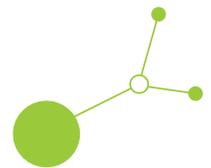


D.1.3.4 Good Practice Guide: How to create secondary benefits for local stakeholders in Healthy Forest Regions

Guideline document



02 2026

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The *HealthyForestRegions Project - Supporting Healthy Forest ecosystems for human well-being in forest regions* (CE0100310) operates under Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE's 2021-2027 funding. It is aligned with Priority 2 'Cooperating for a greener Central Europe', and addressing Objective 2.4, 'Safeguarding the environment in Central Europe'. The project spans from April 2023 to March 2026, with a budget of €2.78 million, of which 80% are funded by ERDF. Involving nine partners across six Central European countries with six project regions, the project fosters commitment among policy- and decision-makers to maintain and create conditions that support the health of the regional forest ecosystems. Thereby, the *HealthyForestRegions Project* supports the long-term well-being of the people living, working and spending time in the targeted regions.



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D.1.3.4 GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE: HOW TO CREATE SECONDARY BENEFITS FOR LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS IN HEALTHY FOREST REGIONS

1. Introduction

Forests play a vital role in supporting human health and well-being. Increasing evidence highlights the positive effects of forest ecosystems on physical and mental health, making forest regions valuable spaces for recreation, prevention, education, and nature-based health promotion. At the same time, forest-dependent regions face the challenge of balancing sustainable management with economic viability and local development.

This “*Good Practice Guide: How to create secondary benefits for local stakeholders in Healthy Forest Regions*” builds on practical experiences gained within the Interreg project *HealthyForestRegions*¹. It aims to support practitioners, forest owners, local authorities, tourism actors, and communities who seek to harness the health-promoting potential of forests while generating additional value for local stakeholders. The guide provides practical guidance and good practice examples on how forest ecosystems can be used to enhance human health and well-being through non-extractive uses such as recreation, nature-based activities, and therapeutic approaches.

The recommendations presented in this guide are grounded in pilot activities carried out in four European regions: the Jizera Mountains (Czech Republic), Angermünde (Germany), Paklenica National Park (Croatia), and Kočevje (Slovenia). These pilot actions served as real-life testing grounds, allowing partners to identify success factors, challenges and enabling conditions. The lessons learned from these pilots form the backbone of this guide.

¹ <https://www.interreg-central.eu/projects/healthyforestregions/>



2. Good Practices: Lessons learned from pilot actions

To support the development of healthy forest regions and the creation of secondary benefits for local stakeholders, several pilot actions were implemented across different regions. These pilots tested practical approaches to using forest ecosystems for health, well-being, recreation, and education, while at the same time demonstrating viable non-extractive economic opportunities. The experiences gained provide valuable insights and transferable lessons for practitioners and decision-makers.

One group of pilot actions focused on the development of nature-based tourism packages that combine multiple services - such as accommodation, catering, recreation, wellness activities, and local products - into integrated offers centred on forests and their positive effects on human health. In Angermünde (DE), a dedicated leaflet was published presenting body and mind activities in the town forest. Each activity is clearly described in terms of difficulty level, health benefits, required equipment, and contact details for guides or trainers, making the offer accessible to a wide range of users. Similarly, the Local Action Group (LAG) Frýdlantsko developed targeted communication materials by engaging former project participants and regional service providers. Using marketing personas and storytelling, they created thematic narratives illustrating how different visitor types experience the services offered in the Jizera Mountains beech forests. In Kočevje, a new guided cycling tour was integrated into the destination management system and promoted through an information leaflet. These pilots demonstrate the importance of clear communication, user-oriented design, and cooperation between tourism, health, and forest stakeholders when creating attractive nature-based offers.

A second set of pilot actions explored nature therapy and recreation formats designed to support physical, emotional, and mental well-being through mindful interaction with forest environments. A diverse range of activities was tested, including forest yoga, bachata dancing in the forest, Nordic walking, Forest Mind sessions, Catching Balance, Forest Detox Experiences, art-based activities such as drawing in the wild, and mountain biking. These pilots showed that forests can host a wide spectrum of health-oriented activities appealing to different target groups, from those seeking relaxation and mental balance to more active and sport-oriented users. Key lessons include the importance of qualified guidance, adaptable formats, and sensitivity to both participant needs and ecological conditions.

