



Photo: Lars Sjöqvist/Ute.se



Behind every corner, there's a new story

Around 400 years ago, the Forest Finns left eastern Finland and settled in central Sweden to pursue so-called slash-and-burn agriculture. Today, though the Forest Finns have long since integrated into Swedish society, the cultural heritage they left behind is still very much alive. Finnskogarna, or the Finn Forest, offers a wide range of tourist experiences, all telling the story of the people that once came and made this land their own.

By Linnea Dunne | Photos: Finnskogarna

"It was long said that the Forest Finns had magical powers," says Susanne Andersson, a project manager in the area of Forest Finn descent. "They lived in smoke cottages and had smoke saunas, and their food and handicrafts were also very special." In order to preserve what is left of the tradition, the umbrella organisation Finnskogarna works with just under 50 local businesses to tell the story of the Forest Finns to visitors to the region.

"There is so much to see and do," says Andersson and talks about Finngården Rikkenstorp, the organically run small-holdings with a nearby culture trail and a farmhouse museum that depicts the day-to-day life of its former inhabitants. While

Rikkenstorp offers accommodation both in modern cottages and on the farm itself, Abbas Stugby & Camping in Torsby offers even more choice, with everything from camping space to luxurious houses with modern saunas and fireplaces. Alongside a restaurant with freshly prepared traditional cuisine made of local produce, the site is also home to the only Profile Trek Store in Sweden, with mountain bike activities for beginners and veterans alike.

Those less keen on sports might enjoy a crafts course in yarn dyeing, lacemaking or iron preparation at Orsa Finnmark's Fågelsjö, an old country estate owned by a wealthy family of Forest Finn heritage; while Packstation Högfall offers a variety

of horse riding excursions including three- to six-day packing school trips as well as wolf and bear tracking tours.

With a number of activities already approved by Nature's Best and another handful awaiting approval, Finnskogarna has added its own cornerstone to the already existing three of environment, quality and safety. "Historical knowledge of the Finn Forest is key. We should know it inside out," Andersson makes clear. And no wonder, as the organisation's strapline reveals: behind every corner, there's a new story.



Photo: Lars Sjöqvist/Värmlands Museum

For more information, please visit: finnskogarna.com