

Regenerative activities for tourists and locals

A toolkit for tour guides, tourism actors and stakeholders in the Arctic

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Summary

This research note presents a practical toolkit of regenerative tourism activities for Northern Troms in Arctic Norway, emphasizing cultural ownership, community inclusion, and ecological stewardship. The toolkit outlines five categories: immersive experiences, cultural revitalization, ecological restoration, citizen science, and empowerment and reconciliation. These activities aim to foster connections with nature, preserve heritage, repair ecosystems, and promote social cohesion.



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Introduction

This research note presents a practical toolkit of regenerative activities for tourists and locals in an applied manner. The research output builds on a doctoral thesis involving tour guides and stakeholders over a four-year period in Arctic Norway/Sápmi (Omma, 2025b). Inspired by Indigenous research methodologies and multispecies perspectives (Kimmerer, 2013; Virtanen et al., 2021), this research note challenges the conventional format of a research note by offering concrete and creative ideas for regenerative tourism transformations. As such, theoretical and methodological implications are not discussed. Instead, this work represents a reciprocal act of giving back to the research partners through applied research insights and a form of “care-full” academic activism, as described by Bertella (2023). Rooted in an ethics of care, this approach can serve as a means for tourism researchers to advocate for shifts toward genuine sustainability (Bertella, 2023).

I am a Sámi and Norwegian scholar who views regenerative tourism as an approach that encompasses the restoration and creation of ecosystems to promote the thriving of both human and non-human communities (Bellato & Pollock, 2023). Hence, this research note partakes in discussions of regenerative tourism and the call of Aquino Falter, and Atladóttir (2024) “for academics to increase efforts to open avenues for interactive dialogues at all stages of research design, practice, and interpretation” (p. 179). Research has shown that tour guides can be change actors for regenerative tourism transformations in Arctic Norway/Sápmi (Omma, 2024). However, some of the potential barriers to the regenerative journey are external ownership of businesses, financial limitations, and uniform tourism models that frequently undermine local cultural authenticity and sustainability initiatives (Omma, 2025c).

The research is situated in Northern Troms in Arctic Norway, an area where multiple cultures are gathered from the Indigenous Sámi people, the Kven minority, Norwegians, and other ethnic groups (Svensson, 2016). The main research partners in the study were six local tour guides who offer diverse outdoor activities in varied landscapes, with or without direct engagement with animals



Figure 1. Two hikers taking in the coastal landscape of Northern Troms.



(Omma, 2024). Interviews and conversations with stakeholders were carried out that have expertise in culture, conservation, biology, outdoor recreation, and tourism management. The toolkit was developed by the author through the identification of potential innovative activities derived from the research findings in Northern Troms and a process of evaluation based on experience working in tourism. The writing phase was informed by knowledge from research on regenerative tourism in various contexts (e.g., Hajarrahmah et al., 2024; Major & Clarke, 2022). Feedback from stakeholders, gathered through meetings and public presentations of the research outputs, confirmed the relevance of the key themes and ideas.

More-than-human immersion

Previous studies indicate that tourism businesses can enhance regenerative tourism by fostering well-being through actions characterized by respect and reciprocity (Mathisen et al., 2022). Additionally, immersive outdoor experiences are recommended as avenues towards more regenerative futures, achieved by forming genuine connections with places through ethical and authentic engagement (Fusté-Forné & Hussain, 2023). Hence, this section of the toolkit focuses on activities that enable participants to immerse themselves in the more-than-human world we live in, acknowledging nonhuman agency and striving in making kin across species (Haraway, 2016). Regenerative tourism suggests that solving our ecological crisis requires a deep change in how people think, value, and view the world, in which inner transformations must encompass body and mind (Taveras Dalmau, 2024).

