika sacrificial stone and so on. In addition, it has

many beautiful scenic areas, like Vaida, Hendrikhansu and Lopa outcrops, Paasi lake, Lüütre nature reserve, Paudi farmstead and so forth. Local stakeholders, entrepreneurs and citizens, are very involved and actively participate in improving the Abja surroundings and preserving the Mulgi culture and heritage sites.



Figure 1. Location of Abja-Paluoja indicated with the red marker (Google Maps, 2012)

1.2 Objectives and limitations

The main objective is to build a functioning, up-to-date and multilingual, Estonian and English, website for the Abja Rural Tourism destination. Additionally, the aim is that the website would increase the recognition of Abja and would start to build brand awareness for Abja as a tourist destination. Destinations brand awareness is described as the strength of a brand's presence in the traveler's mind (Kozak & Baloglu 2011, 177).

Even though the thesis author has basic skills of Adobe Photoshop, Picasa and website building software which functions on drag-and-drop method, some limitations regarding the website building and visual design may arise from the limited technical expertise. Consequently, this project is somewhat based on trial-and-error method thus it would take slightly longer for the website to be fully finished, than it would for an experienced website developer.

In addition, since there will not be an employee responsible for updating the content of neither the website nor the social media, it is crucial that the website contains the latest and most relevant information. Moreover, it should not have news feed, blog or any other application which would require regular updates.

1.3 Task description

This project-oriented thesis is about creating a multilingual website for Abja Rural Tourism destination and the process would be guided by the project plan made with Edraw Max, and can be found in the attachment 1. The project plan shows tasks which would be done by the thesis author, as well as future tasks, which would be done in co-operation with the commissioning party.

The process would start with gathering theoretical background information, such as website building principles and other technical know-how materials, to enhance the knowledge of the thesis author. It continues with comparing and choosing suitable website building program, which would be operating based on drag-and-drop interface. The most suitable platform for this project proved to be Wix. The tasks carry on with benchmarking domestic and international destination, to gather ideas for the website's content elements. Based on the ideas collected from the research, the Abja Rural Tourism website map would be created and presented to the commissioning party representative.

Tasks carry on with gathering and editing content stage. The website content gathering and editing would be the responsibility of the thesis author. All the content, for instance contact information for service providers, attraction's descriptions, images, recipes, legends, and so on, would be searched from both printed materials and online sources. Design elements would be searched from online and altered in either Photoshop or Picasa. The map for attractions would be created with Google Map My Places functions and the exact coordinates for this would be searched from different online sources, like National Registry of Cultural Monuments and Estonian Environment Information.

Building the website stage entails placing the elements onto the Wix website building platform, naming images with descriptions and Alt text, as well as adding links to original sources below the content materials on the website, and so forth. In addition, since the Wix website builder does not automatically create a mobile version of the website, this would be created as well. However, it would be only in Estonian as it is not possible to make it multilingual. Social networking is important marketing tool for any business, however due to the fact that the Abja Rural Tourism website will not have a person regularly updating it or any social media pages, there is no need at the moment to create Facebook, Pinterest or Twitter accounts.

The final stage is focused on the testing and improving the Abja Rural Tourism website and the mobile version. For instance, the website's compatibility with various Internet browsers would be checked, as well as functionality of links, buttons and third-party tools.

The finalized website would be presented to the commissioning party representative Ms. Leskova and the codes for accessing the Wix online website building platform, content information and design elements would be handed over in electronic format. The final tasks presented on the project plan would be carried out in co-operation with the commissioning party. In addition, it was agreed upon with the commissioning party that they would be responsible for purchasing the Wix hosting/upgrading package and the domain name. In the future, if necessary, any assistance, changes or occasional content updates can be guided or implemented by the thesis author, since she is familiar with the software and its functions.

2 Marketing of destinations

Destination marketing is a demanding task, because a destination comprises of many tangible and intangible aspects which all affect the marketing process. The challenges may arise from dealing with all the stakeholders, as well as determining how to market a destination, in order to differentiate it from others alike. (Boniface & Cooper 2005, 42-43.) The following paragraph talks briefly about destination marketing, branding, online marketing and tourist's behavior before visit.

2.1 Destination marketing

Before discussing the complexity of destination marketing, it is important to understand what a destination is. For instance, according to Horner and Swarbrooke (1996, 682) a destination is a country, region or locality where tourists spend their holidays. Boniface and Cooper (2005, 41) on the other hand have come up with more elaborative definition, as for them a destination has to have at least one attraction, supporting facilities, accessibility, basic infrastructure, tourist organizations and political stability, in order to be a proper tourist destination. It is clear that the first description is overly simplified and in reality a destination needs to have supportive elements in order to be viable and remain competitive, as explained by latter authors.

The intricate task of marketing the destination is often managed by DMOs, be it tourist offices, tourism bureaus, Convention and Visitor Bureaus or councils, and the funding usually comes from the government or tax money (Kozak & Baloglu 2011, 80). On the other hand, the marketing and financial aspects can also be managed by LAGs and entrepreneurs, as is often the case with the smaller rural destinations, which need to come up with own financial resources, since they have to compete with more popular destination for the government funding and do not necessary get the full support they deserve.

Destination marketing compared to product marketing is more multifaceted and often requires different approach (Boniface & Cooper 2005, 42-43). Not only do the DMOs

need to deal with the tangible elements such as natural geography, built environment, attractions, accommodation and so on, but also with the intangible aspects like social and cultural factors (Cooper, Fletcher, Fyall, Gilbert & Wanhill 2008, 612). For that reason, it is important for DMOs to involve all stakeholders and to combine their input and effort to the process, in order to successfully apply the appropriate marketing concepts to planning strategy and to attract visitors to a destination (Kolb 2006, 2; Kozak & Baloglu 2011, 14).

DMOs need to remember that tourists cannot simply pre-sample a destination before their arrival consequently, they base their decisions on the information received from the marketing or on feedback received from their friends and family (Kozak & Baloglu 2011, 3-4). Because of this, it is vital that the marketing message would match the reality of the destination; otherwise the visitors would feel deceived, which would result in negative attitude towards the destination (Kozak & Baloglu 2011, 4).

2.2 Destination branding

According to Morrison and Anderson (2002, in Qu, Kim & Im 2011, 466) destination branding is as a way to communicate a destination's unique identity by differentiating a destination from its competitors. It is more than just designing a logo and slogan, and is certainly more complex than branding a product (Kozak & Baloglu 2011, 156).

Most destinations have great facilities and attractions, and every destination promotes their unique culture, heritage, beautiful landscape, excellent facilities and friendly people. Consequently, DMOs need to strategically manage their branding process, in order to reach their branding goals and to attract visitors. (Kozak & Baloglu 2011, 15-154.) There are four stages which can be used by DMOs to guide the branding process: Assessing the destination's current situation and core values, developing a brand identity and promise which interacts with the target audience, communicating that promise, and after that measuring the brand's effectiveness in the marketplace (Hudson & Ritchie 2009, 219). Ideally, a brand should reflect all the destinations products and services, as well as all the characteristics which form the destination's image and identity (Kozak & Baloglu 2011, 155).

2.3 Destination online marketing

Simply said, online marketing is defined as using World Wide Web for marketing products or services and is often also expressed as e-marketing, web marketing or Internet marketing (Thomas 2011, 4-5). Online marketing in its core is used for keeping, cultivating and rekindling relationships, but it also helps to support brand awareness, increase sales and interact with current and prospective customers. Methods often used for online marketing are for instance online advertising, paid search, SEO, social media and e-mail marketing. (Thomas 2011, 5-9.)

Since the online based marketing strategies have become widely used, DMOs are forced to carefully evaluate their website effectiveness, assess the return on their investments and gather feedback on necessary improvements (Park & Gretzel 2007, 46). Park and Gretzel (2007, 51) emphasize that the mistake that DMOs do, is that they fail to establish clear objectives for their websites, as well as strategic development plans for their online marketing endeavors. This results in wasting precious marketing budget on methods which do not necessarily work or are not efficient enough.

2.4 Tourist's behavior before visit

With time, tourists have become more educated, informed, demanding and experienced. They expect good value, quality, higher standards, and often want to have more than one experience at the destination. (Kozak & Baloglu 2011, 3-11.) The changes in behavior and preferences have been greatly influenced by the growth of the Internet and the use of Information and Communication Technologies (from here onwards abbreviated as ICT), which has resulted in development of new type of empowered individuals, the ICT-skilled tourists (Jacobsen & Munar 2012, 39).

Information search is considered to be the starting point in the tourists' destination choice process and thanks to their skills, tourists know how and from where to search better offers, as well as what to expect from international and national destinations (Dey & Sarma 2010, 341; Jacobsen & Munar 2012, 39; Kozak & Baloglu 2011, 11-12).

Consequently, tourists have become less interested of package tours and more independent from intermediaries like travel agencies and tour operators, and often purchase their travel products directly from various online booking systems (Buhalis & Law 2008, 611; Jacobsen & Munar 2012, 39). In that way they can make their own schedules and their own preferences, when it comes to accommodation, transportation, tours and so forth (Buhalis & Law 2008, 611; Dey & Sarma 2010, 341).

In addition, tourists do not rely anymore only on the information received from the tour operators or the destination marketing message, since they have the possibility to gather information about the destination through a variety of sources, such as Internet, word-of-mouth communication, brochures, magazines and newspapers, TV shows, and so on (Kozak & Baloglu 2011, 12). Accordingly, more and more of tourist's base their decisions on the information collected from tourism related websites and virtual communities, like Couchsurfing, iTourist, Travelblog, Foursquare, TripAdvisor, Facebook, Youtube, Twitter, and so on (Buhalis & Law 2008, 612; Munar 2011, 294). According to Rheingold (1993, in Buhalis & Law 2008, 612), "A virtual community is a group of people who may or may not meet one another face-to-face, and who exchange words and ideas through the mediation of computer bulletin boards and networks."

Buhalis and Law (2008, 612) point out that in the future, it is expected that tourist will be more influenced by the virtual communities based on peer reviews and less by destination's marketing message. This in fact puts added pressure on DMOs, since they need to modify their marketing strategies and to focus on gaining better understanding of the behavior and satisfaction of the virtual communities' users, in order to utilize this new marketing paradigm in a more efficient way and to use virtual communities to increase destination's brand awareness (Buhalis & Law 2008, 612).

3 Website building principles

Internet provides endless possibilities for website design and development. For instance, a website can be easily created by using do-it-yourself tools, by hiring a freelance graphic designer or even expensive design agency. (Thomas 2011, 26.) Kozak and Baloglu (2011, 210) highlight the fact that websites are important online marketing tools and in order to affect online users intention to purchase, it is crucial to provide useful, complete and relevant information to potential users consequently, great care needs to go into planning and developing a website.

The following chapter describes various website building principles, for instance aspects to keep in mind while choosing a domain name, the importance of defining website objectives, elements to remember while planning the content, choosing the appropriate color, text and font for the site, using third-party tools to enhance usability for visitors, as well as issues like SEO and website analytics, to track and improve the website.

3.1 Domain name

Thomas (2011, 20) points out that before starting to design and develop a website, it is important to purchase a domain name, which is also known as Uniform Resource Locator (from here onwards abbreviated as URL). URL is a web address, which is used to find a website on a web server (Chaffey 2009, 751). While choosing a suitable domain name, it should be remembered that the name should be short, memorable, not easily confused with other similar domains, easy to spell, suit with company synergy and would work on business cards (Laudon & Traver 2010, 7-47; Nielsen 2000, 247; Thomas 2011, 20).

3.2 Website objectives

In order to determine the form, functions, the content of a website, it is vital to clarify site's purpose and goals (Chaffey & Smith 2008, 223; Kraynak & Bluttman 2011, 2).

Website's purpose could be to support, entertain, inform, showcase a product, sell products or services, brand an individual, and so on (Kraynak & Bluttman 2011, 2; Thomas 2011, 19). Chaffey and Smith (2008, 223) suggest that in order to determine the website's purpose, it is good to ask the following: How could my website help my customers? For instance: Help them to make purchases. Provide them with information. Help them to save time and money and so forth. (Chaffey & Smith 2008, 223.)

Kraynak and Bluttman (2011, 2) recommend in addition to website's purpose, to set measurable goals, for example to get 100 visitors per month to sign up for newsletter, or to increase sales by certain percent. Whatever the goals, it should be made sure that they are measurable, so that it would be possible to determine whether the goals have been achieved or if any changes need to be made with marketing efforts (Kraynak & Bluttman 2011, 2).

3.3 Content planning

People come to a website to read something, look at something, learn new things, watch videos or hear music – these are all forms of content. Needless to say, the content is king. (Kraynak & Bluttman 2011, 4.) Newlands (2011, 77) recommends to conduct a research, to find out what other similar companies have on their websites. In addition, since search engines and users like it when a website is frequently updated with new content, it would be helpful to create a content plan and a schedule which to follow (Newlands 2011, 151).

The quality of the information plays a great role for users. They prefer that information which is accurate, up-to-date, reliable, honest and based on expert sources. Therefore, whenever possible, it is good to provide precise, detailed information and to point out sources as well as dates. (Brinck, Gergle & Wood 2002, 279.)

Furthermore, online rich media elements such as pictures, illustrations, animations, audio tracks and videos are important part of a website design, which can be very persuasive when distributed correctly (Chabrow 2006, in Rosenkrans 2009, 19; Kozak & Baloglu 2011, 210; Thomas 2011, 32). Safko (2010, 193) explains that of all the rich

media elements, users generally prefer video over audio and audio over text. However, since creating a professional video is relatively expensive and requires the most effort, smaller companies and entrepreneurs can instead create an audio message, which they are able to make with using tools already in their computer. From the user's perspective, audio files are smaller thus can be downloaded faster than videos, they can be played on various portable players and can be listened while doing different activities, like driving, walking and so on. (Safko 2010, 193.)

The shift from web 1.0, the information web, to web 2.0, the social web, has changed the way people use and interact on the Internet (E-language, 2012). Users are no longer content with merely reading the information and are seeking to actively participate in content development, to express their ideas and experiences. Consequently, Chaffey and Smith (2008, 268) recommend to increase the interaction and two-way communication, to offer website visitors more involvement and control over their web experience. This can be done by utilizing for instance Forums, feedback forms, social network pages and virtual communities, like Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter, Foursquare, TripAdvisor and so forth.

