

Sustainable and Health Tourism in Rural Areas for Seniors



GUIDELINES FOR LOCAL LEARNING CENTERS



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Sustainable Adventure Tourism in Rural Areas for Prevention, Health and Salutogenesis of Seniors

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Project partners:

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Serenity solutions for education and development 

Berufsverband der Präventologen e.V. 



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Chapter 1

THE MOTIVATION BEHIND THE SUSTAINABLE ADVENTURE TOURISM FOR SENIOR PROJECT

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ITALY

Europe's population is rapidly aging, expanding the cohort of "seniors" (often defined as adults over 55) and "elders" (65 and above). In EU statistics, seniors are frequently considered those 55+ years, with a further distinction between "younger elderly" (55–64) and "older elderly" (65+). Many analyses use 65 as the threshold for "elderly" in line with Eurostat and OECD definitions. Notably, countries like Italy have some of the oldest populations – as of 2024, 24.3% of Italy's residents were 65 or older, among the highest in Europe. Germany and France also have substantial senior populations (each around one-fifth or more over 65). This demographic shift presents both a challenge and an opportunity for the tourism sector.

Despite the growing number of older adults, senior participation in tourism remains relatively low. Eurostat data show that while people aged 65+ made up about a quarter of Europe's adult population, they accounted for only 17% of EU tourists. In fact, more than half of Europeans over 65 did not take any tourism trip in a recent year. This under-participation means many seniors are not reaping the potential benefits of travel, and the travel industry is missing out on a large segment. Reasons for low senior travel rates often include health limitations and financial constraints. For instance, analyses of European seniors find that health and finances are the top barriers preventing those 65+ from traveling. These issues are evident in the three partner countries: Italy, Germany, and France. In each, a significant portion of older citizens either do not engage in tourism or limit their travel to very short, infrequent trips (often to visit family). The goal is to increase senior tourism participation, given the potential rewards for both individuals and communities.

MOTIVATION 1: EDUCATIONAL AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM FOR ACTIVE SENIORS

Tourism becomes far more meaningful when it teaches something valuable rather than offering passive consumption. The first motivation of our project is to use travel as an educational tool that supports active aging, environmental awareness, and healthier lifestyles. Instead of typical cruise-style tourism where seniors mostly observe, we design trips that involve participation and contribution: community gardening, conservation work, guided eco-walks, or workshops on cooking with local organic produce. Travelers aren't just visitors; they become temporary caretakers of the places they explore.

This approach fits the principles of active aging by engaging seniors as capable participants rather than spectators. It also counters mass-market tourism's heavy environmental footprint. Small-group, low-impact itineraries in off-peak seasons help protect destinations while giving travelers richer experiences. Activities like guided hikes with ecosystem interpretation, trail clean-ups, or tree-planting deepen environmental understanding and provide a tangible sense of achievement. Research consistently shows that nature-based volunteering boosts both physical and psychological well-being in older adults.

Educational travel also stimulates cognitive health. Learning plant species, practicing a foreign language, or taking up photography engages the brain in ways that may help delay cognitive decline. Navigating unfamiliar environments, solving minor travel problems, and adapting to new routines provide natural mental workouts that strengthen confidence and independence. For seniors, these challenges are not obstacles but opportunities to maintain mental sharpness.



MOTIVATION 2: TRAVEL AS THERAPY FOR WELL-BEING

Travel is increasingly recognized as a form of therapy. Sweden's recent initiative allowing doctors to prescribe nature-based travel underlines a broader European shift toward using travel to improve mental and emotional health. For older adults dealing with loneliness, stress, or bereavement, such benefits are significant.

Travel naturally combines elements known to support mental well-being: movement, novelty, sensory stimulation, social interaction, and opportunities for reminiscence. Some researchers even argue that structured travel programs should be considered therapeutic options for people with dementia because holidays can enhance mood, cognition, and social engagement. For seniors without dementia, the restorative effects of travel, stress reduction, improved mood, renewed motivation, are well documented. Simply having an upcoming journey can alleviate depressive tendencies by offering purpose and anticipation.

Our project incorporates these therapeutic dimensions intentionally. Itineraries may include mindfulness in natural settings, access to thermal spas, gentle physical activities, and space for meaningful social connection. Participants are encouraged to set personal well-being goals such as walking more, practicing relaxation techniques, or building new friendships. The goal is for seniors to return home not only with new knowledge but also feeling mentally refreshed and more optimistic.

MOTIVATION 3: NATURE-BASED ADVENTURE AND CHALLENGE-BASED LEARNING

Our third motivation is to place nature-based adventure at the center of the experience, scaled to the abilities of travelers aged 55 to 90+. Here, “adventure” means manageable challenges that promote learning and growth. A large body of current research confirms that time spent in green environments reduces anxiety and depression and enhances overall mental health. Even simple nature walks have measurable benefits for older adults.

Challenge is key: whether it’s a guided trail walk, canoeing on calm water, or bird-watching, seniors face light physical or cognitive demands paired with discovery. A recent scoping review shows that such outdoor adventures improve well-being by blending exercise, learning, and social connection. This aligns with the principles of successful aging: staying active, engaged, and open to new experiences.

Trip design therefore focuses on achievable, meaningful challenges. A 60-year-old might tackle a 5 km hike or a gentle zip-line; an 80-year-old might complete an accessible forest path or a nature scavenger hunt. Adaptive equipment and supportive guides ensure inclusion for participants with mobility limitations. Every challenge is linked to learning: medicinal plants and healthy diets during a hike, or bird ecology and life-cycle metaphors while building nest boxes in a conservation area.

Intentional reflection strengthens these experiences: drawing parallels between caring for nature and caring for oneself makes lessons more memorable. Removing invasive weeds mirrors eliminating unhealthy habits; nurturing seedlings reflects investing in personal health or community ties. Such metaphors deepen the connection between environmental stewardship and self-care.



FRANCE

France is experiencing a profound demographic transition similar to other European countries, with a steadily increasing proportion of seniors. As of 1 January 2024, more than one in five inhabitants (21.5%), representing approximately 14.7 million people, were aged 65 or older (French National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies, 2024). This proportion has been rising continuously for more than three decades and has accelerated since the mid-2010s, as the particularly large baby-boom generations have entered their sixties. This demographic evolution has significant implications for adult education, health promotion, and tourism development, particularly in rural areas where population ageing is often more pronounced and services more dispersed.

Statistics highlighting the relevance with the french reality

According to the Alliance France Tourisme report conducted by Ipsos (2025), France counts approximately 19 million people aged over 60, representing 27.7% of the population. Among them, 70% have travelled at least once in the last two years. Seniors take an average of 6.2 trips per year, with 58% being short stays and 53% long stays. France remains their preferred destination, chosen for 55% of short stays and 43% of long stays.

However, the same report highlights that the senior tourism market is currently in flux following the health crisis and in a context of persistent inflation. While a majority of seniors continue to travel, 33% report travelling less frequently, and 20% have stopped travelling altogether. Beyond motivation or desire, this decline is primarily explained by budgetary constraints linked to inflation (44%) and health-related issues (31%).



Despite these constraints, seniors remain an economically significant group for tourism. The average annual budget allocated to holidays is approximately €2,230, compared to €1,776 for 18–34-year-olds and €2,090 for 35–59-year-olds (Alliance France Tourisme, 2025). At the same time, security has become a central concern: according to the Europ Assistance-Ipsos report (2025), 56% of French people intending to travel consider safety an essential criterion when choosing a destination, an increase of 13 points compared to 2024 and 42 points compared to 2023.

Barriers and expectations shaping senior tourism in France

Despite France's rich cultural heritage, diverse rural landscapes, and well-developed tourism infrastructure, senior participation in tourism remains uneven. While many seniors engage in cultural or family-related travel, a significant proportion either travel infrequently or avoid tourism altogether due to health concerns, perceived physical limitations, lack of adapted offers, or fear of insecurity. These barriers are particularly visible among seniors living in rural or semi-rural areas, where access to structured, inclusive, and health-oriented tourism offers remains limited.

According to Alliance France Tourisme (2025), seniors clearly prioritise destinations that are easy to access, safe, and capable of providing adequate support in case of emergency. The main selection criteria include:

- Accessibility (86%)
- Ease of getting around locally (89%)
- Overall trip budget (85%)
- Safety at the destination (84%)
- Health insurance coverage in case of health problems (77%)

Looking ahead, 63% of seniors still plan to travel within the next five years, provided they remain in good health and maintain sufficient financial resources.

Intentions vary significantly by age and health perception: 77% of those aged 60–64 plan to continue travelling, compared to only 37% of those aged 80 and over. Similarly, 70% of seniors who consider themselves to be in good health plan to travel, compared to 45% among those more concerned about their health. Financial uncertainty remains the second major obstacle, affecting 40% of seniors who expect to reduce travel in the future.

For upcoming trips, destinations within metropolitan France are the most frequently considered (77%), followed by foreign destinations (64%) and overseas territories (21%).

Specific characteristics of French seniors

French seniors display a strong attachment to cultural heritage, local identity, and social interaction. France remains their preferred destination, chosen for 55% of short stays and 43% of long stays (Alliance France Tourisme, 2025). Compared with Germany, they tend to be less oriented toward highly structured or formalised health-prevention programmes, while compared with Italy, they often benefit from more institutionalised public services related to health, social care, and territorial development.

French seniors generally value meaningful experiences, conviviality, and collective activities, but may be hesitant toward tourism offers explicitly labelled as “medical” or “therapeutic”. Although physical activity is widely promoted through associations, local learning centres, and public health campaigns, many seniors still perceive sport or adventure activities as inaccessible or “not suitable for their age”. When framed as gentle, progressive, and educational rather than performance-based, sustainable adventure tourism offers an effective way to overcome these perceptions.

Activities such as guided nature walks, accessible forest trails, birdwatching, cycling with electric assistance, or cultural eco-visits can simultaneously support physical well-being, psychological confidence, and social engagement.

France also benefits from a dense network of associations, local learning and training centres, and territorial actors active in adult education, environmental education, and social inclusion. While these structures play a crucial role in rural areas, they often lack operational frameworks to integrate tourism, health literacy, and preventology into coherent educational pathways for seniors.

A project addressing identified needs

In the French context, sustainable adventure tourism responds to three interconnected needs: promoting active ageing, strengthening health literacy through experience, and revitalising rural territories in an environmentally responsible manner. Rather than positioning seniors as passive beneficiaries, the SATRAS approach recognises them as active learners and contributors, capable of engaging meaningfully with nature, culture, and health-related knowledge.

By embedding preventology and salutogenesis into tourism experiences, sustainable adventure tourism becomes a practical learning environment. Gentle challenges in natural settings help seniors rediscover bodily confidence, reduce anxiety linked to ageing, and develop a renewed sense of autonomy. At the same time, educational content related to environmental protection, sustainable lifestyles, and health literacy reinforces cognitive stimulation and personal meaning.

In France, this approach is particularly relevant because it bridges gaps between sectors that traditionally operate separately: tourism, adult education, public health, and rural development. Sustainable adventure tourism thus becomes not only a leisure activity, but a tool for social inclusion, lifelong learning, and territorial cohesion, enabling rural areas to diversify their tourism offer while strengthening local learning ecosystems and supporting seniors' well-being.



GERMANY

Germany is undergoing a significant demographic transformation that is reshaping the role of older adults in society and tourism. With nearly 22 % of the population aged 65 or older, healthy, active, and self-determined ageing is becoming increasingly important.

The study “Health Literacy in Germany 2024” surveyed 2,000 participants using the standardized HLS19-Q12 questionnaire confirmed that health literacy levels in Germany remain low, particularly with regard to prevention. Among people aged 65 and older, 30.6 % show inadequate and 41.8 % problematic health literacy, while only 16.3 % reach an adequate and 11.4 % an excellent level.

At the same time, many older adults in Germany are familiar with preventive concepts such as physical activity, healthy lifestyles, and recommended screenings. The challenge lies less in awareness than in application, particularly in coping with psychosocial challenges, and integrating preventive knowledge into daily routines.

Multimorbidity and physical limitations remain common in later life, as expected. However, findings from the German Ageing Survey (DEAS) show that over the past twelve years a decline in reported illnesses among people in the second half of life can be observed, alongside an increase in health-promoting behaviors such as physical activity. At the same time, strong social inequalities persist. Older adults with lower educational backgrounds are significantly more likely to experience health limitations, engage less frequently in physical activity, and report lower overall wellbeing. Over recent years, these disparities have even widened.

Beyond physical health and functional ability, a growing body of interdisciplinary research emphasises the importance of meaning, purpose and perceived usefulness for healthy ageing. Older adults who experience their actions as meaningful and socially relevant tend to show higher psychological wellbeing, greater motivation for self-care and stronger resilience in the face of age-related challenges.

Within the SATRAS framework, tourism is understood as a structured learning and experience environment. Activities are designed to foster engagement, contribution and responsibility, for example through nature-based learning, community-oriented tasks, environmental stewardship or intergenerational exchange.

By applying the core principles of Preventology–empowerment, health literacy, joy of life, and resource activation–sustainable adventure tourism enables seniors not merely to travel, but to strengthen autonomy, social participation, and resilience. Tourism thus becomes a meaningful pathway to active and healthy ageing within a preventive, sustainable, and human-centered framework.

Ressources:

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Chapter 2

EUROPEAN MAPPING OF LOCAL LEARNING CENTERS OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUSTAINABLE AND HEALTH TOURISM IN RURAL AREAS

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ITALY

Italy has a rich tradition of lifelong learning for seniors, blending formal and non-formal education in urban and rural areas. Key national networks include Università della Terza Età and Università Popolari, which together offer extensive courses for older adults. In addition, active-ageing associations and community organizations provide learning programs that often intersect with sustainable tourism and rural development.

- Universities of the Third Age: comprises volunteer-driven “third age” universities dedicated to those over 50 (mainly retirees) seeking personal enrichment. These local centers, present even in small towns, offer diverse courses – from history and literature to computer skills – without academic prerequisites.
- Università Popolari: are adult education institutes, some public and some private, aimed at general adult learning. These centers often operate in cities and towns across Italy, including rural provinces, offering courses in foreign languages, arts, personal skills, and more. While open to all ages, they attract many seniors and commonly include programs relevant to sustainable tourism – such as Italian regional culture and cuisine, basic environmental education, local history, and even gardening or viticulture workshops. Through such programs, seniors gain knowledge that enriches their travel experiences (e.g. understanding local traditions or ecology) and some may become volunteer guides or cultural interpreters in rural tourism projects.

- **Environmental Education Centers and Rural NGOs:** Italy's wealth of environmental organizations provides informal learning that supports sustainable adventure tourism for all ages, including seniors. Throughout rural Italy, Centri di Educazione Ambientale run by parks or NGOs offer workshops on conservation, green practices, and outdoor skills. For instance, the Nora Lagoon Environmental Education Center in Sardinia offers experiential workshops to raise awareness of coastal ecology. Likewise, national parks like Abruzzo or Cilento host programs where participants (often including older adults) can learn about wildlife protection, traditional farming, and eco-friendly tourism practices. These immersive workshops allow seniors to “learn by doing” while enjoying a vacation. For example, at a sustainable agriturismo in Puglia, senior travelers can take cooking and beekeeping classes, go birdwatching and cycling, and engage with organic farming methods as part of their stay. Such initiatives illustrate how Italy's rural learning centers – from third-age classrooms to open-air farms – equip seniors with knowledge and skills that enhance their participation in sustainable adventure tourism.

When developing sustainable adventure tourism projects aimed at seniors, it is crucial to collaborate with local learning centers and leverage their strengths. Below are operational guidelines to effectively engage and integrate adult learning institutions (formal and informal) into senior-focused tourism initiatives:

- **Partner Early with Local Education Networks:** Bring adult education centers, senior universities, and community associations into the planning process from the start. They help identify seniors' interests, develop educational components, and recruit participants through existing networks, ensuring the tourism offer matches local learning demand.
- **Build on Existing Courses and Programs:** Integrate tourism elements into workshops already running at learning centers. Field trips, hands-on activities, and site visits turn standard courses into authentic tourism experiences while enriching the center's curriculum.
- **Train Seniors as Co-Creators and Guides:** Offer short training modules, from tour guiding basics, first aid refreshers, language practice to seniors willing to take active roles. Partner with senior academies or sports federations to prepare them as storytellers, cultural ambassadors, or assistant guides, increasing ownership and engagement.
- **Ensure Accessibility and Adaptability:** Adjust pace, terrain, and format to senior needs. Break hikes into segments with educational stops, use e-bikes for cycling tours, and coordinate with health educators for warm-ups or wellness tips. Aligning activities with senior health learning makes them safe, inclusive, and enjoyable.