Table 1. Activities aiming for immersion with the more-than-human world

Regenerative activity	Description	Example	Benefits
Outdoor recreation with a focus on mind-body activities.	Transformative experiences that connect humans with nature and promote harmonious living.	Yoga retreats in natural surroundings with practical or financial support for a local project, such as vegetable cultivation.	Promotes mental and physical health, increases environmental awareness, creativity, and concentration, and strengthens connections with nature. Guides participants toward sustainable behavior and deeper self-reflection.
Technological detox.	Experiences without internet access, TV, mobile phones, and similar technology.	Accommodation in a place made from eco-friendly materials and recycled items, off-grid system with solar panels, and a small library.	Supports mental relaxation, improved sleep, increased presence, more time for self-reflection and learning. Reduced operating costs for accommodation supports the circular economy through material reuse.
Nature therapy.	Spending time in the forest for health benefits, known in Japanese as forest bathing, can reduce stress, improve mood, increase energy levels, and strengthen the immune system.	Forest bathing, floating in the sea or a lake, followed by discussions on how to live in an environmentally friendly way.	Encourages a deep connection with nature and promotes psychological and physical well-being.
Sauna activities.	Create activities around the sauna combined with hiking and/or ice bathing, social events. If one is Kven, then Kven practices can be used as a basis.	Sauna experience in the forest with self-made sticks of native trees as massage tool.	Saunas offer many health benefits, including stress reduction, improved circulation, muscle relaxation, and social interaction.



Cultural revitalization

Tour guides who provide meaningful experiences rooted in generational local knowledge not only benefit local communities and ecosystems but also enhance cultural and ecological understanding (Matunga et al., 2020). Local ecological knowledge in Northern Troms is critical for shaping regenerative tourism practices that honor local traditions, Indigenous legacies, and the environment (Omma, 2024). Collaboration with other tourism actors and stakeholders in their communities can also generate mutual benefits in terms of sharing economy and cultural competence. Diversifying tourism offerings can stimulate job opportunities for young people and enhance the quality of life in rural communities (Aquino, Falter, & Fusté-Forné, 2024). Providing additional services, like accommodation and food experiences, can yield numerous benefits including the preservation of heritage buildings, the promotion of ecological agriculture, and support for small-scale harvesting (Ateljevic, 2020).

Table 2. *Holistic activities supporting cultural revitalization*

Regenerative activities	Description	Example	Benefits
Mapping and restoration of place names.	Gain new knowledge about original names of places and terrain designations, and utilize the knowledge in tourist experiences, marketing presentations, and more.	Create maps of natural areas and link stories to the places and the significance of the names in a visitor center for residents and tourists.	Unveils historical and cultural contexts, helps preserve and communicate knowledge about local traditions, highlights the uniqueness of the places, and emphasizes the importance of cultural heritage and natural practices.
Revitalize culture through outdoor activities.	Revive, renew, or make visible traditions that have weakened over time to ensure they are preserved for future generations and hold value today.	Course in Sea Sámi boat traditions; rowing techniques, boat building, terminology, and natural knowledge.	Strengthens cultural belonging, place identity, and pride in one's personal heritage. Promotes cultural understanding and diversity.
Course in foraging and harvesting combined with cooking.	Maintain sea Sámi and other local food traditions and fishing techniques.	Fish roe soup and learning to use the whole fish.	Pass on traditional knowledge and <i>birgejupmi</i> (North-Sámi of how to live a good life with just enough of the resources one needs).
Cultural diversification of place representations and stories.	Highlight the uniqueness of places and distinguishes the destination from others.	Experience fisher-farmer livelihoods in the past on a guided tour in a coastal village.	Preservation of knowledge and culture, unique offerings for tourists and schools, distinguishing itself from other destinations.
Activities related to the production and sale of local products.	Combined with local courses that create meeting places between residents and tourists.	Wool as locus, sourced from local sheep, local tannery, courses in felting, knitting, etc.	Circular economy that secures local values by collaborating and selling products directly to buyers, building competence, and sharing knowledge.
Activities related to <i>doudji</i> (Sámi handicraft) and other arts and crafts.	Tourists and residents can participate in courses at various prices, with revenues going towards building competence and creating a broader range of offerings.	Course in making <i>guksa</i> – a wooden cup, covering both how to find suitable materials in the forest and the techniques for crafting it.	Building competence, maintaining and passing on traditional knowledge/ <i>árbediehtu</i> , learning how to sustainably harvest from nature based on reciprocal relations.



