



# Tourism experiences in forest areas

AN EXPLORATION OF INDUSTRY CASES

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## Introduction

### Research context

Forests have long been associated with recreational and touristic experiences worldwide. Outdoor recreation is a vital part of the daily life in the Nordic and Scandinavian countries, as the concept of *friluftsliv* exemplifies, and forests are the most usual environment for outdoor recreation in the Nordic region. This is especially true for countries such as Sweden, where the relationship between people and forest areas is changing from extractive towards purely recreational<sup>1</sup>.

Nevertheless, a distinction needs to be done between outdoor recreation and tourism. Recreation as a concept is close to leisure, and refers generally to free time activities. Recreationists can be people who live in neighboring areas. Tourism, on the other hand, gravitates more around the economic value that recreation and free time bring to the area

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<sup>1</sup> Sievänen 1997; Bori-Sanz & Niskanen 2002

in which free time takes place. Differently from recreationists, tourists are often defined as people who spend free time outside their ordinary neighborhood<sup>2</sup>. The economic value of recreation, therefore, can be substantially different than the one of tourism. In fact, a major problem in defining tourism experiences in forests as well as other natural areas is that, in empirical research, tourism is often blurred with recreation, and definitional attempts of tourism in natural and forest areas are rather scant. Moreover, it is generally very complicated to distinguish the role of the forest in contexts, such as the “wilderness” or the rural and periphery areas, which are made up of different cultural and natural resources. In other words, it is very complicate to define the tourism value of “forests” alone in a multi-faceted nature-based tourism experiential context<sup>3</sup>.

These aspects all contribute in making so that, although numbers are clear in terms of the demand increase and new demand of nature-based tourism worldwide (not only in protected but also in rural areas), and specific trends and megatrends in nature-based tourism can be identified (in terms of experiential “themes” and resources for forest-based and nature-based experiences)<sup>4</sup>, it is very difficult to build industry surveys or case studies protocols centered on “forest-based” tourism businesses. This has been found to be especially true for Sweden, as showed, for instance, in the large scale industry surveys of Lusine Margaryan and Peter Fredman<sup>5</sup>.

Additionally, transferability of different business practices of “forest-based tourism” worldwide is made difficult by their roots in different legal and economic contexts, other than natural. In the Nordic countries, the right of public access to natural areas (such as the Swedish *allmansrätten*) makes the context in which forest-based tourism businesses operate rather unique, both in terms of managerial opportunities, strengths, threats and weaknesses<sup>6</sup>. The insufficient amount of empirical research on this specific issue complicates further the situation.

## Report objectives

Given the abovementioned contextual considerations and conceptual limitations, the main goal of this report is to provide a brief exploration of business practices of forest-based tourism, which are contextualized in Sweden but are also considered by the author to share a contextual compatibility to the neighboring Scandinavian regions, especially in terms of public access to land, roots in outdoor culture and basic infrastructure.

The sampling of the cases is nowhere intended to achieve a generalization, or to be guided by economic indicators that could prove their status as industry leaders or best-case practices budget-wise. Instead the aim is to provide a heterogeneous selection of cases

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<sup>2</sup> Fredman, Wall-Reinius & Grundén 2012

<sup>3</sup> Hyttinen et al. 2000

<sup>4</sup> Bori-Sanz & Niskanen 2002; Fredman & Tyrväinen 2010

<sup>5</sup> Fredman & Tyrväinen 2010; Margaryan (2017); Fredman & Margaryan (2017)

<sup>6</sup> Vistad, Erkkonen & Rydberg, 2010

that, in the opinion of the author, follow important and acknowledged experiential trends<sup>7</sup>, particularly in relation with wellbeing, spirituality and adventure tourism.

The typologies of businesses that are presented in this report are, therefore, intended to be similarly heterogeneous, ranging from accommodation owners to guides, tour operators, event companies and other experience mediators.

## Methodology

This report follows two different and subsequent methodological steps.

The first step was a literature review of forest-based and nature-based tourism in the Scandinavian context, which greatly informed the overall report in terms of identifying industry and market trends, contextual factors and challenges. The review influenced critically the selection of cases presented in the report, as the value of these cases is based on their resemblance with experiential trends and mega-trends showed in the current literature, more than specific budget figures or longitudinal economic analysis.

Following the first step, a second step was the conduction of netnographic observations online. The observation aimed at detecting cases of firms operating in forest-based tourism experience mediation and service provision. The observation were conducted mainly on Airbnb Experiences, Instagram, Tripadvisor and Facebook. These digital platform were chosen due to their popularity and importance in the contemporary tourism industry worldwide. Changes in the competitive business environment make online presence, both on social media and in other digital platforms, mandatory for tourism businesses nowadays<sup>8</sup>. This methodological step therefore is based on the assumption that competitive businesses in nature and forest-based tourism have at least some degree of online presence that can be detected and observed through netnographic methods<sup>9</sup>.