The third pilot action type involved the creation of Forest Rallye Tours as self-guided outdoor experiences combining recreation and environmental education along designated forest routes. Different formats were tested: a geocaching tour in Angermünde (DE), an audio-guided forest experience in Paklenica National Park (HR), and a treasure hunt focusing on forest ecosystem services in Kočevje (SI). These activities highlighted the value of self-guided approaches, which allow flexible participation, reduce staffing requirements, and can be easily integrated into existing visitor infrastructure. They also demonstrated how playful and interactive elements can effectively raise awareness of forest functions and ecosystem services while enhancing visitor engagement.

Overall, the pilot actions illustrate how forests can be actively used to promote human health and well-being while generating secondary economic benefits for local stakeholders. They provide practical examples of how non-extractive forest uses can be implemented, offering inspiration for Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) approaches and sustainable regional development models.



2.1. Nature-based tourist packages

Nature-based tourist packages combine different services - such as accommodation, catering, recreation, wellness and local products - into a single offer focused on nature, especially forests, and their positive effects on human health and well-being. By linking these services with guided forest experiences, nature-based tourist packages highlight the benefits of forest ecosystems, simplify planning for visitors, promote sustainable behaviour and create added value for local communities.

2.1.1. Objectives

Nature-based tourist packages demonstrate that tourism and conservation can coexist. Careful planning, sensitive use of natural areas and targeted marketing allow the recreational benefits of forest ecosystems to be shared with visitors while minimizing environmental impact.

The main objective of nature-based tourist packages is to enhance the value of existing tourism offerings in forest regions by introducing experiences that highlight the benefits of forest ecosystems for human health and well-being - particularly their recreational services - thereby increasing the destination's appeal to visitors.

Tourist packages seek to combine a diverse range of tourist offerings that bring together various services, which increase the overall attractiveness of the destination, strengthens collaboration among the local providers, and enhances the quality of nature-based health and leisure tourism in the area.

Mapped capacities, quality-proved services and an appropriate offer of services help tourist packages to prevent conflicts such as overcrowding or promotion of unsustainable activities. Promotional tools, including leaflets and websites, can guide visitors on appropriate conduct in sensitive forest areas.

For the visitors, bundled packages simplify planning and purchasing by combining multiple services in one single offer, often at more favourable prices than individually sourcing each service.

2.1.2. Target groups

There are three main target groups to be considered in the development of nature-based tourist packages:

- **Visitors:** Tourist packages should be designed to meet the needs and interests of specific visitor segments. Using *marketing personas*² can help identify target groups, such as families, active or sports-oriented individuals, environmentally conscious visitors or those seeking wellness or spiritual experiences. Tailoring activities and services to these groups ensures that the package is appealing and relevant for the visitors.
- **Entrepreneurs in tourism:** Tourist packages rely on collaboration with local businesses, including accommodation providers, catering services, travel agencies, activity organizers, nature guides and wellness or spa operators. Encouraging networking and cooperation among service providers helps to integrate environmentally responsible offerings and strengthens the overall quality and attractiveness of the package.

² We recommend formulating marketing personas based on an interpretation plan for a specific location. General information on marketing personas can be found, for example, here:

<https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/261151/1/afm-praxiswissen-01-2020-s041-052.pdf>



- Destination Management: Destination management is a key target group to be involved, as their understanding of these principles is essential for adapting tourism strategies and marketing approaches in ways that support both visitor experiences and ecosystem protection.

2.1.3. Resources and requirements

The starting point should be the participatory development of an Interpretation Plan (IP)³ as a joint strategy which outlines target groups and an overview of tools for addressing them appropriately, a description of desired visitor experiences and expected visitor behaviours. Tourism operators should be actively involved in the development of a joint IP and agree with its content to ensure its consistent and successful implementation.

Since the purpose of a tourist package is to create a marketable and competitive offer, it is crucial to understand visitors, their behaviours and preferences. The packages should combine services that meet visitor needs while protecting sensitive sites. Additionally, selecting effective communication channels and making the package easily purchasable is critical.

An important prerequisite is mapping available services that can be included in the tourist package offer. Therefore, cooperation with destination management - if one operates in the area - with marketing experience is highly beneficial.

