

How to use interesting stories with traditional elements to create a memorable tourism experience?

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Tools for Trainers



Real world, tourist world and the story world

- Similar to fairy tales, in experiential tourism the tourist trip is **a journey to a moderate fictionality**, to a world that has been constructed to be not entirely believable (Järv 2010: 283). On a tourist trip people are more prone to **fantasy and imagination**, and traditional storytelling and story motives offer wonderful ways to get the best of them. There are many possibilities to include **narrated folklore motives** into the touristic experience, below are just some examples:
- Walking tours in the surroundings that use folkloristic stories about plants, birds, insects, animals, wetlands, lakes, etc. There is a plentitude of folklore about the creation of animals and natural objects, about the life of animals and birds, about sacred places (e.g. stones, wells).
- Longer trips (e.g. bicycle, minibus) that include stories about nature, places and buildings.
- Thematic storytelling evenings (e.g. fairy tales, ghost stories, horror stories).
- Ghost tours in the nearby graveyards and/or villages (including churches, ruins, etc.).
- Biographic stories connected with the rural farm/castle and its surroundings.
- For female groups storytelling events with stories connected with love, marriage, motherhood.
- Family groups: competition of putting together story puzzles (sentence by sentence) or writing their own stories on the example of folkloric stories.
- Folklore quiz: who can guess which story belongs to which object.



Storytelling as part of touristic offer: examples

- The following excerpt is taken from the Estonian handbook „Pärimuskultuuri käsiraamat“ (2014), author Ene Lukka, page 11.
(http://www.vomentaga.ee/sites/default/files/book/digiraamat/parimuskultuuri-kasutamisest-turismiettevotes_952.pdf)
- **Storytelling and the usage of other oral folklore** could be well based on local material (local heritage, folk narratives, legends, fairy tales, etc). Such stories can be told when introducing the rural enterprise, during workshops or during the celebrations of certain calendar days and holidays.
- Example: **Taevaskoja Salamaa** [Secret land] (Southern Estonia), a rural enterprise close to Ahja river that offers accommodation and programs to various groups. Rich local story material was found from the folklore archives, whereby mainly the stories that were connected with the surrounding places were chosen, e.g. stories about the lakes Navi and Lutsu and other local natural sights, about the walking stick and coat of the Swedish king Carl XII, legends about St. George, legends about men turning into werewolves, about Latvian witches, about local men meeting the devil, about memories from Swedish war times.



More on Taevaskoja Salamaa story world

- Telling of such traditional stories gives the area a new unique and attractive „face“. Taevaskoja Salamaa also offers thematic workshops that are based on the folk narrative tradition from the area, e.g. stories about local landlords from the Erastvere manor, about building of the church of Põlva, about the big stone named Jaagu or Sauna stone, about a smart farmer from Räpina, about the princess Eeva, about the life in the local mill Saesaare, about meetings with the devil or with the forest spirit that local people have narrated in various times.



The story world of the Viking village

- The Viking village – a rural thematic enterprize in North Estonia offering accommodation, programs and stories connected with the Viking age.
- Introductory text awakening the fantasy of the visitors: *The Viking village is situated in a powerful place: a road passed here already hundreds of years ago, sacrifices were made to the well spirit already thousands of years ago, on the nearby river vikings and merchants were sailing, silver lasts were transported... Even today ancient spearheads are found, sometimes also treasures. The Viking village offers educating, exciting and participatory activities in the vein of the Viking age. You can try your skills in competitions and adventures, you can listen/see presentations about the pre-Christian Estonia, you can try combatting a stronghold or take a boat trip on the river, catch a big fish, learn ancient songs and dances, try bows and arrows or axes.*



The story world of the Viking village 2

- The story of the sauna of the Viking village – contains elements from folklore but these are presented in a humorous fictional way. Ideally, folklore fiction and actual folklore collected from the area should be separated – it is ok to use both as long as a touristic enterprise doesn't try to sell fiction in the name of authentic local folklore.
- *Close to the sauna there is a rune stone and the gate to the Valhalla. According to the legend, long time ago a big warrior chief lived there. After a heavy battle the chief afforded that a proper sauna would be heated that would do well to his wounds. Yet the chief was such a heavy sauna fan that the sauna needed to be heated two days before he went in. However, this time the sauna became especially well, so that when the chief went in, the sauna started to burn. But it didn't disturb the great sailor viking, he swore a bit and told that may rather the sauna burn than he would get no proper heat. He was sitting, whisking himself and taking the sauna as long as only the heating stones and the oven were left from the sauna. Then the man got angry, told something in the magic language, took his ring and put it to the ground, took the smallest heating stone and clashed with it on the stone, so that sparks were flying and both, the stone and the ring, crashed two feet deep into the earth. After that he swore again and told that he will go and have a look at Valhalla because the chiefs there have better saunas that are built under the earth. He took his shield and sword, stepped a couple of steps and disappeared. The old people say that the gods liked his ring so much that they opened the gates of Valhalla for a second. On the heating stone there appeared some rune signs after a while, the are said to have some magic meaning.*



Conclusions

- The stories and storytelling fill many purposes: they can be used in pedagogy, education, therapy, informing, marketing and just fun.
- Traditional stories can be combined with films, walks, games, ritual activities, re-enactments, dances, etc.
- Various sources of stories can be used: books, folklore archives, personal creativity, group creativity. However, it should be clearly marked if the story comes from personal imagination or has been found in historical chronicles or old folklore texts.
- Global and local events can be combined, for example there is the World Storytelling Day (close to the spring equinox, March 20th, celebrated since the beginning of the 1990ies) that can be also connected with local storytelling events.
- More ideas: Risto Järv. Fairy tales and tourist trips. *Fabula* 51, 3/4 (2010), 281-294.