At the end of this second step, 7 cases judged to be particularly relevant and critical in order to understand tourism experience staging in Nordic forest areas.

## Cases

### “SLOW ADVENTURE” AND ANIMAL-BASED *FRILUFTSLIV*

“Fast adventures” are often associated with a desire for “extreme” experiences occupying the threshold between high risk and high excitement, which provide high emotional involvement as well as high social status. Instead, in the Nordic context, *slow adventure* has been recently advocated as a concept closer to spending relaxing time in nature, birch wood fires, cooking wild food, carrying camping luggage over rough lands or along remote

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<sup>7</sup> Elmahdy et al. 2017

<sup>8</sup> Neuhofer et al. 2012

<sup>9</sup> Kozinets 2002; Kozinets et al. 2014; Bartl et al. 2016.

coastlines in kayaks<sup>10</sup>. Perhaps the most notable difference is that these kinds of adventure are usually longer in time than the “fast” ones. Additionally, they are also more rooted in pre-existing Nordic notions of leisure in the nature, e.g. the Scandinavian *friluftsliv*. Slow adventures, therefore, relate to themes of personal transformation, authenticity, discovery of new dimensions of the self and new places, accomplishment, stepping out of the comfort zone, as well as meaningful encounters and exchanges with locals, indigenous communities and fellow travelers<sup>11</sup>.

An aspect that received very little attention so far is the link between such experiential themes and the encounter with animals, besides the acknowledgement that a link between the perception of animals and the perception of the environment exists. An explorative research was made in Norway on nature-based tourism experiences based on the concept of *friluftsliv*, and related to consumptive and non-consumptive activities involving wild and domesticated animals.

Animal	Activity	Nature interpretation and experience
Fish (wild)	Fishing	Anthropocentric, consumptive
Dogs (domesticated)	Sledding	Mainly anthropocentric, non-consumptive
Whales (wild)	Whale watching	Eco-centric, non-consumptive

*Table 1: Bertella (2016)*

Fishing, for instance, placed fish (wild) as a mere object of consumption, which mediated a highly human-centric nature as a space in which to achieve relax, calm and socialization through activities. On the contrary, whale watching placed not just whales (wild) but *encountering* whales as the final experiential achievement, which inspired sensations of wonder, awe, and mediated an eco-centric nature as a remote space of human absence, freedom and ethical issues of conservation. Finally, dogs (domesticated) had the instrumental role of introducing tourists to an untouched nature that comes to be tamed and humanized through sledding, but also to meaningful human-animal interactions which do not belong to a consumptive view of nature per se<sup>12</sup>.

On the other hand, it should be noted that anthropocentric and eco-centric nature experiences usually co-exist in Nordic slow adventures: dog sledding and fishing may relate to indigenous consumptive practices which are branded as radically different (if not opposite) to Western anthropocentric experiences of nature (e.g. massified, industrialized, rationalized, extractive). This is due to the general attempt of slow adventures and animal-based slow adventures to position themselves as experiences, as said above, of authenticity, accomplishment, stepping out of the comfort zone, as well as meaningful encounters and exchanges with locals, indigenous communities and fellow travelers<sup>13</sup>.

These arguments are all reflected in the majority of the adventure-based experiential offers that could be detected online in the Nordic context, and related to forests and

<sup>10</sup> Varley & Semple 2015

<sup>11</sup> Easto and Warburton; Varley & Semple 2015

<sup>12</sup> Bertella 2016

<sup>13</sup> Easto and Warburton; Varley & Semple 2015



contextual animal encounters. However, as explained above, it is very difficult to establish the market value of the “forest” by itself by looking at slow adventure tourism and animal-based experiences, besides acknowledging its criticality as a spatial context. The cases showed below reflect this aspect, and showcase the co-existence of a landscape dominated by forests, rivers and lakes with experiential themes related to wildlife, activities, northern lights, Nordic and Sápmi heritage.

### Case: Wild Sweden



#### WHAT WE DO

We bring together small groups of likeminded people for unusual adventures in nature. We travel off the beaten track in non-touristic areas.

You will be welcomed by our passionate local guides. They live with nature and just love to be out there.



#### MEET WILD ANIMALS

Watch & photograph wild animals like moose, beavers, wolves and bears in their natural habitat.

Remember that these are wild animals so sightings can never be guaranteed. But we know where to find them, and how you can see them, in a respectful way.



#### SLEEP & EAT

We work with unusual ecolodges, small guesthouses and locally owned hotels.

