

We work across borders in the project
Regenerative nature tourism - REGGAE

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Reggae Newsletter 3/2025

Check also: REGGAE homepage¹

Greetings from the project!

An Update from the REGGAE Project: Understanding the Shift from Sustainable to Regenerative Nature Tourism

As the REGGAE Project moves forward, we're excited to share the evolving journey toward regenerative nature tourism, a shift that builds on the principles of sustainability but reaches beyond them. This is more than just a change in terminology. It represents a deep transformation in how we think about tourism, our responsibilities, and the role of businesses in shaping the future of our communities and natural environments.

Both sustainable and regenerative tourism share essential goals. But regenerative tourism asks us to do more. It's not only about preserving what we have, but actively improving it. It's about using tourism as a tool to restore ecosystems, strengthen local communities, and make positive, lasting contributions to the places we visit and call home. While sustainability works to maintain balance and avoid harm, regeneration seeks to leave a place better than it was before.

At the heart of this approach is a mindset shift. Traditional tourism often begins with the question: *"How can this place serve my business?"* In regenerative tourism, we turn that

¹<https://www.slu.se/en/departments/forest-ecology-management/forskning/nordic-nature-health-hub/regenerative-nature-tourism/>

around and ask: *“How can my business serve this place?”* This change of perspective transforms tourism companies from passive service providers into active participants in the health and vibrancy of their local ecosystems. It’s a call to become caretakers and contributors, not just users of resources.

As the REGGAE Project has shown, adopting this new way of thinking doesn’t happen overnight. We still need to work on reshaping values and attitudes among business owners, visitors, and local communities. The conventional image of tourism as a purely commercial activity is still strong. That’s why our efforts have focused not only on developing new products and tools but also on fostering a deeper understanding of what regeneration really means in practice.

Over the past months, we’ve organised hands-on workshops, cross-border learning exchanges, and coaching sessions with our reference companies. These activities have helped entrepreneurs develop regenerative tourism products and services, while also encouraging them to reflect on their broader impact. The focus isn’t only on learning technical skills, it’s about rethinking one’s role in the larger system and identifying ways to contribute meaningfully to local culture and nature.

What we’ve seen is inspiring. Regenerative tourism is about doing good while doing good business. It’s about choosing to go local, not just because it’s trendy or authentic, but because it supports the places we love and depend on. It’s about recognising that tourism can be a force for healing and restoration, not just sustainability.

We’re excited to continue this work, and we invite you to join us on this journey. Our next workshop takes place in October, where we’ll explore even more ways to put regenerative principles into practice. Until then, thank you for being part of this movement toward a more thoughtful, responsible, and regenerative future for tourism.

Pia Smeds

Project Coordinator

(banner photo: Backfors Gård)

Project updates



Regenerative Tourism in Practice: Business Networks, Benchmarking, and Tools for Change

The Reggae project brings together companies from Sweden and Finland that are committed to developing their operations based on regenerative principles. So far, we have identified 12 reference companies in Finland and 8 in Sweden, forming the core of a growing cross-border network.

Together with these companies, we have organised two business workshops and benchmarking trips designed to foster peer learning, exchange of ideas, and strategic networking. These meetings have proven invaluable, offering both inspiration and guidance for companies seeking to develop meaningful and regenerative nature tourism products.

Networks as a Tool for Transformation

For many small businesses, being part of a network is key to initiating and sustaining change. Through the Reggae network, participating companies gain access to shared knowledge, peer support, and new connections, paving the way for collaboration, innovation, and stronger market positions. The project actively supports the development of these networks and provides practical tools to help companies take concrete steps in their regenerative

transformation. We have identified specific coaching and sales support needs among the companies and are currently developing tailored approaches to help address them. The goal is for each company to have a clear, market-ready regenerative tourism product by the end of the project - a product that not only sustains the environment but actively contributes to the restoration of ecosystems and the vitality of local communities.

Raising Awareness and Visibility

Last November, we launched a series of open webinars combining expert knowledge with real-life inspiration from within the field of regenerative tourism. These will continue throughout the current year of 2025.