Figure 2. A family-owned outdoor and indoor museum conveys fisher-farmer livelihoods.

Repair and restore

This section of the toolkit explores regenerative ideas where cultural revitalization is intertwined with the well-being of the land (Kimmerer, 2011). The concept of “reciprocal restoration” by Kimmerer (2011) entails “repair of both ecosystem and cultural services while fostering renewed relationships of respect, responsibility, and reciprocity” (p. 258). Tourism businesses can provide transformative experiences that help restore the relationship between humans and nature, thereby promoting a regenerative stewardship of ecosystems (Bellato et al., 2022). Bertella et al. (2020) exemplifies the potential of tourism actors to partake in marine waste collection by collaborating with NGOs and other stakeholders, such as marine scientists, local governments, as well as incorporating educational programs. This part of the toolkit presents ideas on various forms for ecological restoration activities.

Table 3. Outdoor activities with ecological restorative properties

Regenerative activities	Description	Example	Benefits
Restore cultural landscapes.	Engage in physical restoration of landscapes that have been used in the past, but have been overgrown, or have been used in another way.	Participate in manual mowing and raking the grass in traditional farmland fields.	Contributes to the preservation of the biodiversity that has adapted to and become dependent on the cultural landscape, including the traditional ecological knowledge.

Table continued >>



Increase awareness of climate change in Arctic regions on trips to particularly important natural habitats.	Share local stories about the natural habitat, which animals and plants live here, carbon storage, consequences of climate change, and taste berries and plants during the trip.	Experiences in the birch forest or around the bog – conveying traditional knowledge and promoting nature and climate-friendly actions.	Recognize the value of the birch forest and protect it from development and other interventions, gain media attention, and raise awareness about threats to the forest.
Trail building for restoration purposes.	Participate in trail building and adaptation to protect the soil and vegetation from trampling and erosion.	Rebuild and reinforce existing trails with nature sensitive techniques, such as creating drainage systems and using native materials.	Protect the qualities of the ecosystem and learn about responsible behavior and negative effects of outdoor recreation. Preserving the natural landscape for future visitors.
Species-specific restoration.	Restoration projects that protect specific species or remove invasive species.	Freediving and removing sea urchins on the seabed to help the kelp forest grow back.	Opportunities to strengthen participation in nonprofit organizations, or start a new local association, collaborating with sports clubs and schools.
Guided tour with clean-up.	Trash cleanup while guests engage in physical activity, learning about the consequences of littering and hearing positive stories about how activities like beach cleaning help.	Island hopping with a kayak: picking up trash on land and in water, taking water samples, and looking for microplastics.	Reduces harm to animals, prevents pollution and microplastics, improves water quality, and more.
Food experiences and local cultivation.	Small-scale soil cultivation and ecological farming.	Workshop where participants help plant, tend, and harvest crops, followed by a cooking class where they prepare a meal with the produce.	Increase self-sufficiency, learn about cooking from scratch, understand where raw materials come from, and develop a more conscious relationship with food production and consumption behavior.
Restore water courses and improve ecosystem quality.	Non-motorized experiences on and around the river, learning about the species that live there, and initiatives with restorative properties.	Traditional maneuvering of riverboats with poles, which is gentler than using motors, especially at low water levels. When necessary, manage the vegetation along the riverbank.	Learn about the river's cultural and ecological significance, gentle travel without motors, and lower disturbance to wild salmon spawning beds, especially at low water levels.
Combat invasive species in watercourses.	Activities that reduce the damage caused by invasive species such as invasive salmon and sea lice.	Fjord fishing for invasive salmon and catch them in nets at the river mouth, making traditional food from the fish.	Improve living conditions and spawn opportunities for wild salmon and strengthen cultural practices and the local economy. Raise awareness of climate change and salmon farming.
Theme-based bike tours focusing on local nature, geology, history, and culture with an environmental focus.	Various types of bike tours in different terrains, tailored to skill levels and preferences, in accordance with the rules of conduct for outdoor activities.	Mountain biking and workshop where tourists can learn to repair and maintain their bikes, also when they return home.	Creates diverse representations of places, promotes a culture of reuse and maintenance over consumption. Climate-friendly means of transportation.