Carrying on, website's planning process can be made easier by creating a website map. A website map illustrates a list of pages, which would be available for website's users. It can be created as a simple list with pages and subpages in Word document, or it could be build with boxes to make it more visual (see Figure 2). It is also beneficial for developers, as it visualizes the hierarchy thus guides the development process and makes it easier and faster. (Thomas 2011, 38.)

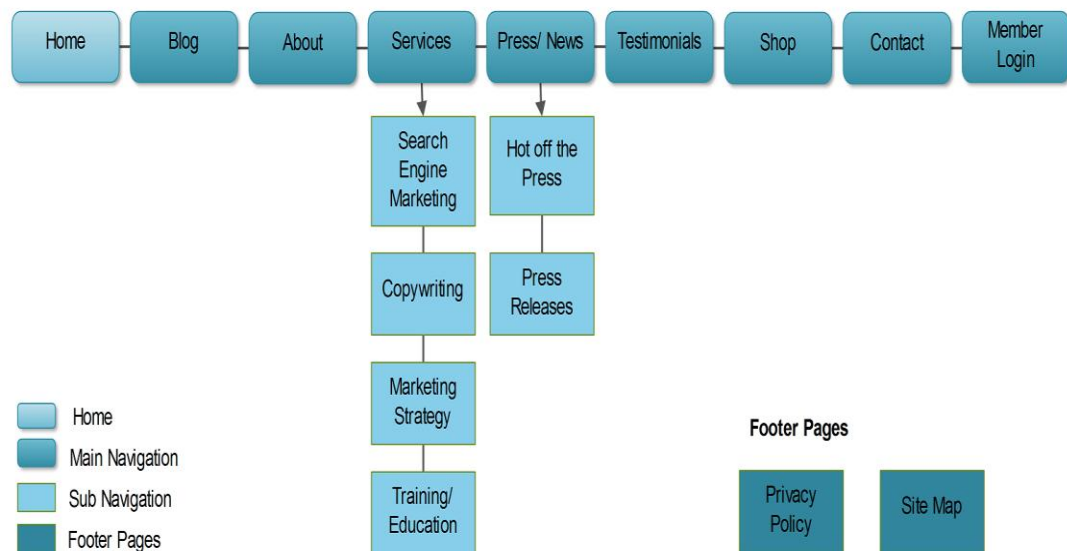


Figure 2. Example of a website map (Thomas 2011, 39)

When it comes to planning the layout, it is good to build a wireframe for each of the website's page. Wireframing refers to a process of defining a structure of the webpage, without the intended content (see Figure 3 below). Wireframe helps developers to focus on the structure, without being distracted by visual elements like colors, text and images. (Kraynak & Bluttman 2011, 4.) A wireframe can be built with only a handful of boxes or may be created to show all the details (Kraynak & Bluttman 2011, 83).

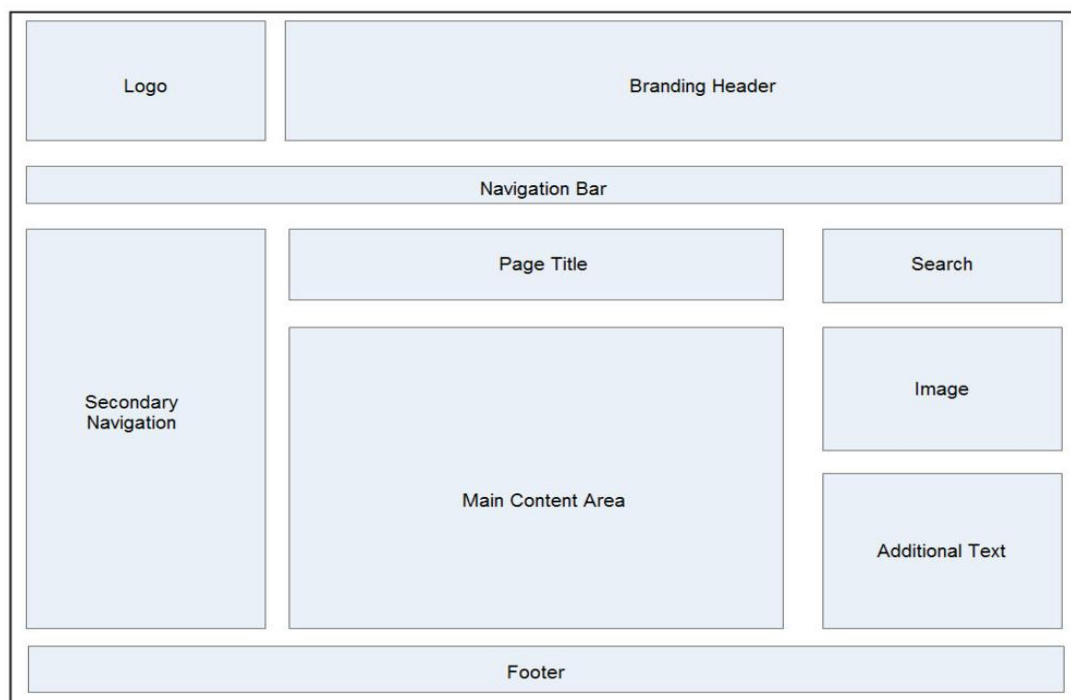


Figure 3. Example of a wireframe (Kraynak & Bluttman 2011, 4)

A good practice is to keep website quick and easy to navigate, and not to give people too many layers to click through, so that they are easily able to retrieve the information they are looking for. With more complex sites, it would be useful to test the website's map and wireframe on few people, to identify whether the structure looks also logical for potential users. (Reed 2011, 33.)

3.4 Color, text and font

Color

Kraynak and Bluttman (2011, 90) point out the fact that website developers need to keep in mind that people often have different associations with color, which are influenced by emotional, psychological or cultural aspects in their lives. For instance, deep reds may express love, passion or even aggression, earthy colors on the other hand may be more soothing and are often used as autumn colors (Kraynak & Bluttman 2011, 91).

Kraynak and Bluttman (2011, 99) recommend that it is best to choose complementary colors, which are those that are opposite one another on a color wheel (see Figure 4). Complementary colors look good together on a page, however it is advisable not to use them in foreground/background relationship, in order to avoid the phenomenon called simultaneous contrast (see Figure 5), which would make colors look more vibrant together and make page over stimulating for viewers (Kraynak & Bluttman 2011, 99).

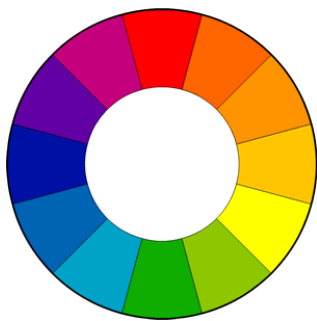


Figure 4. Color wheel (Tiger Color, 2012)



Figure 5. Example of simultaneous contrast (Kraynak & Bluttman 2011, 100)

Another safe strategy is to use analogous colors. Those are the colors next to each other on the color wheel. However, those should not be used in situations which require contrast. For instance, it is not good idea to use analogous colors in charts. (Kraynak & Bluttman 2011, 99.)

Text

Kraynak and Bluttman (2011, 113) state that the main web activity is to read content and even the fanciest website is useless when the text is obscured. To make content easier to read, it is best to use shorter paragraphs, so that the information would be divided into chunks (Brinck et al. 2002, 279).

Furthermore, to point out parallelism in multiple items, it is best to use bullet points. On the other hand, to avoid confusion for viewers it is best to avoid using custom-designed bullets, bullet points that may look like buttons and those which give three-dimensional shading. (Brinck et al. 2002, 280.)

There are four text alignment types (see Figure 6) which developers can apply on their websites. However, the most popular way is to align the text in a paragraph from left, which would be the most user-friendly, followed by the center alignment, which is the second most commonly used alignment type (Kraynak & Bluttman 2011, 124). It is

best to avoid using justified alignment, since it might cause users to focus on ‘white space’ between the words, instead of the content itself (Trinity College Dublin, 2012).

Left aligned	Justified	Center aligned	Right aligned
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Nam cursus. Morbi ut mi. Nullam enim leo, egestas id, condimentum at, laoreet mattis, massa. Sed eleifend nonummy diam.	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Nam cursus. Morbi ut mi. Nullam enim leo, egestas id, condimentum at, laoreet mattis, massa. Sed eleifend nonummy diam.	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Nam cursus. Morbi ut mi. Nullam enim leo, egestas id, condimentum at, laoreet mattis, massa. Sed eleifend nonummy diam.	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Nam cursus. Morbi ut mi. Nullam enim leo, egestas id, condimentum at, laoreet mattis, massa. Sed eleifend nonummy diam.

Figure 6. Four text alignment types

When adding links to the website, it is good to differentiate the active link from the rest of the text, so that the users would be able to distinguish the difference. Blue and underlined text is universally recognized method, even for novice computer user. (Brinck et al. 2002, 285-286.)

Font

It is possible choose from hundreds of fonts, however in reality only a handful of types are practical on the websites. The problem with fonts is that in order for a font to display properly for users, it must be installed on person’s computer, so that it would be available for their browsers. That is the reason why developers prefer to use certain well-known type of fonts, which are commonly installed to computers. (Kraynak & Bluttman 2011, 113.)

There are two kinds of font families, serif and sans-serif, to choose from. In general, serif fonts are mostly used for text in paragraphs and sans-serif font types for headings (Kraynak & Bluttman 2011, 115). To clarify, serif fonts are those which have small decorative pieces on the ends of every character (see Figure 7), however sans-serif fonts lack those decorative ends (Trinity College Dublin, 2012). While choosing a font type, it is useful to check out the study by Shaw (2012a; 2012b), which demonstrates the most common sans and sans-serif fonts in Windows, Mac and Linux.



San Serif

Figure 7. Difference between serif and san-serif fonts (Trinity College Dublin, 2012)

3.5 Third-party tools

Reed (2011, 38) recommends to use third-party web tools, in order to enhance a websites' service offering and make it more interactive for users. Third-party tools are often also called widgets or gadgets, which are different tools made available on website and either provide some functionality, like calculator or provide real-time information, for instance weather forecast (Chaffey 2009, 135).

It is more reasonable to purchase the tools, since in most cases the prices are very reasonable or tools are even free, rather than to waste resources and time to build one. It is often thought that using a third-party tool makes a website look 'unprofessional', however even the biggest brands commonly purchase tools from elsewhere. (Reed 2011, 38.) For instance, it is possible to find various free widgets from Google Gadgets for Your Website page, such as Google Maps, Google Driving Directions, Google Calendar, Skype, PayPal, Weather, and so on.

3.6 Search Engine Optimization

To discover websites and other online content, people mostly use search engines like Google, Yahoo!, Ask and Bing, to find the material they are looking for. By understanding the work methods of search engines, the website and its content can be built in more efficient way, which would then help to gain higher search engine ranking. (Kraynak & Bluttman 2011, 219.)

SEO involves in adding certain keywords into website's SEO settings, in order to achieve higher ranking in natural listings on the search engine results pages (Chaffey &

Smith 2008, 283). For instance a meta description, which is a short description of a web page, helps search engines to index and rank sites, and is often displayed in search results for users (Kraynak & Bluttman 2011, 226). Kraynak and Bluttman (2011, 226) recommend to remember following tips while optimizing meta descriptions: write a description for each page, limit the length to 150-200 words, incorporate descriptive keywords and phrases, and finally, write for users and not just for search engines.

While choosing keywords, Kraynak and Bluttman (2011, 227) advise developers to use those sparingly and strategically, place the most important ones first, separate words with commas and to choose 5-10 most targeted keywords which to use. Furthermore, another useful trick to improve website's ranking is to give each visual element and image a descriptive filename, caption and Alt text (Chaffey 2009, 648; Kraynak & Bluttman 2011, 228).

In the past, in order to achieve highest ranking possible, website developers tried to trick search engines by stuffing the pages with all sorts of keywords. Nowadays, since search engine developers became aware of this method, it no longer works and using this trick would most likely have an opposite effect on the ranking. (Kraynak & Bluttman 2011, 227.)

3.7 Website analytics

In order to measure and to improve a website's effectiveness, it is good to connect it with web analytics service. Analytics shows for instance visitors' demographics, their behavior on pages, what kind of technology they use for browsing, how many are return visitors, etc. Connecting your website with analytics service is relatively easy and most service providers operate on the same principle: sign up for an account, identify to the system the website which will be tracked and copy the code received from the service provider to the footer of the website (Reed 2011, 39). Google Analytics is probably the most known web analytics provider, which offers also free account.

4 Planning stage

Developing a website is not particularly an easy task and required a lot of time and effort. Following section describes how the planning stage of the website was carried out. The paragraph starts by explaining the process of choosing the appropriate website building program and continues with introducing the Wix publishing platform. It carries on with describing how the content planning was organized, as well as how and from where the visual design elements were chosen in order to obey the copyright restriction, and so forth.

4.1 Choosing a website building program

It was clear that since the thesis author does not have adequate HTML coding skills, which is traditionally used for building a website, it was necessary to explore other options. HTML stands for Hypertext Markup Language and it is the programming language used to make web pages. HTML consists of tags which are read by the browsers and then displayed as visual elements. (Kraynak & Bluttman 2011, 227.)

Therefore, the alternative was either to create it with a blogging platform or a drag-and-drop based platform, but since the first option has rather limited customization capabilities, the favor was towards latter alternative. The comparison and testing was made between Moonfruit, Yola, Webs, Weebly and Wix. In the end, it was established that Wix was the most reasonable, when it came to customization, usability and price level, and would be most suitable for this project.

Wix

Wix is a free online publishing platform, which uses drag-and-drop interface. The company was founded in 2006, headquarter is located in Tel Aviv and offices in San Francisco, New York and Dnepropetrovsk. Wix is very user-friendly and even users with basic computer knowledge are able to create Flash or HTML5 websites, mobile sites and Facebook pages. (Wix 2012.)

The HTML5 based website building platform is still a work in progress and the aim is that it will be the new standard for HTML (W3Schools 2012a). Abja Rural Tourism website is created by using Wix HTML5 website editor.

Wix pros

- easy drag-and-drop interface
- no coding required
- free hosting
- allows customization of websites
- premium packages are affordable
- good customer support (forum)
- many step-by-step tutorials
- pre-built templates
- Search Engine Optimization.