At the same time, we are producing a series of short films that document the development journeys of our reference companies, sharing both their challenges and breakthroughs to inspire others to follow suit. Our communication efforts span LinkedIn, Facebook, and a recently launched YouTube channel where the films are being published. We have also started building a dedicated digital platform to showcase the reference companies and their stories - a key tool for increasing visibility and sparking broader engagement.

Together, we are not just building a network - we are laying the foundation for a movement towards a new kind of tourism.



Enhancing Knowledge in Transformative Tourism

Courses

We have planned four courses and two excursions. One excursion is about ecology and nature conservation. The other is about how to open up and maintain the cultural landscape. The courses are about regenerative tourism, marketing and communication, cultural heritage and forest history and accessible and inclusive tourism. The courses will be given online on the learning platform Canvas at SLU in Sweden. There will be short PowerPoint lectures, literature and links online that the participants take part in before the workshop. At the workshop, online, the course leader and lecturers participate and lead structured discussions about the content and answer questions.

Cultural heritage along our coasts

Cultural heritage is visible everywhere along our coasts. The interviews we have conducted show that entrepreneurs are interested in developing the local cultural heritage as part of their business. Therefore, a course on the theme of cultural heritage is now being planned, and we will also hold a workshop on the same theme.

Other Current Project Issues

Evaluation of project effects

During the winter and spring of 2025, data have been collected on entrepreneurs' attitudes toward sustainability as well as their well-being, in order to assess whether regenerative tourism could have a positive impact on these aspects. A post-survey will be conducted later. Now, during the summer, similar data is being collected from visitors to evaluate how regenerative tourism services might influence their attitudes toward sustainability and their well-being.

REGGAE Workshop in April 2025



The Third Workshop headed towards North Karelia

Workshop 3 with Study Trip to North Karelia, Finland, April 7–10, 2025. This spring's project trip for the reference companies took place in eastern Finland. The Swedish group travelled east for twelve hours—first by the sustainable ferry Aurora Botnia from Holmsund to Vaasa, and then 500 km by bus to Joensuu.

Once we arrived, our first stop was the regenerative hotel Lietsu Boutique Aparthotel² – Huoneistohotelli Lietsu. This hotel showcases Karelian culture and operates from a sustainability perspective, with details ranging from secondhand porcelain to rooms offering

²<https://www.lietsuhotel.fi/en/#/booking/search>

clean, allergen-free air and renewable electricity. We visited the University of Eastern Finland (UEF)³ and held a workshop on the pricing of tourism products. Päivi Kosonen from UEF taught us how entrepreneurs should think to make their businesses financially viable. After that, we headed down winding, often narrow and muddy roads in North Karelia to visit one of the project's reference companies: Karelia Cottages⁴. This company offers accommodation in a regenerative environment on an island in Lake Saimaa. The lodging is well thought out and sustainable, and they offer regenerative activities, such as shovelling snow mounds for the endemic Saimaa ringed seal to reproduce. The Saimaa ringed seal (*Pusa hispida saimensis*) is a subspecies of ringed seal, with only about 400 individuals remaining. The species became isolated in Lake Saimaa 8,000 years ago due to land uplift.

The next day, we continued to a peninsula in Lake Saimaa. Saimaa is Finland's largest and Europe's fourth-largest lake, filled with islands, peninsulas, and isthmuses. There, we visited SaimaaLife⁵ and Mari, who "helps you deepen your connection with nature—both outside and within yourself—so that you can gain wisdom and strength to better use them in your everyday life, and for your health and happiness." Mari took us on a forest bathing experience in freezing wind and occasional sleet. Despite the weather, it was amazing to lie back and gaze up at the tall pine canopies swaying in the wind—truly a perspective-shifting experience. Lunch was served at Vanha Salmela⁶, which, among other things, grows apples and raspberries. The meal included slow-cooked lamb korma with pearl barley, apple juice, seed crispbread and rye bread, and finally apple cake with raspberries—all locally produced.