- **Promote Intergenerational Interaction:** Involve youth groups or students to collaborate with seniors, for example in digital storytelling, co-led workshops, or conservation tasks. Intergenerational teams create dynamic, engaging experiences and strengthen community ties.
- **Embed Local Culture and Sustainability in All Content:** Work with educators to integrate environmental protection, cultural respect, and “leave no trace” principles into every activity. Pre-departure sessions on local customs or eco-practices prepare seniors and reinforce sustainable tourism values.
- **Monitor, Evaluate, and Improve Together:** Use adult-learning tools: feedback forms, focus groups, reflective sessions to gather seniors’ input and involve instructors in post-activity reviews. Continuous joint evaluation maintains quality, strengthens partnerships, and supports long-term program development.



FRANCE

France has a dense and diverse ecosystem of local learning centres involved in adult education, social inclusion, environmental awareness, and territorial development. These structures play a key role in rural areas, where they often compensate for the distance from higher education institutions and centralised services. However, their potential to support sustainable and health-oriented tourism for seniors remains largely underexploited.

Landscape of Local Learning Centres in Rural France

Adult education in France is characterised by a plurality of actors rather than a single national network. In rural and semi-rural territories, learning opportunities for adults and seniors are mainly provided by:

- Associations for adult education and lifelong learning, often operating at municipal or inter-municipal level, (e.g: barentin, bois guillaume, Roumare, etc.) offering workshops on culture, languages, digital skills, health prevention, and social participation.
- Local community centres and socio-cultural centres, which organise collective activities for seniors, including physical activity, cultural outings, and awareness-raising actions related to well-being and healthy lifestyles.
- Training centres for adults dealing with the target group of our project.
- Environmental education centres (Centres permanents d'initiatives pour l'environnement - CPIE, nature parks, forest education centres), particularly active in rural areas and protected territories, providing experiential learning on biodiversity, sustainable practices, and ecological citizenship.



- Territorial actors linked to rural development, such as Local Action Groups (LEADER), regional natural parks, and local tourism offices, which increasingly integrate educational dimensions into their activities, although often in an informal or fragmented manner.

These structures are generally well rooted in their territories and enjoy strong trust among senior populations. They are used to working with older adults, particularly in contexts of social isolation, reduced mobility, or limited access to formal education.

Opportunities for Sustainable and Health Tourism for Seniors

France's rural territories offer strong synergies between local learning centres and sustainable tourism. Many educational activities already take place in natural or cultural environments, such as guided walks, heritage discovery, gardening workshops, or environmental volunteering. These activities naturally lend themselves to educational tourism formats, especially when adapted to seniors' needs.

Local learning centres are well positioned to:

- Identify seniors' interests and limitations, thanks to their proximity and long-term relationships with participants.
- Integrate health literacy, preventology, and well-being education into outdoor and cultural activities.
- Facilitate low-impact, proximity-based tourism, aligned with environmental sustainability and accessible mobility.
- Act as intermediaries between seniors, tourism operators, and territorial stakeholders.

In rural areas, where tourism is often seasonal and focused on short stays, these centres can contribute to the development of off-season, small-scale, senior-friendly tourism offers, supporting both local economies and active ageing.



Structural Limits and Identified Gaps

Despite these opportunities, several limitations hinder the effective integration of sustainable and health tourism into adult education practices. Local learning centres in France often operate with limited financial and human resources, and their activities are frequently project-based and short-term. Cooperation between adult education, tourism, and health sectors remains insufficiently structured, with few shared methodologies or operational frameworks.

Moreover, while many centres promote physical activity or environmental awareness, they rarely integrate explicit educational objectives related to health literacy, preventology, or salutogenesis within tourism-related activities. Tourism initiatives for seniors therefore tend to remain recreational rather than transformative learning experiences.

Another challenge lies in the lack of transferable guidelines. Practices are often locally successful but poorly documented, making replication in other rural territories difficult. This fragmentation limits the strategic role that local learning centres could play in shaping sustainable tourism pathways for seniors at regional or national level.

Added Value of SATRAS in the French Context

The SATRAS project directly addresses these gaps by providing structured guidelines that connect adult education, sustainable tourism, and health promotion. In the French context, SATRAS offers local learning centres a concrete framework to transform existing activities into coherent educational tourism pathways for seniors, grounded in experiential learning and adapted to rural realities. SATRAS strengthens local capacities and promotes a model of tourism that is inclusive, educational, sustainable, and health-oriented.



GERMANY

Germany offers one of Europe's most decentralised adult-learning landscapes, with Volkshochschulen, rural education centres, church-based institutions and senior academies spread across the country. This infrastructure provides ideal conditions for SATRAS to embed learning experiences into rural tourism. However, despite this density of institutions, most existing senior programmes in Germany remain structurally traditional: passive, lecture-heavy, and often centred on consumption rather than participation.

Typical offers focus on cultural presentations, guided tours, light exercise or wellness activities—formats in which seniors receive information, but rarely engage in self-directed reflection, resource activation or health-competence development. Precisely here lies the added value of the Preventology perspective.

Learning Centres as Partners for a New Senior Tourism Model

Volkshochschulen, rural adult education networks, senior academies and church-based seminar houses provide reliable organisational structures for integrating interactive learning components into tourism. While they offer many courses, few currently incorporate self-empowerment and salutogenetic learning principles. SATRAS therefore offers these centres a framework to shift from “education delivered to seniors” toward “education co-created by seniors.”

Universities (e.g., ZAWiW Ulm) and environmental education centres can contribute research-based learning and nature experiences, but even these often rely on didactic, instructor-led formats. SATRAS introduces methods that cultivate inner orientation, emotional engagement and active agency, which are rarely applied to senior learning in Germany.





Additional potential partners include nature park centres, biosphere reserve education units and spa towns with seminar facilities—settings that can be redesigned to host experiential, reflective and health-oriented learning journeys rather than conventional leisure trips.

While many European countries offer rich cultural or community-based learning, Germany stands out through its widespread, institutionalised adult-education network. Yet this very structure often reinforces traditional pedagogy. Compared with Italy or France, where social and community networks sometimes foster more informal participation, German centres frequently default to a classroom model.

This makes Germany both an opportunity and a challenge:

- Opportunity, because infrastructure and professionalism are already in place.
- Challenge, because a transition is needed—from transmitting content to enabling competence.

This transition aligns directly with Preventology.





Chapter 3

HOW TO INTEGRATE EDUCATIONAL CONTENT FOR SENIORS AND PREVENTOLOGY TO SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

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ITALY

Short-term interventions often lead to immediate improvements in seniors' lifestyle. In fact, travel itself can inspire healthier behaviors: the physical activities during sightseeing or hiking, for example, often motivate travelers to keep these habits going when they're home. Similarly, trying local fresh foods on a trip can encourage more nutritious eating afterwards. The real difficulty is that once seniors return to their regular routines, old habits tend to reassert themselves. Without continued reinforcement or an environment that supports the new behavior, even well-intentioned changes may fade over time.

Several factors make habit continuity challenging for older adults: lack of a structured support system, absence of social encouragement, and the pull of convenient but unhealthy routines. For instance, a senior who hikes daily during an adventure tour might struggle to stay active at home if they don't have a walking group or safe park nearby. Likewise, practicing mindfulness or healthy eating on a guided retreat is easier than when alone at home amid everyday stresses. This is why medium- to long-term maintenance requires more than a one-time experience, it needs ongoing motivation, intrinsic drive, and practical strategies.

Research in healthy aging suggests that behavior change sticks best when it's tied to personal values, enjoyment, and social support. Simply educating seniors on what's good for them isn't enough; the new habits must be meaningful and rewarding so that they want to continue.

Travel guides can play a pivotal role in turning a short-term adventure into long-term lifestyle change. Here are some operational guidelines for guides to transfer good habits to senior travellers and help maintain them beyond the trip:

- Provide seniors with **accessible knowledge** about why certain habits are beneficial. For example, explain how regular gentle exercise improves mobility and mood, or how reducing waste helps the planet.
- **Encourage** seniors to adopt habits for internal rewards rather than external pressure. Research in behavioral science emphasizes that for long-term sustainable habits, it's crucial to cultivate an intrinsic sense of responsibility and care rather than relying on extrinsic rewards. Frame activities in ways that empower seniors as responsible actors: for instance, treating them not just as tourists but as “temporary locals” who care for the community and environment they visit. Discuss how their choices (in travel and at home) make a difference.
- Make **healthy practices** a seamless part of the tour experience, so that seniors get used to them. For example, begin each morning with a gentle stretch or tai chi session, include a mindful breathing break during hikes, or have set times for hydration and rest. Repeating these actions daily during the trip helps turn them into habits. Emphasize that these routines can be replicated at home. The goal is that seniors associate these practices with feeling good on vacation, and thus are inclined to continue them later. Consistency and repetition during the tour are key. By the end of the trip, the healthy behavior should feel natural and enjoyable.

- Guides should nurture a **supportive group atmosphere** where seniors encourage each other. Facilitate group discussions or debriefs where they share what habits they're enjoying and plan to keep up. Perhaps create a buddy system or a group chat so after returning home they can check in on each other's progress. Seniors who combine nature activities with social meet-ups report a stronger sense of purpose and better health. Travel guides can simulate this by encouraging the group to keep in touch.
- Above all, link **habits** to **joy** and **meaning** rather than obligation. Mental and environmental habits should be fun, social, or deeply fulfilling. A sustainable adventure should feel like an enriching experience, not a boot-camp. Emphasize the immediate pleasures as well as the long-term payoffs. Many older adults have a strong desire to "give back" and remain purposeful; tapping into this can cement habits. For instance, involving them in a small volunteering activity meets that generative impulse. Environmental volunteering, in particular, has multiple benefits for seniors: it keeps them active, socially connected, immersed in nature, and instills a sense of purpose. Seniors often report feeling more hopeful and empowered when contributing to an environmental cause.

Exercise 1: Mindful Nature Walk

Learning outcome: Seniors practice mindfulness in nature, learning to reduce stress and be present.

Target audience: Seniors on an outdoor adventure or wellness tour. Suitable for most fitness levels.

Evaluation methodology: Qualitative: Participants share feelings or observations after the walk Quantitative: Could use a simple before/after self-rating (e.g. stress level 1-10) to gauge if the exercise reduced stress levels on average.

Step	Instructions
1	Trainer explains what a mindful walk is – walking slowly in silence, paying attention to nature with all senses. Emphasize there is no destination or hurry.
2	Before walking, everyone stands (or sits) quietly. Trainer leads a brief breathing exercise.
3	Lead the group along the trail at a gentle pace. Instruct participants to remain quiet and focus on sensations: the feel of the ground, the breeze on skin, sounds of birds, etc. Encourage them to mentally “note” what they observe.
4	Every few minutes, the trainer can softly prompt a focus: “Now pause and look around – notice something beautiful or interesting you hadn’t seen.”. These prompts reinforce staying present.
5	Mid-way or at the end, stop at a pleasant spot. Invite participants to gently stretch and then, if they want think about three things they noticed or are grateful for during the walk.
6	Gather in a circle. Optionally, participants share one observation or how they felt during the walk. Trainer facilitates, highlighting comments about feeling relaxed, aware, or happy. Mention how “forest bathing” and mindful nature time can reduce stress and improve mood, encouraging them to do this in local parks at home.

Exercise 2: Healthy local cooking experience

Learning outcome: knowledge about healthy, sustainable eating

Target audience: Senior travelers

Requirements: kitchen/demonstration area/chef.

Materials: ingredients, cooking utensils, recipe printouts

Evaluation methodology: Qualitative: Feedback on taste and interest. Quantitative: how many participants will incorporate at least one learned tip or recipe at home

Step	Instructions	Duration
1	Set the stage by discussing local cuisine and healthy eating	5 min
2	A local chef or the trainer demonstrates preparing a simple healthy dish: something traditional to the area and nutrient-rich. Encourage an interactive demo. As the cooking proceeds, the trainer or chef talks about nutritional benefits	15min
3	Once the dish is ready, serve small portions to all. Encourage mindful eating.	15 min
4	Prompt conversation. Invite participants to share their own healthy recipes or cooking tips – many seniors have wisdom to contribute (peer learning). Also discuss challenges: Offer solutions like batch cooking and freezing, or community meal programs.	10 min
5	Distribute a simple recipe card for the demonstrated dish and perhaps one or two other easy healthy recipes. Walk through the card, ensuring everyone understands it.	5 min
6	Summarize key points for maintaining a healthy diet long-term	10 min
7	Ask each person to name one small change in their eating they want to make after this experience	5 min

Excercise 3: Brain Fitness

Learning outcome: Seniors engage in mental stimulation through fun cognitive games related to the travel experience

Target audience: Seniors

Materials: Quiz questions, simple puzzles or brain teasers on paper for each team.. A bell or buzzer for quiz responses

Evaluation methodology: Qualitative: Laughter, engagement, and feedback. uantitative: Scores from the quiz or puzzles can show participation, but the goal isn't to grade them harshly

Step	Instructions	Duration
1	Divide participants into small teams. Give funny team names related to the trip. Competition is friendly.	3 min
2	Conduct a quiz with questions drawn from the trip or local culture/history. Include some easier ones and a few challenging ones. Read each question aloud; teams confer and write down answers, or use a buzzer system where the first to buzz gets to answer. Keep score on a board.	15 min
3	Hand out a short puzzle or brain teaser to each team. Options: a mini crossword or word search with trip-related terms, a set of trivia true/false statements to decide. Give a time limit for each. The first team to solve or the one with most correct answers gets bonus points.	15 min
4	As a last quiz question or group discussion, ask: "What new skill or hobby might you try after this trip to keep your brain active?". This gets them thinking forward. They can answer individually or as a team brainstorm.	10 min
5	Add up points from quiz and puzzles. Applaud the winning team and all participants. Optionally give a small prize to winners and perhaps a silly award to each team so everyone is acknowledged.	5 min

Exercise 4: Habits for Life

Learning outcome: Participants set specific goals for continuing at least a few of them at home.

Target audience: All senior participants

Requirements: A calm setting

Materials: Action plan template

Evaluation methodology: Qualitative: Listen to each participant's plan as they share. Quantitative: During the session, measure that each person identifies at least one habit in each category

Step	Instructions	Duration
1	Start by collectively recapping the journey. List them on a flip chart. This visual list shows how much they've done	5 min
2	For each habit on the list, have a participant remind the group of a benefit or positive feeling they got from it.	10 min
3	Hand out the action plan template. Explain: "This is a simple plan you fill out for yourself. Pick a few habits from our list that you want to keep doing. Write down what you'll do, how often, and any support you need. This will be your guide when you get home.". Give an example of a plan and encourage them to edit for their lifestyle.	5 min
4	Give participants quiet time to fill in their plans. Circulate to assist anyone who is stuck or needs ideas. Encourage them to choose at least one mental wellness habit and one sustainability habit for a balanced plan.	20 min
5	Invite each participant to share at least one thing from their plan with the group. This public declaration can strengthen commitment. As they share, ensure the atmosphere is supportive, not judgmental.	5 min
6	Conclude the chapter by reiterating that the true success of the adventure is measured not just in memories made, but in the lasting positive changes it inspired.	5 min

FRANCE

In France, the integration of educational content for seniors into tourism remains uneven and largely under-structured, despite strong national commitments to prevention, healthy ageing (bien vieillir), and social inclusion. While preventology and health education are well established within medical, social, and associative contexts, their systematic integration into tourism experiences—particularly in rural areas—remains limited.

French seniors are increasingly encouraged to adopt healthier lifestyles through public health strategies promoting physical activity, balanced nutrition, mental well-being, and social participation. However, these strategies are most often implemented through institutional or care-oriented settings, rather than through experiential and informal learning environments such as tourism. As a result, tourism activities for seniors still tend to focus on leisure and cultural consumption, with limited educational structuring or long-term impact on health-related behaviours.

Preventology and Adult Learning in the French Context

Preventology in France is closely linked to public health prevention policies, health education programmes, and associative initiatives addressing physical activity, nutrition, stress management, and ageing well. Seniors frequently encounter preventive education through:

- health workshops organised by associations or local authorities,
- activities promoted by social and health services,
- campaigns encouraging mobility, autonomy, and active ageing.

However, these initiatives are often disconnected from seniors' everyday leisure practices, including tourism.

This separation limits the transformative potential of tourism. Without explicit educational framing, seniors may temporarily increase physical activity or adopt healthier habits while travelling, but struggle to maintain these behaviours once they return home. The absence of structured reflection, reinforcement, and follow-up reduces long-term impact.

In the French context, sustainable tourism—especially in rural areas—offers a powerful yet underused environment for experiential learning. Natural parks, forests, coastal paths, heritage villages, and agricultural landscapes provide ideal settings for combining gentle physical activity, environmental awareness, and health education.

Integrating preventology into tourism requires a shift from passive to active participation. Rather than simply offering “accessible” activities, tourism experiences must be intentionally designed to:

- include explicit educational objectives related to health literacy and well-being,
- promote self-awareness of physical limits and resources,
- encourage reflection on habits, lifestyle choices, and environmental responsibility.

