

# THE SLOW ADVENTURE GUIDE

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# WHAT IS SLOW ADVENTURE?

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## A FORM OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND AN EMERGING MOVEMENT

Slow adventure is a form of tourism which eschews the quick-fix adrenaline-pumping hits of convenient adventure experiences, in favour of slow, immersive journeys, living in and travelling through wild places and natural spaces - experiencing nature in its timeframe, its seasons, weathers and changes. Slow adventure is a new tourism concept that serves as an antidote to people's urban lives. The antithesis of high-adrenalin, commercialised adventure sports, slow adventure encourages people to enjoy and experience the outdoors at a slower pace and to engage with remote and wild places. The innovation of slow adventure lies in the marketing of other elements that complement adventure activities – the environment, local food and cultural history for example – to both appeal to a broader consumer base and to capture the zeitgeist evidenced by the demand for more authentic experiences and conscious travel and tourism decisions.

Slow adventure represents a responsible travel choice, where core elements are green forms of transport, a desire to learn about other cultures and environments, the interaction with and understanding of local cultural and natural rhythms, and an appreciation of both place and one's place. Slow adventure brings together people who enjoy sharing their sense



of place with visitors by sharing traditional skills, local knowledge, storytelling and spending time together in nature. Slow adventure experiences typically include wild food, wildlife, comfort in the outdoors, human or nature-powered travel and enhanced engagement with place.

# PHILOSOPHY

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The qualities of 'slow adventure' include all elements of the journey: the joys and hardships of outdoor living, self-propelled travel and associated physical engagement with the natural environment over time. These 'qualities' may be summarised as: time, nature, passage and comfort. They are totally interdependent and deliberately flexible.

## TIME

Time is inevitably an important experiential component, and the awareness of time passing during outdoor journeys is felt during the 'passage' of the journey itself, and via natural change such as light and dark, tides and weather. In slow adventure, time does not merely pass, but is felt, in bodily rhythms of tiredness, sleep, wakefulness, and effort. For example, the perception of time via the dropping of the sun is evident as winds rise, the air becomes cold and shadows lengthen. Moreover, the significance of time is woven into the landscape as history, heritage, tradition, and origin. This

experiencing of a transient reality, a travel time or time-out-of-time is infused with the notion of recapturing lost time, of 'making time' and it is precisely this which captures the nuance of slow.

## NATURE

The effects of nature are acute in slow adventures, due to the extended period of exposure. If we explore these spaces we find shivering belays on frozen ice ledges; basking in the sun on rocks worn smooth by glacial erosion; the unfolding of natural expanses and wide skies, feet sinking into peat bogs; cooking in wild mountain corries; encounters with wildlife; struggling with tents in rain and wind; sleeping in and with the wild. It is this direct engagement with natural forces which insists that participants envelop themselves in their environment; surrender to it, even. Further, natural encounters with plants, animals and geological features can provide a story set in time and in a particular environment.



# PHILOSOPHY

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## PASSAGE

Similarly, the term 'passage' refers not only to the journeying through a physical landscape, but is also a journey of change and transformation, which takes time. Passage encompasses the navigation of self through time and space; the crossing of borders and natural obstacles; moving toward horizons and the retrospective gaze to where the traveller has come from. Between the identifiable events or touristic highlights, which the literature focuses upon, the slow adventurer's day unfolds in quiet periods of self-propelled travel, autonomous human powered travel which may lead to boredom, day dreaming and trance-like lapses of self-awareness. This is the journey to / of elsewhere, and the slow adventure tourist carries only the basic material requisites for survival (food, shelter, navigational aids etc.), usually by their own physical effort.

Slow adventure activities draw upon ideas framed around cultures and histories, such as hunting, fishing and wild foods, love of and respect for nature and wildlife, and the relationship between food and natural environments.