Wix cons

- browser compatibility (elements shift around in different browsers)
- not possible to download/backup the website
- not possible to upload own fonts
- no undo button (sometimes Ctrl+Z functions as undo, but not always)
- not possible to bulk delete images
- text editing boxes not functioning properly and lack extra functions
- website and online editor loading rather slow
- multilingual website building complicated
- mobile site editor functions are limited
- not possible to create multilingual mobile site
- not compatible yet with Pinterest
- text and link editing not always functioning properly
- limited slideshow functions.

4.2 Content planning

The purpose of the website was clear from the beginning: It should offer adequate information to visitors about Abja region tourism opportunities, which was previously offered from the Abja Tourism Information Point. Therefore, the website's main objective is to offer information, as well as to entertain users with the Mulgimaa video, images, legends of Abja and Mulgi food recipes.

The initial ideas for website design and content elements were gathered through benchmarking other similar destinations in Estonia and abroad. The benchmarking method is easy to use and is applied either to compare one company aspects with another or to gathering good ideas (Pollard 1999, 73).

After gathering the ideas, the preliminary draft of Abja Rural Tourism website map (see attachment 2) was generated with Edraw Max software. Since the website is relatively small in content and does not require any drop-down menus, the website map shows the elements (e.g. content headlines, icons, third-party tools, etc.) which would be put onto the site. The preliminary version was presented to Ms. Leskova and certain changes, elements added and eliminated, were made according to her suggestions and ideas. The Abja Rural Tourism website building was guided by the final version of the website map, which can be found in the attachment 3.

4.3 Visual design

There were no limitations by the commissioning party on website design, it was only suggested to use linseed field image for background, since linseed flowers have symbolic meaning for Abja. Specifically, in the past the farmers in Abja region made their fortune from growing and selling linseed, as well as current Abja coat of arms is illustrated with blue linseed flowers.

Since it is rural tourism website, the idea was to create familiar and cozy feeling by using vintage design element and to use colors which would complement the blue linseed field background, rather than bright shades.

4.4 Design elements

Design elements used in this project are: various icons, images for design purpose (e.g. envelopes, notebooks, postcards, old books, etc.) as well as Adobe Photoshop brushes, vectors and shapes. The image editing was done with Picasa photo editing software version 3.9 or Adobe Photoshop CS5 program. Some of the design elements were altered in Photoshop by using various brushes (e.g. notebooks for recipes, postcard and envelope, old books for legends, etc.). Elements which were uploaded to website were either of jpeg or of gif formats and images were named with a description and an Alt text.

The design elements were searched by using Google Search Engine and Pinterest page. Pinterest is relatively popular social networking site, which allows users to pin photos, with links attached, onto their virtual pinboard. In addition, it allows users to browse other people's pinboards and to follow users with similar interest. Pinterest was very useful with this project development, as it helped to find design elements more easily.

For copyright reasons, only the design elements which were allowed 'free for commercial use' and with 'no attribution needed or attribution appreciated' terms were utilized in this project. Keywords which were used in Google and Pinterest searches were following: 'free for commercial use', 'no attribution required' combined with 'vintage vectors', 'vintage brushes', 'Photoshop vintage brushes', 'vintage images', 'old envelopes', 'old postcards', 'old books', 'notebooks', 'social media icons', 'website icons', 'water stain brushes', 'texture stain brushes', and so on. Before any of the elements were downloaded, the Terms of Use (from here onwards abbreviated as TOU) were carefully read to identify if the files were allowed to be used without attribution and commercially. The TOU were just in case saved as PDF files, by using freeware called doPDF version 7, together with downloaded elements into folders in Dropbox. Dropbox is software which synchronizes your files online and across your devices (Cloud Puzzle). Folders were named after the website, from where the items were gathered (e.g. fuzzimo.com, bittbox.com, etc.), so it would be easier to identify the source.

5 Development stage

The following section describes in detail, how the website creation for Abja Rural Tourism took place. It starts by describing issues related to font and text and continues with the aspects related with photos. In addition, the section describes briefly about the development process of each page in the website content subsection, and carries on with issues like SEO, reasons behind building the mobile version of the website, as well as testing the site's links and button functions and its compatibility with various browsers.

5.1 Font and text

Prior to starting to write the content, it was checked from the study by Shaw (2012a; 2012b) which serif and sans-serif are the most common in various Operating Systems. Based on the findings and personal preference, title font which was used on the website was Trebuchet MS, with font size varying from 16-18, and the paragraph font which was chosen was Georgia, with font size from 12-13.

All the content text was prepared in Microsoft Office Word document and copy-pasted to the website editor while using Internet Explorer. It was noticed that by using Internet Explorer or Mozilla Firefox for editing, it was possible to keep the font type which was used in Word document, however Google Chrome tended to change the font into Wix generic style. The text on the website was in most cases aligned from left and text was divided into short paragraphs, so that the content would not be cramped together and it would be easier to read the material.

5.2 Photos

The Abja photos were searched from online material and saved to Dropbox folder. In there, the photos were named clearly with the name, author and with the source website abbreviation (e.g. Abja manor in winter. Abja Manor. www.abjamois.ee), so it would be easier to identify and to correctly indicate the source on the website.

Prior to uploading photos to the website, images were optimized in order to reduce their size. Of course it somewhat reduced the image quality, but not significantly. The optimization was done with FILEminimizer Pictures 3.0 program, which is a freeware and can be downloaded from the Internet. In some cases, it indicated that it reduced the photo size even by 90%, which in return would increase the website loading speed.

Most of the photos were added to the website by using slideshow application. First the Estonian version was completed and afterwards the photos were translated for the English version. Every photo was named, the author was noted and a link was added to the original source, and if it was possible, also Alt text was added.

5.3 Content of the website's pages

This section begins by describing elements placed onto the header and footer and continues with explaining the development process of each website's page. The pages which were created, and which functions and features are described are for instance, Home, Services (Catering, Accommodation and Activities), Attractions, Legends, Recipes, Contacts and Additional information.

5.3.1 Header and footer

The header of the website's pages display the title of the website, Abja Maaturism in Estonian and Abja Rural Tourism in English. By clicking on the headline, users would be taken back to the Home page, either to the Estonian or English version, depending which language they are using.

In addition, users are able to switch between languages by using the flag buttons located in the right-hand corner of the screen. British flag image corresponds to the website's English version Home page and Estonian flag image to the Estonian version.

Website's footer displays a copyright symbol, a year and Abja Maaturism text (e.g. © 2012 Abja Maaturism). Moreover, since the background photo (Linseed field) was used

under the Creative Commons license from Herry Lawford which was downloaded from Flickr and therefore, requires attribution. The source is indicated in the footer, with the link to original material.

5.3.2 Home page

A gallery with current and historical photos and Mulgimaa video from Youtube were placed on the upper part of the page. The Mulgimaa introductive video was done by NPO Mulgimaa Development and is available on Youtube. The video was added to the website with Wix own application, which only required that the link was copied from the Youtube source to the video application. The Estonian version website has video in Estonian and the English version in English language. A short description about Abja was placed right below the gallery, in addition the page was enriched with various third-party tools, which were mainly added with HTML embedding app in Wix.

Most of the codes of the third-party tools were available online, for instance weather broadcast from Ilmake.ee and Google Driving Directions, and it was merely a matter of customizing and copy-pasting those to the appropriate place. The weather broadcast displays current weather conditions in Abja-Paluoja, for instance the outdoor temperature and wind speed. By clicking on the weather widget, users would be prompted to the official Ilmake.ee website, where they would be able to retrieve more information about the current weather conditions as well as forecast for a week.

Google Driving Directions already contains the destination, which is set to be Abja-Paluoja. By entering the starting location into the application 'From' field and by clicking the direction button, users would be forwarded to the Google Maps website, which would display the driving direction to Abja-Paluoja.

In order to get the event calendar for Kultuuri.net, it was necessary to contact the service provider and they sent the correct code via e-mail. Unfortunately the calendar is only in Estonian language. The events displayed in the calendar are for Abja and Karksi, a neighboring municipality, due to the fact that Abja event calendar is not regularly

updated. However, in November 2012 the Kultuuri.net webpage will start to operate under new brand name, Kultuurikava, which should also improve the event calendar update frequency.

The bus ticket and schedule was added by merely using linking option, by clicking on the Tpilet image, users would be transferred to corresponding website, where they would be able to purchase bus tickets or merely check the schedules. Google Map which is displaying the location of Abja-Paluoja, was added with Wix application which merely required that the address and the business name needed be filled. Users are able to zoom in, drag the map inside the application and switch to the street view function.

5.3.3 Services

Since the Abja-Paluoja is a relatively small destination, it does not have wide range of services to offer. Service pages which were added were: Catering, Accommodation and Activities. Each page has approximately 3-5 services per page. Information about service providers was checked from multiple sources, to assure that the data on the website would be correct. Every service provider was shortly described, followed by business address, contact phone, e-mail and if applicable, also homepage and Facebook page link.

E-mail addresses were not set with direct 'mailto:' option and were altered, the @ symbol was replaced with [at] marking (e.g. name[at]domain.com), in order to reduce the spam mail. Even though it would have been possible to set e-mail addresses with 'mailto:' link, it was recommended in Website Creation Tutorials that this should be avoided even with the disguised e-mails, since spam robots may still extract the address from it. Spam robots, also called as Spam Bots, are programs designed to search and collect data from the Internet for e-mail addresses posted online as hyperlink format, which would be later on used for distributing spam e-mails to user accounts (Gresham, 2012).

An image or a logo was placed next to most of the service providers. The exception was with accommodation providers, which received a gallery with the photos of their

rooms and other facilities. In that way the visitors would be able to see the amenities straight away and would not have to search for those from the Internet.

5.3.4 Attractions

The prospective attractions and their descriptions were searched from various online sources and from printed materials. The sources were clearly indicated underneath the text and links were added to the original material. The map of attractions was made with Google maps - My Places function. The exact coordinates of attractions were searched from National Registry of Cultural Monuments and Estonian Environment Information, which were then copy-pasted to Google maps. Attractions contain both Estonian and English descriptions on the same map. By clicking on the illustration of a map underneath the 'Attractions map' heading, a new browser window would open and display the map. The map has all the generic functions of the Google map. Users are able to print the map, send it via e-mail and save it to their Google account.

Furthermore, link was added to Everyman's rights, so that visitors would be familiar with the regulations in Estonia and would remember to respect those while sightseeing.

5.3.5 Legends

The legends for the website were chosen from the book "Mulgimaa Charm and Pain" written by Ms. Vainlo, which has compilation of stories from Abja area. The criterion was that the origin of the story should be in Abja or near the area, the legend should not be very long and the story should not be violent, thus would be also appropriate for children to read.

Permission for using the legends on Abja Rural Tourism Destination website was acquired via phone call from the author Ms. Vainlo. It was explained to Ms. Vainlo where the stories would be featured and which ones in particular would be used. She was content with the selection and gave permission to use those on the website (Vainlo, S. 24 Aug 2012).

After receiving the permission, the stories were typed into Word document in Estonian and afterwards translated into English. Translation was done with the help of various online and printed dictionaries. The sources of the legends are indicated under the stories on the website.

5.3.6 Recipes

Recipes were first searched from an online cookbook and the publisher was contacted in order to acquire the permission for using images and recipes on the website. The answer received from them stated that it is not allowed to feature their material on a website 'As is', however it was allowed to use their image and link it to their original recipe or then purchase the rights for using the images and recipes. These options were not suitable and the alternative solution was to use recipes from blogs.

After the search from blogs, four suitable recipes from two different authors were chosen. The blog authors were contacted via e-mail in order to ask for permission to use their images and recipes on the Abja Rural Tourism website. Both authors gave their consent to use their material. Recipes and images on the website are linked back to the original sources.

5.3.7 Contacts

The contact page was created however, since the Abja Rural Tourism Information Point currently does not have a person working in the office, the page will be hidden on the website and can be later on made visible. Contacts page consist of description of Information Point services with contact information and location on Google Map. In addition, the page has a custom contact form, so that visitors are able to send an e-mail directly to the Abja Rural Tourism Information Point. Users would need to fill in their name, e-mail, subject and content field, and after clicking on the send button, the e-mail would be sent to the Information Point's e-mail address.

5.3.8 Additional information

Additional information is a compilation of various links which would be useful for visitors in order to gather more information about the region. Links were divided into separate sections: Abja-Paluoja, Mulgimaa and Miscellaneous. If an organization or a business has a Facebook page, also this was added next to the link with the Facebook icon.

5.4 Search Engine Optimization

With Wix site optimization function, it is possible to add to every page a title, description and keywords. The title consists of combining Abja Rural Tourism with corresponding page, e.g. Abja Rural Tourism – Catering in Abja-Paluoja. The description was more elaborative and stated what information can be found from the page and from the destination (e.g. Delicious food and cozy dining places in Abja-Paluoja. Come and taste the mulgi cuisine, etc.). Finally, the keywords were chosen based on the page and the information on it (e.g. Abja attractions, places to see in Abja, activities in Abja, active holiday, nature hikes, etc.).

5.5 Mobile version of the website

After the Abja Rural Tourism website was finalized, the mobile version was created as similar as possible. Unfortunately, it was only possible to build it in Estonian language and not in English. The reason for building the mobile site in Estonian and not in English was based on the thesis author's presumption that at the present, Abja is more known and visited by domestic tourists than by international visitors, although there is no statistical data to support this statement. In addition, according to study by Verkasa-lo (2011, 227) the odds of using mobile Internet for browsing are around 242% higher when at home country, compared to roaming internationally. Thus, it is more likely that domestic tourists would use their Smartphone's Internet while visiting Abja and searching for tourist information, than international travelers. It could be argued that since Estonia has numerous free wireless locations, the international tourists would be able to use those instead of their mobile Internet, on the other hand, this would be

limit their Internet and the Abja Rural Tourism website browsing only to certain locations, while domestic visitors would be able to use their mobile Internet everywhere. Therefore, based on the abovementioned arguments, thesis author found that it is more beneficial to have the mobile version in Estonian than in English.

Continuing, Wix mobile editor itself is simple to use, but when it come to customization, it does have limited functions and it was notices that the editor does not work properly in Google Chrome browser.