Our excellent bus driver guided us through the small, winding roads, past the well-managed forests of pine, spruce, and birch, and on and off ferries, to a guided tour at the Riihisaari Museum⁷ in Savonlinna in southern Savo. There we learned more about Lake Saimaa, the town of Savonlinna, and the castle of Olavinlinna.

Finally, we travelled to the Oravi Outdoor Activity Centre at SaimaaHoliday Oravi⁸. Oravi is located on the edge of Linnansaari National Park. The activity centre offers a range of guided tours in the national park. You can also rent boats, canoes, bicycles, or hiking gear for independent adventures. They offer sauna experiences with a dip in Lake Saimaa, which we tried. Ice still covered the bays, so you had to be well-heated before jumping in! We had dinner and stayed overnight in Oravi. For dinner, we were served pike patties made from locally caught pike from Saimaa. Breakfast included warm Karelian pasties and cured zander, also locally sourced. Oravi Outdoor Activity Centre contributes to the local community by running a grocery store. Without the visiting tourists, it would not be possible to maintain a

³<https://www.uef.fi/en>

⁴<https://kareliacottages.com/en>

⁵<https://www.saimaalive.com/>

⁶<https://tapahtumat.savonlinna.fi/en-FI/page/67a4756ab28d3639d6bd0660/saimaa-harvest-festival-vanha-salmela-saimaa-life-kerim-ki>

⁷<https://www.savonlinna.fi/riihisaari/en/>

⁸<https://www.oravivillage.com/en/>

store in this depopulated rural area. Local youth work in the store during the summer, often their first step into the job market. Of course, there are other seasonal jobs, but for residents to make a living, full-time employment is necessary. After all these experiences, it was time to head home. For us from Sweden, that meant another 500 km by bus and the ferry across the Kvarken Strait.

(Text: Ann Dolling Photos: Lisa Jonsson, Maria Raitanen, Pia Smeds)



Meet a few of the several reference companies taking part in the project!

Company presentation - Kullar och Klang



Kullar & Klang in Sweden is a place for recovery and inspiration and an arena for sustainable change. This is the place where they meet to enjoy and celebrate the power of culture, the richness of nature and the changes of the seasons, and they mobilise for a future where they can continue to do so. Beautifully located among the rolling natural pastures of Vännforsbäck with the Vindelälven/Juhttátahkka as a sparkling backdrop, the entrepreneurs, Tommy and Lisa, have preserved an old farmhouse and made it the base for Kullar & Klang's diverse activities. Over the years, many have come to discover Kullar & Klang's beautiful surroundings and atmosphere, and some have wanted to make the place part of their own history.

The company run a summer café with organic, locally grown and homemade food and coffee. The shop sells ceramics, sheepskin, bokashi and other things that are good for the planet, body and soul. Every summer they organise a festival with an extensive program with current speakers, workshops, musical acts and swinging on the dance floor. The gallery shows a new art exhibition every season. In the beautiful barn, they have a flea market where the proceeds go to people in need.

As Tommy and Lisa state, we are moving towards a new era. A time with many challenges but also many opportunities. Among other things, the UNESCO-designated Vindelälven biosphere reserve rests on a platform that is unique.

Check more at: <https://kullaroklang.se/>

(photos: Kullar och Klang)



Company presentation - Granö Beckasin



Granö Beckasin is a destination and a hotel in the deep forest of northern Sweden. According to the staff at the company, their goal and purpose are clear; they want their rural area to thrive and grow. More so, they measure growth in the number of residents and entrepreneurs in their little village.

Granö Beckasin is co-owned by a group of friends from the local area. They started the business in 2007 because people were moving away for work and because the village school was threatened with closure. Their drive was to save the school, create jobs and with that, reignite hope, enthusiasm and pride. Fortunately, the village school is still running. From the beginning, the company was created to be an eco destination offering nature tourism for all senses.