2.1.4. Implementation

Implementing nature-based tourist packages involves a series of practical steps to ensure the offers to be appealing, accessible and sustainable:

- 1) Develop an Interpretation Plan (IP):
 - Begin by creating a participatory IP with local stakeholders.
 - The IP defines target visitor groups, desired experiences, expected visitor behaviour and key messages about forest ecosystem services and their contributions to human health and well-being. It provides a framework for aligning activities, services and marketing with conservation and tourism objectives⁴.
- 2) Identify and map available services:
 - Catalogue existing services relevant to the package, including accommodation, catering, recreational and wellness activities, guided tours and local products.
 - Assess the quality, capacity and suitability of the services and products, ensuring their compatibility with sensitive natural areas and their alignment with the IP.
- 3) Design new activities and experiences:

³ More about Interpretation and Interpretive Planning can be found here:

<https://interpret-europe.net/about-heritage-interpretation/>

The Interpretation Plan for Healthy Forest Regions is available here:

https://www.interreg-central.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/Interpretation_Plan_for_HFR.pdf

⁴ As an example, you can find the Interpretation plan for Jizera Mts Beechforest here:

<https://ipbuciny.webnode.cz/dokument/> (in Czech)



- If not available yet, develop activities that communicate the benefits of forest ecosystems for human health and well-being.
 - Include clear guidance on activity difficulty, health benefits, required equipment, and supervision.
- 4) Engage stakeholders:
- Involve local service providers, guides and environmental stakeholders in designing and delivering the package.
 - Use visitor profiles or marketing personas to ensure that the activities match the target audience interests and needs.
- 5) Develop supporting materials:
- Create brochures, leaflets and online content that describe activities, schedules, rules for responsible forest use and booking information.
 - Integration into Destination Management: Collaborate with destination management to ensure the visibility, marketability, and easy booking of the developed tourist package for visitors.



Figure 1: Brochures and leaflets developed for Jizera Mts Beech Forests (CZ)
(author: Jitka Doubnerova, LAG Frydlantsko)

- 6) Pilot and refine:
- Test the package with small visitor groups to assess its feasibility, attractiveness and environmental impact. Use feedback sheets to obtain direct feedback from the visitors.
 - Adjust activities, schedules, and materials based on feedback and observations.
- 7) Promote and Monitor:
- Use multiple marketing channels - online, print, social media - to reach the target audiences.
 - Monitor visitor satisfaction, behaviour and ecological impacts for continuous improvement.

By following these steps, practitioners can develop tourist packages that provide enriching visitor experiences, support sustainable forest use, and create added value for local communities.



2.1.5. Success factors and challenges

Key success factors include:

- **Participatory planning:** Developing a nature-based tourism package in a sensitive natural area should not aim to increase visitor numbers, but rather to attract responsible visitors who respect and value the environment. A key success factor is participatory planning based on an Interpretation Plan (IP). The IP enables stakeholders to clarify expectations, define goals for visitor experiences, and identify desired changes in visitor behaviour. Tourism service providers should offer only those services that are consistent with the objectives defined in the IP.
- **Targeted communication and marketing:** Proven communication and marketing tools - such as printed materials, websites, social media, and the involvement of promoters or ambassadors - are essential to raise awareness of the new offer. These tools should convey a coherent image that reflects the unique characteristics and values of the area as defined in the IP.

Challenges may include:

- **Balancing ecosystem service objectives:** Challenges arise from the diverse and sometimes competing objectives associated with forest ecosystem services. In sensitive locations, recreational use must respect the primacy of nature conservation. The use of recreational ecosystem services must remain balanced and aligned with conservation goals in order to avoid overtourism, ecological damage, and potential negative impacts on the site's reputation.
- **Long-term cooperation and governance:** Sustainable implementation requires long-term, operational cooperation at the local and regional levels. Planning processes should be interdepartmental and intersectoral, fostering networking, cooperation, and shared responsibility among all relevant stakeholders. By addressing these factors, nature-based tourism packages can provide meaningful visitor experiences, strengthen local collaboration, and support the sustainable use of forest ecosystems.
- **Operating in a competitive tourism market:** Tourism is a highly competitive sector. Therefore, nature-based tourism packages must be developed to a high professional standard and, where possible, integrated into existing destination management structures operating in the area.