5.6 Testing

Once the website and the mobile version were completed, those were tested with the most popular browsers, such as Mozilla Firefox, Google Chrome and Internet Explorer, and the mobile website was checked on Android based Smartphone. The browser usage popularity was checked from W3Schools.com (2012b). The snapshots of the finalize Abja Rural Tourism website's pages can be seen from attachment 4 which displays the English version and from attachment 5 which presents the Estonian version.

The testing with the Internet browsers showed that there are compatibility issues with the website. The images and text elements had the tendency to shift either up or down, which changed the look or made the text unreadable. Sifting issues were fixed in Wix editor by adding transparent Shape Box into the problematic area and attaching the text or image onto it. This method was learned from the Wix support forum and it seemed to eliminate the malfunction, at least for the time being.

From the loading speed, it seems that the website is faster with Mozilla Firefox and Google Chrome, and with Internet Explorer it takes slightly longer to fully load. During the testing it was noticed that the Attractions page does take slightly longer to load than other pages, but this is due to the amount of content that is on the page. In addition, all the links, buttons and third-party tools were tested to make sure that everything is working properly, as well as the images were looked over, to see if the descriptions are correct.

The testing with Smartphone did not indicate any problems with the mobile site; however it is difficult to view the actual website with a phone. Even though Wix does state that there should not be any problems with viewing the site, it seems that there is a slight compatibility issue.

6 Further development

Future development suggestions can be implemented gradually and similarly to this project, a co-operation could be done with a graduate student. At the moment the website is only in Estonian and English, in future also Finnish, Russian and Latvian versions can be created, to help tourists to retrieve information in their native language.

Since Abja Rural Tourism website currently does not have a logo, one can be created either by a professional designer or a co-operation could be done with local citizens or even students. While deciding on appropriate color, it might be useful to take a look at Millers (2012) article about colors, brands and different associations.

Currently there is no need for social network pages, since there is no one to update those on regular basis. However, when applicable in future, it is good to increase interaction with visitors by creating a Facebook page, as well as Pinterest page. The social network logos can then be added to the header of the website. Furthermore, interaction and visitor assistance can be boosted by adding an online chat or Skype and forum, as well as a feedback form and monthly/quarterly newsletter and so forth.

Smartphone usage is certainly a growing trend and people use them more and more. Therefore, to make information easily accessible, it would be practical to create QR codes of the website to incorporate that in marketing and of attractions map, to place this on to the traditional information stands. A QR code stands for Quick Response and it is a Smartphone readable barcode (QR Stuff, 2012). It is possible to link a QR code with an URL, e-mail, telephone number, text, etc. A free QR codes can be easily created online for instance on QR Stuff website.

7 Evaluation

The main objective of this project was to create a multilingual website for Abja Rural Tourism Destination, which would alleviate the absence of Abja Rural Tourism Information Point and would offer tourism related information to visitors as well as locals. Since the thesis author does not have extensive HTML coding experience, the most suitable choice was to use Wix online website development platform, which functions on drag-and-drop interface and is quite easy to use.

When it comes to visual design, the intention was to keep it relatively simple and to create a cozy, rustic feeling by using vintage inspired elements whenever possible. The thesis author was not limited by the commissioning party, NPO Mulgimaa Development, in any way and was free to choose the design elements, as well as the website content. Visual design elements were searched from various online sources, but only those which were allowed free for commercial use were utilized for this project. The altering of images and other visual elements were done in Photoshop and Picasa, which took quite a lot of time to edit, since the first program was relatively new to author and it was necessary to learn its functions.

After the website was created, a feedback for both positive aspects and suggestions for improvement was inquired via e-mail from the commissioning party representative Ms. Leskova. The response received was positive and she especially liked the linseed field as the background image, simple layout of the website, use of vintage design elements and use of various applications. In addition, she pointed out that the English version of the website was well done and contains lots of content, as well as the Smartphone version of the website is great to have for visitors. For the improvement, it was recommended to change the header from 'Events in Abja and Karksi' to 'Events in Abja and in Abja region', and if possible to change the Mulgimaa YouTube video starting thumbnail in the Estonian version, which currently displays a church, which is not located in Abja region. (Leskova, P. 06 Nov 2012.) The first suggestion was implemented, but unfortunately the second improvement can only be done by the video uploader.

At the beginning, the project implementation seemed rather daunting task due to the limitation of technical skills, however by reading books and experimenting with programs, the anxiety was relieved and the creation process was in fact very exciting. The project not only taught a great deal about different design programs, website building principles and inspired the author to learn more about the graphic design, but also taught about the historical background of the Abja area, its natural attractions and showed that it has great potential to be a successful tourism destination, provided that its resources are strategically utilized.

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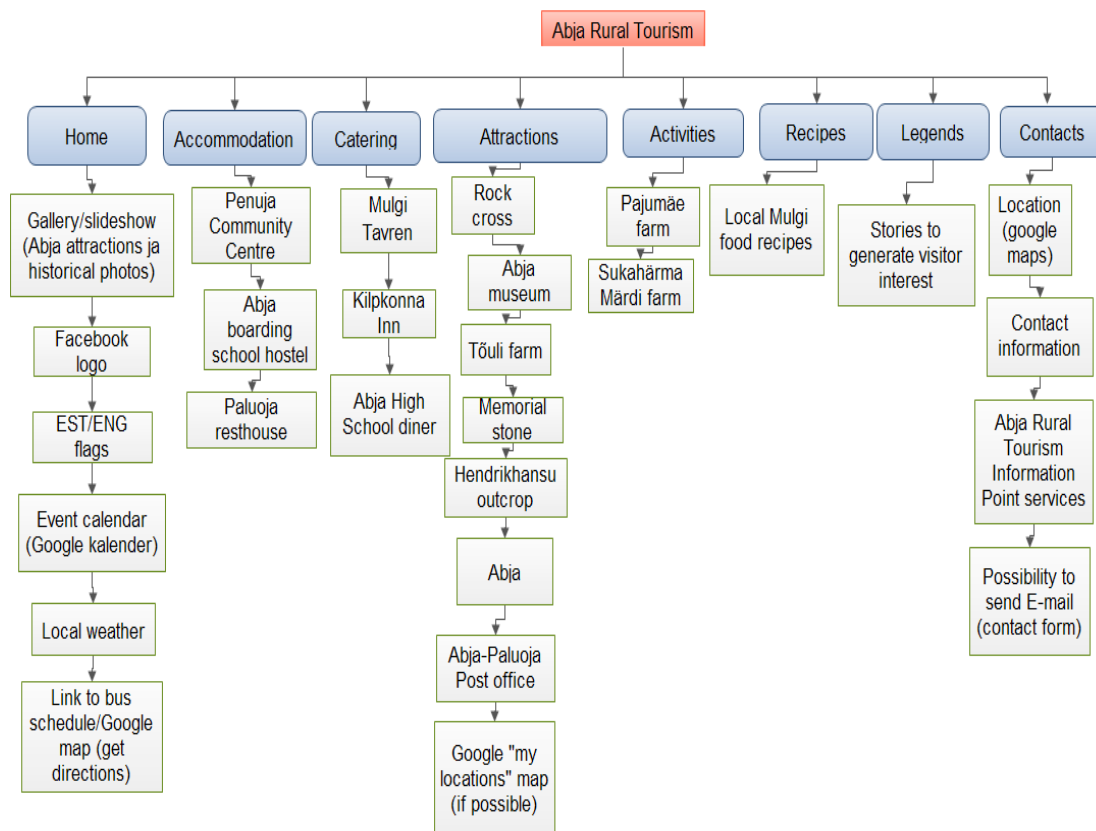
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Attachments

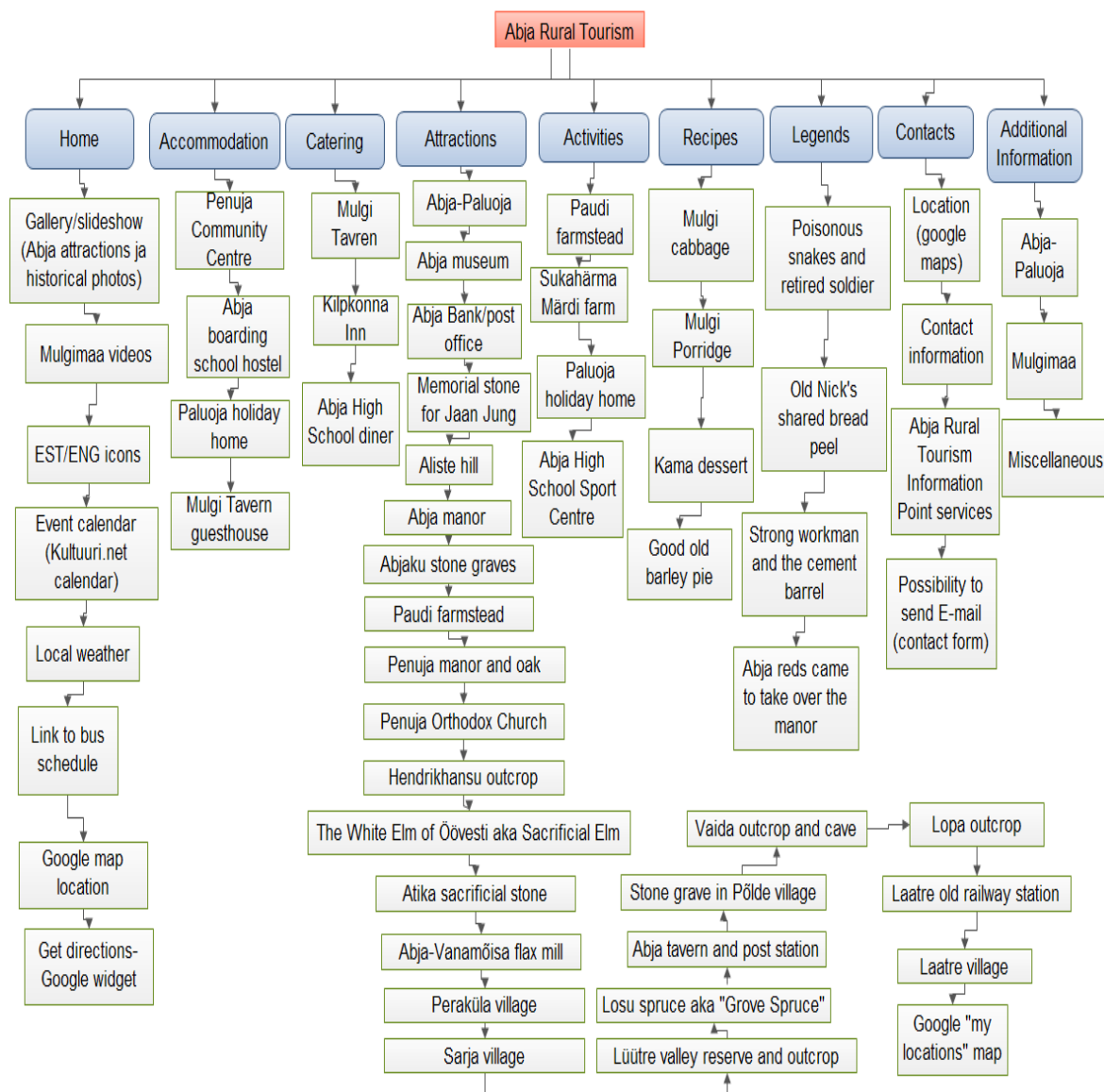
Attachment 1. Project plan

Project plan														
	June 1 2012	June 15 2012	July 1 2012	July 15 2012	August 1 2012	August 15 2012	September 1 2012	September 15 2012	October 1 2012	October 15 2012	November 1 2012	November 15	December 2012	January 2013 onwards
Gathering theoretical background														
Comparing website building programs														
Benchmarking and planning														
Gathering content (text, images, design elements, etc.)														
Editing content, translating and altering design elements														
Building the website														
Testing and improving														
Connecting with domain and publishing														
Connecting website with Google Analytics														
Updating website content														
Legend:	Progress Completed													

Attachment 2. Preliminary draft of Abja Rural Tourism website map



Attachment 3. Final Version of Abja Rural Tourism website map



1. Home page

Abja Rural Tourism




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Briefly about Abja-Paluoja

Abja-Paluoja is located on the southern edge of Halliste valley. First writings about Abja date back to 1504. Abja was well known for its Autumn Fair, which was the biggest livestock fair in Estonia. Buyers even came from Riga and the livestock was not only brought from Halliste, but also from elsewhere.

From 1890 onwards, the area was popular for craftsmen and tradesmen. New borough was called Abja-Paluoja, which was named after the Paluoja tavern and the Paluoja stream nearby. New railway connection was opened in 1897 and thanks to this, the Abja-Paluoja area continued develop and to grow in size.

For centuries, the fields in Mulgimaa have been used for growing crops and farming; however the main wealth for Mulgi farmers came from growing flax. In 1914, a flax mill was opened in Abja-Vanamõisa, which was the first in Estonia. Also current Abja coat of arms is illustrated with blue flax flowers.

Nowadays, travelers can enjoy the peaceful atmosphere of a small city, where they could visit various attractions and cozy taverns. The unspoilt nature of Abja parish has a variety of scenic areas and fascinating heritage sites worth visiting.

Local weather

CURRENT WEATHER
Abja-Paluoja, Estoni

4°C Wind: 3.9m/s
Wind chill: °C
FORECAST: [ilmake.ee](#)

Events in Abja and in Abja region

Otsi OK

Kõik Teater Muusika Kino Pidu & Klubi Sport Pere ja lapse

Neljapäev, 22. november 2012

18:00 Kontsert "Muusikute päev – pi... Karksi valla kultuuri...

Reede, 23. november 2012

19:00 Paistu rahvamaja näiteringi et... Karksi valla kultuuri...

Laupäev, 24. november 2012

11:00 Mulgi oma ülikuul Karksi valla kultuuri...

Esmaspäev, 26. november 2012

12:00 Kodanikupäev Karksi valla kultuuri...

Kolmapäev, 28. november 2012

17:00 Jaak Kõdari luulekogu "Homm... Karksi-Nuia raamat...

17:30 Mälu mäng Karksi valla kultuuri...

Location



How to visit us?

With bus


Get driving directions

From
To Abja-Paluoja


[Gadgets powered by Google](#)

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Background photo used under Creative Commons from [HerryLawford](#)

2. Catering

Abja Rural Tourism



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Mulgi Tavern

Mulgi Tavern offers a cozy atmosphere with delicious mulgi cuisine and pleasant service for both locals and travelers. Seating places for up to 60 guests.