Granö Beckasin wish was also to give opportunities to the local people in the area by creating jobs, helping small businesses get going, and supporting strong networks. The company has always had sustainability as the main focus. Small business entrepreneurship is thriving in the area. Granö Beckasin is working closely with, for example, farmers, bakers and other small businesses. Nature is the lifestyle, and the seasons are always the starting point. Granö Beckasin offers a wide range of activities, one of the most popular being moose safaris. The company offers unique accommodation in trees, a tree hotel right in nature.

For more: <https://granobeckasin.com/en/>

(photos: Granö Beckasin)



Company presentation- Karelia Cottages



Karelia Cottages in Eastern Finland

Karelia Cottages is a company in eastern Finland, an hour's drive by car from Joensuu. The place is situated beautifully on an island. The company is surrounded by scenic views and valuable forest areas, situated in the northern Saimaa lake district. The company offers both accommodation in three villas and a variety of different activities. The villas are modern buildings based on the Karelian timber construction tradition.

Many activities are offered all year round, for example, folk music, kantele workshops, to Nordic walking. In autumn, the visitors may pick berries and mushrooms and in wintertime time for example, to go cross-country skiing in the forests. As the entrepreneur Katri states, the place is a haven of tranquillity, and is available for enjoying at any season of the year.

Check more at:

<https://kareliacottages.com/en/huvilat>

(photo: Karelia Cottages)

Company presentation - NAAST



NAAST

In September 2020, amidst the coronavirus pandemic, Linda Boberg-Santala decided to start her own business after years of contemplation. Thanks to this long process, NAAST's core concept was easy to define: A company offering local history, archipelago nature, and outdoor experiences.

The location was also set: a small boat shed in the heart of Öja Fishing Village in Ostrobothnia, Finland, by the sea, near Café Bryggan and the Öja Village Center. As the managing director of the village, I know both the area and the community well.

NAAST is short for 'naastans,' a local dialect word meaning 'somewhere' or 'to somewhere.' With NAAST, you never know exactly where you will end up or what story you'll uncover behind the next island or bend. A lot has changed in the world over the past four years. But NAAST's essence has remained the same. I still want to explore my roots, enjoy nature, and share this experience with the visitors.

NAAST offers, among other things, guided hikes, Story Walks in beautiful terrains. One interesting example is in the "Footsteps of Smugglers". Linda will explore the background of smuggled weapons in the Öja archipelago about 100 years ago.

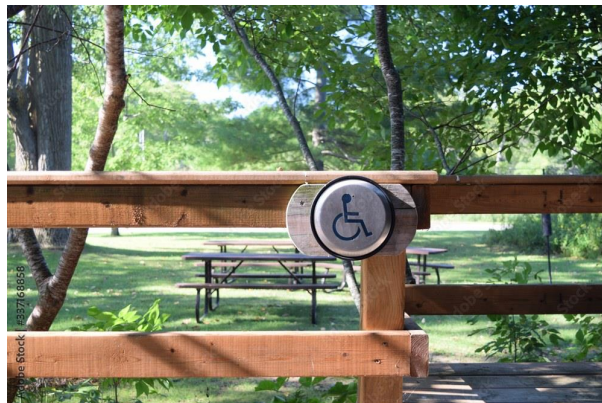
Check more at:

https://naast.johku.com/en_US

(photos: Tarja Jakobsen Photography)



Events, ideas, research, and good practices



Webinars on Regenerative Tourism in Practice

The REGGAE series of webinars on regenerative and accessible tourism continued this winter, 29th of January, on accessible nature tourism, with Kristin Godtman Kling, a postdoctoral researcher on human geography at Mid Sweden University.

As Kristin explained, “natural areas and outdoor experiences are not equally accessible to everyone, as many people with disabilities face structural and social barriers that hinder full participation in nature-based activities. Small measures, such as detailed information about the facilities and activities on the website or the installation of a handrail, can often be sufficient to widen the tourism offering to a more diverse customer segment. Today, about 20% of the global population has some form of disability, and with an ageing population, this number is expected to rise. Therefore, nature environments and outdoor activities need to become more inclusive so that a greater share of the population can benefit from the remedial abilities that spending time in nature possesses.”