We love camp fire evenings... and food. Nothing beats Amy's wraps with organically grown vegetables and wild boar sausage, flushed down with a Fenna craft beer or a wild picked berry juice.

Wild Sweden is a company based in Falun. As most of the companies operating in nature-based tourism in Sweden, it is a small/micro firm that currently count around 10 employees. As it can be read on their website, they propose both winter and summer tours of various length, which correspond to different experiential themes. Nevertheless, their “*adventures have a strong focus on wildlife*”, and are always made in small groups, only in certain times of the year. Their summer wildlife tours are segmented according to the kind of wild animal sightseeing that they propose: moose, beavers, wolves and bears. These tours range from 5 hours to 2 days and are located in the forest areas of Skinnskatteberg, Sandviken and Bollnäs. They always include educational components about wildlife behavior, tracking and conservation, with a strong component on both forest and wildlife conservation. Although the focus of the experience is wildlife sightseeing, they include “slow adventure” components of stargazing, silence, discovery and authenticity:

**“Imagine sitting on a hill in a dark forest, surrounded by trees and watch the night sky above knowing that a family of wolves is nearby. We wait, listen and hope to hear them howl. This can be both a meditative and thrilling experience.”**

The winter tours are different: all of them are 1 week long, they are located in Luleå, and include a strong marketing focus on Northern Lights (which dominate title + front picture on the website), but the experience itself include dog sledding, reindeer and moose

photography and educational/cultural/food insights on the local Sápmi culture. The forest in this context is as important as other natural resources, such as frozen lakes, which provide the context for ice fishing, cross-country skiing or snowshoe hiking.

Wildsweden count on excellent reviews on Tripadvisor, currently 316 with 89% of them being 5 star. Tourists praise the **high level of guiding**, the **genuine environmental concern**, the **experience of companionship** and in general the **combination of activities**. Authenticity, both declined in terms of personal commitment and genuineness of nature, environmental awareness and camaraderie are generally experiential milestones.

### Case: Vildmarkivarmland



#### APPRECIATED DURING THE TOUR



Vildmark i Värmland is a unique example of “slow” rafting tours, happening during the summer, ranging between 1-8 days and involving the construction of a personal timber raft to use to navigate the river Klarälven. They include strong experiential themes of personal challenge/achievement (staying without internet and other amenities, building personally the raft used to travel and arriving to the destination), and rediscovery of social bonding:

**“It is always calm flowing water (at a speed of around 1-3 km / h), but even in the calmest waters lurk small adventure in in terms of rocks, sandbanks and eddies. A great adventure is to get the almost two-ton timber raft from the stream into the shore.”**



The context of the raft tours offered by the operator are a mix of forests and cultivated land, connected by the means of the river, although the forest areas are dominant in the marketing material used by the company.

However, more than the river or the boat themselves, the strong selling point of the company is the "slow"-based combination of freedom, self-reliance and independence. This involves how to spend the free and quiet time while slowly crossing the river, how to get food, where to sleep, and similar:

the case of shorter tours (2 nights), meant for less experienced outdoorists, the focus is again self-reliance, independence and accomplishment involved in building the raft, rafting, landing, and team work.



#### Day 2-5: Camping/accommodation

You plan the daily distances for the trip on your own, due to the circumstances given at exactly that moment. During the timber raft tour you spend the night under canvas on you well-moored raft or on land in a tent. The suitable spots for the night is your individual choice. Along the river there are also some camp sites. In this way you have the possibility to spend one or a few nights at a well-equipt camp site – either in your own tent or in a small cabin.



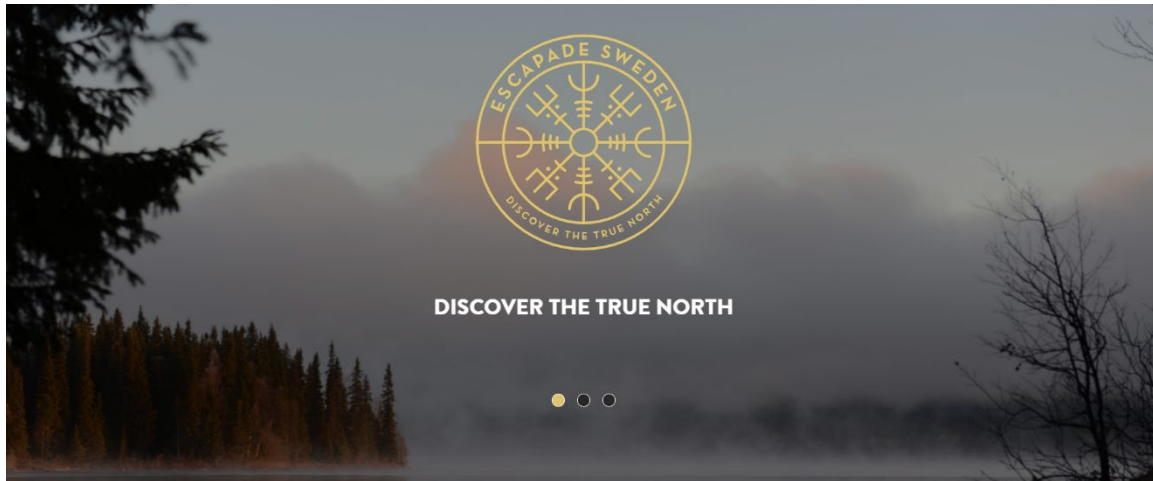
#### Day 2-5: Fish for dinner?

