

FIELD TRIP IN TORNEDALEN – Crafts & Culture as a travel reason

Övertorneå greeted us with a cold Wednesday-morning on December 12th. We've filled a bus with 16 curious participants, to spend the day travelling around Övertorneå and Pajala municipalities. The participants were a mix of established company leaders, future entrepreneurs and other strategic stakeholders – all with a special interest when it comes to tourism and in this case; crafts and culture as a travel reason.

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The bus rolled away south towards our first visit at Arthotel Tornedalen in Risudden. There Gunhild Stensmyr and Karl-Johan Ersson welcomed us, serving us a tour around the hotel, presentations of Arthotel and the upcoming art gallery Konsthall Tornedalen – together with delicious cake, coffee and lingonberry lemonade. The hotel was established as a necessary infrastructure to the planned art gallery. Konsthall Tornedalen is a project worth over 50 million SEK, which has been on the agenda for about a decade. The plan is to start the construction site during next year. You can read more about the sites at www.arthoteltornedalen.se and www.konsthalltornedalen.se.



After being inspired by Gunhilds visions we left Risudden and continued our journey towards Liehittäjä and Huuva Hideaway. At the small off-grid village we got a warm welcome from Pia and Henry Huuva. We got served a nice, hot homemade glögg (or mulled wine), with a taste of the nearby forest. We then got to hear the story about the village and the Hideaway and learn a little more about the Saamí culture. Together with an excellent lunch we also got served a presentation of the activities and accommodation at Huuva Hideaway, such as the floating cabin M/S Floataway, and their vision about offering soft adventures and genuine hospitality. Learn more about Huuva Hideaway on their Facebook-page; www.facebook.com/HUUVAHIDEAWAY.



After the lunch we went to visit the cultural reserve of Hanhivittikko fäbod (shieling). There we were met up by guide Rolf Lahti, who told us about the facilities and their activities. Summertime the site becomes a place of living history, with farm animals and everything. There's also a chance to rent the cottages or the barns for a sleepover, conference, dinner or other festivities. The place is taken care of by the association Friends of Hanhivittikko, they provide the basis such as the facilities, but can also contribute with guiding and cooking. On their webpage you can find more of their activities: www.hanhivittikko.se.



From Hanhivittikko it was time for a little longer busride up north to Korpilombolo, where we were going to visit the European Festival of the Night. We started at the old village homestead called Uusitalo, having a peak at on of the ongoing workshops at the festival. The two sisters Linnea and Märta Nylund met up with us and told us the concept of and the story behind the two week long festival. It's an event that attracts around 6 000 visitors to a village with less than 600 residents. The program contains acts and performances from all over the world, with a connection to art, litterature, philisophy and music. We also had time to have a quick look at one of the art exhibitions, where Tornedalen and the connection between Sweden and Finland was the theme. And at last we had a cup of coffe at the adjoined restaurant Kulturhuset, which (together with two hostels) is a year-round product of the December-festival. Read more about the festival and the rest of the business at www.nightfestival.se.



To end the day, we visited Forest Jewel in Övertorneå. A café, souvenir shop and wooden workshop in the old customs house. Owner Mika Korkeaniemi showed us around on the premises and told us about their business. Forest Jewel is actually the largest supplier of wooden cups in Sweden, with a quite large international market. They have up to 4 employees making cups and other souvenirs, but as a guest you can also visit their workshop and create your own personal wooden cup with inauguration ceremony and all. If you're curious about their products you can find them in their webshop at www.forestjewel.se.



A huge thanks to all our hosts for inspiring us, feeding us and showing us a great time! And thank you to all the participants, who contributed with knowledge, curiosity and a lot of enthusiasm!



Photo: Pia Huuva