Location: Pärnu road 14, Abja-Paluoja, Viljandi County

Contacts: +372 43 60 161 or +372 502 2121

E-mail: [kylli\[at\]mulgikorts.ee](mailto:kylli[at]mulgikorts.ee)

Homepage: www.mulgikorts.ee 



Kilpkonna Inn

Kilpkonna Inn offers enjoyable pastime during summer season, with pleasant service, tasty food and refreshing beverages. Seating places for up to 50 guests, additional seating on the summer terrace for up to 35 guests.

Location: Jaama 2, Abja-Paluoja, Viljandi County

Contacts: +372 43 45 109 or +372 56 40 104

E-mail: [info\[at\]kilpkonna.ee](mailto:info[at]kilpkonna.ee)

Homepage: www.kilpkonna.ee 



Abja High School diner

Advance reservation for groups, for up to 100 persons.

Location: Abja road 15, Abja-Paluoja, Viljandi County

Contacts: +372 43 61 282

Homepage: <http://abjag.vil.ee>

3. Accommodation

Abja Rural Tourism



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Mulgi Tavern guesthouse

Guesthouse offers comfortable lodging and delicious food for all travelers. Breakfast is included in price (served from 07.30-10) and there is free internet connection for guests. Every room has a shower and a toilet.

Location: Pärnu road 14, Abja-Paluoja, Viljandi County

Contacts: +372 43 60 161 or +372 502 2121

E-mail: [kylli\[at\]mulgikorts.ee](mailto:kylli[at]mulgikorts.ee)

Homepage: www.mulgikorts.ee 



Paluoja holiday home

Paluoja holiday home is cozy retro inspired accommodation in Abja-Paluoja. It has 2 bedrooms, livingroom, kitchen, toilet and shower. It is possible to accommodate four plus two persons at the same time.

Location: Sarja road 2, Abja-Paluoja, Viljandi County

Contact: +372 5665 4225 or +372 5665 4200

E-mail: [info\[at\]paluoja.ee](mailto:info[at]paluoja.ee)

Homepage: www.paluoja.ee



Abja boarding school hostel

Hostel has 22 rooms (2-person rooms 9 pcs., 3-person rooms 9 pcs., 4-person rooms 4 pcs.). Shower and toilet in the room or shared. Possibility to rent bed linen and towels. Extra beds available. Upon advance booking, up to 60 places available. (During study period, according to the number of vacancies).

Location: Staadioni 4, Abja-Paluoja, Viljandi County

Contacts: +372 43 47 089 or +372 524 6160

E-mail: [opilaskodu\[at\]abja.ee](mailto:opilaskodu[at]abja.ee)

Homepage: <http://abjag.vil.ee>



Penuja community centre

Accommodation up to 5 people, extra beds available. Community centre has kitchen, internet connection, village swing, campfire site, camping site and barbeque are.

Location: Abja parish, Penuja village

Contacts: +372 43 62 516

E-mail: [reet.paju.001\[at\]mail.ee](mailto:reet.paju.001[at]mail.ee)

4. Attractions

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Map of attractions



*While sightseeing, remember
the [Everman's rights](#)*

Abja-Paluoja

Abja-Paluoja is located on the southern edge of Halliste valley and historically it belonged to Halliste parish. First writings about Abja date back to 1504. It is believed that in 1833 the "crazy lord" Reinhold von Stackelberg from Abja manor was the first who started selling farmsteads and that the first buyer came from Mulgi farm.

Until the end of 19th century, Paluoja tavern was popular stopping place for flax load carriers who were heading from Tartu County to Pärnu. Abja was well known for its Autumn Fair, which was the biggest livestock fair in Estonia. Buyers came even from Riga and paid higher price than local butchers. Livestock was not only brought from Halliste, but also from elsewhere and after the trading, the cattle were herded thru Penuja to Latvia.

From 1890 onwards, the area was popular for craftsmen and tradesmen. New borough was called Abja-Paluoja, which was named after the Paluoja stream and the Paluoja stream nearby. New railway connection was opened in 1897, which gave access to Viljandi, Pärnu and Valga. Thanks to this, the Abja-Paluoja area continued develop and to grow in size.

For centuries, the fields in Mulgimaa have been used for growing crops and farming; however the main wealth for Mulgi farmers came from growing flax. In 1914, a flax mill was opened in Abja-Vanamõisa, which was the first in Estonia. Also current Abja coat of arms is illustrated with blue flax flowers.

In 1925 Abja-Paluoja received borough rights; in 1945 it was named a borough and in 1993 was received a city status.

While taking a stroll in Abja, it is worth to visit the old bank building/post office built in 1929 by architect Kuusik, the Community Centre which was built in 1938 by architect Mattes, as well as High School structure built in 1940, with extension finished in 1964. City's three parks, near High School, post office and kindergarten, offer beautiful picnic areas for both travelers and locals.

Source: [NPO Institute of Mulgi Culture and Abja Parish](#)



Abja-Paluoja post office

The post office is an architectural monument and the most beautiful building in the city. The building was completed in 1929 based on the plans of architect E.J. Kuusik, which at that time was designed to be a Bank.

This well proportioned building is characterized by high tile roof and simple lines. The grand Art Nouveau ovens have remained untouched and still have beautiful original glaze colored coating.

Initially, the first level functioned as a Bank office and the bank director had a spacious apartment on the second floor, but after the war period, the second floor was turned into office space and apartments were added into the attic floor. Abja central park is located in front of the post office.

Source: [Abja Parish](#), [National Registry of Cultural Monuments](#) and [NPO Institute of Mulgi Culture](#)



Abja manor

Abja manor (*Abja*) was first mentioned in 1504. During the 17 century the manor belonged to von Fersen and after the Great Northern War it was owned by Carl Magnus von Posse. The manor and its land were owned by Carl Magnus von Posse's sons until 1780, when it was given to their brother-in-law Friedrich Adolph von Stackelberg.

Apparently, the transaction of the deed was not fully fair and one of the von Posse brothers, Gustav von Posse, took the matter to court in 1799. Von Posse family won the court case and was granted with 38 000 silver rubles, as well as to receive 7 male serfs in the ages of 16 to 26. (*Serfs who occupied a plot of land were required to work for the Lord of the Manor who owned that land*).

Also the Abja peasants/ farmers were not happy with the new lord and in 1798 they complained their bad life in the Voltveti tavern to the owner of the Rencini manor, who happened to be the brother of Oisu manor lord Friedrich von Sievers. He sent the land magistrate authorities to check the situation in Abja manor. Peasants were not so much complaining about the Friedrich Adolph von Stackelberg, but more for the manor seneschal Lofrenz Wisser. (*Seneschal-on agent or steward in charge of a lord's estate*).

Peasant Lepa Jaak admitted that during 7 days, he had been 9 times brutally beaten by the seneschal and another peasant, Sado Mürt, declared that during 8 days he had been whipped 3 times. Abja manor seneschal rejected the allegation and stated that he acted according to instructions received from the lord Friedrich Adolph von Stackelberg.

Shocked by the confessions of the peasants and the brutality, the land magistrate authorities appointed the Friedrich Adolf von Stackelberg with a fine worth 500 rubles. Outraged landlord complained to the emperor, which resulted in cancellation of the penalty and removal of von Sievers from his position. Despite his cruel character, Friedrich Adolph von Stackelberg was the one who built Abja manor to its full glory.

Original manor was modest, with wooden roof and with outside walls plastered. The new manor house was two storey building and with tiled roof. One-by-one new buildings were constructed, which together with the main manor house formed a symmetric ensemble.

Between the barn and the stable, a colonnade was built where in the middle was a 4-pillar gate. Straight from the gate, a several kilometers long beautiful alley headed towards Halliste Holy Anna church and family's burial place a.k.a Solitude in Halliste cemetery.

In addition to the barn and the stable, estate had many other buildings, such as servant house, livestock building, beer refinery/kitchen, 2 watermills, 1 windmill, granary and *menagerie-place where cruel lord held wild animals for entertaining his guests*.

Abja manor garden was designed by gardener Johann Friedrich Semisch from Germany. The park was filled with different flowers and plants, and was designed to run along the valley, where several ponds with islands and boat piers were located. In addition, two pavilions were constructed, one in 1813 which was called the Japan temple and other was called the New temple.

After the death of the cruel lord, his son Georg Gotthard Baron Stackelberg inherited the manor in 1824 and after him, Reinhold (Roman) Johan Woldemar Baron Stackelberg owned the manor from 1844 to 1878.

Abja manor started to rent out farms in 1836 and selling farmsteads in 1843. Abja manor belonged to Stackelberg family until the expropriation and in 1923 when Charles von Stackelberg was evicted from the manor house, locals refused to help the bailiff in the process, which showed their utmost respect for the last lord.

After the expropriation, manor has house several schools: local school and a Home Economics School in 1930. After the II World War it functioned as an Orphanage, during which the oldest building got second storey in 1950. In 1990's Border Cordon functioned from the premises and today it is private property.

Location: Põlde village, Abja parish, Viljandi county

E-mail: info@abjamois.ee

Homepage: <http://www.abjamois.ee>

Source: [NPO Institute of Mulgi Culture](#) and [National Registry of Cultural Monuments](#)

Abja-Paluoja museum

Abja-Paluoja museum was established in 1999. Museum showcases permanent exhibitions and also temporary exhibitions which are renewed every now and then. Museum showcases plethora of historical materials, such as mulgi culture, sports, library, flax mill, education, fire station, etc. The museum is located in the old Bank /Post Office building.

Location: Posti street, 3, Abja-Paluoja, Viljandi county

Open: Wed 15.00-18.00

Thu 11.00-14.00.

Contacts: +372 5392 6806

Source: [mulgi.karkise](#)



Paluoja tavern and post station

Former Paluoja tavern is the oldest building in the city. It was named after the Paluoja stream which was flowing nearby. Abja-Paluoja primary school started to operate in the building in 1919 and in 1933 the school was merged with Kaidi primary school.

Source: [Estonian Environment Information](#)

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Abja High School Sport Centre

Abja High School Sport Centre is a great place to organize recreation- and sport camps. During winter, visitors can rent their skis from Abja High School and enjoy the 3.5 km long ski trail. During summer period, it is possible to use the full size athletic stadium and to play football. The gym, ball hall and sauna can be used year round. Accommodation can be arranged in Abja High School boarding hostel.

Location: Abja tee 15, Abja-Paluoja, Viljandimaa

Contacts: +372 5597 2631

E-mail: [inre.jugomae\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:inre.jugomae[at]gmail.com)

Homepage: <http://sport.abja.ee/>



Sukahärma Märdi farm

One of the farm's main activities is the breeding and sale of the horses. In addition, visitors have the opportunity to go horseback riding and get familiarized with the horse breeding. **Pre-registration required!**

Location: Veskimäe village, Abja parish, Viljandi County.

Contacts: +372 5664 0002

E-mail: [vivian.patune\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:vivian.patune[at]gmail.com)



Paudi farmstead

Paudi farmstead is located approximately 4.5 km from Abja-Paluoja towards Sarja, on the right-hand side. In this ancient farmstead you have the opportunity to see old forest tools and explore how those were used in everyday life. Farmstead has an exciting hiking trail where you can find several cultural heritage sites and learn more about the beautiful nature of Mulgimaa.

Location: Veskimäe village, Abja parish, Viljandi County.

Contacts: +372 562 5464 or +372 5376 1728

E-mail: [ojapera\[at\]hot.ee](mailto:ojapera[at]hot.ee)



Paluoja holiday home

In addition to accommodation, Paluoja holiday home offers various services for active holiday:

Photo hunting – eating places, trails and nesting areas of wild animals. Various bird nesting locations and nature shoots.

Fishing - Possibility to fish on the lake of Kariste. Fishing permits required. If needed, possible to help with the application.

Hiking – nature hikes with an experienced guide.

Hunting – beaver, wild boar and other animals.

Wild forest gifts - hike to forest to pick different berries, mushrooms, etc.

Pre-registration required! Possibility to organize transportation.

Location: Sarja road 2, Abja-Paluoja, Viljandi County

Contacts: +372 5665 4225 or +372 5665 4200

E-mail: [info\[at\]paluoja.ee](mailto:info[at]paluoja.ee)

Homepage: www.paluoja.ee

7. Legends

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Legends about Abja

Abja and its surrounding region are rich with historical stories. The Old Nick who used to live in the area, as well as Abja manor lords are still the main figure in several legends. Below you can find few interesting tales about Abja and its area.

Poisonous snakes and retired soldier

In the old days there were many poisonous snakes nesting around Abja manor swamps and meadows. During one summer, there were exceptionally many slithering around. Many people got bitten and several of them died in terrible agony.

At that time there lived an old retired soldier in the area, who could speak bird and animal languages. Thanks to his proficiency he found out from birds and animals what to do, so that no one would get bitten again.

On one day, the old soldier put a log over Halliste River and told to a snake who was curiously observing him: "If you, snakes, do not cross this river and go as far as possible from here, I will destroy your big swamp!" After that, snakes started to gather around to the riverbank. Old soldier crossed the river first and after him came immense group of snakes. When the last snake had crossed the Halliste River, the old soldier rushed back to the other side and removed the log, so that no snake could return to Abja manor land.

From that time onwards, there were no snakes seen in Abja area and no one got bitten again. However, there were many snakes nesting around the Pornus manor swamps and meadows.

Salme Vainlo < 2008 > The story was written down by Abja High school student Lea Univer from Põlde village in 1948. Original transcript is in Abja Museum.

Story from Salme Vainlo book "Mulgimaa Charm and Pain" („Mulgimaa Võlu ja Valu" in Estonian) (Abja : Kodukuru, 2011).

Old Nick's shared bread peel

Long time ago when the Old Nicks (*Vanapaganad*) still lived on our land, one Old Nick family lived in Koodiorg and the other family near Abja manor close to Põrgupedak. Both families were very poor, in fact so poor that they had only one wooden bread peel for two families and because of this the wives had to share it.

Usually the wives of Old Nicks made the bread at the same day. When the housewife in Koodiorg had prepared her first bread loaf and placed it in the oven with the bread peel, she went outside and tossed it to neighbor's wife in Põrgupedak. She had already prepared her bread loaf and swiftly placed the bread to oven, so that she could go out and throw the bread peel back to her beloved neighbor in Koodiorg. This repeated several times, depending on how many bread loaves the women were baking.