For many people going down the river it is a dream to catch your own supper with the fishingrod. You can purchase a fishing permit in Gunnerud and then feel free to try your luck in fishing – though, just to be on the safe side, you shouldn't count on catching your supper out of the river every evening. Instead you could use the opportunity to pay a visit to one of the small local convenience stores, supporting the local inhabitants of the valley.

Vildmarkivarmeland operates since 1980 and in the summer they can count on approx. 20 employees. They were included in the National Geographic's "50 Tours of a Lifetime" in 2013.

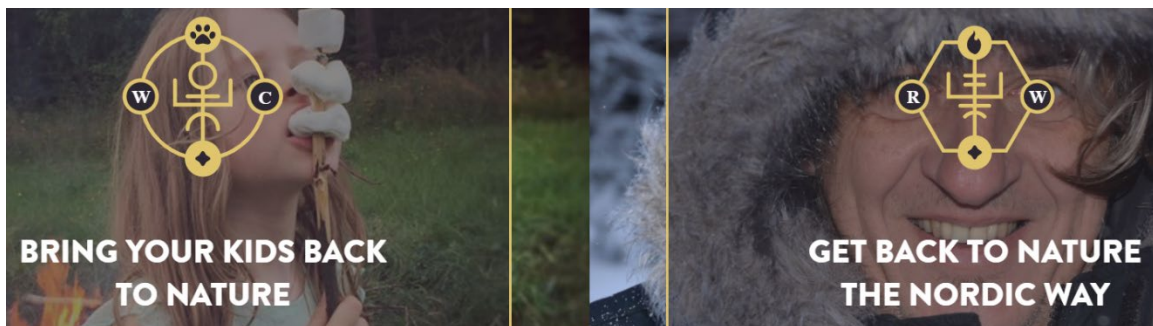


## Case: Escapade Sweden



Escapade Sweden is a small, "slow adventure" tour operator with a focus on a transformational travels ("*rewilding humans of all ages*") throughout the discovery of a blend of Swedish, Nordic and Sápmi heritage about living in the wilderness. They are located in Åre.

Escapade Sweden advertises two specific experiential themes on their webpage, one being "bring your kids back to nature", which is more family-oriented in terms of activities, attempting a mix of fun and education about "*a variety of skills for enjoying and surviving in the wilderness*". Examples are "*making a fire, Learning about the Nordic natural environment & local animals, Bush-craft such as carving fishing rods or other, Open fire cooking & eating outside, Trekking through mountain and forest terrain and Wilderness survival basics for each season – such as foraging & fishing or skiing, snow shoes & snow-*

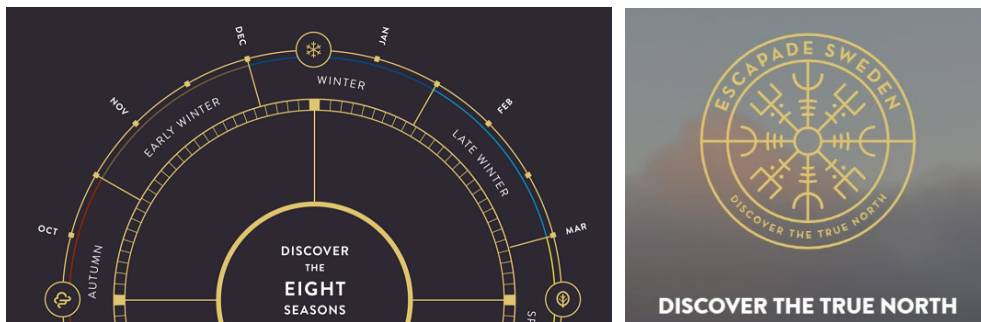


*know-how*".

The other one, "get back to nature the Nordic way" includes actually all the above-mentioned experiential components, but refers more to authenticity, indigenous knowledge about survival, and connections between survivalism, authenticity and culture: "*Indigenous and ancestral skills can teach us a lot. When we forage for food, drink water from a spring or make a camp fire outside, we connect with something real. Together we gain a sense of adventure and how interconnected we are with our surrounding wilderness*".

