



Innovative methods of nature and wilderness education in youth work

May 10th - 16th, 2026 - Gartow (Northern Germany)

23 participants from Slovenia, Portugal, Spain, and Lower Saxony who are involved in youth work. Free Participation!

Intention of the training

Various studies and our own experiences show how valuable nature and wilderness educational experiences for the development and well-being of children and young people is. However, many wonderful methods of nature and wilderness education are largely unknown, which are able to strengthen the relationship with nature, as well as social skills, cooperation in the group, as well as one's own Well-being. This training aims to support the participants of this training (staff of youth hostels, freelancers who work with youth hostels ...) to develop and implement wilderness and nature education programs in cooperation with youth-hostels. The participants will get to know contents and concepts of nature and wilderness education. Together we will practice different methods and discuss how to adapt them to your own needs, conditions.

It is important that participants and the cooperating youth hostels have the resources to subsequently implement the ideas they have gained and developed.



Partner-Organizations

Hi Slovenina - Movijovem (Portugal) - REAJ Spain

In cooperation with DJH Landesverband Hannover e.V.

Our goals

During this training, participants will develop for their respective Youth hostel ideas for an individual nature education program lasting at least three hours.

The aim is to offer youth groups and school classes who stay in the youth hostel this workshop. Over a one-year period following the training, the participants exchange every two months online about their ideas, efforts and experiences to develop and run their own program.

Venue & Accommodation



We live together in the 'Herbsthausen' cultural, art and seminar-centre on the outskirts of the small town of Gartow, in a former historic sawmill, now with studios, exhibition spaces, seminar rooms, a seminar house and guest flats. The forest is right next door and the bathing lake is within easy reach.

Accommodation is in two-bed rooms. Here are a few impressions of the rooms/holiday flats.

<https://herbsthausen.org/raeume/>

Catering

The hot meals are largely vegetarian. Meat is served twice. Participants will provide their own meals once during the visit of the cultural festival.

Arrival and departure

Gartow is located almost exactly between Berlin, Hamburg and Hannover. All three airports are possible for arrival and departure. From there, you can continue by train. We will then pick up participants at the last train-station. Those arriving by train will travel to Hannover.

We will help you arranging your travel.

Costs

Participation in the training, including accommodation and meals, is free of charge. The European Union provides a fixed budget for travel to and from the event, depending on the distance traveled and the type of travel (green travel or flight). If this budget is exceeded, the additional costs must be borne by the cooperation partners, such as the sending organization. The details will be discussed with the respective participants and partner-organizations.





The region



Gartow is located in the so called „Wendland“ region, characterized by forests, heathland, the Elbe River, the former inner-German border, pretty villages, and the people who live there. Many artists have settled in the region. Communities and alternative/ecological projects have emerged in numbers unprecedented in rural Germany. This is the main reason why so many creatives came to the region in the 1980s.

- the beauty of the region
- then empty farms and houses in a region with high unemployment, which was surrounded on three sides by the former GDR
- the approximately 20-year, ultimately successful protest against a planned nuclear waste repository

On Thursday, May 14, we will gain an insight into the region's cultural diversity and visit the "Cultural Countryside Festival."

The Cultural Countryside Festival is a ten-day event organized by numerous artists, musicians, and artisans living in Wendland. They open their workshops and studios, their farms, and their homes. There are concerts, theater performances, and much more. It all began many years ago with the resistance against nuclear power.

Art and culture with several hundred events take place at around 80 locations.





Program:

Sunday, May 10, 2026

Arrival in Gartow. (We are happy to plan your arrival and departure together with you.)

Dinner together & Orientation & Time to rest

Monday, May 11, 2026

Participants get to know each other

Exchange of expectations regarding the training and personal experiences on the training topic

Agreements on the program of the coming days, integration of wishes

Theoretical introduction to nature- and wilderness education and its goals

Lunch



Experiencing nature with all our senses

Practical introduction to nature education with games and exercises that we try out together, which can be done anytime and anywhere with groups of all ages.

Yes! We will play a lot during the days.

Dinner

What should we consider when planning activities in nature?

Creation of a checklist that can serve as a basis for your own, adapted to the respective local conditions and activities.

Tuesday, May 12, 2026



Bicycle tour

Today we'll be cycling about 30km. We'll explore the region, crossing the Elbe River by ferry (photo), and passing through the Iron Curtain that separated Eastern and Western Europe until 1989. At an old watchtower (photo), we'll explore the deadly former border and its history.



Located in the heart of the biosphere reserve is Lenzen Castle, which serves as an environmental education facility and houses an eco-hotel. We'll learn about its nature education work. Afterwards, there'll be time to explore the tranquil town of Lenzen.