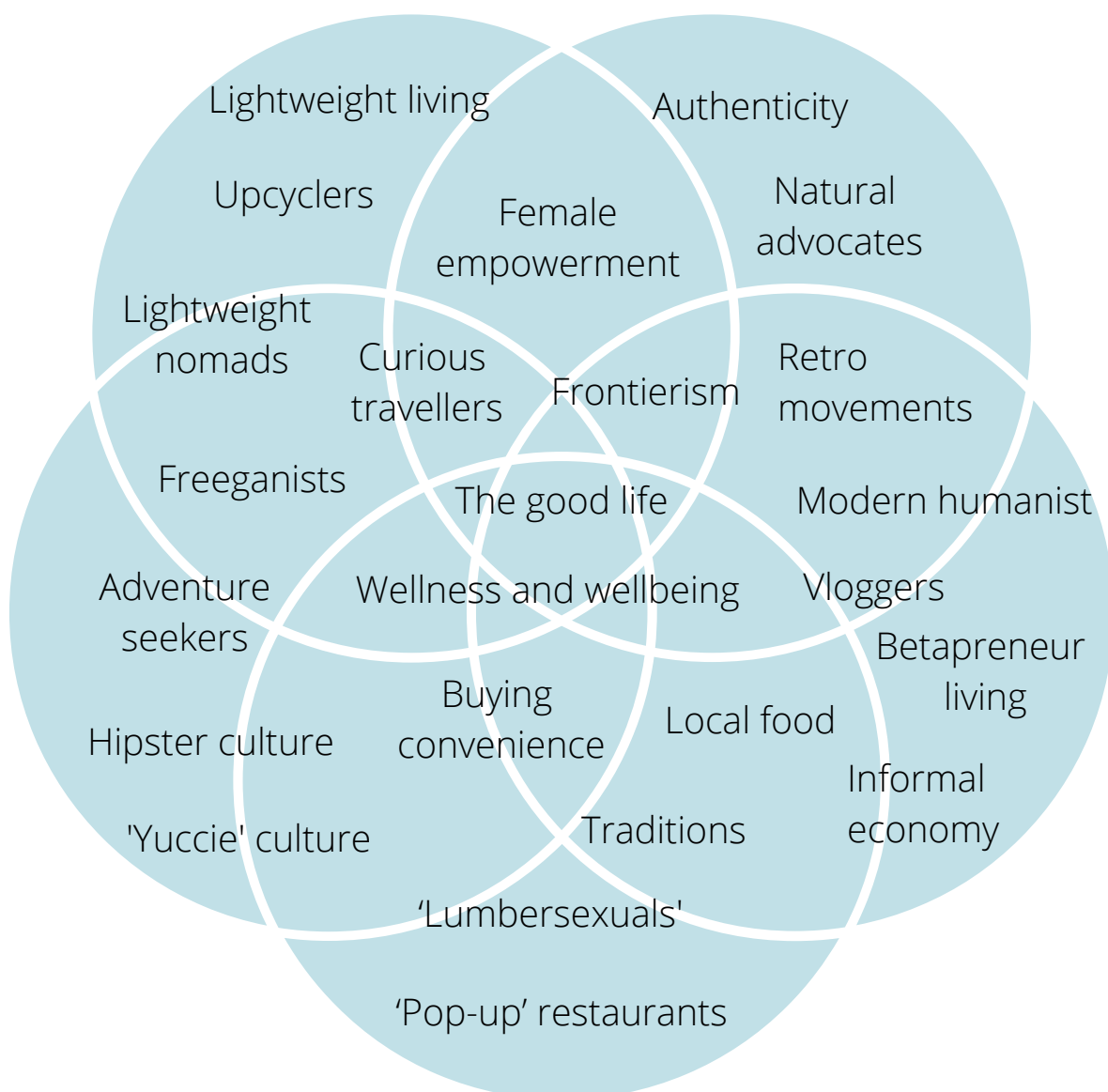
## COMFORT

Comfort' equally has a number of meanings in the context of slow adventure. Firstly, there is the process of becoming comfortable with the challenges presented by the journey (sustained effort for example). Indeed, blisters, sores, sunburn, aches and pains would initially be framed as dis-comfort, and at odds with the usual tourist product. Yet the journey becomes inscribed upon the adventurer's body. In addition, comfort may be derived from a re-connection with place, tradition and history (linked to time). The traditional, rural life, imagined as slow, rich and meaningful, can become a 'refuge' landscape: a place to escape to.