2.1.6. Replicability and recommendations

Nature-based tourist packages can be successfully adapted to different regions while maintaining ecological sustainability, enhancing visitor experiences, and supporting local communities if the following conditions are met:

- **Emphasis on local character:** To create a unique and authentic tourist offer, it should combine novel experiences (e.g. nature therapy offers, interpretation walks, body and mind workshops with local offerings (e.g. provided by local craftsmen or food producers), highlighting their connection to the region and its healthy forest ecosystem.
- **Stakeholder collaboration:** Local groups of stakeholders should be established to jointly develop an interpretation plan and implement activities in line with its goals.
- **Integration with Destination Management:** Involving destination management and using proven marketing practices, such as defining target groups through personas, supports the success and visibility of the package.
- **Effective marketing:** Sufficient resources need to be allocated for the successful operation of the package.



2.2. Nature Therapy and Recreation Offers

Nature therapy activities are guided experiences designed to support physical, emotional and mental well-being through mindful connection with the natural environment, especially forests. These activities invite participants to slow down, engage their senses, and restore balance in a natural setting.

Nature therapy and recreational activities provide high-value, low-impact regional development potential. By integrating health, tourism, environment, and community development, they contribute to:

- Sustainable economic growth
- Improved public health
- Strong regional identity
- Environmental protection
- Long-term regional resilience

2.2.1 Objectives

The main objective of nature therapy and recreation activities is to develop and promote new, forest-based recreational services and offers for visitors and the local population that make it possible to experience how the forest benefits our body, mind and soul, thereby promoting overall human health and well-being.

Specific goals include:

- Improve mental health and support physical health.
- Foster a deeper connection between people and nature, encouraging environmental awareness, conservation ethics, and responsible behaviour.
- Utilize recreational ESS and show that the forest environment has a profound preventive and therapeutic effects on body and soul
- Contribute to regional development by generating local employment, diversifying economies, and strengthening the identity and resilience of healthy forest regions.

The expected outcomes of implementing nature therapy and recreational activities in forest regions encompass improvements in physical, mental, social, and environmental human well-being. Furthermore, development of nature therapy and recreational services strengthens regional identity and place branding by positioning healthy forest regions as attractive destinations for nature-based health, recreation, and sustainable tourism.

2.2.2. Target groups

Nature therapy and recreational activities are addressed to a wide range of people who can benefit from physical, mental, and social engagement with natural environments. This includes individuals experiencing stress, anxiety, or mental health challenges, as well as those with chronic illnesses or lifestyle-related health conditions seeking preventive or complementary therapies.

Children and adolescents are targeted for cognitive development, emotional well-being, and outdoor learning, while older adults benefit from gentle physical activity, social interaction, and mental stimulation. Tourists or nature enthusiasts seeking leisure, wellness, and recreational experiences in forest areas are also included.



Overall, the activities are designed for people of all ages, abilities, and socio-economic backgrounds who can gain health, social, or environmental benefits from contact with nature.

2.2.3. Resources and requirements

The development and implementation of nature therapy and recreational activities require the following key resources and requirements:

- Natural resources: healthy, well-preserved and aesthetically valuable forest areas, clean air, water sources, and safe natural landscapes.
- Human resources: Qualified nature and forest therapists, recreation guides, health professionals, educators, park rangers, and appropriately trained support staff.
- Infrastructure: Well-maintained walking trails and therapeutic paths, seating and rest areas.
- Equipment and materials: Appropriate safety equipment, tools or equipment depending on the specific activity being offered, and monitoring or evaluation devices.
- Accessibility measures: Inclusive trail and facility design, provisions for people with disabilities, clear wayfinding systems, and safety features to ensure broad and equitable access.
- Financial resources: Adequate funding for planning, training, infrastructure development, maintenance, staffing and program promotion.
- Organisational and institutional support: Strong partnerships with local authorities, forest managers, health institutions, NGOs and tourism providers.
- Communication and promotion: Effective public awareness campaigns, marketing activities, and mechanisms for stakeholder engagement.

2.2.4. Implementation

1) Define the purpose and target group

- Clearly outline the changes the program will bring about. This includes three key dimensions:
 - Health and well-being purpose (e.g. mental health, stress reduction)
 - Environmental purpose (e.g. environmental awareness, conservation)
 - Socio-economic purpose (e.g. tourism, jobs)
- Not everyone needs the same type of nature therapy. It should identify the primary beneficiaries (e.g. elderly, tourists, children) and secondary beneficiaries (e.g. local communities, forest departments, tourism businesses).
- Align what people need with what the forest can provide.