Lunch picnic and dinner on the way.

If you cannot or do not wish to cycle, we will find an alternative for you to join the excursion, no problem.

Wednesday, May 13, 2026

Early morning bird excursion

Birds are truly sympathetic creatures. This excursion will explore how we can introduce children and young people to the world of birds in an engaging way, and what their song has to do with a rap battle.

2. Breakfast

Wilderness education

After the introduction to classic methods of nature education on the first two days, the focus is now on an introduction to wilderness education.

After a short theoretical introduction, we try out different methods of wilderness education and learn why “sitting” can be work.

Lunch



Continuation: Getting to know various exercises in wilderness education and how, through very simple methods, children and youth can understand what an ecosystem is and how it functions.

Dinner

Fire Workshop

Fire is an important element of wilderness education. We learn different methods, make fire without matches, and spend the evening around the campfire, where we prepare small snacks.

Thursday, May 14, 2026

Social aspects of nature and wilderness education

The example of the so called „Happiness Camps“, which JANUN Hannover e.V. is organizing for years, clearly demonstrates how social learning can take place in nature. During these multi-day camps, the young participants explore their own desires and needs. A key element is that during the camps, they don't have many things they normally use every day and think they need. This makes it surprising that it's possible and even enjoyable to go five days without a smartphone, for example.

Lunch

Cycling tour Cultural Countryside Festival

We'll be on the move until the evening, visiting various "wonder spots" of the cultural countryside festival. We can split into small groups according to interest.

Dinner – everyone will cater for themselves at the so called wonder spots.



Friday, May 15, 2026

The right dramaturgy of a program in nature

How to start, how to end? How important is a common thread? How to integrate stories and small adventures into the activity?

The planning spiral - developing a program and its goals step by step - a few tips.

Developing own project ideas

Participants work in teams to develop ideas for nature education programs. They divide themselves into thematic groups, such as "forest," so that everyone can develop a program that reflects their own capabilities, ideas, and local circumstances.

Lunch

Presentation and feedback

The teams present their ideas to each other, which are then evaluated together. Weak points are identified, tips are offered, ideas further developed.

What happens after training? How do we stay in touch?

Introduction to various materials that may be helpful.

Dinner

Evaluation of the training & closing evening

Saturday, May 16, 2026

departure

Trainer:

Achim Riemann

Achim founded his first nature conservation group at the age of eight. Since then, he has been involved in nature and environmental protection. He is particularly dedicated to nature and environmental education. He organized his first international youth exchange in 1990, at the age of 19. Since then, he has been responsible for around 160 international youth exchanges and several international trainings. At 18, he was one of the founders of JANUN. He studied social work. From 1993 to 1998, he was a full-time youth education officer in the JANUN regional association. Since 1998 he is the coordinator of local and international projects at JANUN Hannover e.V.



For many years, Achim Riemann has been conducting training courses on the topics of "intercultural learning," "organization, development and management of international youth encounters," and "nature education," including trainings in Belarus, Serbia, Slovenia, and Norway.



Serena Kniesz Nettleau

Serena has been a full-time youth education consultant at JANUN Hannover e.V. for many years and has been working in wilderness education for several years. After completing her training as a wilderness educator, she is now a trainer of wilderness educators herself. For six years, she has been involved in the

innovative Youth Outdoor Education project on the topic of "Happiness," which combines personal development and social learning with outdoor education. Serena has already co-led several international youth exchanges and international training courses, particularly on topics related to outdoor and nature education. Serena studied education, adult education, and ethnology.

Host Organization:

JANUN eV was founded in 1994 by several youth environmental initiatives in Hannover. While nature and environmental protection were the focus of activities in the early years, other social and societal topics were added over the years. JANUN has been particularly committed to intercultural learning for many years. Currently, around 90 young people are active in the following projects: environmental education, nature conservation, natural gardening, climate protection, consumption and globalization, press and public relations, sustainable nutrition, international partnerships, and inclusion. Throughout the year, weekend seminars and around eight international youth exchange programs on a variety of topics, including cultural and intercultural ones, take place, primarily with partner organizations from Belarus, Ukraine, Turkey, Poland, Slovenia, Serbia, Belgium, Norway, Morocco, Spain, and Portugal. Many educational projects are conducted peer-to-peer. The involvement of young people in the planning and implementation of activities is a key goal of the association. JANUN has been organizing wilderness and nature education projects for many years, including in its own nature adventure garden.

www.janun-hannover.de

Contact:

JANUN Hannover e.V.

Achim Riemann

Fröbelstr. 5

30451 Hannover / Germany

Phone: 0049-511-5909190

Email: buero@janun-hannover.de



JANUN Hannover e.V.