As long as the Old Nick families lived in our land, the bread peel flew between Koodiorg and Põrgupedak homesteads. There were never disagreements between Old Nick's wives for sharing it. There was always enough bread and the bread peel was in one piece, but what did not come, was the wealth to buy another bread peel.

Salme Vainlo < 2005 > The story was written down by Lea Univer from Põlde village near Põrgupedak in 1948. Original transcript is in Abja Museum.

Story from Salme Vainlo book "Mulgimaa Charm and Pain" („Mulgimaa Võlu ja Valu" in Estonian) (Abja : Kodukuru, 2011).

Strong workman and the cement barrel

There was always something to fix or build in Abja manor and its surrounding manor houses. Again one day the workmen were summoned to the manor for repair work. Landlord had already bought all the necessary supplies, among those on big and heavy cement barrel. All the workmen arrived to the manor and waited for orders from the landlord.

Landlord noticed that one tall and strong workman was admiring his cement barrel. He could see from his face that the workman would really like to have that cement barrel. "He probably has house building plans and cannot afford to buy a cement barrel himself", thought the landlord.

Landlord was known for his tolerance and support for his workforce, the man of the people. He was also quite of a joker and loved good pranks, like the devil loves a lightning. So the landlord proposed a challenge to the workman: "If you lift the cement barrel onto your shoulders without any help and take it home without putting it down, the cement barrel is yours. I promise you!" The strong workman accepted his generous offer, grabbed the cement barrel with his muscular arms and hoisted it onto his shoulders. Waddlingly he took first steps and it was clear to everyone, he will not be able to get home with the cement barrel.

Landlord on his horse carriage and workmen on foot followed the waddling workman towards the Abja borough. On the Tikuti stream bridge the workman leaned against the railings to rest for a while. Landlord was already delighted, now he will drop the cement barrel and it will still be mine. But this did not happen. The strong workman just shifted the barrel on his shoulders and carried on waddling toward his homestead. After some time, the workman finally got home with his new cement barrel.

Abja landlord kept his promise and said: "Good man, now the cement barrel is yours!"

Salme Vainlo < 2008 > Ain Laidvee from Põlde village < his father Peeter Laidvee from Põlde village.

Story from Salme Vainlo book "Mulgimaa Charm and Pain" („Mulgimaa Võlu ja Valu" in Estonian) (Abja : Kodukuru, 2011).

Abja reds* came to take over the manor

During the revolution, Abja reds got an idea to take over the Abja manor. During that time the manor was perceived to be the root of all evil. Anger was bubbling and the reds were secretly hoping to get to the manor's wine cellar and eat all the good food that they can get their hand on. During all the commotion, they were hoping to grab useful items from the manor, even a fork would have been a good treasure.

Boys working in the manor found out in Abja-Paluoja tavern about the plans that reds have and told it under secrecy to their landlord. Together they hatched a plan and came up with precautions against the reds and their planned attack.

When the Abja red hoodlums came along the lake bank towards the manor, they were greeted by the young landlord and his strong and tall manor boys. Defenders had tall logs to protect themselves and after the permission from the landlord, they started to push reds back from the steep hill. Of course no one was injured, as all of it was done loudly but with lots of laughs.

Abja red hoodlums started running back to where they came from, behind them were manor protectors loudly screaming. After the commotion the whole road was full of attacker's shoes, but most of them were broken and worn out.

Long after this victory, the manor boys were bragging in Abja tavern and in Abja fair about their triumph. Often the manor boys teased the Abja reds by looking at their shoes and mentioning: "Are you the one who forgot his shoes near our Manor hill? Come and see, these are lying near a bush, no one wants those and soon will rot from the rain."

**Reds: soviet-oriented individuals, who were not happy with landlords in general and were trying to gain profit by robbing manor houses.*

Salme Vainlo < 2008 > Liidia Liiber-Räbanik-Niin from Abja-Paluoja.

Story from Salme Vainlo book "Mulgimaa Charm and Pain" („Mulgimaa Võlu ja Valu" in Estonian) (Abja : Kodukuru, 2011).

8. Recipes

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Mulgi food

Recipes like, mulgi porridge, mulgi sauerkraut, blood sausage, smoking meat and using mushrooms in cooking, all spread from Mulgimaa to other parts of Estonia. It was popular in Mulgimaa to bake curd pastry, barley pie and bread stuffed with meat. Cannabis seeds were mashed to make butter, fat and milk substitutes. Temp (*Kanepitemp*) was spread on bread or used for stuffing pies.

During summer, people ate foods made from kama. For instance, kama flour was mixed with (full fat) milk, sour milk, taar or cannabis milk (*made from cannabis flour and water*). Everyday drink was taar (*made from mixing hot water with barley flour and was left to stand for few days*) and during festivities, mulgi people drank homemade beer.

Source: [Haapsalu Education Centre](#) and [Kätlin Blogi Asjadest](#)



Mulgi porridge

2 dl pearl barley
1,2 kg potatoes
approximately 0,75 l water
(1 dl milk)
salt
250 g smoked meat or bacon
2 big onions

Wash and soak the barley in a bowl of water for at least few hours (to overnight) to soften up. Peel the potatoes, cut into cubes and put to boil. After few minutes, add the soaked pearl barley onto the potatoes and cook on low heat until barley is soft. It might take several hours. If necessary, add water during the cooking process.

When the potato-barley mixture is soft, add milk (optional) and stir or mash the mixture with wooden spoon.

Cut the smoked meat and onions into small cubes and fry on a pan until golden. Pour the onion-meat mixture onto or stir it into the porridge. Best served with cold milk.

Recipe and photo: [Ülle Jukk](#)



Mulgi sauerkraut with pork and barley

1 kg sauerkraut
500 g pork
5 peppercorns
2 dl pearl barley
Water
Salt
Sugar

Put the sauerkraut, diced pork and peppercorns into a pot. Place the pearl barley onto (do not stir) and pour on the water, so that all the ingredients will be covered. Add salt and cook on low heat for approximately 2 hours.

During the cooking process, check that there is at least few centimeters of water in the pot. When cabbages are ready, season with salt and sugar and serve with boiled potatoes.

Recipe and photo: [Ragne Värk](#)



Good old barley pie

4 eggs
50 g butter
0,5 l kefir
1 tsp salt
2 tbsp sugar
1 tsp baking soda
barley flour

Beat the eggs slightly with sugar and salt, add the melted butter and kefir. Stir in the baking soda and barley flour mixture.

Add as much flour as needed, the dough texture should be slightly thicker than sour cream, but it should be still soft enough to mix it with a spoon.

Pour the dough into baking form (approx. 32 x 22 cm) and cook at 180 degrees approximately 25-30 minutes.

Recipe and photo: [Ülle Jukk](#)



Kama dessert

400 g quark paste
200 ml double cream
3 tbsp sugar
1 tsp vanilla sugar
3 tbsp kama flour
1 tsp lemon juice

Whip the double cream with sugar and vanilla sugar, add quark and kama flour. Add a dash of lemon juice to the mixture. Mix well. Divide dessert into bowls and enjoy.

Recipe and photo: [Ragne Värk](#)

9. Contacts

Abja Rural Tourism



[Home](#) [Catering](#) [Accommodation](#) [Attractions](#) [Activities](#) [Legends](#) [Recipes](#) [Contacts](#) [Additional information](#)

Abja Rural Tourism Information Point

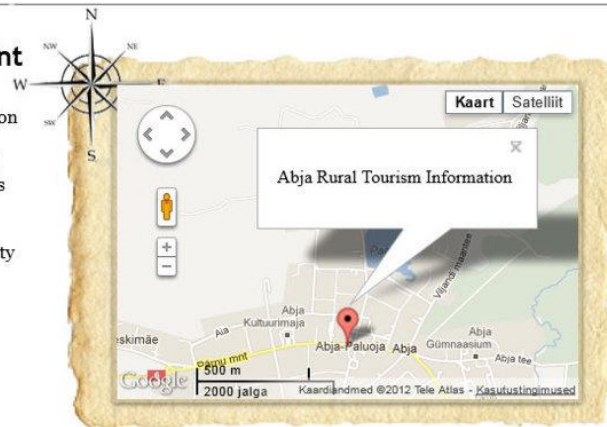
Information Point offers free tourism related information and there is possibility to buy souvenirs, to hire tour guide for sightseeing trips for exploring local areas and for discovering ancient locations. Information Point has Internet and phone connections.

Location: Pärnu road 10, Abja-Paluoja, Viljandi County

Open: Mon-Fri 09.00 – 15.00
Sat, Sun- closed

Contacts: +372 436 4195

E-mail: turism[at]abja.ee



Write To Us

Post Card

SEP 18
6-AM
1908

Name


Email

Subject

Send







10. Additional information

Abja Rural Tourism






[Home](#) [Catering](#) [Accommodation](#) [Attractions](#) [Activities](#) [Legends](#) [Recipes](#) [Contacts](#) [Additional information](#)




Abja-Paluoja

- [Abja Rural Municipality](#)
- [Abja Manor](#)
- [Abja Community Centre](#)
- [Abja Library](#) 
- [Abja High School](#) 
- [Abja High School Sport Facility](#) 
- [Abja Music School](#) 
- [Abja Youth Centre](#) 
- [NPO Abja Adult Training Centre](#)
- [Abja Technical Group](#) 

Miscellaneous

- [Estonian Rural Tourism](#) 
- [Visit Estonia](#) 
- [National Registry of Cultural Monuments](#)
- [Vacation in Estonia](#) 

Mulgimaa



- [Mulgimaa Information Portal](#) 
- [NPO Mulgimaa Development](#) 
- [NPO Institute of Mulgi Culture](#) 
- [Mulgimaa Tourism](#)
- [Tourism and handcraft in South-Viljandimaa](#)
- [Karksi-Nuia Tourism Information Centre](#)
- [Viljandi Tourist Information Centre](#)
- [Mulgi Railway](#)

© 2012 Abja Maaturism



Background photo used under Creative Commons from [HerryLawford](#)

1. Kodu (Home page)

Abja Maaturism

[Kodu](#)
[Toitlustus](#)
[Majutus](#)
[Vaatamisväärsused](#)
[Aktiivne tegevus](#)
[Legendid](#)
[Retseptid](#)
[Kontaktid](#)
[Lisainfo](#)

Lühidalt Abja-Paluoja

Abja-Paluoja asub Halliste ürgoru lõunaserval. Esimesed andmed Abja kohta pärinevad aastast 1504. Paluoja kõrtsi juures peeti Abja sügislaata, mis oli suurim Eesti kariloomade laat. Siia sõitis ostjaid Riist ja loomi toodi Abja laadale mitte ainult Hallistest, vaid ka kaugemalt.

Käsitöölise ja kaupmeeste alevikuks kujunes see paik välja 1890. aastail. Uut asulat hakati Paluojaks nimetama selle piiril voolava Paluoja tõttu. Seoses kitsarööpmelise raudtee avamisega aastal 1897, tekkisid uued asulad ning alevik hakkas jõudsalt kasvama.

Aastasadu on siin tegeletud põllu harimisega ning Mulgimaa jõukusele andis arengutõuke linakasvatus. Aastal 1914 asutati Abja-Vanamõisa lähedale ühisettevõttena toorlinavabrik, mida peetakse esimeseks Eestis. Sinised linaõied on ka välja toodud Abja valla vapil.

Tänapäeval on võimalik Abja keskuses nautida väikelinna miljööd, kus on mitmeid huvitavaid vaatamisväärsusi ning hubaseid söögikohti. Abja valla loodus on hurmav ning rikastatud mitmete põnevate looduslike objektide ja kultuurimälestistega.

Kohalik ilm

HETKE ILM

Abja-Paluoja, Eesti

4°C Tuul: 3.9m/s
Tuule jahedus: °C
PROGNOOS:

Sündmused Abjas ja Abja ümbruses

Otsi OK

Kõik Teater Muusika Kino Pidu & Klubi Sport Pere ja lapsed

Neljapäev, 22. november 2012

18:00 Kontsert "Muusikute päev – pi... Karksi valla kultuuri...

Reede, 23. november 2012

19:00 Paistu rahvamaja näiteringi et... Karksi valla kultuuri...

Laupäev, 24. november 2012

11:00 Mulgi oma ülikuul Karksi valla kultuuri...

Esmaspäev, 26. november 2012

12:00 Kodanikupäev Karksi valla kultuuri...


Kolmapäev, 28. november 2012

17:00 Jaak Kõdari luulekogu "Homm... Karksi-Nuia raamat...


17:30 Mälumäng Karksi valla kultuuri...

19:00 Eesti film 100: "Eestlanna Parii... Karksi valla kultuuri...

Asukoht



Kuidas meid külastada?

Bussiga 

Hangi juhised

From

To Abja-Paluoja

Get Directions


Gadgets powered by Google

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Background photo used under Creative Commons from [HerryLawford](#)

2. Toitlustus (Catering)

Abja Maaturism



[Kodu](#) [Toitlustus](#) [Majutus](#) [Vaatamisväärsused](#) [Aktiivne tegevus](#) [Legendid](#) [Retseptid](#) [Kontaktid](#) [Lisainfo](#)




Mulgi Kõrts


Mulgi Kõrtsis pakutakse ödusat olemist koos mulgi toitudega ja meeldiva teenindusega nii kohalikele kui teelistele. Kohti kuni 60-le külastajale.

Asukoht: Pärnu mnt 14, Abja-Paluoja, Viljandimaa

Kontakt: +372 43 60 161 või +372 502 2121

E-mail: [kylli\[at\]mulgikorts.ee](mailto:kylli[at]mulgikorts.ee)

Koduleht: www.mulgikorts.ee 




Kilpkonna trahter


Trahter pakub mõnusat ajaviidet suvisel hooajal, koos lahke teeninduse, maitsvate toitude ja jahutavate jookidega. Kohti kuni 50-le inimesele, lisaks suveterrass mahutab veel kuni 35 külastajat.