2) Forest Area Selection

The chosen forest area should be:

- Safe and accessible
- Calming
- Not environmentally fragile



3) Design and offer new activities

If not available yet, develop activities that focus on the benefits of forest ecosystems for human health and well-being. Activities should follow psychological and ecological principles, not tourism only. Include clear guidance on activity difficulty, health benefits, required equipment, and supervision.

4) Engage qualified trainers

This step ensures the program is safe, credible and effective. Without qualified trainers, nature therapy becomes just a walk in the forest, not a healing system.

5) Develop supporting materials:

Create brochures, leaflets and online content that describe the type of therapy or activities, schedules, rules for responsible forest use and booking information.

6) Pilot and refine:

- Test the activities (e.g. Forest Bathing, Mindfulness, Yoga in nature, Art in Nature) with small visitor groups to assess their feasibility, attractiveness, human health benefits and environmental impact. Use feedback sheets to obtain direct feedback from the visitors.
- Adjust activities, schedules, and materials based on feedback and observations.

7) Promote and Monitor:

- Use multiple marketing channels - online, print, social media - to reach the target audiences.
- Monitor visitor satisfaction, behaviour and ecological impacts for continuous improvement.



Figure 2: Yoga in nature in Paklenica NP (HR) (author: Mihovila Milin, PNP PI)



2.2.5. Success factors and challenges

Nature therapy and forest-based recreation activities are most successful when they are purposefully designed with clear therapeutic and recreational goals that align with the participants' needs and abilities. Qualified nature and forest therapists with expertise in mental health, group dynamics, and outdoor safety are essential for creating great experiences.

The forest environment itself is a central success factor. Well-maintained, biodiverse, and relatively quiet forests support the implementation of the activities.

Effective promotion is essential for the successful implementation of nature therapy and forest-based recreation activities. Clear and credible messaging is essential. Promotion should explain what nature therapy and forest recreation involve, who they are for and what benefits participants can expect. Proven communication and marketing tools (such as printed materials, websites, social media, and the involvement of promoters or ambassadors) play a key role in advertising the activities.

Nature therapy and forest-based recreation activities face a range of environmental, social, organizational, and therapeutic challenges that can affect their effectiveness and sustainability. One major challenge is balancing conservation and use. Forests provide multiple ecosystem services and increasing recreational or therapeutic activity can conflict with nature conservation goals, particularly in sensitive or protected areas.

Weather variability, seasonal changes and uneven terrain can disrupt activities and reduce accessibility, especially for older adults, people with disabilities, or those with health conditions. Transportation to forest sites can further limit participation.

Professional and organizational challenges include limited availability of trained facilitators with both therapeutic and outdoor expertise.

2.2.6. Replicability and recommendations

Nature therapy and forest-based recreation programs are highly replicable because they rely on widely available natural resources such as parks, forests, and green spaces. With standardized activity guidelines, trained facilitators, and simple infrastructure, these programs can be adapted to different regions, cultures, and age groups while maintaining their therapeutic benefits.

Programs should reflect the natural and cultural identity of each region by combining core nature-therapy elements (such as guided forest walks, mindfulness sessions, or sensory immersion) with local offerings, including traditional knowledge, history of the place, local crafts, or regional food products. This creates authentic, place-based experiences rooted in the surrounding forest ecosystem.

Local stakeholder groups (forest managers, health professionals, tourism providers, community organizations, and environmental agencies) should work together to co-design programs, develop shared guidelines, and coordinate activities in line with agreed-upon health, conservation, and community goals.

Adequate marketing, communication, and operational resources are essential to raise awareness, attract participants, and ensure long-term viability. Clear messaging that highlights health, nature, and local value strengthens the visibility and credibility of the activities.



2.3. Forest Rallye Tour

A Forest Rallye Tour is a self-guided outdoor activity that combines recreation and environmental education along a designated forest route. It is designed to encourage visitors to explore the forest in an active, playful and immersive way while learning about forest ecosystems, biodiversity and natural processes.

Participants follow a predefined route with several thematic stops. Depending on the design of the tour, information and tasks may be provided through a variety of formats, such as short texts, audio guides, mobile applications, QR codes, geocaching elements or interactive challenges. At each stop, participants engage with the forest environment by solving tasks, answering questions, finding hidden objectives or completing sensory or observational activities related to forest ecosystems and their local features.