Escapade Sweden offers tours ranging between 3-5 nights, with different activities according to the season. However, the cultural component is always very high. Interestingly, such component does not include only insights on indigenous knowledge, but also components (notably food and drinks) typical of contemporary Swedish culture. For instance, food experiences of Jämtland gastronomy, accommodations in Bustamons Fjällgård, (advertised as *"a true genuine Swedish historic ski lodge setting with nicely decorated no frills rooms, outside hot tub, traditional sauna and a magnificent restaurant serving local delicacies in a space where even the walls breathe cultural history and Swedish traditions"*) and Hotel Åregården, inaugurated as a sky sport hotel in 1895 and considered as part of Åre's heritage. This co-exist with stays, during the same tours, at a Sápmi lodge managed by a family of reindeer herders in which *"everything is done in the indigenous Sami way"*.

Such blend is visible in the guides and personnel advertised on the website, which include experts in nature therapy, indigenous Sápmi guides, husky trainers, gastronomy experts, and "Nordic nomads" who like *"roaming the mountains with traditional bow & arrows as a shield maiden Viking"*. It is also visible in the branding of the company, which implement a logo that *"is an ancient Nordic Rune meaning 'guide post' or 'pathfinder', or 'Vegvisir' in Icelandic, and is sometimes referred to as a Runic Compass"*, and whose design is brought closer to the display of Sápmi eight seasons and the experiential themes:



## FOREST AND WELL-BEING

A somewhat different situation can be observed when it comes to experiential products more closely related to health and well-being, in which **a stronger connection between the forest itself and the experiential themes associated with it can be highlighted.**

Although research on the matter is still scant, there is an increasing empirical evidence of the connection between forests and therapeutical power and capacity<sup>14</sup>. At the same time, research shows that the demand for therapeutical tourism in the nature is increasing<sup>15</sup>, and several forest-centered products of this kind are being developed worldwide.

- *Shinrin-Yoku*, a Japanese tradition translated often as “forest bathing” is becoming the foundation of several forest-based tourism and leisure products in the Western world<sup>16</sup>. Surprisingly, although the relationship between tourism, forests and well-being has been studied in the Nordic context<sup>17</sup>, relatively few firms offering *Shinrin-Yoku* experiences can be detected in Sweden, especially in comparison with slow adventures. This is probably due to the numerous overlaps that can be detected between forests, well-being and the abovementioned *friluftsliv* which connect with slow adventures. Components of nature therapy and references to well-being can, in fact, be seen both conceptually (as explained above) and empirically, e.g. in the marketing/staging and in the online reviews of Escapade Sweden and others.
- Forests are very strong components of other wellness products related to an intersection between spirituality and well-being: examples are wellness centers, holistic retreats, spas, spiritual pilgrimages and yoga retreats, whose proliferation worldwide is unprecedented since the early 2000s<sup>18</sup>.
- *Digital detox* holidays are also emerging as packages specifically oriented towards disconnecting from digital devices (smartphones, laptops, tablets, etc.) and engaging in de-toxifying therapies. Negative outcomes due to loss of internet connectivity have been detected in so-called “technology-dead zones”, especially in terms of anxiety and social tensions<sup>19</sup>. Yet, increasing empirical research detected, on the one hand, damages in tourist engagement, social interactions, loss of authenticity and alienation due to ubiquitous connectivity<sup>20</sup>, and on the other hand, benefits in terms of well-being for tourism activities with limited or no technology access<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> Konu 2015, Hansen, Jones & Tocchini, 2017

<sup>15</sup> Konu 2015, Smith & Kelly, 2006

<sup>16</sup> Hansen, Jones & Tocchini, 2017

<sup>17</sup> Varley & Semple 2015, Hjalager and Flagestad, 2012, Konu et al., 2010

<sup>18</sup> Smith & Kelly, 2006

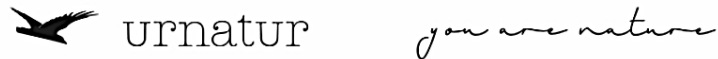
<sup>19</sup> Tribe and Mkono (2017); Tanti & Buhalis (2016); Cai, McKenna & Waizenegger (2019).

<sup>20</sup> Cai, McKenna & Waizenegger (2019).

<sup>21</sup> Li, Pearce & Low (2018); Cai, McKenna & Waizenegger (2019)

The typologies of product mentioned above often rely on long-term isolation from urban settings and other human gatherings. They are sometimes founded on the exclusion of one or more genders, as in the case of women-only retreats. The absence of overcrowding and the relative isolation typical of the Nordic forests make the conditions favorable for these kinds of products, but the right of public access might constitute a threat, an aspect that is still unexplored in the literature<sup>22</sup>.