# SLOW ADVENTURE CONSUMER TRENDS

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THE NEW WIDER CONSUMER TRENDS ARE IN URBAN ENVIRONMENTS, WHICH ARE MELTING POTS FOR NEW IDEAS AND TRENDS. MANY OF THESE RECENT, NEW OR EMERGENT URBAN IDEOLOGIES WILL HAVE IMPLICATIONS FOR SLOW ADVENTURE AS THEY REACH FAR BROADER GROUPS OF PASSION COMMUNITIES WHICH ADOPT THESE NEW AND EMERGING CONSUMER OR LIFESTYLE TRENDS. RECENT 'MOVEMENTS' OR INNOVATIONS HAVE INCLUDED THE FOLLOWING:





slow adventure®

# SLOW ADVENTURE PASSION COMMUNITIES

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Slow Adventure consumers come from various passion communities who are 'into' specific trends. These communities of like-minded folk are not limited by demographics or geography, but linked by shared behaviour, activity, fashion and passion. Focusing on the fulfilment of needs through experience not things.

# WHAT DO THEY SEEK?

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## SILENCE PLEASE – QUIET, SPACE AND TIME



A feeling of escapism is a highly important motive for the slow adventurer and when it is achieved in nature, it prompts a strong sense of de-stressing in the individual. A passing motor boat would be an annoying noise in a quiet natural setting.



A belief in the importance of making time to spend in nature, and this time is most often activity driven. Nature is already a significant element in the slow adventurer's life and is often in contrast to their working lives. The opportunity to spend more time in nature is desirable. Seeking a work life balance is important and nature is viewed as a re-energiser.



Linked to this, slow adventure opens up opportunities for 'switching off the clock'. Mid-way through the crossing on a sea kayaking trip a whale broke the surface some distance in front of the group. It brought them into a new way of being here – they were now operating on 'whale time': the group was now guided by the whale.

# WHAT DO THEY SEEK?

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## COMMUNITAS AND BELONGING



Self-time in nature and shared time with friends in nature are important motives. Slow adventurers enjoy being out in nature's elements, and enjoy the associated exercise and fitness demands. A sense of connectedness and heritage is important, particularly in terms of place.



The slow adventurer has regular experiences of nature's power and beauty. They have a willingness to share such experiences with others, and these help strengthen bonds. A sense of fun and freedom in the outdoors is important.



Positive emotions such as joy, peacefulness and thankfulness are expressed in terms of the natural beauty of the landscape, and these emotions are intensified when experienced through adventure and activities in the outdoors. Mental and bodily strength are important components for the slow adventurer and pain in the form of exhaustion or cold, for example, may also be experienced at times.



# WHAT DO THEY SEEK?

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## CREATING THE BESPOKE



Slow adventure clients, and consumer trends in general, point to a desire for bespoke and unique experiences which can change according to opportunity and situation.



Particular concerns for the slow adventurer include weather conditions, escape routes, lack of experience and, in a more reflective way, self-exposure. Alleviating concerns and making the slow adventurer comfortable in nature is a hallmark of a quality experience.

"the guide was a highlight herself. She was a good speaker but she also let us walk a bit alone in our own mind. We could ask her questions and she gave us good knowledge on the bears, where it walks, how shy it is and so on"

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Norwegian slow adventurer

# WHAT DO THEY SEEK?

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## GETTING INVOLVED – LIVING AND LEARNING THE WILDERNESS DREAM



Slow adventurers are internally motivated and open to experiences that are unique, educational and nature focused.



Activity in the outdoors is driven by the slow adventurer's love of nature and their willingness to learn new skills and knowledge.