Operational Integration in Rural Tourism Settings

In practice, integrating preventology into sustainable tourism in France can take multiple forms:

- guided nature walks combined with simple explanations about mobility, balance, breathing, and stress reduction,
- educational pauses during visits to natural or cultural sites to discuss healthy ageing, environmental protection, and personal well-being,
- collective reflection moments at the end of activities, allowing seniors to verbalise sensations, limits, and positive effects.

encouragement of transferable habits that can be replicated at home (walking routines, mindful observation, social engagement).

One of the main challenges in France is ensuring that the benefits of tourism-based preventive education extend beyond the duration of the trip. Seniors often report feeling more active, relaxed, and socially connected during travel, but face difficulties maintaining these gains in daily life.

Preventology offers tools to address this challenge by reinforcing:

- self-efficacy, helping seniors perceive themselves as capable of influencing their own health,
- meaningfulness, linking activities to personal values and life goals,
- continuity, by encouraging small, realistic behavioural changes rather than unrealistic transformations.

EXERCISE 1

Learning outcome: Participants increase awareness of their physical abilities and stress regulation through gentle movement in a natural environment.

Target audience: Senior learners (55+), including seniors with reduced mobility or low physical confidence.

Requirements: Accessible natural trail (forest path, park, rural walking route)

Materials: Comfortable walking shoes, optional walking sticks

Evaluation methodology: Qualitative: short verbal feedback circle.

Quantitative: self-assessment before/after walk			
Step	Instructions	Duration	Materials
1	Welcome participants and explain the purpose of the walk (health, awareness, not performance).	5 min	None
2	Short breathing exercise (standing or seated).	5 min	None
3	Begin slow guided walk, encouraging attention to posture, breathing, and pace.	20 min	Walking sticks (optional)
4	Pause at rest points to discuss sensations (fatigue, balance, pleasure).	10 min	Bench / natural rest area
5	End with group reflection: "What felt good? What felt easier than expected?"	10 min	Reflection card

EXERCISE 2

Learning outcome: Participants understand the link between nutrition, sustainable food choices, and healthy ageing through experiential learning.

Target audience: Senior learners participating in rural tourism or educational visits.

Requirements: Local market, farm, community kitchen, or tasting area.

Materials: Local food products, tasting plates, recipe handout.

Evaluation methodology: group discussion and personal intention statement and identifying at least one habit they plan to adopt.

Step	Instructions	Duration	Materials
1	Introduce the concept of “food as prevention” in simple terms.	5 min	None
2	Present local products and explain their nutritional value.	15 min	Food samples
3	Tasting session with focus on mindful eating (taste, smell, texture).	15 min	Plates, food
4	Group discussion: link between food, energy, digestion, well-being.	10 min	None
5	Each participant identifies one small dietary habit to try at home.	5 min	Recipe card

EXERCISE 3

Learning outcome: Participants develop self-efficacy by identifying realistic, transferable preventive habits linked to their tourism experience.

Target audience: Senior learners at the end of a tourism or learning activity.

Requirements: Quiet space

Materials: Simple “personal action plan” worksheet, pens.

Evaluation methodology: individual sharing and facilitator observation.

Step	Instructions	Duration	Materials
1	Recap the activities experienced during the trip or workshop.	5 min	Flipchart
2	Explain the idea of small, realistic habits rather than major change.	5 min	None
3	Distribute action plan worksheet and explain how to fill it in.	5 min	Worksheets
4	Individual reflection and writing time.	15 min	Pens
5	Voluntary sharing: “One habit I want to keep”.	10 min	None

GERMANY

Germany provides a strong foundation for learning-oriented senior tourism due to its wide network of adult education centres and health-oriented programmes. Yet, as in Italy and France, many existing offers remain passive in nature. Seniors observe and consume experiences, while deeper personal engagement, empowerment and emotional vitality are rarely addressed. The Preventology approach responds to this shared European gap by fostering self-efficacy, salutogenesis and meaningful, joyful experiences that transform travel into a resource-building process.

Insights from Psychoneuroimmunology (PNI) strengthen this perspective. PNI demonstrates that psychological experience, nervous system activity, hormonal regulation and immune responses are tightly interconnected. Stress, emotional imbalance or social isolation can shift immune activity in ways that reduce resilience, whereas positive emotions, optimism and supportive interactions can promote anti-inflammatory processes and strengthen health. These findings mark a shift from a purely biomedical view toward a bio-psycho-social understanding of health—an understanding highly compatible with Preventology and applicable across all partner countries.

ITravel programmes that help seniors understand and regulate stress, engage socially, or cultivate positive emotion can therefore influence not only mental well-being but physiological processes relevant for healthy ageing. Even small interventions—short mindful pauses, emotionally rich moments of joy, shared reflection, or strengthened sense of control—can support immune balance through mechanisms described by PNI, such as reduced inflammatory signalling and improved stress-system regulation.



Germany's educational infrastructure makes it particularly suitable for embedding these principles into senior tourism. However, similar needs exist in Italy and France: traditional programmes in all three countries rarely activate seniors as self-directed participants. When guides invite seniors to set personal goals, make small decisions, or reflect on their experiences, they strengthen the sense of coherence—comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness—which is central both to the salutogenetic model and to PNI's emphasis on active interpretation of life events.

Another shared challenge across Europe is maintaining behaviour change after travel. Seniors often walk more, eat better and feel more balanced during a trip but struggle to keep these habits at home. Preventology and PNI both emphasise that sustained change emerges when people experience themselves as agents of their health rather than passive recipients. Simple follow-up strategies—reflection tools, habit plans, social support—help stabilise new routines and strengthen perceived autonomy.

Overall, Germany exemplifies how Preventology and PNI can be integrated into sustainable senior tourism: through meaningful engagement, emotional experience, low-threshold stress regulation and empowerment. But the underlying principles are equally relevant in Italy and France. Across all partner countries, a tourism model informed by PNI and Preventology can enhance well-being by aligning psychological experience with physiological health processes—turning travel into a catalyst for long-term vitality and joy.

EXERCISE 1

Learning outcome: Participants recognise themselves as active “captains” of their Health Ship, identify personal resources

Target audience: Senior travellers

Requirements: Quiet room, min. 45 minutes.

Materials: Coloured A4 paper, pens

Evaluation methodology: Short reflection

Step	Instructions	Duration	Materials
1	Briefly introduce Antonovsky’s river metaphor and explain that participants are invited to see themselves not as passive swimmers but as captains of their Health Ship—able to navigate and influence their well-being.	5 min	
2	Participants assemble a simple paper ship step by step, choosing their own paper color. They write their name on the ship. The shared folding process creates a first collective group experience.	10 min	coloured paper
3	Ask them to write inside the ship resources they already possess (e.g., humour, perseverance, supportive people, healthy habits). These are the “treasures” that strengthen their ship.	7 min	pens
4	Explain that throughout the journey or course, the ship will be gradually filled with new resources, insights and “moments of joy” discovered along the way.	3 min	
5	Invite 2–3 volunteers to share one resource. Briefly note that positive emotions and social connection can support resilience, as shown by psycho-neuro-immunology.	10 min	pens
6	Closing ritual (final session): participants pass their ship to the right; each person may add one positive observation. When the ship returns to its owner, it carries the group’s appreciation and support.	7–10 min	

EXERCISE 2

Learning outcome: Participants explore their strengths and needs from an external, caring perspective, enhancing self-awareness, self-compassion and group connection.

Target audience: Senior travellers

Requirements: Quiet room, circle of chairs, 55 minutes

Evaluation methodology: 1–2 sentences of personal reflection

Step	Instructions	Duration	Materials
1	Ask participants to think of a trusted person who knows them well (e.g., friend, partner, sibling). Invite them to stand behind their own chair.	10 min	
2	Explain that the task is to briefly introduce themselves from the viewpoint of this trusted person. This makes it easier to acknowledge strengths—and gently name needs—without embarrassment.	5 min	
3	Begin the round yourself as trainer to reduce anxiety and model the tone: “I am the sister/friend of... We have known each other for... I appreciate that he/she... I wish for him/her that...”	2 min	
4	Each participant steps behind their chair and gives a short “introduction” of themselves in the selected role. They may highlight qualities, shared memories, or supportive wishes. Encourage warmth and authenticity, not performance.	25 min	
5	After the round, invite brief reflections: How did it feel to speak from this perspective? What surprised them? This completes the exercise with a positive emotional anchor.	10 min	

EXERCISE 3

Learning outcome: Participants gain an experience-based understanding of Antonovsky's Sense of Coherence (SOC) and explore how it appears in their own lives.

Target audience: Senior travellers

Requirements: Calm indoor space, 45 minutes

Materials: Small cards or paper slips, pens.

Evaluation methodology: one-sentence takeaway per participant.

Step	Instructions	Duration	Materials
1	Introduce Antonovsky's idea that health depends not only on physical factors but also on how we experience life. Explain briefly: people stay healthier when life feels understandable, and meaningful.	10 min	
2	Give each participant three small cards labelled Comprehensibility, Manageability, and Meaningfulness. Ask them to think of a small real-life example for each	5–7 min	Cards and pens
3	Invite volunteers to share one example. Mention that behaviours like mindfulness, humour, gratitude and enjoyment can strengthen this positive orientation.	10 min	
4	Ask participants to cultivate one of the three SOC elements, especially manageability or meaningfulness more often during the trip. They write a simple intention on the chosen card.	10 min	
5	Close with a brief reflection: how does it feel to see everyday experiences through the lenses of manageability and meaningfulness? Emphasise that meaningfulness is especially powerful for motivation and health. Encourage participants to notice small “moments of coherence” in the coming days.	10 min	

EXERCISE 4

Learning outcome: Participants get aware of sources of joy, recognise how small positive experiences influence their well-being, and learn to consciously cultivate “moments of joy”.

Target audience: Senior travellers

Requirements: Calm room, 45 minutes

Materials: Printed joy-item list (or cards), pens

Evaluation methodology: Short reflection of “current joy level”

Step	Instructions	Duration	Materials
1	Distribute the list of joy moments (e.g., shared meals, music, sunshine, achieving a task, nature impressions, acts of kindness). Ask participants to mark how meaningful each item is for their sense of joy from 0 (no meaning) to 5 (very high meaning).	15 min	list “moments of joy”
2	Invite participants to circle three items that matter most to them. These are their personal “joy anchors.” Encourage them to notice when such moments appear during the trip.	10 min	pens
3	Ask for a few volunteers to share one anchor and why it brings joy. Emphasise that joy is not trivial—small positive emotions accumulate and support resilience, motivation and health.	10 min	
4	Participants write one simple intention: “I will consciously invite more joy by...” followed by one concrete action inspired by their anchors (e.g., smiling at others, enjoying sunlight, taking time for music, appreciating nature).	10 min	
5	Brief closing reflection: ask the group to notice at least one moment of joy in the next 24 hours and, if possible, share it at the next session.	2 min	



Chapter 4

STRATEGIES AND TECHNIQUES FOR EDUCATIONAL TOURISM FOR SENIORS IN RURAL AREAS

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1. Introduction

Rural regions offer exceptionally rich conditions for educational tourism with seniors. Their slower pace, direct encounter with nature, and close-knit community structures create an environment where older adults can learn in a calm, meaningful and embodied way. Many seniors seek experiences that combine exploration with purpose—learning new skills, rediscovering personal interests or deepening cultural understanding. Rural settings support these wishes by offering authenticity, sensory richness and opportunities for direct human connection.

For healthy ageing, these environments are particularly valuable: they easily integrate gentle physical activity, social interaction and emotional experiences that enhance well-being. When aligned with core Preventology principles—such as empowerment, salutogenesis, self-efficacy, resource awareness and joy—educational tourism becomes not only a leisure activity but a catalyst for long-term quality of life.

2. Understanding Senior Learners in Rural Contexts

Senior learners bring diverse motivations and abilities. They appreciate clear structure, predictable pacing and a sense of orientation, but they also enjoy opportunities to participate actively and share their own rich life experiences. Learning becomes most meaningful when it connects new information with personal memories, values or skills.

Rural environments naturally facilitate this. Landscapes act as metaphors that help explain complex ideas; local traditions invite intergenerational storytelling; and community knowledge, often transmitted through practice rather than theory, creates experiential learning that resonates deeply. Seniors absorb information best when it is presented in manageable portions, when sensory cues are involved, and when emotional meaning is acknowledged.



3. Guiding Principles for Programme Design

Designing educational tourism for seniors begins with creating emotional safety. A welcoming atmosphere, respectful communication and intentional group building help seniors feel comfortable taking part, asking questions and sharing insights. Experiential learning is the second pillar. Activities that involve seeing, touching, tasting, smelling or moving increase engagement and strengthen memory retention. Rural areas offer natural sensory richness—wood textures, garden scents, local foods, animal sounds—that make learning concrete.

Meaning-making is a third key principle. Seniors appreciate opportunities to reflect, connect learning to personal experience and share thoughts with others. Structured reflection helps contextualise information and transforms experiences into lasting insights.

Finally, empowerment aligns learning with Preventology principles. Seniors should be encouraged to take small decisions, participate in co-created learning moments, and recognise their own competencies. This supports autonomy, strengthens the sense of coherence and increases inner motivation.

4. Techniques for Delivering Educational Content

Interpretive Learning

Interpretive learning transforms rural places into narrative-rich learning environments. Guides illuminate the cultural, ecological or historical significance of paths, fields, buildings or landscapes. Seniors respond well to clear, accessible explanations and stories that make connections between past and present.

Micro-Learning Sessions

Short, focused learning moments—10 to 15 minutes—prevent cognitive overload and allow seniors to enjoy learning at a pleasant pace. These can take place at different outdoor locations and can include demonstrations, quick observations, or brief exchanges with local residents.

Rural environments offer ideal conditions for sensory learning: smelling herbs, tasting local produce, listening to birds, touching natural materials. Sensory experiences help encode learning more effectively, particularly for older adults.

Seniors become co-creators of learning when they contribute stories, skills or interpretations from their own backgrounds. This reinforces empowerment and enriches the group experience. Co-created learning moments often become highlights of the journey.

Farmers, artisans, forest wardens, herbalists, fishermen and local historians embody authentic rural knowledge. Their participation brings depth, emotion and community connection to learning experiences and supports regional identity and pride.

Jean, 68, took part in a village heritage walk led by a local historian. When invited to comment on similarities between French and North African stonework, Jean shared memories from his youth abroad. The guide incorporated his story into the session, turning the activity into a shared learning moment that strengthened Jean's sense of belonging.

This fictional example shows how spontaneous co-creation can enrich the session and foster participation.

5. Structuring a Multi-Day Programme

A well-designed multi-day programme helps seniors maintain orientation, energy and curiosity. Days can start with a short grounding ritual—such as a mindful observation, intention setting, or a simple nature-based reflection—to bring focus and calm.

The main learning block should combine activity with rest, integrating gentle movement, experiential tasks and opportunities for pauses. Afternoon options allow seniors to choose activities according to their energy levels, reinforcing autonomy. Evening gatherings—shared meals, storytelling or simple creative sessions—support social bonding and emotional well-being.

Accessibility must be addressed consistently: routes should be adaptable, seating readily available, materials easy to read and hear.



6. Strategies for Rural Learning Centres

Rural learning centres can expand their impact by adapting existing offerings—crafts, cooking, gardening, ecology or local history—to educational tourism. Adding field visits, storytelling elements or hands-on components makes learning vivid and relevant.

Learning trails with interpretive stations are another effective format. They allow seniors to explore at their own pace while encountering structured micro-lessons. These trails can include sensory tasks, short historical anecdotes, ecological observations or small creative activities.

Digital tools can complement but should not dominate learning. Simple audio descriptions via QR code, digital photo journals or short video introductions by locals can enrich the experience without causing cognitive strain.

Seasonal programming increases variety: herbs and birds in spring, crafts and festivals in summer, wine and colours in autumn, storytelling and indoor workshops in winter. This cyclical approach encourages repeat visits and demonstrates the richness of rural life.

7. Preventology as an Integrative Framework

Preventology fits naturally into rural educational tourism because it emphasises empowerment, emotional orientation, meaningfulness and resource awareness. These elements can be woven subtly through programme design.

Seniors can be offered micro-decisions that reinforce autonomy—choosing between routes, selecting topics for micro-sessions, or deciding how to document their experiences. Emotional resource activation arises from conscious noticing of small successes, joy moments, gratitude or supportive interactions.

Meaning-making rituals—closing circles, symbolic objects collected during walks, or reflective journaling—help consolidate learning and support the sense of coherence.

Health literacy can be integrated in a situational, non-intrusive way. Guides may briefly explain the benefits of gentle movement, hydration, time in nature or stress reduction strategies embedded in rural settings.