Empowerment and reconciliation

Regenerative tourism can empower communities and build social capital through collaborative processes and holistic approaches to tourism (Hajarrahmah et al., 2024). Working in tourism can enable self-discovery among Indigenous guides who use their work as a means for learning, teaching, and healing (Jennings, 2023). Indigenous interpretation has also been suggested to aid in the processes of decolonization, reconciliation, and regeneration by allowing Indigenous citizens to control what is communicated, when it is shared, by whom, and who oversees the narrative (Lemelin et al., 2024). Indigenous tourism businesses can act as agents of change through hosting guests according to cultural protocols, connecting on common human traits, and through sharing local identities, cultures, and historical contexts (Curtin & Bird, 2022; Kramvig & Førde, 2020).

Table 4. *Activities for empowerment and reconciliation*

Regenerative activities	Description	Example	Benefits
Social events for local inhabitants and tourists.	Create meeting places for tourists and locals with cafe operations or other activities to support cultural offerings.	Cafe, guided tours, circle talking groups	Strengthening community bonds, prevents loneliness, and enhances the quality of life in local areas.
Activities for truth and reconciliation regarding the colonization and assimilation of the Sámi and Kven people.	Experiences that focus on the consequences of the Norwegianization of the Sámi and Kven people, building bridges, fostering allyship, and how to reconcile with one's own history and society.	Sámi storytelling with a group discussion and self-accountability of the participants.	Decolonizing initiatives, promoting unity, cultural exchange, building respect and trust, creating equitable communities, reducing conflicts, and preventing racism.
'Dugnadsturisme' – tourism activities based on volunteer work or 'busy bee' concepts.	Engagement in local 'busy bee' initiatives, called 'dugnad' in Norwegian with maintenance of common areas with social aspects.	Painting the walls of a kindergarten with locals, lunch with waffles.	Offers tourists a unique opportunity to partake in local culture by participating in social activities with direct positive benefits. Fostering reciprocal relations between locals and tourists.
Cultural exchange sessions	Activities are designed to foster understanding and appreciation between people to create a shared space where participants can openly discuss their story, perspectives, and share cultural practices.	Bonfire storytelling: Every participant shares a story, a song, or a poem rooted in their own cultural background.	Enhance cultural awareness but also build bridges between diverse communities, encouraging tolerance and global citizenship.
Contributions to youth empowerment.	Equipping youth with skills, resources, and opportunities needed to develop their potential, make impactful decisions, and actively participate in society. Can strengthen their feeling of belonging whether if they identify with Sámi, Kven, Norwegian, or other ethnicities.	Tourism businesses can give financial support training of local youth in cultural and nature-based tourism with a basis of individual background and interests.	Enhance skill development and confidence among youth, fostering leadership qualities. Promote social connections and strengthen cultural competence and ecological knowledge. Enhances the appeal of rural communities as places to live and work.
Get to know a local!	Homestay allows travelers to be invited to live as part of the community, share meals, participate in daily routines, and get acquainted.	Stay with a family and participate in weekend activities, e.g. as baking, football games, hiking.	Allow travelers to immerse themselves in the local community and culture, often with personal guidance and recommendations from the hosts. Facilitates new friendships and the opportunity to visit guests where they live.
Rebuilding Indigenous infrastructure or repatriation of land.	Creating more meeting places in nature for travel in accordance with local traditions. Preservation and development of traditional knowledge in line with eco-friendly design.	Repairing or building <i>goathi</i> – Sámi huts, and other structures that were destroyed or forcefully abandoned.	Reconciliation with the land and cultural practices. Preservation and development of traditional knowledge and regenerative design.