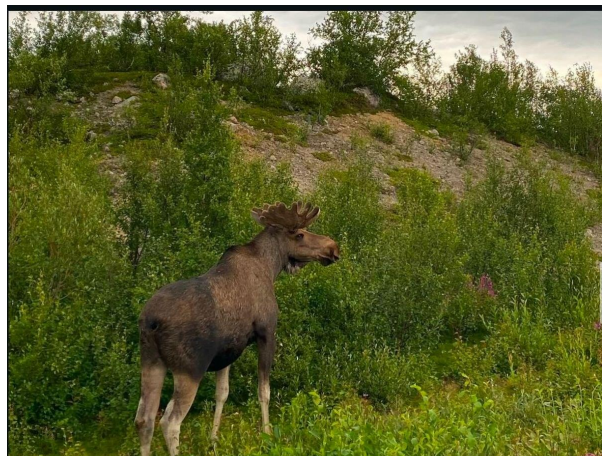
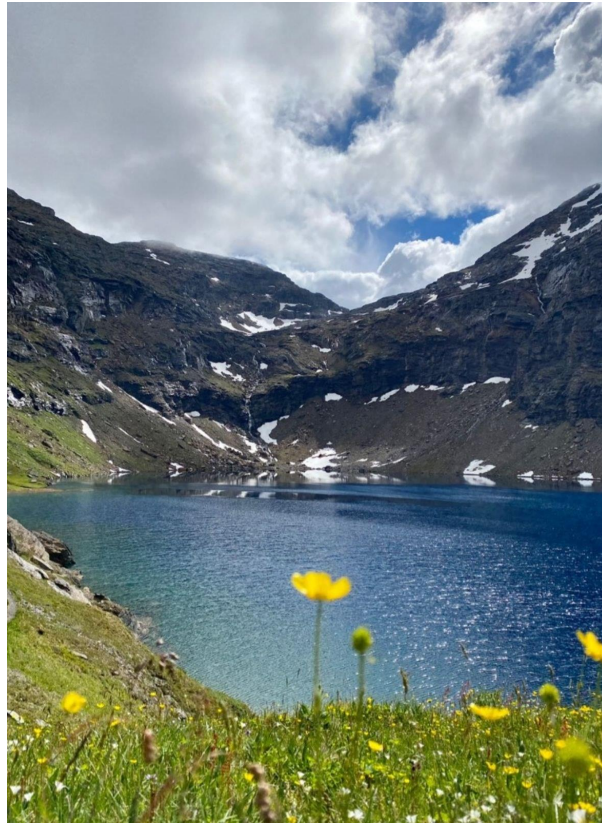
A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a black jacket and a backpack, is shown in profile, looking out over a vast mountain landscape. The foreground is a rocky, scree-covered slope. In the background, there are rolling hills and mountains under a clear blue sky with a few wispy clouds. The woman is holding a small, colorful object in her hand.

An interesting Master's thesis has been published by Mid Sweden University (project partner) as the topic touches regenerative tourism.

For some Sámi people, tourism can be a tool for the healing process that empowers Sámi ways of life. Entrepreneurs enhance social resilience by supporting the local economy and Sámi artists, and providing tourism activities for both locals and visitors. Collaboration and partnerships are also important among entrepreneurs, showing a shift toward collective thinking, an essential ingredient when moving toward regenerative tourism.

⁹https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fyoutu.be%2Ft4v_lzfr7V8&data=05|02|Lena.Enlund%40centria.fi|bbc698065fe6491f154c08ddb2e96c7f|accae6158d174ca5bfc5c8d799c2dc2e|0|0|638863437828034614|Unknown|TWFPbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYioiIiwLjAuMDAwMCIslIAIoijXaWx4ZSzl83D&reserved=0

Kiruna as an example of sustainability evolving toward regeneration. Milena believes regenerative tourism can lead to a better future. It goes beyond “do not harm” by encouraging travellers and businesses to actively improve destinations, whether through supporting local food, restoring nature, or uplifting Indigenous voices. It challenges tourism to become a force for healing, not dwindling.