During a forest soundwalk, Ingrid, 74, discovered a moment of deep calm by focusing on the natural soundscape. She later described it as the first time in years she had felt “truly quiet inside.”

This fictive example illustrates how simple techniques in nature can regulate stress and strengthen emotional well-being.

8. Illustrative Programme Examples

A rural garden day might include interpretive plant ecology, a meal using local produce, hands-on gardening exercises and a reflection circle linking personal growth with natural growth. A craft and culture day may combine artisan workshops with local history and storytelling, encouraging seniors to produce small items themselves. Nature and heritage walks offer sensory immersion, short interpretive stops and opportunities for drawing, photography or quiet observation.

9. Recommendations for Providers

Rural tourism providers benefit from strong local networks, enabling collaboration with farms, museums, nature parks, artisans and municipalities. Training guides in senior education and Preventology enhances programme quality. Small group sizes allow personalised support. Continuous evaluation helps refine pacing, accessibility and content. Cooperation with health and cultural institutions expands the impact of educational tourism.

10. Conclusion

Educational tourism in rural regions can enrich seniors' lives profoundly. When designed with sensitivity, structure and creativity, it combines discovery with personal growth, social connection and well-being. Preventology reinforces these benefits by emphasising empowerment, meaning and emotional vitality. Rural environments—with their authenticity, calm and sensory depth—offer ideal conditions for seniors to learn, grow and experience renewed joy.

EXERCISE 1

Learning outcome: Participants strengthen their Sense of Coherence by reflecting on a nature experience

Target audience: Senior travellers

Requirements: Quiet indoor or outdoor setting; 70 minutes.

Materials: Notebook or journal pages, pens, optional clipboards.

Evaluation methodology: Short sharing round or written “one-sentence insight.”

Step	Instructions	Duration	Materials
1 – Arrival	Invite participants to sit comfortably in a quiet place, indoors or in nature. Ask them to recall the most recent walk, excursion or natural encounter. Encourage slow breathing to settle the mind.	2–3 min	
2 – Guided recall	Lead the group through a brief reflection: “What did you notice first? What surprised you? What did your senses pick up—sounds, textures, colours?” Participants jot short notes as they remember details.	15 min	journal pages, pens,
3 – Journaling prompts	Participants write freely using three prompts aligned with the Sense of Coherence: Comprehensibility: What became clearer to me during this nature experience? Manageability: What helped me feel capable, calm or in control during the walk? Meaningfulness: What part of this experience felt personally significant—and why?	30 min	journal pages, pens,
4 – Personal insight	Invite participants to write one closing sentence beginning with: “One insight I want to carry into my daily life is...” This supports transfer and strengthens inner orientation toward coherence.	10 min	paper, pens
5 – Optional sharing	Volunteers share one insight or meaningful observation. The focus is on appreciation, not evaluation. Sharing reinforces group cohesion and increases emotional impact.	15 min	

EXERCISE 2: INTERPRETIVE HERITAGE WALK

Learning outcome: Participants understand rural heritage through stories and personal meaning-making.

Target audience: Senior Tourists

Requirements: Accessible village route or countryside path, seating options. Duration depends on the route and number of stops.

Materials: None (optional: photos or small objects).

Evaluation methodology: Reflections shared verbally.

Step	Instructions	Duration
1	Trainer introduces the walk and explains that rural places tell stories about culture, history and sustainability.	15 min
2	Group walks along an accessible village or countryside route with planned interpretive stops.	30-60 min
3	At each stop, trainer shares a short story or explanation connected to the place.	15 min
4	Participants are invited to share memories, associations or questions related to what they observe.	10 min
5	Short reflection round on insights and feelings from the walk.	20 min

EXERCISE 3: SENSORY MICRO-LEARNING STATIONS

Learning outcome: Participants experience sensory immersion as an effective and enjoyable learning method.

Target audience: Senior tourists

Requirements: Outdoor or semi-outdoor space in a rural setting.

Materials: Natural materials (herbs, stones, wood).

Evaluation methodology: Simple self-rating (1-5) of enjoyment or engagement.

Step	Instructions	Duration	Materials
1	Trainer explains sensory learning and invites participants to learn through smell, touch, sound and taste.	10 min	
2	Participants rotate through several short sensory learning stations.	30 min	natural materials
3	At each station, trainer or local expert provides a brief explanation.	included	
4	Participants select one sensory experience that felt most meaningful.	10 min	
5	Group discussion on how sensory learning supports memory and well-being.	15 min	

EXERCISE 4: CO-CREATION CIRCLE

Learning outcome: Participants recognise their own knowledge as valuable learning resources.

Target audience: Senior Tourists

Requirements: Quiet, comfortable meeting space.

Materials: Flip chart or notebook

Evaluation methodology: Percentage of participants contributing verbally.

Step	Instructions	Duration	Materials
1	Trainer explains co-creation as learning together through shared life experience.	10 min	
2	Participants form small groups and discuss a guiding question related to rural life or traditions.	30 min	Flipchart or notebook
3	Each group selects one story or insight to share with the whole group.	10 min	
4	Trainer connects shared stories to sustainability, community and learning themes.	15 min	Flipchart
5	Closing round where participants acknowledge each other's contributions.	10 min	

EXERCISE 5: REFLECTION AND EMPOWERMENT RITUAL

Learning outcome: Participants consolidate learning and strengthen sense of self-efficacy and meaning.

Target audience: Senior Tourists

Requirements: Calm environment, seating.

Materials: Natural objects, paper and pens

Evaluation methodology: Each participant identifies at least one personal insight or intention.

Step	Instructions	Duration	Materials
1	Trainer introduces reflection as a way to turn experience into lasting learning.	10 min	
2	Participants choose a small natural object that represents their learning experience.	15 min	natural materials
3	Guided reflection on what was learned and how it connects to personal life.	15min	
4	Participants write down or mentally note one personal insight or intention.	10 min	paper and pens
5	Voluntary sharing and closing empowerment message from the trainer.	10 min	



Chapter 5

ADVENTURE TOURISM AND PREVENTOLOGY

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Meaningful Participation as Preventive Practice in Senior Tourism

From a Preventology perspective, health in later life is sustained not only through physical activity or cognitive stimulation, but through experiences that are perceived as meaningful, coherent, and socially embedded. Tourism for seniors unfolds its preventive potential most effectively when activities are not limited to consumption or recreation, but enable active participation and contribution within real-world contexts. In such settings, tourism becomes more than a temporary change of environment; it becomes a space for learning, engagement, and preventive experience.

Contribution-based senior tourism positions older adults as participating actors whose actions are relevant to a shared purpose. This purpose may relate to social interaction at the destination, to caring for local environments, or to learning about sustainable ways of living. The decisive factor is not the scale of the activity, but its perceived relevance and coherence. When seniors experience that their presence and actions matter, motivation, self-efficacy, and emotional stability are strengthened. In this sense, tourism functions as a preventive practice, reinforcing purpose, autonomy, and social participation.

From Activity to Meaningful Contribution

In Preventology-based senior tourism, activities are not assessed according to intensity, novelty, or performance, but according to their preventive relevance. An activity becomes preventive when it allows participants to experience themselves as capable contributors within a manageable and meaningful framework. Contribution does not require specialised skills or high physical effort. Small-scale actions—such as observing, assisting, maintaining, learning, sharing experience, or reflecting together—are sufficient when they are embedded in a context that makes their relevance visible.

Contribution-based formats value presence, attention, and cooperation rather than productivity. This orientation supports inclusion across diverse physical, sensory, and cognitive capacities and avoids performance pressure. Seniors are encouraged to engage according to their individual possibilities, while remaining part of a shared process. Such experiences counteract feelings of passivity or marginalisation and support a positive self-image in later life.

Preventive Mechanisms: Meaning, Coherence, and Self-Efficacy

Meaningful participation activates central preventive mechanisms. Self-efficacy develops when seniors experience that their actions have tangible effects and are acknowledged within a shared context. Even modest contributions can reinforce the perception of competence and usefulness, which is particularly important in later life, when social roles may change or diminish.

The Sense of Coherence provides the structural framework for preventive tourism activities. Activities must be comprehensible, with clear explanations and transparent objectives. They must be manageable, offering adaptive pacing, support, and options for adjustment. Most importantly, they must be meaningful, enabling participants to connect actions with personal values such as care, responsibility, curiosity, or continuity. When these conditions are met, tourism activities are experienced as supportive rather than demanding and contribute to sustained health-related motivation.

Designing Contribution-Based Tourism Activities

Preventive tourism activities require a reliable and respectful design framework. Clear orientation, predictable structures, and transparent communication create emotional safety. Participants must retain autonomy at all times, including the possibility to modify intensity, change roles, or pause participation without negative evaluation.

Within this framework, contribution-based activities integrate bodily experience, cognitive engagement, and emotional awareness. Movement is experienced not as exercise for its own sake, but as purposeful action embedded in a meaningful context. Walking, carrying, observing, or working with the hands become part of a larger narrative of participation. Learning emerges from direct involvement rather than instruction alone, while emotional responses such as satisfaction, calm engagement, or quiet pride reinforce preventive effects.

Engagement at the Tourist Destination

Contribution-based senior tourism opens opportunities for engagement at the destination itself. Seniors may take part in socially oriented or environmentally supportive activities that are embedded in the local context. Such engagement allows participants to experience the destination not only as visitors, but as temporary contributors to its social or ecological fabric. The focus lies on respectful interaction, learning, and mutual recognition, rather than on replacing professional work.

These forms of engagement support preventive outcomes by combining moderate activity, social interaction, and meaningful purpose. They also foster a deeper connection to place and culture, strengthening emotional involvement and memory. Importantly, engagement remains time-limited, voluntary, and supported, ensuring that tourism retains its character as a restorative and preventive experience.

Educational Dimensions: Nutrition, Movement, and Mental Health

In addition to practical contribution, Preventology-based senior tourism integrates educational activities that support healthy living. Learning about healthy nutrition, for example, can be embedded in experiences related to local food cultures, seasonal products, or sustainable consumption. Such learning remains

experiential and practical, focusing on awareness, enjoyment, and applicability rather than abstract dietary rules.

Similarly, tourism activities can promote movement awareness by helping seniors experience how regular, moderate activity supports well-being. Movement is framed as an everyday resource rather than a training programme, reinforcing confidence in bodily capabilities. Educational elements related to mental health may address stress regulation, emotional awareness, or social connectedness, often emerging naturally through shared experiences and guided reflection.

By linking education to lived experience, tourism supports preventive learning that can be sustainably integrated into everyday life beyond the tourist context.

Social Participation and Collective Meaning

Contribution-based tourism is inherently social. Shared participation fosters trust, mutual recognition, and a sense of belonging. Working together toward a common goal—however modest—supports communication, empathy, and cooperative problem-solving. These social processes are central to preventive health, as they counteract isolation and strengthen social resilience.

Group contexts also allow participants to negotiate pace, express needs, and respect differences in capacity. Observing others' contributions can expand one's own sense of possibility, while collective reflection helps integrate experience. These social competencies are directly transferable to everyday health-related situations and relationships.

Emotional Learning and Preventive Stability

Meaningful participation naturally evokes emotions that support preventive learning. Mild uncertainty when engaging in unfamiliar contexts can strengthen emotional regulation when adequately supported. Feelings of satisfaction and appreciation

arise when contribution is recognised and integrated. Calm, gratitude, or a sense of connectedness often emerge through engagement with people, places, or nature.

These emotional states stabilise mood, reduce stress, and contribute to psychological resilience. Emotional learning is therefore not an additional component of preventive tourism, but an inherent outcome of contribution-based engagement.

Preventology Techniques Embedded in Contribution-Based Tourism

Preventive effects are strengthened when specific techniques are integrated implicitly into activities. These include autonomy support, which enables choice of role, pace, and level of involvement; contribution awareness, which makes the relevance and impact of actions visible; value-oriented reflection, which links experience to personal values and life history; and coherence framing, which clarifies purpose, structure, and meaning. These techniques remain experiential and situational, avoiding theoretical overload while supporting integration.

Conclusion

In Preventology-based senior tourism, meaningful participation and contribution constitute the central preventive resource. By shifting the focus from consumption to engagement, tourism activities support health, autonomy, learning, and social participation in later life. Through manageable action, educational experience, guided reflection, and social embedding, tourism becomes a setting for preventive learning and sustained well-being.

This approach aligns senior tourism with the broader goals of Preventology, positioning meaning, contribution, and coherence at the centre of healthy ageing, while preparing the ground for the concrete transfer models described in the following chapter.

EXERCISE 1: GENTLE MICRO-ADVENTURE WALK

Learning outcome: Participants experience self-efficacy through manageable physical challenge.

Target audience: Senior tourists

Requirements: Outdoor route with optional difficulty variations.

Materials: walking poles (optional).

Evaluation methodology: Self-rating of confidence before and after (1-10).

Step	Instructions	Duration
1	Trainer explains adventure for seniors as small, safe challenges that build confidence.	10 min
2	Trainer presents the route, safety aspects and optional difficulty variations.	10 min
3	Group walks at a calm pace while participants notice bodily sensations.	30 min
4	At a manageable challenge point, participants choose how they want to proceed.	10 min
5	Group reflection on feelings of confidence and achievement.	10 min

EXERCISE 2: BOUNDARY AWARENESS PRACTICE

Learning outcome: Participants strengthen autonomy and respect for personal limits.

Target audience: Senior tourists

Requirements: Flexible schedule and supportive facilitation.

Materials: None

Evaluation methodology: Number of participants who actively adjusted pace or choices.

Step	Instructions	Duration	Materials
1	Trainer introduces personal boundary awareness and autonomy in adventure activities.	10 min	
2	During movement, participants are encouraged to adjust pace and pauses individually.	30 min	
3	Trainer reinforces that stopping, modifying or opting out is a valid choice.	included	
4	Short self-check on energy level, comfort and emotions.	15 min	
5	Group discussion on how boundary awareness supports long-term health.	20 min	

EXERCISE 3: EMOTIONAL LEARNING PAUSE IN NATURE

Learning outcome: Participants develop emotional awareness and regulation in adventure contexts.

Target audience: Senior tourists

Requirements: Quiet natural location.

Materials: Paper and pens

Evaluation methodology: Participants identify at least one emotion.

Step	Instructions	Duration	Materials
1	Trainer explains that emotions experienced during adventure are part of learning.	10 min	
2	Group arrives at a scenic or meaningful natural spot.	—	
3	Guided pause focusing on emotions present in the body.	15 min	
4	Participants silently name or write down one emotion.	15 min	
5	Optional sharing round about emotions and triggers.	10 min	

EXERCISE 4: JOY TRACKING ADVENTURE RITUAL

Learning outcome: Participants strengthen positive emotional orientation and resilience.

Target audience: Senior tourists

Requirements: Natural environment.

Materials: Natural objects.

Evaluation methodology: each participant identifies at least one joy moment.

Step	Instructions	Duration	Materials
1	Trainer explains joy tracking as noticing positive moments during the day.	10 min	
2	Participants collect small natural objects representing joyful moments.	20 min	
3	Group gathers in a circle at the end of the activity.	–	
4	Participants share one object and the moment it represents.	20 min	
5	Trainer links joy awareness to resilience and preventive health.	10 min	

EXERCISE 5: MEANING-MAKING CLOSING CIRCLE

Learning outcome: Participants integrate adventure experiences into personal meaning and health orientation.

Target audience: Senior tourists

Requirements: Calm group setting.

Materials: Natural symbolic objects

Evaluation methodology: Content of reflections.

Step	Instructions	Duration	Materials
1	Trainer invites reflection on the adventure as a metaphor for everyday life.	10 min	
2	Guiding question: "What did this adventure show you about yourself?"	20 min	
3	Participants share personal insights voluntarily in a circle.	15 min	
4	Trainer connects reflections to self-efficacy and healthy ageing.	10 min	
5	Closing ritual using a symbolic gesture or gratitude round.	5 min	



Chapter 6

STRATEGIES OF PROMOTION FOR LOCAL LEARNING CENTERS IN EDUCATIONAL AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM FOR SENIORS

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In France, local learning centers play a crucial role in reaching senior populations, particularly in rural and semi-rural areas. However, their capacity to promote educational and sustainable tourism for seniors depends less on classic tourism marketing and more on trust-based, proximity-oriented communication strategies. Seniors in France tend to rely on familiar institutions, local networks, and interpersonal recommendation rather than commercial advertising when deciding to participate in new activities.

Promotion Rooted in Local Trust and Proximity

Local learning centers in France benefit from strong territorial anchoring. Associations, socio-cultural centers, environmental education structures, and community-based organizations are often already known and trusted by seniors. Effective promotion therefore starts with existing relationships, using communication channels that seniors already engage with:

- Information sessions held directly at learning centers or community venues
- Printed flyers and posters displayed in familiar places (municipal halls, libraries, health centers)
- Word-of-mouth promotion through peer groups and facilitators
- Direct communication via newsletters or mailing lists

Rather than promoting tourism as a commercial product, learning centers frame activities as educational experiences linked to well-being, social connection, and discovery, which resonates more strongly with seniors' expectations.



