

JÄRVSÖ

Case Study

The city of Järvsö

A model for sustainable tourism in Sweden



Country

Sweden



Category

Community-Led Sustainable Tourism



Website

<https://jarvso.se/>



Alignment with Paths to Peace

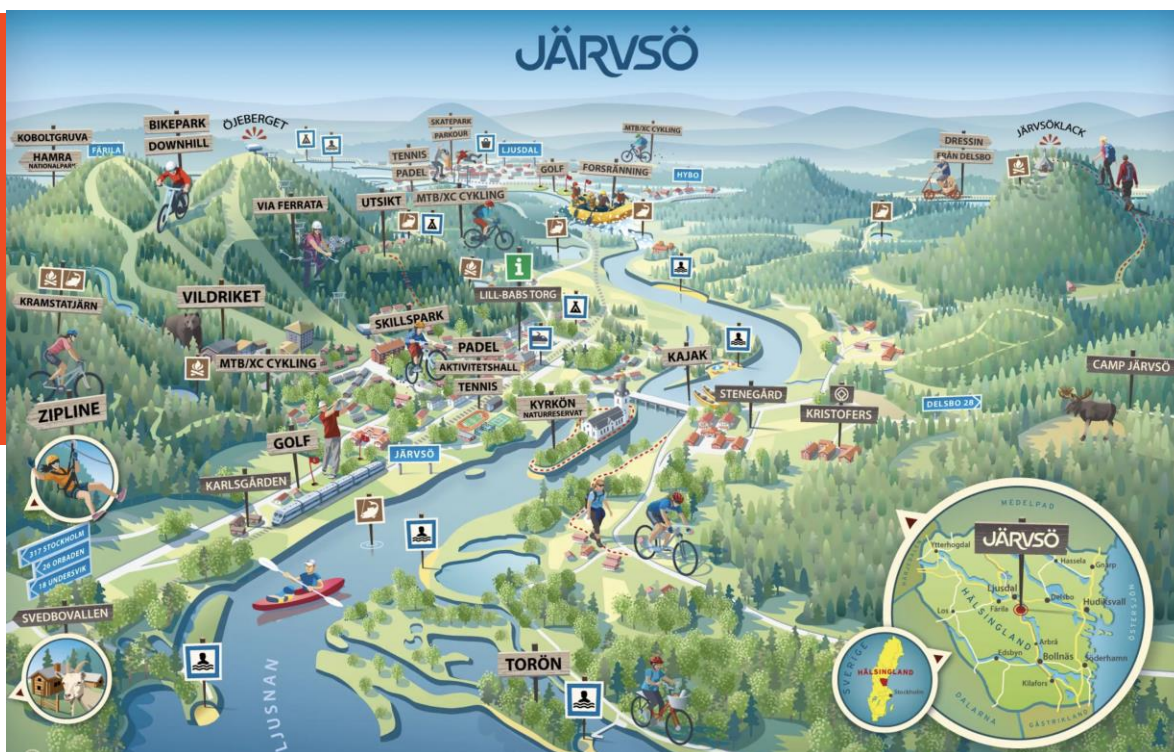
Järvsö aligns closely with the mission of *Paths to Peace* by demonstrating how community-led tourism can foster sustainability, inclusion, and dialogue. Through its focus on local ownership, cultural exchange, and youth engagement, Järvsö promotes understanding between people from different backgrounds while strengthening community identity and resilience. By integrating environmental care, accessibility, and shared experiences, the destination exemplifies how tourism can evolve into a platform for empathy, collaboration, and peacebuilding- reflecting the core values of *Paths to Peace* and contributing to its vision of youth-driven, sustainable development.

Introduction

Järvsö, a small town in the Hälsingland region of Sweden, has emerged as a sustainable tourism destination that balances economic growth, environmental protection, and social well-being. Known for its scenic landscapes, UNESCO World Heritage sites, and outdoor activities such as skiing, biking, and hiking, Järvsö has strategically positioned itself as a leader in sustainable and community-driven tourism development.

This case study explores the dimensions of environmental, economic, and social sustainability in Järvsö, highlighting how the destination contributes to long-term resilience, innovation, and cross-cultural understanding.





Sustainability in Järvsö: A Holistic Approach

Järvsö's approach to sustainability combines environmental care, economic resilience and social inclusion, which creates a balanced model for responsible tourism.

Environmental sustainability is at the heart of the community's identity. Tourism activities such as biking, hiking, and skiing are developed to minimize environmental impact, while local businesses invest in renewable energy and eco-friendly infrastructure. Nature-based education and conservation efforts, including wildlife initiatives, promote respect for biodiversity and deepen visitors' connection with the natural landscape.

Economic sustainability is achieved through community ownership, year-round tourism, and strong regional partnerships. Locally run accommodations and attractions keep profits within the community, strengthening local resilience and ensuring that tourism growth benefits residents. Collaboration with organizations like Visit Sweden and UNESCO helps align local development with broader sustainability goals.