### Case: Urnatur



Urnatur is a micro-firm located in Ödeshög, Östergötland, focused on ancient human heritage of the woods. They produce and sell craft items, mostly textiles and items with a design inspired by forest and forest-based craftsmanship. Yet, much of their offering is tourism and recreation-related. They have 10 huts and treehouses that can be booked by guests, each hosting between 1 and 4 people. They offer activities for guests (only groups) centered on food and ancient forest food culture, alongside basic woodman skills, such as chopping wood, lighting a fire and sharpening an axe. Most of these activities are rather basic, and oriented towards de-toxifying and the rediscovery of healthy human sociality. For example, foraging herbs and vegetables and cooking them together: "*Cooking*



<sup>22</sup> Vistad, Erkkonen & Rydberg, 2010



together is among the most natural things to do. But how often are we doing it?'. However, they also offer a 2 days workshop activity based on building a Swedish log house.

They also offer specific Shinrin Yoku retreats led by professional retreaters, 3 times yearly, lasting 2 days: *"Welcome for two days of rest and enjoyment in the woods. Here you can let go of everyday thoughts and stress and let your souls senses have a bathe in the forest. That's what we at Urnatur call "forestbath" – Japanese call it Shinrin-Yoku."* Guests can book a hut or a treehouse, but can also camp, in which case access to facilities is offered for a small fee.



8 reasons to come to Urnatur

- connection with nature
- inspiration
- physical activity
- feeling of well-being
- stress reduction
- time to be alone, solitude
- heightened awareness
- meaning and purpose

Urnatur counts on 13/13 5 stars reviews on tripadvisor, with guests praising the overall magical, unique and spiritual nature of the experience.

### Case: Force of Nature



Force of Nature is a relatively new "surf and outdoor company" based in Skåne, and founded in 2016. They have three distinct event tourism offering that focus on forests. "National Tourism" is focused on the aim of bringing swedes to experience forest leisure more often. "International Tourism – Sweden by Force of Nature" aims at offering international tourists experiences based on Swedish outdoor culture. "Nature Recreation - Natureness" focuses on Shinrin Yoku and nature therapy.

These categories influences the event staging, schedule and experience mediation, e.g. in terms of the language implemented and activities.

They organize Shinrin Yoku events yearly, basing on capacity. In 2019, they planned 8 different retreats of 1-2 days between May and September. 3 of these events are focused on slow rafting, but they also include yoga classes and forest bathing components.

They are currently expanding their event portfolio to include educational forest experiences based on foraging.

## SWEDISH FOREST BATHING

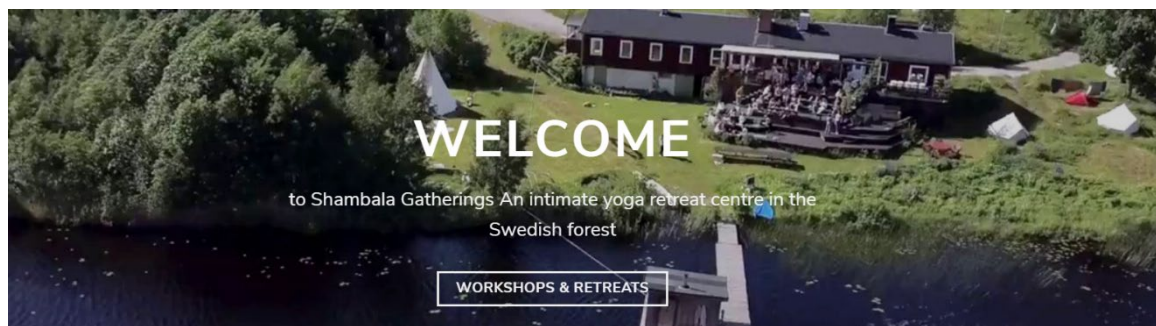
Skogsbad on Swedish, Forest Bathing on English or Shinrin Yoku on Japanese. Shinrin-yoku is a term that means "taking in the forest atmosphere" or "forest bathing."

During this activity you will visit beautiful Swedish forest and learn different exercises during the 2 hours. Exercises that helps you reconnect to nature and find balance in your life and live it with a sunnier state of mind.

If I can't bring nature to people, I will bring people to nature!

[READ MORE](#)

## Case: Shambala Gatherings



Shambala Gatherings is a Yoga retreat established in 2005 in the forest area of Bergslagen, which offer yoga retreat programs all year around. An experiential theme of "silence, stillness and introspection" is associated with winter retreats, whereas "creativity, connection and joy" is the theme that dominate the summer season.