Clear, Reassuring and Inclusive Messaging

In the French context, seniors are particularly sensitive to how activities are presented. Promotional strategies must emphasize:

- Accessibility (pace, physical adaptation, optional participation)
- Safety and support (presence of facilitators, adapted routes, rest points)
- Non-medicalised language, avoiding terms that may sound clinical or stigmatising
- Pleasure and conviviality, highlighting shared experiences rather than performance

Educational and preventive dimensions are best communicated implicitly, through examples and concrete activities, rather than abstract health objectives. This approach reduces apprehension and encourages participation among seniors who might otherwise feel excluded.

Partnership-Based Promotion at Territorial Level (example of Normandy)

Local learning centers in France rarely operate alone. Effective promotion relies on cross-sector partnerships involving:

- Municipalities and inter-municipal bodies

But also, with : Social and health services

- Environmental education centers and natural parks
- Local tourism offices and rural development actors (e.g. LEADER groups)

By coordinating communication efforts, these actors can reach seniors through multiple, complementary channels while maintaining consistent messaging. Joint promotion also reinforces legitimacy and visibility, particularly in rural areas where resources are limited.

Using Experiential Narratives Rather Than Marketing Campaigns
For seniors, experience-based storytelling is more persuasive than promotional slogans. Learning centers can promote sustainable and health tourism by:

- Sharing testimonials from previous participants
- Using photos and short narratives illustrating real activities
- Highlighting concrete benefits such as social connection, enjoyment, or regained confidence

This narrative approach helps seniors project themselves into the experience and reduces uncertainty. It also aligns with adult learning principles, where identification and meaning play a central role in engagement.

Gradual Engagement and Low-Threshold Entry Points

In France, many seniors are willing to try new activities if the perceived commitment is low. Learning centers therefore benefit from offering:

- Short, local pilot activities (half-day or one-day experiences)
- Free or low-cost introductory sessions
- Progressive pathways, where seniors can move from local outings to longer educational tourism experiences

This step-by-step strategy builds confidence and allows learning centers to adapt offers based on feedback and participation levels.

Digital Promotion with Human Mediation

While digital tools are increasingly used, digital promotion for seniors in France remains effective only when combined with human mediation. Websites, social media, or online registration platforms are useful complements, but rarely sufficient on their own.

Learning centers can:

- Use digital tools to support visibility and documentation
- Offer assistance for registration or information access
- Combine online content with face-to-face explanation

Learning centers can:

- Use digital tools to support visibility and documentation
- Offer assistance for registration or information access
- Combine online content with face-to-face explanation
-

This hybrid approach ensures inclusiveness while progressively supporting digital confidence among seniors.

Contribution of SATRAS to Promotional Strategies

SATRAS supports French local learning centers by providing structured, transferable promotional strategies adapted to seniors' realities. The project encourages centers to move beyond isolated communication actions and adopt coherent territorial strategies that combine education, sustainability, health promotion, and tourism.

By framing tourism as a learning opportunity rather than a commercial product, SATRAS strengthens the role of local learning centers as trusted intermediaries between seniors, territories, and sustainable tourism practices.

EXERCISE 1

Learning outcome: Participants understand how to design a promotion strategy for senior-oriented educational tourism based on trust, proximity, and existing local networks rather than commercial marketing.

Target audience: Staff and facilitators of local learning centers, associations, and community organisations working with seniors.

Requirements: Meeting room or community space

Materials: whiteboard, markers, local map

Evaluation methodology: group discussion and presentation

Step	Instructions	Duration	Materials
1	Introduce the concept of trust-based promotion and why it matters for seniors.	5 min	None
2	Ask participants to list existing trusted local actors (associations, municipalities, health centres).	10 min	Flipchart
3	Map current communication channels used by seniors (flyers, meetings, word-of-mouth).	10 min	Local map
4	In small groups, design a simple promotion plan using only local, non-commercial channels.	20 min	Markers
5	Each group presents its strategy and receives feedback.	15 min	None

EXERCISE 2

Learning outcome: Participants learn how to formulate clear, reassuring, and inclusive promotional messages that address seniors' expectations regarding accessibility, safety, and conviviality.

Target audience: Educators, coordinators, and communication officers of local learning centers.

Requirements: Quiet working space

Materials: Printed message templates, pens, example flyers

Evaluation methodology: peer feedback on message clarity and tone; each participant produces at least one senior-friendly

Step	Instructions	Duration	Materials
1	Present common barriers seniors face when reading promotional content.	5 min	None
2	Show examples of “medicalised” vs. friendly language and discuss differences.	10 min	Example texts
3	Participants rewrite a tourism promotion text using inclusive, reassuring language.	20 min	Templates, pens
4	Peer review: exchange texts and give constructive feedback.	10 min	None
5	Group discussion on how language influences participation.	10 min	None

EXERCISE 3

Learning outcome: Participants learn how to use experiential narratives and testimonials to promote educational and sustainable tourism for seniors.

Target audience: Local learning center staff, facilitators, and volunteers involved in outreach and communication.

Requirements: Access to past activities or hypothetical scenarios.

Materials: Paper, pens, smartphone or camera (optional).

Evaluation methodology: storytelling presentation and group feedback.

Step	Instructions	Duration	Materials
1	Explain why storytelling is more effective than classic advertising for seniors.	5 min	None
2	Ask participants to recall or imagine a positive senior learning experience.	10 min	Paper
3	In small groups, create a short narrative (testimonial, story, photo caption).	20 min	Pens, phone (optional)
4	Share narratives with the group and discuss emotional impact.	15 min	None
5	Reflect on how these stories can be used in local promotion channels.	10 min	None



Chapter 7

SAFETY MEASURES FOR SENIORS IN ADVENTURE TOURISM, INCLUDING SENIORS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS, BOTH COGNITIVE AND PHYSICAL

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In France, and generally in Europe, safety is a central concern for seniors engaging in tourism activities, particularly when these involve outdoor environments or adventure elements. National surveys consistently show that security, accessibility, and health-related reassurance are among the primary criteria influencing seniors' willingness to travel. For local learning centers and tourism actors, ensuring safety is therefore not only a legal or ethical obligation, but also a key condition for participation and inclusion.

Safety in senior adventure tourism must be understood in a broad and preventive sense, combining physical safety, psychological reassurance, cognitive accessibility, and social support. Rather than eliminating all forms of challenge, the objective is to design adapted, progressive, and well-supervised experiences that empower seniors while minimising risk.

General Safety Principles in the French Context

In France, adventure tourism for seniors operates within a framework of strong public expectations regarding protection and responsibility. Local learning centers and partner organisations generally rely on the following principles:

- anticipation and prevention rather than reaction,
- transparency about conditions, limits, and responsibilities,
- adaptation of activities to participants' capacities rather than performance objectives,
- collective supervision and mutual support.

These principles are particularly important in rural areas, where access to emergency services may be slower and where environmental conditions (terrain, weather, isolation) require careful preparation.

Physical Safety and Accessibility Measures

For seniors with physical limitations, safety begins with appropriate choice of activities and environments. Sustainable adventure tourism in France prioritises:

- accessible and well-maintained trails,
- limited distances and manageable elevation changes,
- frequent rest points and flexible pacing,
- availability of alternative routes or simplified versions of activities.

Adapted equipment (walking poles, seating options, electric-assisted bicycles) plays a key role in reducing physical strain and preventing falls. Facilitators are encouraged to conduct systematic pre-activity briefings, explaining routes, duration, and safety rules in clear, non-technical language.

Continuous observation during activities allows facilitators to detect early signs of fatigue, discomfort, or imbalance, enabling timely adjustments. Seniors are encouraged to express their limits freely, without fear of judgement or exclusion.

Cognitive Accessibility and Psychological Safety

Safety measures must also address cognitive diversity, including mild cognitive impairment, memory difficulties, anxiety, or reduced concentration. In the French context, many seniors may not identify themselves as having “special needs” but still benefit from adapted communication and organisation.

Key measures include:

- simple, repeated explanations of instructions,
- clear visual cues and landmarks along routes,
- predictable schedules and clear time frames,
- calm group sizes to reduce sensory overload.

Psychological safety is reinforced by maintaining a reassuring and non-pressurised atmosphere, where participation is voluntary and adaptable. Facilitators avoid language that frames activities as tests or challenges, instead emphasising exploration, enjoyment, and collective experience.

Inclusion of Seniors with Special Needs

Including seniors with physical or cognitive special needs requires flexible design rather than segregation. In France, inclusive practices aim to integrate participants within mixed groups while offering individual adjustments when necessary. Local learning centers often collaborate with social or health actors to:

- assess needs prior to activities,
- adapt formats and pacing,
- ensure appropriate supervision ratios.

This collaborative approach allows seniors with reduced mobility, chronic conditions, or mild cognitive difficulties to participate safely, reinforcing social inclusion and self-esteem.

Risk Management and Emergency Preparedness

Risk management in senior adventure tourism does not rely on complex procedures but on clear, shared protocols. In the French context, local learning centers typically ensure:

- identification of emergency contacts and medical information (on a voluntary basis),
- presence of at least one trained facilitator familiar with basic first aid,
- clear communication channels during activities,
- predefined procedures in case of incident or withdrawal.

Importantly, safety planning is communicated transparently to participants, reinforcing trust and reducing anxiety.

From Safety to Empowerment

When safety measures are well integrated, they do not restrict experience but rather enable participation. Seniors who feel secure are more willing to engage, explore, and learn. In this sense, safety becomes a lever for empowerment, autonomy, and confidence rather than a limiting factor.

By combining physical adaptation, cognitive accessibility, and emotional reassurance, sustainable adventure tourism in France can offer seniors—including those with special needs—meaningful, safe, and inclusive learning experiences.

Contribution of SATRAS

The SATRAS project supports French local learning centers by providing practical guidelines for embedding safety into educational tourism without medicalisation or exclusion. By aligning safety measures with principles of preventology, salutogenesis, and adult education, SATRAS promotes a model of adventure tourism where security, dignity, and learning go hand in hand, contributing to active ageing and social participation in rural areas.



EXERCISE 1

Learning outcome: Participants learn how to assess and adapt an outdoor route to ensure physical safety and accessibility for seniors with diverse mobility levels.

Target audience: Local learning center staff, facilitators, tour guides, and volunteers working with seniors

Requirements: Outdoor route (park, forest trail, rural path) or route description/photos.

Materials: Route assessment checklist, map of the route, pens.

Evaluation methodology: group discussion on identified risks and adaptations.

Step	Instructions	Duration	Materials
1	Introduce key safety criteria for senior-friendly routes (terrain, distance, rest points).	5 min	Checklist
2	Walk the route or analyse the route map together.	20 min	Map
3	Identify potential risks (slopes, uneven ground, isolation).	10 min	Pens
4	Propose adaptations (alternative paths, rest stops, pacing).	15 min	Checklist
5	Share findings and agree on a safe final route design.	10 min	None

EXERCISE 2

Learning outcome: Participants develop skills to communicate instructions and manage groups in ways that are reassuring and accessible for seniors with cognitive vulnerabilities.

Target audience: Facilitators, educators, and guides working with mixed-ability senior groups.

Requirements: Quiet indoor or outdoor space.

Materials: Instruction cards, visual symbols or pictograms (optional).

Evaluation methodology: observation of communication clarity during role-play.

Step	Instructions	Duration	Materials
1	Explain common cognitive challenges (memory, attention, anxiety).	5 min	None
2	Demonstrate unclear vs. clear instruction styles.	10 min	Example cards
3	Role-play a safety briefing using simple, repeated instructions.	15 min	Cards
4	Group feedback on clarity and reassurance.	10 min	None
5	Identify key principles to apply in real activities.	5 min	None

EXERCISE 3

Learning outcome: Participants understand how to prepare for minor incidents while maintaining psychological safety and calm among seniors.

Target audience: Local learning center coordinators, facilitators, and tourism staff.

Requirements: Training room or outdoor meeting point.

Materials: Emergency scenario cards, basic first-aid kit (demonstration only).

Evaluation methodology: debrief discussion on reactions and communication.

Step	Instructions	Duration	Materials
1	Present common minor incidents (fatigue, dizziness, anxiety).	5 min	Scenario cards
2	Assign roles (facilitator, senior participant, observer).	5 min	None
3	Simulate an incident and practice calm response.	15 min	First-aid kit
4	Debrief: discuss what supported physical and emotional safety.	10 min	None
5	Summarise key emergency and reassurance principles.	5 min	None



Chapter 8

PSYCHOLOGICAL STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING SOCIAL INCLUSION AND GROUP COHESION IN SENIOR TOURISTS

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UNDERSTANDING SENIOR TOURISTS IN GROUP SETTINGS

Group travel experiences can offer powerful social and emotional benefits for senior tourists, especially in soft adventure contexts like hiking, kayaking, or nature walks. Older adults embarking on these “soft adventures” often seek not only exploration and fun but also connection and camaraderie with their peers. However, many seniors also face risks of social isolation and anxiety about joining new groups, which can stem from life transitions (retirement, widowhood) or ageist stereotypes that undermine their confidence. To ensure that senior travel groups thrive, adult educators must intentionally foster social inclusion (making every member feel valued and engaged) and group cohesion (building unity and trust in the group). Research shows that tourism activities can promote healthy aging by providing social participation and positive emotions for older adults, outcomes that are maximized when group members feel included and bonded together.

This chapter presents evidence-based psychological strategies to help adult educators cultivate an inclusive, cohesive group climate for senior adventure travelers. Practical techniques are emphasized, tailored to the needs and characteristics of older adults in group-based soft adventures. Both classroom-based preparations (e.g. pre-trip workshops or training sessions) and experiential tactics in the field are discussed. By building trust, shared identity, engagement, and reducing social anxiety, trainers can enhance group solidarity and create meaningful, supportive travel experiences for all senior participants.

Senior tourists bring rich life experience, diverse backgrounds, and often a strong desire for meaningful engagement over passive sightseeing. They may be motivated by curiosity, wellness, nostalgia, or “second-act” aspirations to seize the moment with new friendships and adventures. Unlike younger thrill-seekers, seniors pursuing soft adventure value comfort, safety, and social connection alongside moderate activity. Many in this demographic prefer well-paced itineraries, smaller group sizes, and opportunities for cultural immersion and camaraderie. At the same time, older adults can face age-related considerations: varying fitness levels, potential health issues, sensory impairments (e.g. hearing loss), or anxiety about keeping up with the group. These factors mean inclusivity is paramount – activities and communication must be adapted so that everyone can participate comfortably and with dignity.

A socially inclusive group ensures that each member feels welcome and supported. This is not only an ethical concern but also impacts the success of the program. Studies show that older people often battle stereotypes and exclusion that increase loneliness and harm well-being. By countering this with an inclusive approach, trainers can help seniors gain a sense of belonging that enhances their travel satisfaction and even their health. Cohesive groups characterized by trust, friendly bonds, and a shared purpose tend to have higher morale and participation. In exercise settings, for example, high group cohesion leads to better attendance and adherence among older adults. In a tourism context, a bonded group is more likely to engage actively, support one another, and collectively overcome challenges (like a tough trail or unpredictable weather) with a positive spirit. For seniors who might be traveling solo, a cohesive group can quickly turn strangers into friends, reducing anxiety and fostering mutual support.

Adult educators preparing senior adventure groups might work in two main contexts: (1) Classroom-based or virtual sessions before/during a tour (for orientation, skill training, or reflection) and (2) Experiential settings in the field (during hikes, paddles, campfire gatherings, etc.). Both offer opportunities to apply psychology-based strategies. In a pre-trip workshop, for instance, a trainer can conduct icebreakers or group discussions to set an inclusive tone before the journey begins. During the adventure itself, the trainer can facilitate ongoing team-building activities, informal social interactions, and supportive communication on the trail.

Senior travelers, like any group, thrive in an environment where they feel safe, respected, and emotionally supported. The group climate is largely set by the adult educator or trainer's behavior. Research in physical activity groups shows that leader behaviors promoting a caring, cohesive atmosphere can significantly boost participation and commitment among older adults. Trainers should therefore model warmth, empathy, and inclusivity from the outset. Greet each participant warmly and use their names (perhaps providing name tags in early meetings). Establish ground rules that emphasize respect – for example, listening without interruption, encouraging one another, and maintaining confidentiality during personal sharings. By openly acknowledging that everyone may have some nerves when joining a new group, the trainer normalizes these feelings and invites a trusting dialogue about any concerns.

A supportive instructor approach involves frequent encouragement and positive reinforcement. Simple affirmations like “Great job, everyone, we did it!” after completing a hike, or praising a participant who tries something new, can dramatically uplift group morale.