Asukoht: Jaama 2, Abja-Paluoja, Viljandimaa

Kontakt: +372 43 45 109 või +372 56 40 104

E-mail: [info\[at\]kilpkonna.ee](mailto:info[at]kilpkonna.ee)

Koduleht: www.kilpkonna.ee 



Abja Gümnaasiumi söökla

Grupid ettetellimisega kuni 100 kohta

Asukoht: Abja tee 15, Abja-Paluoja, Viljandimaa

Kontakt: +372 4361282

Koduleht: <http://abjag.vil.ee>

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Background photo used under Creative Commons from [HarryLawford](#)

3. Majutus (Accommodation)

Abja Maaturism

[Kodu](#)[Toitlustus](#)[Majutus](#)[Vaatamisväärsused](#)[Aktiivne tegevus](#)[Legendid](#)[Retseptid](#)[Kontaktid](#)[Lisainfo](#)

Mulgi Kõrtsi Külalistemaja

Külalistemaja pakub teelistele hubast öömaja ning maitstavaid toite. Hommikusöök on hinna sees (serveeritakse kella 07:30 -10:00ni) ning majas on Interneti püsiühendus. Iga toa juurde kuuluvad WC + dušš.

Asukoht: Pärnu mnt 14, Abja-Paluoja, Viljandimaa

Kontakt: +372 43 60 161 või +372 502 2121

E-mail: [kylli\[at\]mulgikorts.ee](mailto:kylli[at]mulgikorts.ee)

Koduleht: www.mulgikorts.ee



Paluoja puhkemaja

Paluoja puhkemaja on ödus retro-hõnguline majutuskohd otse Abja-Paluoja. Puhkemajas on kaks magamistuba, puhketuba, köök, WC ja dušinurk. Korraga võimalik majutada neli pluss kaks inimest.

Asukoht: Sarja tee 2, Abja-Paluoja, Viljandimaa

Kontakt: +372 5665 4225 või +372 5665 4200

E-mail: [info\[at\]paluoja.ee](mailto:info[at]paluoja.ee)

Koduleht: www.paluoja.ee



Abja Õpilaskodu hostel

Hostelis on 22 tuba (2- kohalisi 9 tk, 3- kohalisi 9 tk, 4-kohalisi 4 tk). Dušš ja wc toas või kahe toa peale. Voodipesu ja kuivatusrätikute komplekti laenutus. Lisavoodi võimalus. Ettetellimisel kuni 60 kohta (õppeperioodil vastavalt vabade kohtade arvule).

Asukoht: Staadioni 4, Abja-Paluoja, Viljandimaa

Kontakt: +372 43 47 089 või +372 524 6160

E-mail: [opilaskodu\[at\]abja.ee](mailto:opilaskodu[at]abja.ee)

Koduleht: <http://abjag.vil.ee>



Penuja külamaja

Majutus kuni 5-le inimesele, lisavoodi võimalus. Kööginurk, internetiühendus, külakiik, lõkkeplats, telkimisplats ning grillimise võimalus.

Asukoht: Abja vald, Penuja küla

Kontakt: +372 43 62 516

E-mail: [reet.paju.001\[at\]mail.ee](mailto:reet.paju.001[at]mail.ee)

4. Vaatamisväärsused (Attractions)

Abja Maaturism

Kodu Toitlustus Majutus Vaatamisväärsused Aktiivne tegevus Legendid Retseptid Kontaktid Lisainfo



Vaatamisväärsuste

kaart



Vaatamisväärsustega tutvudes pea kinni [Igatiheõiguse](#) põhimõtetest

Abja-Paluoja

Abja-Paluoja asub Halliste ürgoru lõunaserval. Ajalooliselt kuulub Abja Halliste kihelkonda. Esimesed andmed Abja kohta pärinevad aastast 1504. Talude päriks müümist alustas aastal 1853 Abja mõisa „hull parun“ Reinhold von Stackelberg ning esimene ostja tuli Mulgi talust.

Veel 19. sajandi kolmandal veerandil asus praeguse linna alal Paluoja kõrts, mille juures peatusid Tartumaalt Pärnu suunduvad linavoorid. Kõrtsi juures peeti Abja sügislaua, mis oli suurim Eesti kariloomade laad. Siia sõitis ostjaid Riias, kes maksid nende eest kõrgemat hinda kui kohalikud lühnikud. Loomi toodi Abja laadale mitte ainult Hallistest, vaid ka kaugemalt. Pärast laata aeti neid suurte karjadena Penuja kaudu Lätimaale.

Käsitööliste ja kaupmeeste alevikuks kujunes see paik välja 1890. aastail. Uut asulat hakati Abja-Paluoja nimega selle piiril voolava Paluoja ja kõrtsi nime järgi. Et 1897. aastal avati raudteeliiklus, mis hakkas Abja-Paluoja ühendama nii Viljandi, Pärnu kui ka Valgaiga, kaotas alevik jõudsalt edasi.

Aastasadu on siin tegeletud põllu harimisega ning Mulgimaa jõukusele andis arengutõuke linakasvatus. Aastal 1914 asutati Abja-Vanamõisa lähedal ühisetevõtte toorlinavabrik, mida peetakse esimeseks Eestis. Sinised linaõied on ka välja toodud Abja valla vapi.

Aastal 1925 sai Abja-Paluoja alevikuõigused, aastal 1945 aleviks ning aastal 1993 sai linnaks.

Vaatamisväärsusteks on endine pangahoone – praegune postkontor mis on ehitatud aastal 1920, arhitekt Kuusik. Kultuurimaja valmis 1958, arhitekt Matteus. Gümnaasiumi hoone valmis 1940, juurdeehitus 1964. Linnas on kolm parki: gümnaasiumi juures, postkontori juures ja lasteaia juures.

Info: [MTÜ Mulgi Kultuuri Instituut](#) ja [Abja Vald](#)



Abja-Paluoja muuseum

Muuseum asutati aastal 1999. Alalises ekspositsioonis on stendid ja vitriinid - muinasaeg, mulgid, kultuurietü, haridus, postiteenistus, tuleõrje, lasteaed, sport, haigla, raamatukogu, teedevalitsus, linavabrik, piimatööstus, mõisad, jt. Muuseum asub endises Panga / Postkontori hoones.

Asukoht: Posti tn. 3, Abja – Paluoja, Viljandimaa

Avatud: K 15.00-18.00
N 11.00-14.00.

Kontakt: +372 5392 6806

Info: [mulgi.karkai.ee](#)

Abja-Paluoja postkontor

Postkontor on arhitektuurimälestis ja linna kauneim hoone. Hoone valmis 1929.a. arhitekt E.J.Kuusiku projekti alusel pangahooneana.

Hästi proportsioneeritud hoonet iseloomustavad kõrge kivikatus ja lihtne hoone mass, mis on liigendatud tumedate uste- ja aknaraamistustega ning katuseakendega.

Praeguseni on säilinud suured juugendstiilis reljeefsed aljad, mis on tehtud värvilise glasuuriga ahjupottidest.

Algselt olid all pangaruumid ning ülaokruusel juhataja korter. Sõjajärgsetel aastatel on ka II korrus ametiruumideks ehitatud. Hoone esialgsed ilmet on muutnud katusekorruse ehitamine korteriteks. Abja postkontori ees asub linna keskpark.

Info: [Abja Vald](#), [Kultuurimälestiste Riiklik Register](#) ja [MTÜ Mulgi Kultuuri Instituut](#)



Paluoja kõrts ja postijaam

Vanim hoone linnas. Nimetati Paluoja oja järgi Paluoja kõrtsiks. Aastal 1919 avati vana kõrtsis Abja-Paluoja 6-klassiline algkool ja aastal 1933 liideti Kaidi algkooliga.

Info: [KesklinnaInfo](#)



Abja mõis

Varasemad teated Abja mõisa (*Abia*) kohta pärinevad aastast 1504. 17. sajandil kuulus mõis von Fersenitele, pärast Põhjasõda oli see Carl Magnus von Posse valduses. Selle Rootsi päritolu perekonna käes püsis Abja kuni 1780. aastani, mil haldusõigus manönik Carl Magnus von Posse poegadele nende omehele Friedrich Adolph von Stackelbergile üle läks.

Nähtavasti ei toimunud üleminek ausal teel, mistõttu üks vendadest Gustav von Posse andis asja 1799. aastal kohtusse. Possede kasuks mõisteti välja 38 000 hõberubla, lisaks seitse 16 kuni 26 aasta vanust meessoost pärisorja.

Uue härraga polnud rahul ka Abja talupojad. 1798. aastal kurtsid nad Voltveti kõrtsis oma halba elu Rencēni pärisrahrale, õisu mõisniku vennale Friedrich von Siversile. Tema saatis kohale maanõunike kolleegiumi komisjoni. Talupojad ei kaevanud mitte niivõrd mõisniku kui mõisavalitseja Lofrenz Wissori peale.

Talupoeg Lepa Jaak tunnistas, et seitsme päeva jooksul on teda üheksa korda pekstud ja mõisavalitseja on teinud seda sellise ägedusega, et „seig praguks täis nagu puukoor ja augud peas“. Sado Märt oli aga kaheksa päeva jooksul viis korda pekka saanud ja seda nii viiste kui ka piitsaga. Valitseja lükkas süüdistused ümber ja ütles, et olevat käitunud vastavalt mõisniku instruksioonidele.

Talupoegade ülestunnistustest jähmunud kolleegium määras Friedrich Adolf von Stackelbergile 500 rubla trahvi. Vihane mõisnik pöördus keisri poole. Stackelbergile määratud trahvi tühistati ja Sivers tagandati ametist. Halvat iseloomust hoolimata hakkas just Friedrich Adolph von Stackelberg Abja mõisasüdan esinduslikult välja ehitama.

Senine hääber oli tagasihoidlik, puust laudkatusega ja väljastpoolt krohvitud seintega. Uus hoone kerkis aga kahekorruseliseks ja kivikatusse. Rõdumis kerkis ka kõrvalhooneid. Aidast ja kivitalist moodustus härrastemaja ette sümmeetriline ansambel. Aida ja talli vahele ehitati kolonnad ja selle keskele nelja sambaga kujundatud värav. Otse väravast algas mitme kilomeetri pikkune sirgeallee, mis viis Halliste Püha Anna kiriku ja perekonna matmispaiga ehk *Solitude* juurde.

Ansambli kuulusid teenijamajad, karjahooned, millest tähtsamad olid viina- ja õlleköö, kaks vesiveskit ja üks tuuleveski, magasiit ja *menagerie* – koht, kus julm mõisnik hoidis oma küllalist lõbustamiseks metsloomi.

Mõisnik palkas pargi kujundamiseks aedniku Johann Friedrich Semischi Saksamaalt. Pargi kujundamisele andis häid võimalusi mõisasüdan läbis sügav org. Park laienes mööda orgu külgi, oru põhjas asetsesid tiigid poolsaarte ja saartega, purrete ja paadisildadega. Samuti oli seal kaks paviljoni, millest üht on 1813. aasta paiku nimetatud Jaapani templiks ja teist Uueks templiks.

Ühte oru nõlva kaevati grott. Mõistagi istutati kõikjal rohkesti lilli. Efekti mõttes toodi suvel kasvuhoonest pottidega välja ka agaave, loorberipuid ja noori apelsinipuid. 1813. aastal oli neid mõisas 81.

Võib-olla sellepärast, et Abja esimene Stackelberg oli aidametu ja toores, on tema järeltulijad rahva müllü jäädvustunud hoopis soojemas valduses. Poeg Georg Gotthard Baron Stackelberg sai mõisa enda nimele 1824. aastal, pojapoeg Reinhold (Roman) Johan Woldemar Baron Stackelberg valitses Abjat 1844-1878.

Abja mõisas algas talude raharendile viimine 1836. aastal ning nende päriksmüük 1843. Abja jäi Stackelbergide kätte kuni mõisate võõrandamiseni. 1923. aasta kevadel, kui viimast härrast Stackelbergi hakati härrastemajast välja tõstma, polnud keegi kohalikust nõu kohtupriistavile appi minema.

Võõrandamisjärgsel kolis mõisahoonesse gümnaasium ja 1930. aastal kodumajanduskool, Teise maailmasõja järel aga lastekodu. Lastekodu tarbeks ehitati hoone varem osa 1950. aastatel kahekorruseliseks. 1990. aastatel tegutses hoones piirivalvекordon. Peahoone vastas paiknev kallis kaaristuga ait on säilinud, selle paarisiseks olnud tall-tõllakuur on aga hävinud.

Asukoht: Põide küla, Abja vald, Viljandimaa

E-mail: [info\[at\]abjamois.ee](mailto:info[at]abjamois.ee)

Koduleht: <http://www.abjamois.ee>

[Lisainfo 1](#) ja [Lisainfo 2](#)

Info: [MTÜ Mulgi Kultuuri Instituut](#) ja [Kultuurimälestiste Riiklik Register](#)

6. Aktiivne tegevus (Activities)

Abja Maaturism

[Kodu](#)[Toitlustus](#)[Majutus](#)[Vaatamisväärsused](#)[Aktiivne tegevus](#)[Legendid](#)[Retseptid](#)[Kontaktid](#)[Lisainfo](#)

Abja Gümnaasiumi Spordikompleks

Abja-Paluoja kutsutakse kasutama oma spordirajatisi puhke- ja spordilaagrite korraldamiseks. Talvisel ajal sportijatel on kasutada 3,5 km pikkune suusarada ning Abja Gümnaasiumis tegutseb ka suusalaenutus. Suvisel ajal on võimalik kasutada täismootmetes kergejõustikustaadioni ning mängida jalgpalli. Aastaringelt saab kasutada jõusaali, pallisaali, võimlat ning sauna. Külastajad on võimalik majutada Abja õpilaskodusse.

Asukoht: Abja tee 15, Abja-Paluoja, Viljandimaa

Kontakt: +372 5597 2631

E-mail: imre.jugomae[at]gmail.com

Koduleht: <http://sport.abja.ee/>



Sukahärma Märdi talu

Talu üheks tegevusharuks on hobuste aretus ja müük. Samuti on külastajatel võimalik ratsutada ja tutvuda lähemalt hobusekasvatusega. **Vajalik eelregistreerimine!**

Asukoht: Veskimäe küla, Abja vald, Viljandimaa.

Kontakt: +372 5664 0002

E-mail: vivian.patune[at]gmail.com



Paudi talu

Abja-Paluojaast 4,5 km Sarja poole sõites jääb paremat kätt Paudi talu. Selles põlises metsatalus on võimalus näha vanu metsatööriistu ja nende kasutamist. Talu maadel on põnev matkarada, kus asuvad mitmed pärandkultuuriobjektid.