YOGA &  
TRAININGS



BODYWORK &  
HEALING



MEDITATION &  
SILENCE



THE SACRED  
FEMENINE



DANCE & MUSIC



CHI KUNG & TAI  
CHI

The retreats are also divided by six different themes, showed above. The first 3 are related with yoga, physical training and well-being, meditation and introspection. They include a vast array of retreat programs. The "sacred feminine" is a special retreat program reserved for women, and focused on experiences of sisterhood, womb yoga and feminine self-care. Retreats that are part of Dance & music include a component related to chanting, music therapy and similar experiences. Qi Gong and Tai Chi are retreats focused on the related martial and mediation arts. A single retreat is usually tagged with more than one of these themes.

Food has a great deal of importance, specifically in terms of *what* is prepared (vegetarian/gluten-free), and *how* is prepared and consumed (themes of idealism, joy, gratitude, sharing, etc.). Food is deeply connected with the experiential themes of Shambala Gathering.



Shambala Gatherings is composed by a “core” staff, more than 37 teachers, and a varying number of volunteers. However, the number of teachers vary, as Shambala Gatherings offers the possibility to host external teachers. The “core” staff is composed by 8 people. Core staff, teachers and volunteers are all present at the center only in the summer season, whereas in the winter only a bare minimum part of the core staff is available. This is reflected in the difference between isolation/disconnection and connection/community explained above, and provides with a strong experiential theme that follow the physical seasonality. The center itself has sauna, rooms and facilities.



## Case: Digital Detox Camp at Villa Insikt

Villa Insikt is a retreat and a small accommodation provider (3 double rooms) open all year around, run by Karina Di Lucia, a Norwegian "*digital detox pioneer*" grown up in Lapland. It is located in Innansjön, Vasterbotten (north of Umeå).



### Möjlighet till reflektion

- # Känner du dig stressad när du inte är uppkopplad?
- # Har det hänt att du haft mer fokus på skärmen än att umgås med nära och kära?
- # Har du själv upptäckt att du inte varit närvarande i ett viktigt möte?

Villa Insikt proposes itself as an accommodation with the possibility of participating in a series of guided activities, namely *digital detox*, *shinrin yoku*, *forest retreats*, *reflective walks* and a not else specified *mindfulness*. Nevertheless, a particular focus is put on the connectivity addiction of the contemporary world (which is declined on the website as FOMO, "*Fear Of Missing Out*", and on the specular and opposite need of retrieving time and space for self-reflexivity, "*to be truly present in real life, happening here and now*". All the guided activities are, therefore, reflecting this theme, to which experiential cues of silence, calm, relax and freedom, which are in turn projected in the nature that surrounds Villa Insikt: forests and the lake Göksjön.

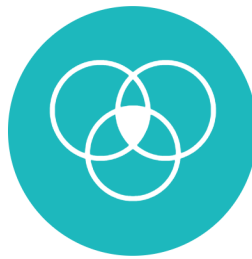
The Digital Detox Camp itself is made of few days of giving up the "*digital bonding units*" and, instead, spending time in loose and small groups of people, and engaging in discussions, exercises and activities to mature "*digital awareness*" and to critically reflect on "*how we want to relate to the ever-increasing digital flow*". The overall goal is to develop a "digital insight", which is connected with balance, freedom, recovery, time management and increased socialization. Although these activities are both indoor and outdoor, their connection with discovering the surrounding natural landscape around is clear.



### Hur funkar det?



Deltar du under en helg anländer du under torsdagen och öker hem på söndagen.



Dialog, reflektion och kreativa övningar. Du får utforska både i grupp och på egen hand.



Mat, frukt, kaffe, te och vatten – allt du behöver för att hålla energin uppe finns tillgängligt.

The Digital Detox Camp is effectively an all-inclusive package of 72 hours, which include food and accommodation at Villa Insikt, and costs 3950 SEK.

Despite the focus on digital detox, Villa Insikt promotes also “*activities nearby without a guide*”: *Hiking trails, barbecue sites, caves and rock climbing, refreshing bath in lake and river, fishing in lakes and rivers*. Different activities (connected with the abovementioned slow adventures and consumptive animal-based *friluftsliv*) may introduce different experiencescapes of nature (more “slow adventure” and less “well-being/digital detox”), which on the other hand can easily co-exist.

Rooms at Villa Insikt, as a “*natural place for creativity and thinking*” can also be rented by “*creative people and those who look for peace and quiet*”. A group of up to six people can also rent the whole house, “*with the opportunity to have workshops, creative meetings, reflect, read, paint*”. Aspects, those of individual and collective creativity and art, which again relate to the possibility of exploring nature.