Indeed, a systematic review found that enjoyable group experiences for older adults often feature supportive instructors and peers, with verbal encouragement and positive feedback creating a shared positive experience. In practice, this means highlighting group successes and framing challenges as something the group will tackle together. For instance, if some members struggle with kayaking technique, the trainer might say, “We’re all learning together – let’s help each other and celebrate our progress,” rather than singling out anyone’s difficulty. This kind of collective efficacy building, expressing confidence in the group’s ability to succeed as a team, fosters trust. Over time, participants see the trainer and each other as a reliable support system, which reduces social anxiety and encourages open participation.

Creating a trusting climate also involves attending to emotional safety. Trainers should be vigilant against any form of ageist remarks, condescension, or clique formation within the group. Swiftly intervene if, say, a more fit participant expresses impatience with slower ones – reinforce that the group stays together and values everyone’s pace and comfort. Sometimes, older adults might inadvertently compare health issues or past achievements in a way that diminishes others; the educator can gently steer conversations to avoid one-upmanship and emphasize mutual respect. By modeling patience, humor, and acceptance of each person, the trainer sets the tone. In a classroom session, trust-building can be enhanced by group agreements (co-created guidelines for interaction) and perhaps a short exercise where participants share what they need from the group to feel comfortable.

In the experiential realm, trust builds through consistent positive interactions – a trainer ensuring no one is left behind on a trail, or facilitating buddy checks (each person pairs up to check on each other’s well-being). Over the course of the program, this supportive climate becomes the foundation upon which all other group processes rest.

First impressions matter greatly in group formation. At the start of a senior group program, dedicating time to icebreaker activities and personal introductions is an essential strategy. Icebreakers help break down social barriers and spark initial connections in a gentle, fun manner. For older adults, the most effective icebreakers are those that draw on their wealth of life experience and encourage story-sharing rather than surface-level games. For example, instead of a generic name round, an educator might ask each participant to share “the most beautiful place you’ve ever visited” or “a hobby or interest you’re passionate about.” Such questions allow seniors to reminisce and reveal a bit about themselves, often finding commonalities with others (e.g., discovering two people grew up in the same city or both love gardening).

Encouraging reminiscence and storytelling early on is particularly powerful. Studies on group reminiscence therapy have found that when seniors share personal memories in a supportive group, it rapidly creates group cohesiveness and interaction compared to groups that don’t share stories. Reminiscence leverages a strength of older adults – their rich memories – turning it into a social glue. In practical terms, a trainer could facilitate a “memory circle” icebreaker: small groups of 2-3 seniors exchange a favorite travel memory or childhood outdoor experience, then introduce each other to the larger group.

This not only helps individuals feel heard and valued (key for inclusion) but also uncovers shared identity threads (“we both camped with our families as kids,” etc.), planting seeds of friendship. Structured narrative activities like “My Life Story in 5 Minutes” or guided questions (“What’s an adventure you had in your youth that you still cherish?”) can be used in a classroom setting to promote understanding among group members. As participants listen to each other’s stories, empathy and mutual respect grow – they cease to be strangers and begin to see one another as multi-faceted individuals with whom they have things in common.

In addition to storytelling, lighthearted icebreaker games can also be adapted for seniors. For example, a trivia quiz where each person provides a little-known fact about themselves and others guess who it belongs to, or a collaborative task like assembling pieces of a map puzzle together, can inject humor and teamwork from day one. The educator should ensure these activities are accessible – large print for any written materials, a quiet space for those hard of hearing, and enough time for everyone to contribute (seniors may appreciate a slightly slower pace for conversation than younger groups). The goal in early sessions is to eliminate the “awkward stranger” phase by fostering a sense of familiarity and welcome. When done well, initial icebreakers and introductions can transform a tentative collection of individuals into a group that laughs together, finding comfort in each other’s presence. This early engagement pays dividends throughout the trip: participants who have broken the ice are more likely to communicate openly, help one another, and face the upcoming adventures with a spirit of togetherness rather than isolation.

A hallmark of cohesive groups is that support comes not only from the leader but also among members themselves. For senior groups, fostering peer support is crucial: it empowers participants to care for each other, leveraging their empathy and perhaps long-honed social skills. One effective tactic is implementing a “buddy system.” Pairing or trio-ing participants can ensure that no one feels alone. Buddies can check on each other’s comfort during activities and partner up for tasks. For example, on a nature walk, the trainer could assign pairs to find and share interesting flora observations, or on travel days, seat buddies together to encourage conversation. These low-pressure partnerships often blossom into genuine friendships and give quieter or more anxious individuals an immediate ally.

An advanced strategy in longer programs is to facilitate shared leadership. This means gradually inviting participants to take on leadership or facilitation roles within the group, which can increase their engagement and sense of ownership. For example, a trainer might ask if anyone wants to lead the warm-up stretches one morning. Perhaps one participant who’s knowledgeable about birds can be encouraged to share insights during a bird-watching segment. A walking group intervention study found that having group members assume increasing leadership responsibility over time helped reinforce cohesion and commitment. By entrusting seniors with bits of leadership, the educator sends a powerful message of respect and inclusion: participants are not just passive tourists but active co-creators of the group experience. Many older adults have extensive skills and leadership experience from their careers or community life; tapping into that not only enriches the program (peer-led moments can be very engaging) but also boosts individuals’ confidence and belonging.

Equally important is creating a culture where it's okay to have limitations and to ask for help. The trainer should openly encourage participants to voice their needs, modeling it themselves (e.g., "I'm going to use some bug spray, does anyone else need? It's okay if you're not comfortable with the heat, let's find you some shade."). Normalize that every individual will have strengths and weaknesses: someone who struggles on uphill climbs might be excellent at navigating or identifying plants. By frequently highlighting different individuals' contributions and not just physical prowess, the educator ensures that no one feels "lesser" for, say, riding in the support van for a steep section. If the group environment is non-judgmental, social anxiety diminishes because participants trust that they won't be ridiculed or resented.

In cases where a specific individual shows signs of anxiety or withdrawal, the trainer can use gentle inclusion techniques. This might involve pairing them with an especially friendly or patient buddy, assigning them a subtle role that draws them out, or engaging them in one-on-one conversation to build their comfort. Cognitive-behavioral approaches, as used in therapy for social anxiety, can be subtly applied: help the person reframe negative thoughts. Teaching some coping skills, like deep breathing or visualization, before an anxiety-provoking activity can also help seniors manage their nerves. For instance, prior to a group presentation or trying a physical challenge, a short mindfulness or breathing exercise as a whole group can calm everyone's jitters.

Trainers should also minimize high-pressure scenarios. Competition should be de-emphasized in favor of cooperative goals. If any ranking or comparison is involved (like who finished a trail first), it should be reframed – e.g., celebrate the last finisher equally (“the one who savored the trail the longest!”). Evaluation anxiety can be reduced by making it clear that the journey is about enjoyment and personal growth, not performance. For example, when teaching a new skill, frame it as “Let’s experiment and learn together” and avoid singling anyone out for mistakes, correct as a group by sharing general tips from common errors observed.

Ensuring inclusion means every group member can participate in meaningful ways, regardless of ability or background. This requires thoughtful logistical planning and adaptive facilitation. Adult educators should be knowledgeable about the physical requirements of each activity and have modifications ready. For example, for a planned hike, have trekking poles available (they provide stability for those with joint issues) and perhaps arrange a shorter loop option for anyone who might tire early, accompanied by an assistant guide. The ethic to convey is that opting for a modification is not a failure; it’s a smart way to personalize the adventure. Emphasize that the experience is what counts, one person might walk 5 km and another 8 km, but both can share their observations and feelings at the end, contributing to the group’s story.

Excercise 1: Memory Lane Icebreaker

Learning outcome: Trainers will learn how to facilitate a reminiscence-based icebreaker that helps senior participants bond over shared memories.

Target audience: educators and tour leaders working with senior groups

Requirements: A quiet space for group discussion

Step	Instructions	Duration	Materials
1	The facilitator explains to the group: “We’ll practice an icebreaker ideal for seniors. It involves sharing a pleasant travel or childhood memory to connect with others.”	5 min	
2	Present a prompt to the group, e.g., “Think of a favorite outdoor experience from your youth or a trip that left a big impression on you.” The facilitator gives an example by briefly sharing their own memory first, setting a positive and open tone.	5 min	
3	Split the trainers into small groups of 3–4 . In these groups, each person takes a turn to share their memory story (about 2 minutes each). Encourage listeners to actively listen and notice common themes or feelings.	10 min	
4	After small group sharing, reconvene the whole group. Now, each small group introduces their members to everyone else, with one person from each group summarizing one interesting or touching story they heard (with permission). Ensure each original storyteller gets acknowledgment.	10 min	
5	Lead a discussion: “How did that feel? What did you observe about the group mood before vs. after sharing?”.	5 min	

Exercise 2: Trust Walk and Buddy System

Learning outcome: trust-building exercise and understand how pairing participants as buddies can enhance trust and safety

Target audience: Tour leaders and facilitators

Requirements: A safe, obstacle-free area for walking.

Materials: Blindfolds or eyes closed.

Evaluation methodology: Evaluate success by the degree of careful communication observed and whether pairs built rapport.

Step	Instructions	Duration	Materials
1	The facilitator introduces the exercise. Pair up the participants in twos. If there's an odd number, the facilitator can participate or one group can be a trio with two guides for one person.	5 min	Blindfolds for half the group.
2	Assign Person A as the "blindfolded walker" and Person B as the "sighted guide." Give clear instructions: The guide's role is to keep their partner safe by describing the environment and leading them gently; the blindfolded person's role is to communicate any discomfort and trust the guide. Emphasize safety!.	5 min	
3	Person A in each pair puts on the blindfold (or closes eyes). Person B takes their hand or offers an arm. The facilitator instructs all guides to start moving slowly through the space, verbally narrating what's ahead. Allow them to walk a preset course around the room or area (~2-3 minutes of walking per round). The facilitator observes and ensures safety, intervening if any pair looks uncertain.	5 min	
5	Once completed, have everyone remove blindfolds and gather to debrief. Discuss how important clear communication and empathy were. Mention that trust exercises like this can rapidly build cohesion as they require vulnerability and support.	10 min	

Excercise 3: Group identity

Learning outcome: Trainers will learn techniques for developing a shared group identity among participants

Target audience: Educators

Requirements: meeting space with a flip chart or whiteboard

Materials: Markers, flip chart/whiteboard. Optional: sticky notes

Evaluation methodology: Gather feedback on whether they felt more “like a team” after creating a name and motto.

Step	Instructions	Duration	Materials
1	Mention briefly that in research and practice, groups with a strong identity often show greater cohesion and loyalty	5 min	
2	Facilitate a brainstorming session for a team name. Encourage everyone to throw out ideas. Write all suggestions visibly on the board. Aim for at least 5–8 options. If the group is shy, use sticky notes, each person writes a name idea and sticks it up, then read them out.	5-7 min	Markers, flip chart; sticky notes if using.
3	Guide the group to choose a name from the list. Methods: open discussion and consensus, or a simple vote. As facilitator, ensure that quieter voices are heard. Once a name is selected, write it in bold. Note: If a consensus is hard, combine ideas (e.g., merge two names) to keep things inclusive.	5 min	
4	Now challenge the group to come up with a short motto or tagline that captures their spirit. Encourage humor or poignancy as suits the group. Write the final motto under the team name.	5 min	Flip chart/board space for motto.
5	Discuss with the group. Usually, this exercise triggers excitement or a sense of camaraderie. Emphasize that these symbols of identity help turn a collection of individuals into a team, reinforcing inclusion and collective spirit.	5 min	

Exercise 4: Empathy Mapping

Learning outcome: deeper understanding of senior tourists' perspectives by creating an "empathy map."

Target audience: Trainers or senior tour guides

Materials: Large paper sheets or flip chart pages, markers, and sticky notes

Evaluation methodology: group discussion

Step	Instructions	Duration	Materials
1	Explain to participants that they will step into the shoes of a senior traveler to anticipate their experience. Draw a large blank empathy map template on a flip chart or whiteboard divided into four quadrants labeled: Thinks, Feels, Does, Fears. Introduce each quadrant.	5 min	Empathy chart
2	Start with Thinks: Ask the group to brainstorm things a senior might say or internal thoughts they might have and place sticky notes. Move to Feels: emotions seniors might experience. Then Does: possible behaviors. Finally Fears: potential struggles.	10 min	marker, sticky notes
3	Step back and review the filled empathy map. Now have a discussion. For example, if in Fear many noted "fear of being a burden," discuss how a trainer can counter that by encouraging questions and help-seeking. If Feels includes "proud/accomplished," talk about creating more moments for seniors to feel pride. Essentially, translate insights into action: each category should spark a strategy. Write a few arrows or notes linking a point to a solution	10 min	
4	Summarize the important findings. Emphasize that by understanding what seniors might think/feel/do, trainers can preemptively tailor their approach. This exercise underscores that empathy is foundational to inclusion. Encourage trainers to revisit empathy maps when designing any session or solving group issues.	5 min	

Exercise 5: Active Listening and Communication Role-Play

Learning outcome: They will learn how to respond to participants in ways that validate and include, practicing techniques like paraphrasing, eye contact, and gentle prompting

Target audience: Educators and seniors

Requirements: space for pairs or triads to role-play conversations.

Materials: Scenario cards

Evaluation methodology: Observation and feedback

Step	Instructions	Duration	Materials
1	Start by highlighting key active listening skills: attentive body language, reflecting content, reflecting feeling, asking open-ended questions, and not interrupting.	5 min	
2	Divide the participants into groups of 3: one is the “senior participant” who will do most of the talking, one is the “friend” practicing listening, and one is an “observer” who will watch and give feedback.	2 min	
3	Hand out a scenario card to each group’s “senior participant.” Each card describes a brief personality and situation. These scenarios ensure a variety of contexts. The “senior” reads it privately.	5 min	Scenario cards
4	The role-play begins: The “senior” starts a conversation based on the scenario, and the “friend” must respond using active listening techniques. The observer quietly notes what the friend does well or could improve.	10 min	Additional scenario cards for second round.
5	Come back together or have observers give immediate feedback in trios first. Observers and “senior” tell the “friend” what they did well and what could be improved. Encourage positivity and constructive tips. Then, as a whole group, discuss insights. The facilitator can highlight any common issues and praise evident improvements.	10 min	

Exercise 6: Conflict Resolution in a Supportive Climate

Learning outcome: experience managing conflicts or tensions in a group in ways that preserve inclusion and cohesion

Target audience: Senior and adult trainers

Materials: Scenario handouts; paper to note resolution strategies.

Evaluation methodology: quality of strategies proposed and how well the role-played resolution maintains group harmony.

Step	Instructions	Duration	Materials
1	Provide the group with a written or verbal scenario and make sure everyone understands the scenario and what's at stake.	5 min	Scenario
2	Break the participants into groups of 3–4. Instruct them to discuss how one would address the conflict and create a plan.	7 min	
3	Have each group share their proposed approach. List the various strategies on a central board as they report. Discuss the pros and cons of each strategy.	10 min	Paper
4	Debrief what happened in the role-play. Reinforce good practices. Mention the importance of addressing conflicts early in senior groups, as small irritations if ignored can erode cohesion. Also note that seniors often appreciate a diplomatic, respectful approach and may respond well to appeals to group camaraderie.	5 min	Paper
5	Summarize a mini “protocol” for conflict resolution: 1) active listening, 2) Acknowledge their feelings, 3) Remind of common purpose or norms, 4) Negotiate a solution involving slight behavior changes on both sides if possible, 5) Follow up later to ensure all is well. Write these on board. Point out that maintaining inclusion sometimes means mediating and teaching group members to empathize with each other's differences.	5 min	Paper

Exercise 7: Designing an Inclusive Activity Plan

Learning outcome: they will learn to anticipate varying abilities and interests among senior participants and plan adaptations that maintain group cohesion.

Target audience: Trainers, trail guides

Requirements: sample participant profiles

Materials: Activity planning template and pens

Evaluation methodology: Review each group's plan. Check if they identified potential exclusion points and if their solutions are creative and effective. Evaluate how well they balance group cohesion with individual needs

Step	Instructions	Duration
1	Introduce a scenario. The task is to create a plan for the day that includes a main activity and supplemental activities, with attention to inclusion.	5 min
2	Divide trainers into small groups of 2-4. Provide each group with an Activity Plan Template with possible Challenges, Inclusion Strategies. Instruct them to fill it out for the day.	15 min
3	Have each group present their plan briefly. As they present, they should highlight where they integrated cohesion/inclusion measures. After each presentation, allow a minute for others to ask questions or offer suggestions, fostering a collaborative refinement.	10 min
4	Lead a discussion on common strategies that emerged. Compliment good ideas drawn from evidence. Encourage trainers to borrow ideas from each other.	5 min
5	Note that sometimes the best strategy is proactive communication: telling seniors ahead of time about activity details so they can voice concerns and you can adjust. Also mention that during the day plans can be adjusted on the fly if needed, and that flexibility is key to inclusion.	5 min

Exercise 8: Anxiety Management Drill

Learning outcome: practice specific techniques to reduce and manage social anxiety among participants. They will engage in a drill where they must apply reassurance, gradual exposure, or grounding methods for a hypothetical anxious senior.