Social sustainability is Järvsö's defining strength. Tourism development is community-led, ensuring that residents shape initiatives and share in their benefits. Cultural heritage, particularly the UNESCO-listed Decorated Farmhouses of Hälsingland, serves as a bridge between locals and visitors, fostering cross-cultural understanding. Festivals and events such as Järvsö Kulturnatt create opportunities for dialogue and peacebuilding through shared experiences.

Inclusivity and accessibility are also prioritized, with adaptive infrastructure ensuring that people of all ages and abilities can participate. Most notably, youth engagement is a cornerstone of Järvsö's model—young people are involved as guides, cultural interpreters, and sustainability ambassadors. Their active participation not only sustains local heritage but also builds future leadership and pride of place.

Together, these efforts make Järvsö a living example of how tourism can promote environmental stewardship, community empowerment, and peace through meaningful human connection.

Järvsö: A Model for Sustainable and Peace-Oriented Tourism

Nestled in the Hälsingland region, Järvsö has long been known for its natural beauty, outdoor recreation and cultural heritage. But what makes it remarkable today is how the entire community has come together to shape tourism as a force for good. One that supports the environment, strengthens the local economy and nurtures social connection.

From renewable energy use to year-round eco-tourism activities, Järvsö shows that environmental sustainability can coexist with economic growth. Local ownership and regional collaborations ensure that the benefits of tourism stay within the community reinforcing shared responsibility and resilience.

At the heart of Järvsö's success, however, lies its social sustainability. Tourism here is not only about attracting visitors but about inviting them into meaningful dialogue with local culture, heritage and everyday life. Cultural events like Järvsö Kulturnatt (Culture Night) bring together local and international artists, musicians and storytellers, creating space for exchange and mutual understanding.

Inclusivity is another building block. Järvsö has worked to make its attractions accessible to families, elderly visitors and people with disabilities. This approach ensures that everyone can experience the landscape and culture- a true embodiment of tourism as a right for all.

Perhaps most inspiring is Järvsö's investment in youth engagement. Through local schools and youth projects, young people are actively involved as guides, storytellers and sustainability ambassadors. They are learning not only professional skills but also empathy, leadership and a sense of global citizenship.

Järvsö's experience demonstrates that when local people, and especially young people, take ownership of tourism, it becomes a platform for connection, inclusion and peacebuilding.



Insights from the Field: Reflections from tourism stakeholders

To deepen our understanding of how tourism can promote peace and social inclusion, we spoke with leading voices in Swedish tourism and regional development. They have seen first-hand how tourism can unite people across generations and backgrounds.

One stakeholder described tourism as *“a peace project for all generations”* a way to meet challenges together, share experiences, and create understanding through encounters in nature and culture.

However, they also reminded us of the importance of perspective. In their words, *“It’s often not young people who are the challenge - it’s the rest of us. The younger generation wants to be part of decisions. They want a seat at the table.”*

These insights resonates deeply with the mission of Paths to Peace: to make youth partners in shaping a more connected and compassionate world.

According to stakeholders, tourism strategies should focus not only on the hospitality industry but also on how travel connects local industries, education and community life. They see a future where partnerships between schools, NGOs and tourism actors become key to promoting inclusion and understanding to ensure that tourism supports peace at every level of society.



“It’s often not young people who are the challenge - it’s the rest of us. The younger generation wants to be part of decisions.”

-Tourism stakeholder



Looking Ahead

- ✓ Through stories like Järvsö's and perspectives from stakeholders, we are seeing how tourism can evolve from an industry into a movement, one that builds empathy, celebrates diversity, and strengthens our shared responsibility for the planet.
- ✓ As Paths to Peace continues to develop its Global Peace Perspectives Roadmap, these insights will shape our understanding of what peacebuilding through tourism looks like in action locally, nationally, and globally.
- ✓ Stay tuned as we continue to explore new case studies and youth-led examples that show how tourism can truly become a path to peace.

Relevance to Paths to Peace

At its core, Paths to Peace aims to explore how tourism can serve as a driver for dialogue, empathy, and understanding. Järvsö embodies this vision: it uses local tourism experiences from cultural storytelling to outdoor recreation, to bring people together across social, cultural and generational divides. Events like Järvsö Kulturnatt and community-led initiatives show how shared experiences can foster respect, trust, and peaceful coexistence- the essence of peacebuilding through tourism.

One of Paths to Peace guiding principles is that peace starts at the community level when people are heard, included and empowered. Järvsö's model of community-owned and locally driven tourism reflects this approach exactly. Residents play an active role in shaping the destination, ensuring that development is inclusive, participatory and rooted in shared values. This bottom-up model mirrors Paths to Peace youth engagement strategy, where young people are not just participants, but *co-creators* of sustainable and peaceful communities.

Another key component of Paths to Peace is empowering youth to become Peace Building Advocates through tourism-based engagement. Järvsö's strong focus on youth involvement from ski and bike instructors to cultural interpreters and sustainability ambassadors, demonstrates how tourism can foster leadership, empathy and employability among young people.

Paths to Peace promotes tourism as a tool for social cohesion, ensuring everyone, regardless of background or ability, can participate. Järvsö's emphasis on accessibility, inclusion and equality making outdoor and cultural experiences available to all reflects our commitment.