Asukoht: Veskimäe küla, Abja vald, Viljandimaa.

Kontakt: +372 562 5464 või +372 5376 1728

E-mail: ojapera[at]hot.ee



Paluoja puhkemaja

Lisaks majutusele, Paluoja puhkemaja pakub erinevaid ettevõtmisi aktiivseks puhkuseks:

Fotojaht - metsloomade söögikohad, -liikumisradad, -elupaigad, lindude pesitsuspaigad ja ürgne loodus.

Kalastamine – võimalus kalastada paadiga Kariste järvel. Vajalik kalastamisluba. Võimalik abistada taotlemisel.

Matkad - loodusmatkad kogenud matkajuhiga.

Jaht - kobras, metssiga ja teised loomad.

Metsaannid - metsaretk erinevate metsaandide korjamiseks.

Vajalik eelregistreerimine! Vajadusel võimalik organiseerida transport.

Asukoht: Sarja tee 2, Abja-Paluoja, Viljandimaa

Kontakt: +372 5665 4225 või +372 5665 4200

E-mail: info[at]paluoja.ee

Koduleht: www.paluoja.ee

7. Legendid (Legends)

Abja Maaturism

[Kodu](#)[Toitlustus](#)[Majutus](#)[Vaata misväärsused](#)[Aktiivne tegevus](#)[Legendid](#)[Retseptid](#)[Kontaktid](#)[Lisainfo](#)

Legende Abjast

Abja ning selle ümbruse kohta on olemas palju põnevaid ajaloolisi jutustusi. Nii Vanapagana, kes elas ennemuiste meie maal kui ka Abja mõisahärrad on siiani mitmete legendide peategelasteks. Allpool on välja toodud mõningad huvitavad jutustused Abja kohta.

Mürgised ussid ja erusõdur

Vanal ajal pesitsenud Abja mõisa soodes ja heinamaadel palju mürgiseid madusid. Ühel suvel olnud neid eriti hulgaliselt. Paljud inimesed said nõelata, mitu neist suri hirmsates piinades.

Sel ajal elas siinmail üks vana erusõdur, kes oskas paljude lindude ja loomade keeli. Erusõdur sai tänu oma keeleoskusele lindudelt ja loomadelt teada, mida ette võtta, et inimesed ei saaks enam ussidelt nõelata.

Ühel päeval pani see vana erusõdur Halliste jõeale palgi peale. Seejärel ütles esimesele ussile, kes sealsamas jõe ääres uudishimulikult tema tegevust pealt vaatas: "Kui te, ussid, nüüd kõik siitpoolt jõge, üle jõe võimalikult kaugemale ei lähe, siis hävitan kogu teie suure soo!" Seejärel hakkasid maod kogunema jõekaldale. Vana erusõdur läks üle palgi esimesena, tema järel ussikari. Kui viimane uss sai üle Halliste jõe, siis läks erusõdur ruttu üle jõe tagasi ja võttis palgi Halliste jõelt ära, et siud ei saaks enam tagasi roomata.

Sellest ajast peale ei olnud Abja-poolsel alal enam ühtegi ussi ja seejärel ei nõelatud ka enam inimesi. Küll leidis neid aga Pornuse mõisa all soodes ja heinamaadel.

Salme Vainlo < 2008 > Loo pani kirja Abja Keskkooli õpilane Lea Univer Põlde külast 1948. aastal. Lugu on olemas käsikirjalisel Abja Muuseumis.

Jutustus Salme Vainlo raamatust „Mulgimaa Võlu ja Valu“ (Abja : Kodukuru, 2011).

Vanapaganate ühine leivalabidas

Vanal, hallil ajal, kui meie maal elasid veel **vanapaganad**, asus ka Koodioru üks Vanapaganate perekond. Teine sarvikute perekond elas Abja mõisa lähisel Põrgupedakus. Mõlemad perekonnad olid väga vaesed, lausa nii vaesed, et neil oli kahe perekonna peale üks leivalabidas. Eks seepärast pididki vanapaganate naised seda üht leivalabidat omavahel jagama.

Tavaliselt võtsid vanapaganate perenaised leivateo ette ühel ja samal päeval. Seda tegid nad järgmiselt. Kui Koodioru perenaine oli saanud esimese leivapätsi valmis ja lükanud selle leivalabidaga ahju küpsema, läks ta õue ja lennutas leivalabida Põrgupedakusse oma naabrinaisele. Tol perenaisel olnud leivapäts juba valmis voolitud, kibekähku asetas ta selle leivalabidale ja läigatas ahju. Nüüd läks see perenaine jooksuajal õue ja lennutas päevinäinud leivalabida tagasi tagasi Koodioru suunas. See kordus niimitu korda, kuimitu leiba olid vanapaganate perenaised valmis voolinud.

Nii lennutati leivalabidat Koodioru ja Põrgupedaku vahet senikaua, kui need vanapaganad siinmail elasid. Igatahes ei olnud vanapaganatest naabrinaiste vahel leivalabida pärast mingeid tülisid. Leiba jätkus ja ka leivalabidas pidas vastu. Kuid mida kunagi ei saanud, see oli jõukus, teist leivalabidat ei suudetud muretseda.

Salme Vainlo < 2005 > Lea Univer Põlde külast Põrgupedaku lähelt, kirja pandud 1948. aastal. Lugu on olemas käsikirjalisel Abja Muuseumis.

Jutustus Salme Vainlo raamatust „Mulgimaa Võlu ja Valu“ (Abja : Kodukuru, 2011).

Turske töömees ja tsemenditünn

Abja mõisahärral oli kogu aeg mõisahoonete juures midagi remontida ja parandada. Ükskord käsutati jällegi töömehed kohale. Valitejahärral oli remondimaterjal juba aegsasti kohale varutud, samuti üks suur ja raske tsemenditünn. Ka töömehed olid siinsamas platsis ja ootasid mõisahärra korraldusi.

Mõisahärra pani tähele, et üks turske töömees imetles tema suurt tsemenditünni. Töömehe pilk rääkis iseenda eest, mees tahaks suurt tsemenditünni kangesti endale. „Küllap tal on majaehitus pooleli ja tsemendistamiseks ei jätku raha,“ mõtles mõisahärra.

Mõisahärra oli tuntud rahvamees. Hea nali oli teda ikka tõmmanud nagu vanakurat valku. Mõisahärra pakkus välja: „Kui tsemenditünni ilma abita õlale võtad ja turjal koju viid, on tsemenditünn sinu oma. Minu käsi selle peale!“ Turske sell võttis mõisahärra lahke pakkumise vastu. Ta haaras tugevate töömekätega tünnist kinni ja taris selle kõigest jõust punnitades oma turjale. Vaarudes astus ta esimesed sammud, kõigile oli selge, et see mees tsemenditünniga koju ei jõua.

Mõisahärra oma saksavankril ja töömehed jalaküüdiga kannul, vaarus turske töömees Abja alevi poole. Tikuti oja silla käetoetajal ta korra seisatas, et hinge tõmmata. Mõisahärral oli juba heameel, et nüüd jääb tsemenditünn siiski temale. Kus sa sellega! Turske sell ainult nihutas tünni paremini oma õlale ja sammus vaarudes edasi. Töömees tassiski tsemenditünni seljas koju.

Abja mõisahärra pidas oma lubadust. Ta kostis: „Tubli miis, nüüd on tsemenditünn sinu oma ikki kahi!“

Salme Vainlo < 2008 > Ain Laidvee Põlde külast - tema isa Peeter Laidvee Põlde külast.

Jutustus Salme Vainlo raamatust „Mulgimaa Võlu ja Valu“ (Abja : Kodukuru, 2011).

Abja punased tulid mõisa üle võtma

Revolutsiooni ajal tekkis Abja punastel plaan Abja mõis üle võtta. Tol ajal oli ju mõis see kõige kurja juur ja esmajoones ihuti ikka tema peale hammast. Vihalt lasti keeda, aga salajas loodeti mõisa veinikeldrit rüüstata ja kõht head-paremat täis parkida. Mõisast loodeti segaduse käigus ka midagi tarvilikku kaasa krahmata, kasvõi haraline kahvel.

Mõisapoisid said Abja-Paluoja kõrtsis punaste plaanist haisu nina ja rääkisid sellest saladuskatte all parunile. Üheskoos peeti plaani ja võeti punaste rünnaku vastu abinõu tarvitusele.

Kui Abja punaste kaltsakate vägi piki järvekallast jälgtee mööda mäest üles vooris, siis võttis neid vastu noor parunihärra koos turskete mõisapostega. Kaitsjad hoidsid rinna kõrgusel koormavaltaid. Paruni käskluse peale tormasid kaitsjad koormavaldastega punaste poole ja trügisid nad järsust mäest tagurpidi alla. Loomulikult ei tehtud kellelegi viga, kõik toimus suure nalja, naeru ja kisa saatel.

Abja punaste kaltsakate vägi pani punuma, ikka sinnapoole, kust nad olid tulnud, mõisakaitsjad hirmsa kisaga põgenejate kannul. Pärast oli kogu tee põgenejate jalavarje täis, suurem osa neist katkised ja lääpa tallatud.

Pärast seda vägitegu kelkisid mõisapoisid palju aastaid Abja kõrtsis. Abja laadal oli samuti kiskumisi ja nägelmisi. Tihti peale ajasid tursked mõisapoisid oma rinna ette ja tõgasid Abja punaseid. Vaatasid nende jalavarje ja teatasid: „Kas mette sia es unetenu oma jalavarjud mede Mõisamäe alla, tule vaata perrä, vedeleve teise tii äären üle pöosa viiren, apneve sääl vihma kähen, kennigi noid ei ta a.“

Salme Vainlo < 2008 > Liidia Liiber-Räbanik-Niini Abja-Paluojaalt.

Jutustus Salme Vainlo raamatust „Mulgimaa Võlu ja Valu“ (Abja : Kodukuru, 2011).

8. Retseptid (Recipes)

Abja Maaturism

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Mulgi toidud

Mulgimaalt levis üle Eesti verivorstide söömine, seente tarvitamine, liha suitsutamine, ning ka tangu-kartuli segapuder (mulgi puder) ja tangudega kapsad (mulgi kapsad).

Mulgimaal küpsetati palju liha- ja silguleiba, karaskit ning korpe. Kanepiseemnetest tehti või, rasva ja piima aseainet. Kanepitempi määrati leivale ning sellega täideti ka pirukaid.

Suvisel ajal söödi tihti kamatoite. Kamajahu segati külma rõõsa või hapupiimaga, taariga, rokaga või kanepipiimaga (*kanepijahu segati veega*). Igapäevaseks joogiks oli taar (*kuuma veega segatud odrajahu* või *linnasejahu kurnati ning lasti seista paar päeva*) ning peojoogiks oli mulkidel õlu.

Info: [Haapsalu Kutsehariduskeskus](#) ja [KätlinBlogiAsjadest](#)



Kartuli-tangupuder ehk mulgipuder

2 dl odratangu
1,2 kg kartuleid
umbes 0,75 l vett
(1 dl piima)
soola
250 g suitsuliha või -peekonit
2 suuremat sibulat

Pese tangud läbi ja pane vähemalt paariks tunniks likku. Koori kartulid ja lõika paksemateks viiludeks, pane koos veega keema.

Mõne minuti pärast lisa ka leotatud tangud ning hauta tasasel tulel, kuni tangud on pehmed. Vajadusel lisa keemise ajal vett juurde.

Kui tangud-kartulid pehmed, lisa piim (see ei ole kohustuslik) ja sega kõik suure puulusikaga segi või tambu pudruniaga ühtlaseks.

Haki suitsuliha ja sibulat väikesteks kuubikuteks ning prae mõnusalt kuldseks. Tõsta pudrule silmaks. Soovi korral võid liha-sibula segada ka pudru hulka.

Retsept ja foto: [Ülle Jukk](#)



Mulgikapsad

1 kg hapukapsaid
500 g pekiga läbikasvanud liha
5 pipratera
2 dl odratangu
Vett
Soola
Suhkrut

Pane kapsad, väikesteks tükkideks lõigatud liha ja pipratered potti. Kalla peale tangud ja niipalju vett, et kõik toiduained oleks kaetud.

Lisa ca 1 tl soola ning seejärel hauta kaane all madalal kuumusel umbes 2 tundi, kuni ained on ilusti pehmed (segada pole vaja). Hautamise vahepeal jälgi, et potis oleks vähemalt mõne sentimeetri jagu vett.

Maitsesta valmis kapsad lõplikult soola ja suhkruga ning serveeri keedukartulitega.

Retsept ja foto: [Ragne Värk](#)



Vana hea odrakarask

4 muna
50 g võid
0,5 l keefiri või petti
1 tl soola
2 sl suhkrut
1 tl soodat
odrajahu

Munad kloppida suhkruga ja soolaga lahti, lisada sulatatud või ja keefir. Lõpuks segada juurde soodaga segatud jahu. Jahu lisada silma järgi, tainas peab jääma hapukoorest natuke paksem, kuid siiski lusikaga segatav.

Valada tainas vormi (suurus umbes 32 x 22 cm) ja küpsetada 180 kraadi juures 25 kuni 30 minutit.

Retsept ja foto: [Ülle Jukk](#)



Kamavaht

400 g kohupiimapastat
200 ml vahukoort
3 spl suhkrut
1 tl vanillisuhkrut
3 spl kamajahu
1 tl pressitud sidrunimahla

Vahusta mikseriga vahukoort suhkruga ja vanillisuhkruga, sega hulka kohupiim ja kamajahu. Piserda kamavahule maitse täiustamiseks hulka sidrunimahla. Jaga kamavaht kausikestesse ja serveeri.

Retsept ja foto: [Ragne Värk](#)

9. Kontaktid (Contacts)

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Abja Maaturismi Infopunkt

Infopunkt jagab tasuta turismialast informatsiooni ning siit on võimalus osta suveniire, tellida retkejuhti või giidi, ekskursioone ümbruskonnaga tutvumiseks ja ürglooduse matkasid. Infopunktis on olemas interneti- ja telefoniühendus.

Asukoht: Pärnu mnt. 10, Abja-Paluoja, Viljandimaa

Avatud: E-R 09.00 – 15.00
L, P- suletud

Kontakt: +372 436 4195

E-mail: turism[at]abja.ee



Kirjuta meile

Name

Email

Subject

10. Lisainfo (Additional information)

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