By collecting clues or completing challenges, participants progress along the route toward a destination that symbolically concludes the activity. This final point may include a summary message, a reflection exercise, or a small reward, reinforcing the learning experience.

Overall, a Forest Rallye Tour offers an accessible and engaging way to experience the forest at one's own pace. By combining movement, discovery, and interpretation, it supports environmental awareness and appreciation of the ecological value of forest ecosystems while remaining adaptable to different target groups, technologies, and local conditions.

2.3.1. Objectives and specific goals

The main objective of a Forest Rallye Tour is to raise awareness of forest ecosystems through active participation and direct experience in nature. By combining learning with movement and discovery, the activity supports a positive and memorable visitor experience.

Specific goals include:

- Increasing understanding of forest functions, biodiversity and natural processes
- Promoting respectful behaviour and responsible use of forest areas
- Supporting nature-based recreation and sustainable tourism
- Encouraging curiosity, observation and shared learning among participants

2.3.2. Target groups

Forest Rallye Tours are primarily designed for individual forest visitors and families who wish to explore the forest independently and at their own pace. Unlike structured educational packages that are tailored to school classes and formal learning settings, Forest Rallye Tours address a broader and more diverse audience, including occasional visitors, tourists, and local residents.

The target groups typically include:

- Families with children, seeking playful and interactive outdoor activities suitable for different age groups
- Individual visitors and small groups, such as hikers or tourists, looking for an engaging way to discover the forest
- Leisure-oriented visitors, interested in light educational content combined with recreation rather than formal instruction



2.3.3. Resources and requirements

The implementation of a Forest Rallye Tour requires a clearly defined and legally permitted forest route as well as educational content adapted to the local forest context. The tour must be developed on a forest trail where such an activity is explicitly allowed, ensuring compliance with relevant legislation, land-use regulations, and forest management objectives. Safety considerations are essential, as the route should be suitable for the intended target groups and accessible under normal conditions.

To minimise impacts on sensitive habitats and avoid disturbance, all stopping points of the Forest Rallye Tour should be located directly on existing forest paths, rather than off-trail. This ensures visitor guidance, reduces trampling and habitat damage, and supports compliance with nature conservation and forest protection regulations.

Once established, a Forest Rallye Tour can be operated with relatively low organisational effort. Key requirements include:

- A marked forest trail with clearly defined and safe stopping points
- Educational content and simple tasks related to local forest topics, adapted to different formats (e.g. analogue, digital, audio-based)
- Printed and/or digital instructions, including maps or navigation support
- A final element that symbolically concludes the activity (e.g. solution code, summary message, or small reward)
- Regular maintenance of materials, signage, and route infrastructure to ensure safety and quality

Close coordination with forest authorities and land managers, as well as integration into existing visitor infrastructure and information systems, is essential for smooth implementation, legal compliance, and long-term operation.

2.3.4. Implementation

The development and implementation of a Forest Rallye Tour should follow a series of practical steps that ensure legal compliance, safety, educational quality, and ease of use for visitors:

- 1) Define objectives and target groups
Clarify the purpose of the Forest Rallye Tour (e.g. recreation, environmental awareness, family activity) and identify the main target groups. The choice of format (e.g. analogue tasks, audio guide, geocaching elements, digital tools) and the level of complexity should be adapted accordingly.
- 2) Select and approve a suitable forest route
Choose an existing forest trail where such an activity is permitted and compatible with forest management and conservation objectives. Ensure the route is safe, accessible for the intended audience, and compliant with relevant legislation. All stops should be located directly on the forest path to avoid off-trail use and environmental impacts.
- 3) Design the route and stopping points
Define a clear start and end point and determine the number and location of thematic stops along the route. Stops should be evenly spaced, easy to find, and linked to specific local forest features or topics.



4) Develop content and tasks

Create educational content and simple tasks that relate to the local forest ecosystem. The content should be engaging, age-appropriate, and suitable for the chosen format (e.g. text-based, audio, interactive, or geocaching). Tasks should be easy to understand and solvable without prior knowledge.



Figure 3: Forest Treasure in Slovenia (SI) (author: Maj Hočevar)

5) Prepare guidance and materials

Develop clear instructions for participants, including maps, navigation support, and explanations of how to complete the tour. Materials may be provided in printed form, digitally, or through on-site signage and QR codes.