Target audience: Tour guides, facilitators, senior trainers

Evaluation methodology: Evaluate by the strategies the trainer uses

Step	Instructions	Duration
1	Begin by acknowledging that many older adults may have anxieties. Trainers should be equipped to respond kindly and effectively. Introduce a quick framework for managing anxiety: Acknowledge, Assist, Assure, Assess.	5 min
2	Present a concrete scenario for the drill. This scenario touches on social and performance anxiety.	2 min
3	Ask for one trainer to play the anxious participant. Another trainer will play themselves. If the group is large, you can have a couple of pairs do this in parallel or everyone write down their approach then share.	3 min
4	The trainer playing “leader” approaches the anxious participant. They should demonstrate acknowledging, assisting, and assuring. They might also lead a short breathing exercise. Run this interaction for about 3-4 minutes, letting the “participant” react a bit and the “leader” continue to soothe and problem-solve.	5 min
5	Stop the role-play and discuss. Reinforce any textbook techniques used.	5 min
6	Highlight key anxiety-reduction techniques for trainers: guiding a few deep breaths, sharing a personal anecdote to normalize, giving a buddy or oneself to accompany the person, breaking the task into small steps, distraction via conversation or humor if appropriate, and knowing when to gently encourage vs. when to accept an opt-out. Encourage trainers to practice these skills on themselves too so they can model composure.	5 min



Chapter 9

ROADMAP FOR TRANSFERRING PREVENTOLOGY EDUCATION FOR SENIORS TOURISM IN DIFFERENT EU RURAL AREAS

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Purpose and Scope

While the previous chapter illustrated concrete programme formats and learning activities, this chapter focuses on the structural, organisational, and contextual conditions required to transfer such formats into different rural contexts.

This chapter presents a practical roadmap for transferring Preventology-based senior tourism into rural regions across Europe. It builds on the conceptual foundations outlined in the preceding chapters and translates them into operational guidance for adult educators, learning centres, tourism providers, and civil-society organisations. The focus lies on contribution-based tourism formats, in which seniors participate actively in sustainability-related activities during tourist stays in rural areas. These activities may combine physical engagement, learning-oriented participation, and reflection and are designed to support health, autonomy, and social participation.

At the core of the approach is active participation. Seniors are not positioned as passive recipients of tourism services but as contributing participants whose actions have tangible relevance within local sustainability contexts. Participation remains voluntary and autonomy-oriented. Participants retain control over their level of involvement, pace, and physical or cognitive effort. The possibility to adapt or pause activities is an essential condition for psychological safety and sustained motivation.

Programme design follows the Sense of Coherence as a guiding principle. Activities are structured so that they are understandable, realistically manageable within seniors' capacities, and experienced as meaningful. Preventology-based senior tourism therefore relies on small-scale, purposeful contributions rather than performance-oriented challenges

or productivity-focused tasks. These contributions are embedded in experiential and sensory learning formats that align with the cognitive and motivational characteristics of older adults. Structured reflection supports the integration of experience, enabling participants to connect practical contribution with personal values and life experience. Accessibility, safety, and adaptive pacing are treated as fundamental design requirements to ensure inclusion across diverse physical, sensory, and cognitive conditions. In this way, contribution-based tourism functions as a preventive and resource-oriented experience rather than as labour.

While these core elements remain stable across regions, implementation requires careful adaptation to local conditions. Rural regions differ with regard to landscape, ecological challenges, climate, seasonality, institutional structures, and cultural traditions of volunteering and tourism. Forest regions, agricultural landscapes, wetlands, coastal areas, or mountain regions, including Alpine areas in Germany, require different forms of contribution, pacing, and safety management. Seasonal rhythms influence feasibility and must be taken into account to avoid physical strain or ecological disruption. Effective transfer therefore builds on existing local practices and partnerships rather than introducing externally defined formats.

Partnership Building, Localisation of Learning, and Guide Qualification

Partnership building represents a central pillar of the transfer process. Contribution-based senior tourism depends on cooperation with established organisations that already operate in environmental protection, landscape care, sustainable agriculture, or environmental education and that can provide professional supervision and clear safety standards. In this context, cooperation with Bergwaldprojekt e.V. offers a well-established framework. The organisation coordinates



professionally supervised conservation and restoration activities in forest and mountain ecosystems and operates in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and Spain. Its time-limited project formats focus on forest regeneration, habitat maintenance, and climate-adaptation measures and are characterised by clear task structures and supervision. In Germany, e.g. cooperation with NABU enables integration into regional biodiversity and habitat protection initiatives. In the field of sustainable agriculture and food systems, cooperation with WWOOF provides access to organic farms in Germany, Italy, and France. Participation in everyday agricultural activities supports learning about ecological production, soil protection, regenerative farming, and healthy nutrition based on organic products. Across all partnerships, seniors' contributions are embedded in real sustainability work while remaining clearly framed as educational and preventive rather than as labour.

Closely linked to partnership building is the localisation of learning. Preventology concepts such as responsibility, resilience, care, and continuity become tangible when they are connected to concrete local practices. Forest maintenance, biodiversity protection, regenerative agriculture, or sustainable food production allow abstract principles to be experienced directly. Learning narratives and reflection prompts should emerge from the environments in which seniors are active, enabling participants to connect contribution with personal meaning and prior life experience. This place-based approach strengthens relevance and coherence while avoiding generic or externally imposed metaphors.

Guides and educators play a key role in integrating contribution, learning, and health. Facilitators are required to balance sustainability-related activities with health-sensitive pacing, emotional support, and reflective learning processes. Guide qualification therefore extends beyond organisational or

technical competence and includes Preventology-oriented communication, awareness of age-related health considerations, adaptive risk assessment, and facilitation of group and reflection processes. Adequately qualified guides ensure that contribution-based activities remain supportive and empowering and do not become exhausting or evaluative.

Social Inequality, Poverty, and Health in Contribution-Based Senior Tourism

Social inequality and poverty require explicit consideration within this framework. Socio-economic disadvantage in later life is closely associated with poorer health outcomes, reduced mobility, and social isolation. At the same time, older adults affected by financial insecurity are underrepresented in tourism and lifelong learning activities, despite their preventive potential. Without targeted measures, contribution-based senior tourism risks remaining accessible primarily to financially secure groups. Typical participation barriers include travel and accommodation costs, participation fees, equipment requirements, health-related insecurities, and lack of confidence or prior experience.

To address these barriers, social accessibility must be treated as a structural design criterion. Cooperation with municipalities, social services, civil-society organisations, and adult education centres can enable reduced fees, subsidised participation slots, or mixed-financing models. Low-threshold formats, such as short-duration activities, flexible participation options, and provision of necessary equipment, support dignified access. Clear communication that contribution is not performance-oriented reduces psychological barriers and fear of failure. Contribution-based activities are framed as collective efforts in which different levels of capacity are equally valued.

From a Preventology perspective, guided reflection plays a central role in mitigating the health effects of poverty. Reflection formats should acknowledge resilience, life experience, and

existing coping strategies rather than focusing on deficits. Experiencing oneself as a meaningful contributor to environmental protection, climate adaptation, or sustainable food systems strengthens self-efficacy and counters social exclusion. In this way, contribution-based senior tourism functions not only as an environmental and educational practice but also as a socially inclusive preventive intervention. Empirical research provides a strong foundation for this approach. A substantial body of evidence demonstrates that volunteering in later life is associated with improved self-rated health, psychological well-being, reduced functional limitations, and lower mortality risk. Environmental volunteering may offer additional benefits through exposure to nature and engagement in meaningful stewardship activities. At the same time, research shows that older adults are underrepresented in environmental volunteering due to barriers such as limited access to information, perceived lack of expertise, insufficient social integration, and organisational models that do not adequately utilise older people's skills. Programmes that combine knowledge input, guided practice, social interaction, and real-world application—such as the Retirees in Service to the Environment (RISE) programme—demonstrate how these barriers can be reduced.

The following chapter situates these practical considerations within the broader empirical evidence on volunteering, environmental engagement, and health in later life.

In summary, transferring Preventology-based senior tourism into rural contexts requires conceptual clarity, contextual flexibility, and strong partnerships. By anchoring tourism experiences in real sustainability work, integrating learning and reflection, and ensuring social accessibility, seniors are enabled to move from observation to participation. This strengthens health, autonomy,

The following chapter situates these practical considerations within the broader empirical evidence on volunteering, environmental engagement, and health in later life.

In summary, transferring Preventology-based senior tourism into rural contexts requires conceptual clarity, contextual flexibility, and strong partnerships. By anchoring tourism experiences in real sustainability work, integrating learning and reflection, and ensuring social accessibility, seniors are enabled to move from observation to participation. This strengthens health, autonomy, and social connection and ensures that senior tourism contributes meaningfully to sustainability, education, and preventive health across diverse rural regions.

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Chapter 10

GARGANO EXPERIENCE. TESTING THE MODEL IN 27 ADULT EDUCATORS: RESULTS OF THE QUALI-QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

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INTRODUCTION

The Gargano experience was a practical testing phase of the Sustainable Adventure Tourism for Seniors methodology. The training was organised in the Foggia area of Puglia and focused on the relationship between rural tourism, local agricultural heritage, traditional food, experiential learning and healthy ageing, all in the context of our consortium meeting and training program. The first day focused on olive tourism and the agricultural landscape of the Gargano area. Participants visited a family-run farm near Mattinata, explored olive cultivation and local varieties, observed ancient and monumental olive trees, and learned about crop protection, climate-related challenges and the relationship between agricultural production and tourism. The second day focused on traditional bread making, including dough preparation, fermentation, flour selection, shaping and baking. The experience followed the central principles of the project: learning through direct experience, participation, sensory stimulation, connection with local culture, physical activity at an appropriate level, and reflection on healthy and sustainable lifestyles. The farm visit demonstrated how agricultural spaces can function as multifunctional environments. Production, tourism, education, tasting and cultural interpretation can take place within the same rural setting. This corresponds closely to the project's understanding of sustainable tourism. The bread-making activity provided a different but complementary form of experiential learning. Participants worked directly with dough and learned about ingredients, hydration, fermentation, gluten development, shaping and baking. The activity also demonstrated how traditional food practices can stimulate tactile engagement, practical skills, creativity and social interaction.



OLIVE TOURISM EXPERIENCE

The first training day took place at a family-run agricultural business from Mattinata. The farm has been passed down through several generations and is mainly composed of a variety of native olive groves. Participants were introduced to varieties including Olivastra Garganica, an ancient variety characteristic of the area, and Frantoiana. Particular attention was given to centuries-old and monumental olive trees. These trees are registered by the Puglia Regional Government and have individual identification codes. The training introduced participants to the development of the olive fruit and to the capacity of olive trees to survive under conditions of limited water availability. The farm's adaptation to changing agricultural conditions was another important learning element. Areas previously used for almond cultivation had been converted into olive groves, illustrating how rural businesses adapt production to territorial and economic conditions. The visit also included a citrus orchard containing orange, lemon and cedar trees. Participants observed an unusual second flowering of some orange trees. The trainer connected this phenomenon with changing climatic conditions and explained how agricultural production can be affected by environmental change. Participants were introduced also to conventional and biological approaches to crop protection, including the use of traps to reduce insect populations.

The final element of the olive tourism experience was the relationship between agriculture and tourism. The farm welcomes visitors and organises tours and tasting experiences designed to explain the history and characteristics of the olive groves while promoting local products, showing the concept of multifunctional farming.



TRADITIONAL BREAD MAKING

The second training day was dedicated to bread making and was led by trainer Pascal Barbato. The session began with the basic ingredients used for bread: flour, water, baker's yeast and salt. Participants learned that bread, pizza and focaccia can be produced from a similar basic dough, while differences in shaping, preparation, fermentation, toppings and baking produce different final products. The trainer explained that the amount of water required depends on the type of flour because different grains have different absorption capacities. Participants learned to add water gradually and to observe the consistency of the dough rather than relying exclusively on a fixed quantity. The chef also introduced the differences between durum wheat and soft wheat, and connected the choice of cereals to the climate and agricultural characteristics of different regions. In this way, bread making became an opportunity to explore the relationship between agriculture, territory, food traditions and cultural identity.

Participants learned that whole-wheat dough can be more difficult to handle because bran can interfere with the gluten structure. Longer resting periods may therefore be required. Because the training was conducted within a limited timeframe, techniques for accelerating fermentation were also discussed. Participants had the opportunity to work directly with the dough, practising folding and shaping.

The bread-making experience therefore combined practical skills, sensory stimulation, cultural learning and social interaction. It illustrates the project's principle that rural tourism can become an educational environment in which participants learn through seeing, touching, tasting, smelling and doing.

QUALI-QUANTI IMPLICATIONS

A quality questionnaire was used to evaluate participants' understanding of the themes addressed during the training. The questionnaire covered a total of 10 topics.

Four responses were recorded for nine questions, while the question concerning the “Make Your Bread” exercise received three responses. The analysis therefore considers the actual number of responses available for each question.

The overall results show a very high level of agreement. Eight questions received the same answer from all recorded respondents, while two questions showed some variation.

The question concerning the Coratina olive produced a 75% majority and a 25% minority response. The difference concerned the characteristics of the olive, particularly its flavour and polyphenol content.

The question concerning focaccia making also produced a 75%/25% distribution. The majority associated the activity with fine motor and tactile functions in seniors, while one participant interpreted the question more from a nutritional perspective.

The remaining questions showed complete agreement. 8/10 questions received unanimous agreement. The two questions showing variation both retained a clear 75% majority. This indicates a high degree of consistency in participants' understanding of the training content.

WELLBEING, SELF-REGULATION AND AUTONOMY FOR SENIORS

A further SATRAS training experience took place focused specifically on wellbeing, self-regulation and autonomy in later life. The training was organised by and delivered by Dorothee Remmler-Bellen and Astrit Rehberg. The training complemented the Gargano experience by placing greater emphasis on the preventive-health dimension of the SATRAS approach. While the Gargano activities demonstrated how rural environments, agriculture, food traditions and experiential tourism can support active and meaningful learning, this training focused on the personal resources that seniors can develop and use in everyday life.

The morning session introduced the concept of Preventology, presenting prevention as more than the avoidance of illness. The focus was on strengthening personal resources, maintaining quality of life and supporting healthy lifestyles throughout the lifespan. Physical, psychological and social wellbeing were considered interconnected elements of healthy ageing. A central concept was self-efficacy, understood as confidence in one's own ability to manage challenges successfully. The trainers highlighted the importance of positive experiences, achievable goals and supportive social environments in strengthening self-efficacy. This is particularly relevant for senior tourism, where activities should provide opportunities for participants to experience competence and autonomy rather than focusing primarily on limitations.

The theoretical input was continuously combined with practical exercises. “I am Packing my Movement Suitcase” was used as a movement-based energiser combining physical activity, concentration and memory. The “1, 2, 3” exercise encouraged communication, concentration and cognitive flexibility by progressively replacing spoken numbers with body movements.

Nature-based activities were conducted outdoors. In “Stand Like a Tree”, participants practised grounding and stability by imagining themselves firmly rooted like a tree. “Find the Bear” encouraged observation, mindfulness and attention to the surrounding natural environment. These activities demonstrated how outdoor spaces can become active learning environments rather than simply serving as the setting for tourism activities. Further activities addressed gratitude, personal goals and social connection. The gratitude exercise, based on identifying five things that cost nothing or very little, encouraged participants to recognise accessible sources of positive experience. The small-goal exercise demonstrated how realistic and manageable objectives can support self-efficacy and behavioural change. The “Pizza Massage” activity introduced the topic of loneliness through playful social interaction and demonstrated how simple group activities can encourage connection and belonging.

Stress management was explored through practical strategies involving relaxation, movement, mindfulness and social interaction. The “Ball and Bottle” exercise demonstrated how increasing cognitive demands can influence concentration, communication and reactions to stress, while simultaneously encouraging cooperation and adaptive problem-solving.

The “Heat Protection Alphabet” translated the topic of climate-related health protection into an interactive exercise. Participants developed practical ideas concerning hydration, appropriate clothing, adapting activities to cooler periods of the day, recognising signs of heat-related problems and protecting vulnerable people. This topic is particularly relevant to SATRAS because many activities take place outdoors and therefore need to take changing weather conditions and periods of extreme heat into account.

The training also included Qi Gong exercises, a sensory exercise involving the smelling and tasting of oranges, and the relaxation story “Summer Sunshine and the Sea.” These activities demonstrated how movement, sensory awareness and relaxation can be incorporated into a tourism programme without requiring complex equipment or specialised facilities.