## Conclusions

When departing from terms such as forest-based tourism in order to investigate tourism experiences based in forest areas, it is important to note the difficulty in isolating forests, and the tourism value of forests, in relation to other natural and cultural resources. It is also important to reflect on the limits of transferability of tourism experiences based on forests worldwide, from one country to the other, due to different natural, legal, economic and cultural frameworks.

Given this, the present report detected two macro-categories of tourism experiences, contextualized in both the Nordic natural areas and cultural space of *friluftsliv*, and in which forests play an important if not determinant role. The first is slow adventure and animal-based *friluftsliv*, and the second one is well-being and spirituality.

The seven cases provided in this report showed how these two typologies are not intended to be mutually exclusive. Recurring themes of disconnecting, recharging,

freedom, authenticity and genuine companionship could be observed in cases related with both categories. Heritage and education are also recurring aspects.

Finally, anthropocentric, eco-centric, consumptive and not consumptive implementation of animals, either wild and domesticated, could be observed in different activities proposed by the same experience provider, suggesting that these visions of the animal world, although perhaps relating to different experiencescapes of nature, are also not mutually exclusive. This is especially true for slow adventures.

A different pattern can be noticed in well-being and spirituality related experiences, where eco-based interpretations dominate over anthropocentric interpretations and consumptive animal experiences, but this pattern should *not* be seen as the sign of a dramatic distinction (meaning that themes related with well-being and spirituality and anthropocentric/consumptive activities are always mutually exclusive). Consumptive activities are present and advertised (albeit less), for instance, by Villa Insikt and Urnatur.

Two separate tables with the major experiential themes detected in the cases presented above, divided according to the two overarching themes delineated in this report, is visualized below. A graphical visualization of the continuum between them follows.

	Case	Experiential themes and focus	Animals and Nature interpretation (example)
Slow adventure and animal-based <i>friluftsliv</i>	Wild Sweden	Wildlife watching Off the beaten track companionship Education, conservation, sustainability Silence, authenticity, meditation Winter tours: Sápmi heritage, activities	eco-based (wildlife watching) anthropocentric consumptive (fishing) and not consumptive (dog sledding)
	Vildmarkivarmland	Personal challenge/achievement Disconnection Companionship Freedom, self-reliance, independence Survival	Mainly anthropocentric consumptive (fishing)
	Escapade Sweden	Heritage of the wild (Nordic – Sápmi – modern Swedish) Re-wilding, rediscovery of the natural self Education about environment Survival skills	anthropocentric consumptive (fishing) and not consumptive (dog sledding)

Well-being and spirituality	Urnatur	Heritage of the woods de-toxifying and stress reduction rediscovery of healthy companionship Shinrin Yoku Solitude Awareness, self-reflection	Eco-based
	Force of Nature	Swedish outdoor culture Slow being Re-discovery of outdoor culture Shinrin Yoku Nature therapy Yoga classes	Eco-based and anthropocentric
	Shambala Gatherings	Winter – silence and introspection Summer – creativity, connection, joy Yoga Nature therapy Gender-based group therapy Healthy lifestyle and socialization Meditation and martial arts	Eco-based
	Digital detox Camp at Villa Insikt	Digital detox Lifestyle balance Shinrin Yoku Self-reflection Freedom Recovery Healthy socialization Creativity	Eco-based

Mainly anthropocentric	Mainly eco-centric
Less focus on the forest, more on general nature	More focus is on the forest and its therapeutical power
More focus on local <i>frilutsliv</i> and indigenous activities	Less focus on local and indigenous activities, as opposed to “ad hoc” therapeutical activities

Slow Adventures

Well Being & Spirituality

An aspect is particularly important to mention. The predominance of “natural” resources (forests, lakes, rivers, wildlife) as well as experiential themes related to “detaching” from the human-urban are very important and well reflected in the very definition of “nature-based tourism” (tourism based on nature).

Yet, these may trick the observer in thinking that experiences in the nature are *all about* nature, whereas elements related to heritage and culture are equally dominant and important. Other than an invitation for an international guest to experience “the wilderness”, a slow adventure in the Nordic context is also a story about local senses of place, arts and heritages (indigenous and not) of the forest, materialized in activities, educational aspects, historical notions, etc.

The local, human “sense of nature” is, consequently, a theme as important as the nature in which the adventure is set.

Similarly, many of the themes presented within the realm of forests and well-being concern values attached to the natural landscape that are determined by *culture*: disconnecting (from what?); awareness (of what?); freedom (from what?) and healthy life style (what is healthy? What is unhealthy?) are all questions that may find in nature a setting, but that find in culture (e.g. meditation, therapy, vegan food, switching off smartphones) an answer.

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