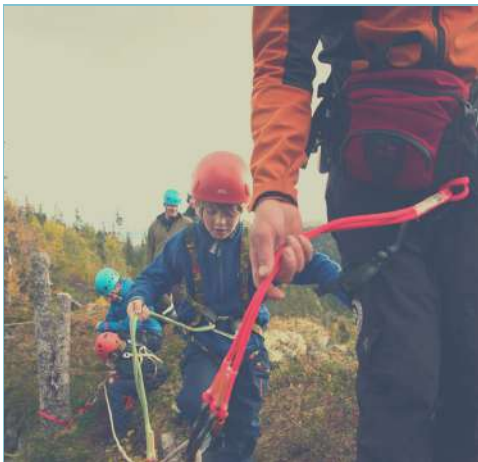


The slow adventurer finds wonder in the vastness of nature, one's proximity to nature and the folklore that enriches the natural environment. They talk about little details in nature, and enjoy eating or trying foraged or wild food.

# WHAT DO THEY SEEK?

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## SHARING THE MAGIC OF WILD PLACES



Importantly, slow adventurer target groups are very likely to urge others such as family and friends to give it a go. Grasping a challenge or just escaping into the beauty of the landscape is actively encouraged.



This is further supported by the enthusiastic embrace of social media platforms. This, if supported by entrepreneurs, is credible, free and effective marketing.

“I really remember my friend’s enthusiasm. He used to paddle but had not paddled for a long time. Seeing his excitement and joy, through his eyes, I really enjoyed that. It reminded me to stop and appreciate things all over again”

Sean, slow adventurer

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# CONSUMER PROFILE

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SLOW ADVENTURE CONSUMERS ARE LIKELY TO SHARE MANY OR ALL OF THE FOLLOWING TRAITS, REFLECTIVE OF CURRENT CONSUMER TRENDS:

Being open-minded and well-educated

A desire to 'get lost' and find themselves

Having above-average income, and wanting 'quality and value', not cheap

A need for elements of privacy, as an antidote to sharing actions and photos through smartphones...

... but with a desire to acquire and, crucially, share social capital

Yearning for a sense of mastery – learning to be competent outdoors folk

A willingness to pursue more ethical travel that directly supports local businesses.

Travelling with 'empathy' – with respect, responsibility, compassion and understanding for others



# SLOW ADVENTURE CRITERIA

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THE FOLLOWING GUIDELINES ARE DESIGNED TO PROVIDE A STRUCTURED APPROACH FOR THE CREATION, DELIVERY AND PROMOTION OF SLOW ADVENTURE EXPERIENCES. BY USING THESE GUIDELINES, BUSINESSES AND ORGANISATIONS CAN BE CONFIDENT THAT THEY MEET THE PRINCIPLES OF THE MOVEMENT AND JOIN THE GROWING NETWORK OF AMBASSADORS WHO USE THE TRADEMARK AS RECOGNITION OF A HIGH QUALITY IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE.

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF CORE CRITERIA FOR SMES SEEKING TO OFFER A SLOW ADVENTURE EXPERIENCE. A SLOW ADVENTURE MUST INCORPORATE:

**HUMAN- OR NATURE-POWERED JOURNEYS**

**AN INSPIRING CONNECTION WITH THE OUTDOORS**

**ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL INTERPRETATION**

**LOCAL, WILD OR SLOW FOOD**

**ELEMENTS OF STORYTELLING**

# SLOW ADVENTURE CRITERIA

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It is also desirable that a slow adventure incorporates some or all of the following elements:



Outdoor engagement - practical outdoor skills e.g. bushcraft, fishing, making camp, foraging

Greater cultural interpretation - local/indigenous traditions, heritage, stories, music, crafts

Natural wellness - physical or emotional e.g. mindfulness

Herbal medicine

Wildlife tracking/watching opportunities

Outdoor living

A slow adventure should be a minimum of one-day in duration, but ideally a multi-day experience, and should consist of the following:

Human- or nature-powered journey

Locally produced food and drink

Accommodation which has an affinity with the surrounding nature

A guided experience when possible

Rural or wild location

Connection with culture, heritage and community

A seamless transition from one element to the next



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DRAWN FROM MATERIAL DEVELOPED FOR THE SLOW ADVENTURE IN NORTHERN TERRITORIES PROJECT AND  
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