Citizen science projects

Projects utilizing citizen science approaches can enhance visitor experiences when integrated as participatory activities at various locations and destinations, although the term ‘science’ can be intimidating for tourism businesses (Aquino, Falter, & Atladóttir, 2024). Citizen science projects can take different forms, such as monitoring seabirds, creating inventories of beach habitats, or mapping oil spills (Cigliano et al., 2015). Active engagement with the surroundings is of utmost importance to address the ecological challenges that are facing the Arctic, such as warming temperatures and invasive species (Omma, 2025a). Potential barriers of regeneration are extensive infrastructure developments and the impacts of climate change, significantly endanger local biodiversity and traditional practices, thereby intensifying the challenges to sustainability (Omma, 2025c).

Table 5. Guided activities with citizen science elements

Regenerative activity	Description	Example	Benefits
Citizen science: outdoor tour or workshop.	Assist tour guides or educators with data collection, such as species observations.	Register animal species in collaboration with a conservation area or nonprofit organization.	Contribute new knowledge to management authorities and research.
Map the impacts of tourists in nature and prevent negative consequences.	Use GPS to track trails in nature, such as new camping sites, trail formations, and littering.	Monitor depreciative behavior by hikers, repair and provide information.	Knowledge sharing with researchers, management, and residents.
Citizen science in the sea and fjord using kayaks/boats.	Conduct experiments, count species through observations, or collect water samples to gain new knowledge about marine life.	Use a Secchi disk to measure the visibility in the water column from the surface, providing information about algae plankton.	A cost-effective and simple way to conduct citizen science with homemade tools. A Secchi disk can be made in advance or as part of tourist experience or as a local sport activity.
Ski trips of various levels and types, focusing on climate change and citizen science.	Skiing experiences where participants learn about shorter and more unstable winters and ski days, contributing data to researchers.	A ski touring trip where participants take samples and examine snow crystals to learn about the relationship between rising temperatures and snow availability.	Provides a deeper meaning to physical tourist experiences, enhances scientific understanding, and potentially informs policy measures for climate adaptation.

Concluding remarks

The suggestions presented in this toolkit must be understood within the context of place and the relationships between humans and nonhumans, including the approval and inclusion of local communities and the consideration of cultural ownership. This toolkit focuses on the region of Northern Troms, with its unique social and ecological conditions. Nevertheless, other parts of the Arctic facing similar opportunities and challenges may also benefit from these ideas. The toolkit offers practical applications for practitioners in outdoor recreation, particularly in tourism and tour guide education (Omma, 2025a). Practitioners are encouraged to adapt and implement the activities outlined in this toolkit while fostering collaboration with local communities.

The activities presented in this research note include immersive experiences that foster connections with the more-than-human world, such as nature therapy and technological detox, which promote well-being and environmental awareness. Holistic activities support cultural revitalization, such as mapping place names and reviving traditional practices, strengthening cultural iden-



tity and preserving local heritage. Outdoor activities with ecological restorative properties, such as trail building and species-specific restoration, demonstrate how tourism can actively contribute to ecosystem repair. Citizen science projects, including monitoring species and mapping environmental impacts, empower participants to engage with pressing ecological challenges while contributing valuable data to researchers. Finally, activities for empowerment and reconciliation, such as cultural exchange sessions and rebuilding Indigenous infrastructure, promote social cohesion, decolonization, and mutual understanding.

The insights presented in this research note should also be incorporated into the strategies and decision-making processes of tourism managers and policymakers. By actively involving local communities, the regenerative potential of these activities creates opportunities for meaningful community development while simultaneously supporting the conservation of both natural ecosystems and cultural heritage (Aquino, Falter, & Fusté-Forné, 2024). However, further research is needed to explore tourists' willingness to pay for regenerative activities and local inhabitants' interest in participating in and co-creating such projects. By addressing these gaps, tourism practitioners and researchers can continue to refine and expand regenerative tourism practices, ensuring that they benefit both human and nonhuman communities in Arctic regions and beyond.

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Ethical statement

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