1 - (Text and photos by Milena)

Co-creating Conservation: Developing Regenerative Nature Tourism to Support the Saimaa Ringed Seal



One of the REGGAE reference companies, Karelia Cottages, was allowed to create and try out a tourism product that is based on the conservation of Saimaa Ringed Seal (building snowbanks for nests), combined with other nature experiences. The product development was done with the permission and according to strict instructions of Metsähallitus

(Forststyrelsen) and in co-operation with the University of Eastern Finland. With this product, the company offers its guests the opportunity to participate in the conservation of the Saimaa ringed seal in practice.

A small-scale product testing for this new regenerative nature tourism product took place in February 2025. A small number of people took part in the product testing together with a university researcher. The product testing day consisted of building the snowbanks, enjoying the winter outdoors and good local food in Lake Saimaa. After the product testing, the participants as well as the entrepreneur were interviewed by the UEF researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the product's strengths and possible weaknesses. This offered valuable insights both for the entrepreneur for the further development of the product, as well as for the REGGAE project for the development of the product development model for the regenerative nature tourism products.

(photos: UEF)



New booking platform for entrepreneurs!

GoHabitat is a new booking platform that has been launched outside the Reggae -project. This platform deploys tourism as a direct funding stream for the regenerative development of local ecosystems and the people caring for them.

Check more at: www.go-habitat.com¹⁰

¹⁰<http://www.go-habitat.com/>

A person is crouching in a field, holding a small green seedling with roots in their right hand and a tablet computer in their left hand. In the foreground, there is a tray filled with many similar young green plants. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees and sunlight.

Here you can read more about the courses and excursions:

11 <https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.slu.se%2Fen%2FregenerativeNatureTourism%2Fcourses&data=05|02|Lena.Enlund%40centria.fi|d63e35efc4844352818708ddb23303b4|acc6158d174ca5bfc5c8d799c2dc2e|0|0|638862654382984408|Unknown|TWfPbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOilwLjAuMDAwMCIslAI0iJXaW4zMilskFOljoitWFpbClldUjoyYQ%3D%3D|0||&sdata=gRNb0P4ztMvEdTw%2Bb04KjywmW70xBImolOoMK4yxrtc%3D&reserved=0>

Save the date: Workshop in October 2025!



Upcoming workshop for the project companies!

Save the date! Next workshop in the project will be on Monday, 27th Thursday, 30th of October 2025 in Umeå, Sweden.

The project - Regenerative Nature Tourism

The project - Regenerative Nature Tourism

Aims to promote accessible and regenerative tourism and to enhance the well-being of entrepreneurs in the project area by building networks and clusters, developing courses, guidebook, and novel thematic tourism experiences. By the increased competence of entrepreneurs and developing thematic tourism experiences co-created together with customers, researchers, local community, and entrepreneurs, tourism firms can attract new customers. Finally, the competitiveness of the tourism firms is enhanced while bringing wider benefits to the travel destination. Cross-border products through cross-branch networks and clusters support the understanding of valuable joint culture and rich history as well as how our prosperous but vulnerable nature is as a resource for all. Thus, the acceptability of sustainable tourism services increases, and tourists take home lessons on how to give back to nature. Regenerative tourism will increase well-being and prosperity for nature, society, culture and a more stable income for entrepreneurs. The project started 09/2023 and ends 08/2026.

Project details and contacts

REGGAE Homepage at:

<https://www.slu.se/en/RegenerativeNatureTourism>

Social Media Channels of the Project

LinkedIn¹² Facebook¹³



Contact details for the Project Working Group can be found on the project homepage.

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The project Regenerative Nature Tourism, is also called Reggae. The project is funded by Interreg Aurora, with co-financing by:

¹²<https://www.linkedin.com/company/reggae/?viewAsMember=true>

¹³<https://www.facebook.com/reggenerativenaturetourism/>

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