6) Define a concluding element

Design a final element that symbolically completes the activity, such as a solution code, summary message, or small reward. This helps to reinforce the learning experience and provides a sense of achievement.

7) Test and refine the tour

Pilot the Forest Rallye Tour with representatives of the target group to identify usability, safety, and content issues. Adjust the route, tasks, or materials based on their feedback.

8) Integrate and maintain the offer

Integrate the Forest Rallye Tour into existing visitor information systems and local tourism offers. Ensure regular maintenance of the route, materials, and content to guarantee long-term usability and safety.



Figure 4: Geocaching Tour in Angermunde (DE)
(author: Maren Michaelsen)



Figure 5: Audio Guide Sign in Paklenica National Park (HR)
(author: Mihovila Milin)



2.3.5. Success factors and challenges

The successful implementation of a Forest Rallye Tour relies on clear and user-friendly instructions, a carefully selected and safe route, and content that is engaging and accessible to participants of different ages and backgrounds. Tasks should be intuitive and motivating, encouraging meaningful interaction with the forest environment without overwhelming participants. The self-guided format represents a major advantage, as it allows visitors to participate flexibly and at their own pace while minimizing the need for continuous supervision. Integrating the tour into existing visitor information and tourism systems further increases its visibility and uptake. If participation fees are charged, a portion of the revenue can be allocated to the forest owner who provides the trail, creating a direct incentive for cooperation. This revenue-sharing approach is a key success factor, as it demonstrates the economic value of non-extractive forest uses and serves as a practical example of Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) schemes, highlighting that forest owners can generate income beyond timber production.

Potential challenges include weather-related limitations, seasonal accessibility, and wear or damage to materials caused by frequent use or exposure to outdoor conditions. In addition, content may lose relevance over time or may not fully match the expectations of all target groups. These challenges can be addressed through the use of durable and weather-resistant materials, simple and inclusive language, modular content that is easy to update, and regular inspection and maintenance of the route and materials.

2.3.6. Replicability and recommendations

A Forest Rallye Tour is highly transferable to other forest regions, as the concept can be easily adapted to different forest types and thematic focuses. Replication primarily requires basic preparation, the selection of a suitable and permitted forest trail, and the development of content that reflects local forest characteristics and management objectives.

Successful replication depends on close cooperation between forest managers, tourism stakeholders, and nature conservation authorities. Early coordination helps to ensure legal compliance, safety, and alignment with conservation goals.

It is recommended to prioritise simple and intuitive tasks, clear and concise messages, and a strong connection to locally relevant forest features and stories. A modular design allows content to be updated or exchanged without changing the overall structure of the tour, making the Forest Rallye Tour a flexible and cost-effective tool for visitor engagement and environmental awareness across different regions.



3. Conclusion

This “*Good Practice Guide: How to create secondary benefits for local stakeholders in Healthy Forest Regions*” has demonstrated that healthy forest regions offer significant potential to enhance human health and well-being while simultaneously creating secondary benefits for local stakeholders. The pilot actions and lessons learned show that forests can serve as multifunctional spaces for recreation, prevention, education, and nature-based health activities, all without relying on extractive uses. When thoughtfully designed and responsibly managed, these activities contribute to physical, mental, and social well-being while strengthening local economies.

Across the different good practices presented - nature-based tourism packages, nature therapy and recreation offer, and self-guided Forest Rallye Tours - several common success factors emerged. These include clear and user-oriented communication, cooperation among forest owners, service providers, health professionals, and tourism actors, and formats that are flexible, inclusive, and adapted to local ecological and social conditions. Importantly, the pilots highlight that non-extractive forest uses can be economically viable when integrated into existing destination management systems and supported by appropriate pricing, marketing, and revenue-sharing mechanisms.

In conclusion, investing in health-oriented forest uses represents a win-win opportunity: forests are conserved and valued for their ecosystem services, people benefit from improved health and well-being, and local stakeholders gain new economic perspectives. This guide aims to inspire adaptation and replication of the presented good practices, encouraging stakeholders across regions to thrive upon the potential of forests for resilient landscapes and communities.



Figure 6: Walking in the forest in Paklenica National Park (HR) (source: Paklenica NP)



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