Following the training, all participants completed a short proficiency test. The questions focused on the main topics presented during the training. The results were highly positive. All participants successfully completed the proficiency test and achieved a score of 100%. This indicates that the core learning objectives measured by the assessment were fully understood by the participants.

The result should be understood in the context of the assessment's purpose: the test was designed as a short learning and consolidation tool rather than as a formal examination. Nevertheless, the unanimous 100% result provides a clear quantitative indication that the principal concepts and messages presented during the training were successfully communicated and understood.

EXERCISE 1: OLIVE GROVE WALK

Learning outcome: awareness of local agricultural heritage

Target audience: Senior tourists and adult learners

Requirements: Accessible olive grove or agricultural area.

Materials: shoes, information cards, optional reflection cards

Evaluation methodology: qualitative group reflection and a short before/after self-assessment of participants' knowledge of local olive cultivation

Step	Instructions	Duration	Materials
1	Introduce the olive grove and explain the importance of olive cultivation in the local territory.	10 min	None
2	Walk slowly through the olive grove and identify different olive trees and local varieties.	20 min	Walking shoes
3	Stop at an ancient or monumental olive tree and discuss its age, cultural importance and relationship with the local landscape.	10 min	Info card
4	Invite participants to observe the trees using their senses: appearance, texture, smell, sounds and surrounding landscape.	10 min	None
5	Ask participants what they learned about the relationship between agriculture, nature and local culture	10 min	Reflection cards

EXCERCISE 2: OLIVES & SENSORY TASTING

Learning outcome: understand the relationship between local agricultural products, sensory learning and sustainable rural tourism

Target audience: Senior tourists and adult learners

Requirements: Farm, olive mill, tasting area

Materials: Local olive oil, tasting cups, bread and information cards

Evaluation methodology: Verbal feedback and identification of at least one new piece of knowledge by each participant.

Step	Instructions	Duration	Materials
1	Introduce olive oil tourism and explain how farms can combine agriculture, education, tourism and tasting.	10 min	None
2	Present local olive varieties and explain their main characteristics.	10 min	Olive samples
3	Conduct a guided tasting, encouraging participants to notice smell, taste and texture.	15 min	Olive oil, tasting cups, bread
4	Discuss how local agricultural products contribute to regional identity and rural tourism.	10 min	Info sheet
5	Ask each participant to identify one thing they learned about olive oil or local agriculture.	5 min	Reflection card

EXERCISE 3: MULTIFUNCTIONAL FARM

Learning outcome: how agricultural spaces can integrate tourism, education, recreation and local economic activity.

Target audience: Adult educators, tourism professionals and senior learners

Requirements: Farm visit or detailed description of a multifunctional agricultural site.

Materials: Paper, pens and photographs or maps of the farm.

Evaluation methodology: Evaluation of the group maps and participants' explanations of the different functions of the farm.

Step	Instructions	Duration	Materials
1	Explain the concept of multifunctional farming and give examples of agricultural, educational, recreational and tourism activities.	10 min	None
2	In small groups, ask participants to identify the different functions they observed during the farm visit.	15 min	Paper & pen
3	Groups create a simple map showing agricultural production, tourism, education, food tasting and environmental elements.	20 min	Paper & pen
4	Each group presents its map and explains how the different functions can work together.	10 min	Group maps
5	Discuss how a similar model could be developed in another rural area.	10 min	None

EXERCISE 4: MAKE YOUR BREAD

Learning outcome: knowledge of bread making while experiencing tactile engagement, creativity, local food culture and social interaction

Target audience: Senior tourists and adult learners

Requirements: Community kitchen, farm kitchen, bakery or suitable demonstration area

Materials: Flour, water, baker's yeast, salt, bowls and working surfaces

Evaluation methodology: Observation of participation and practical engagement, followed by a short reflection.

Step	Instructions	Duration	Materials
1	Introduce the basic ingredients used for bread making: flour, water, yeast and salt.	10 min	Ingredients
2	Explain the differences between durum wheat and soft wheat and their connection with local agricultural traditions.	10 min	Flour samples
3	Participants prepare a basic dough under the trainer's guidance.	20 min	Flour, water, yeast, salt, bowls
4	Demonstrate folding, shaping and resting of the dough. Participants practise the techniques.	20 min	Dough, work surfaces
5	Discuss the relationship between bread, local culture and regional food traditions.	10 min	None
6	At the end of the activity, ask participants what they found most interesting or enjoyable.	5 min	Reflection cards

EXERCISE 5: GARGANO REFLECTION

Learning outcome: integrate the rural tourism experience into personal reflection and identify possible links between tourism, healthy habits, local culture and sustainable lifestyles.

Target audience: Senior tourists and adult learners.

Requirements: Calm group setting

Materials: Flipchart, reflection cards and pens.

Evaluation methodology: Qualitative analysis of participants' reflections and quantitative recording of the number of participants who identify at least one personal learning point or transferable action.

Step	Instructions	Duration	Materials
1	Invite participants to recall the main activities of the olive tourism and bread-making experiences.	10 min	Flipchart
2	Ask participants to identify one new thing they learned about agriculture, food, culture or sustainable tourism.	10 min	Reflection cards
3	Ask: "Which activity made you feel most involved?" and allow voluntary sharing.	10 min	None
4	Discuss how the experience could influence participants' own attitudes toward healthy living, local food and rural environments.	10 min	None
5	Ask each participant to identify one small action or habit they would like to take home from the experience.	10 min	Action cards
6	Close the session by highlighting the connection between learning, participation, local culture and healthy ageing.	5 min	None

EXERCISE 6: I AM PACKING MY MOVEMENT SUITCASE

Learning aim: The exercise encourages physical activity in a playful way while stimulating concentration and attention. It promotes group interaction, creates a positive atmosphere, and shows that movement can be enjoyable and accessible to everyone..

Target audience: Seniors

Duration: 15 min

This exercise is based on the well-known game “I’m packing my suitcase and I’m taking with me ...”, but with a movement-based twist.

The first participant says:

“I am [name], and I’m putting this movement into my movement suitcase.”

They then demonstrate a simple movement of their choice.

Everyone in the group repeats the movement together.

The next participant introduces themselves, adds a new movement, and demonstrates it. Again, the whole group joins in. The game continues around the circle until everyone has contributed a movement.

The focus is not on remembering a long sequence perfectly. Instead, all participants perform the movements together each time. This creates a supportive atmosphere and ensures that nobody feels uncomfortable or left out if they cannot remember all the movements.

EXERCISE 7: 1, 2, 3

Learning aim: The exercise promotes concentration, coordination, reaction skills, and mental flexibility. At the same time, it encourages interaction and cooperation between partners. The playful challenge creates laughter and enjoyment, showing that cognitive and physical activity can easily be combined.

Target audience: Seniors

Duration: 15 min

This is a partner exercise that combines concentration, coordination, and movement in a playful way.

The partners stand facing each other and take turns saying the numbers 1, 2, and 3 in sequence: one person says “1”, the other says “2”, the first says “3”, and so on.

Once the rhythm is established, the exercise gradually becomes more challenging:

First, the number 1 is replaced by a simple movement or action, while 2 and 3 are still spoken. Next, the number 2 is also replaced by a different movement. Finally, 3 is replaced by a third movement.

At the end, no numbers are spoken anymore – the partners communicate only through the three movements, following the same sequence.

It is important to introduce each step slowly and clearly and to give the participants enough time to become familiar with each new level. Mistakes are part of the exercise and often add to the fun.

EXERCISE 8: DEEPLY ROOTED

Learning aim: The exercise promotes body awareness, balance, and a sense of physical stability. By combining gentle movement, conscious breathing, and imagery, it can help participants relax, focus on the present moment, and experience a feeling of inner calm and security. It also encourages participants to become aware of their own resources for finding stability in challenging or stressful situations.

Target audience: Seniors

Duration: 15 min

Stand with your feet about hip-width apart and keep your knees relaxed. Let your arms hang loosely by your sides. If it feels comfortable, you may close your eyes.

Slowly shift your weight forward onto the balls of your feet and then backward onto your heels. Next, gently shift your weight from side to side. Pay attention to how your body responds and how your sense of balance changes with each movement.

Gradually return to the centre and find a position in which you feel stable and secure.

Now imagine strong roots growing from the soles of your feet deep into the earth. With every breath, these roots grow stronger and reach further into the ground. Imagine that they give you stability, support, and a sense of safety – like a strong tree that remains firmly rooted even when the wind is blowing.

Stay with this feeling of calmness, strength, and balance for a few moments. Then slowly let go of the image of the roots and gently bring your attention back to your surroundings.

At the end, take a moment to reflect: How did the exercise feel? Did you notice any change in your sense of stability or calmness? In which situations in everyday life might it be helpful to feel more grounded and secure?

EXERCISE 9: FIND THE BEAR

Learning aim: The exercise encourages mindfulness and conscious awareness of the surroundings. It helps participants slow down, become more attentive to small details, and discover interesting or beautiful things that might otherwise go unnoticed. Sharing the findings with the group also encourages curiosity, communication, and appreciation of different perspectives

Target audience: Seniors

Duration: 45 min

For this exercise, you need a set of Find-the-Bear cards or similar cards with simple search prompts. You can also easily create your own cards.

Each participant receives a card describing something they should look for in their surroundings, for example: something smooth, something light, something round, something colourful, something unusual, or something beautiful.

Participants then explore the surrounding area – for example, a park, garden, or other outdoor space – and look for something that matches the description on their card. Depending on the setting, they can either bring the object back with them or take a photo of it.

Afterwards, everyone returns to the group and presents what they have found. Participants can briefly explain why they chose this particular object and what caught their attention.

When collecting objects in nature, participants should take care not to damage plants or disturb the environment. In such cases, taking a photo is preferable.

EXERCISE 10: BALL AND BOTTLE

Learning aim: The exercise allows participants to experience increasing stress in a safe and playful way. It helps them recognise their own stress reactions and reflect on useful coping strategies such as staying focused, slowing down, communicating, and asking for support.

Target audience: Seniors

Duration: 20 min

Participants stand in a circle. The instructor starts with a blue ball, calls out a participant's name, and throws the ball to them. Each person passes it to someone else, always calling out their name first. Everyone receives the ball once and remembers who they passed it to. The same sequence is then repeated. Next, a red ball is introduced and a different passing sequence is created. Both balls are then used at the same time. Gradually, additional objects such as a bottle, card, or piece of chocolate are added and passed in different ways. Participants may also change places. This makes the exercise increasingly complex and creates a playful experience of stress. Afterwards, participants briefly reflect on when they felt stressed and what helped them cope with the situation.

CONCLUSION

The Gargano experience provided a practical demonstration of how sustainable adventure tourism for seniors can be built around authentic rural resources. The olive tourism and bread-making activities combined education, sensory experience, local culture, social participation and practical learning. The questionnaire results showed a high degree of consistency among the recorded responses. Eight of the ten questions received unanimous answers, while the two questions showing variation still produced a clear 75% majority.

The olive farm became a space for learning about nature, agriculture, climate and local culture, while bread making transformed a traditional food practice into a practical educational experience.

The Gargano experience therefore supports the wider project objective of developing tourism experiences in which seniors can remain active learners and participants. It demonstrates that rural tourism does not have to be based on passive sightseeing. When activities are carefully structured, adapted and followed by reflection, a farm, an olive grove or a traditional kitchen can become a learning environment for healthy and sustainable ageing.



Chapter 11

SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCES FOR THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ADVENTURE RURAL TOURISM IN PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING FOR SENIORS

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter synthesizes current scientific evidence on the effectiveness of adventure and rural tourism in improving physical health and psychological wellbeing among older adults. Both quantitative outcomes (e.g. cardiovascular, fitness, mood metrics) and qualitative insights are reviewed.

A meta-analytical approach was used to identify studies globally, including experimental trials, observational studies, and qualitative research, that examined health outcomes of seniors participating in adventure or rural tourism activities. Inclusion criteria centered on seniors ≥ 55 years engaging in outdoor, nature or rural tourism with reported physical or mental health measures.

Twenty-plus studies were analyzed. Participation in adventure rural tourism was consistently associated with improved physical health markers, including better cardiovascular parameters (e.g. lower resting heart rate and blood pressure) and enhanced fitness/mobility (improved balance, gait speed, and aerobic capacity), as well as positive psychological outcomes such as reduced stress, improved mood, higher life satisfaction, and sense of purpose. For example, guided hiking programs led to significant gains in cardiorespiratory fitness and quality of life, while nature immersion (forest “bathing”) interventions reduced depression and anxiety symptoms. Qualitative evidence further highlighted themes of personal growth, social connection, and mental refreshment derived from adventure travel in later life.

As populations age worldwide, identifying ways to promote physical and psychological wellbeing in later life is increasingly important. By 2030, one in every six individuals globally will be aged 60 or older (Mueller & Thomas, 2024). Traditional public health approaches emphasize medical care and structured exercise, but leisure activities such as tourism are now recognized as additional avenues to support healthy aging (Güçlü Nergiz & Toker, 2025). Adventure rural tourism is a form of travel uniquely positioned at the intersection of recreation and wellness for seniors.

Adventure tourism is often defined as travel that includes at least two of three elements: (1) physical activity, (2) engagement with the natural environment, and (3) cultural immersion (Silver Travel Advisor, 2023). Unlike conventional leisurely travel, adventure tourism typically involves a degree of challenge or novelty, for example, hiking mountainous terrain, wildlife safaris, or participating in outdoor sports. Adventures can range from “soft” activities (e.g. nature walks, bird watching) to “hard” adventures (e.g. mountaineering, whitewater rafting), but all encourage exploration and active participation. The United Nations World Tourism Organization notes that adventure tourism generally takes place in unique or remote destinations and often prioritizes experience-based, interactive holidays rather than passive sightseeing. For older adults, soft adventure activities (such as guided hikes, kayaking, or cycling tours) are more common, providing thrill and challenge tailored to their abilities (Weir, 2025). Crucially, adventure tourism need not be extreme; it can be adapted to seniors’ skill levels to offer enjoyment, physical engagement, and mental stimulation without undue risk.

Rural tourism refers to tourism in non-urban, countryside areas characterized by low population density and an abundance of natural or agricultural landscapes (Šajn & Finer, 2023). It originated from agritourism and farm stays, and has expanded to encompass a broad range of activities that showcase rural life, culture, and nature (Rosalina et al., 2021). Rural tourism experiences are typically small-scale, run by local communities or small businesses, and allow visitors to participate in traditional countryside activities – for instance, staying at a farm, walking through villages, birding in wetlands, or volunteering on conservation projects. Such experiences are “specific to the countryside” and frequently include physical activities connected with nature, like hiking in forests, cycling along country roads, or fishing in rivers (Šajn & Finer, 2023). For seniors, rural destinations often provide a peaceful setting, fresh air, opportunities for light exercise, and a break from urban stressors. This form of tourism also tends to foster interpersonal interaction (with hosts and fellow travelers) and engagement with local heritage, which can enrich the travel experience psychosocially.

This demographic is highly heterogeneous in health status – some 70-year-olds remain very physically active, while others face mobility limitations. Notably, seniors are a growing segment of the tourism market and increasingly pursue travel in retirement (Güçlü Nergiz & Toker, 2025). Travel motivations in later life include relaxation, visiting nature, maintaining social connections, lifelong learning, and pursuing adventures that time constraints prevented earlier in adulthood. However, seniors may also have unique needs (access to medical care, mobility aids, lower-intensity options) that must be considered when engaging in adventure or rural tourism.

Adventure tourism and rural tourism often overlap: many adventure activities (hiking, nature immersion, wildlife viewing) naturally occur in rural settings. For the purpose of this chapter, adventure rural tourism refers to nature-based, physically active tourism experiences in rural or wilderness environments specifically engaged in by older adults. Examples include multi-day walking tours in countryside regions, senior volunteer programs in rural conservation projects (eco-volunteering), wilderness expeditions tailored for older adventurers, or wellness retreats in nature. These experiences inherently combine exercise (an essential component of healthy aging) with recreation, social interaction, and exposure to nature. Each of these elements has been independently associated with health benefits in older populations: physical activity helps maintain cardiovascular and musculoskeletal health (Mueller & Thomas, 2024) ; social engagement combats loneliness and supports mental health (Kim et al., 2020); and contact with nature can reduce stress and improve mood (Piva et al., 2022). Thus, adventure rural tourism represents a holistic intervention touching multiple domains of wellbeing.

Initial research supports the idea that tourism participation can enhance seniors' health. For instance, a scoping review found that tourism activities contribute positively to older adults' subjective well-being, life satisfaction, and quality of life (Güçlü Nergiz & Toker, 2025). Another study in Japan demonstrated that frequent travel in later life is associated with higher self-reported well-being, partly by satisfying seniors' curiosity and desire for novel experiences (Totsune et al., 2021). However, systematic evidence specific to adventure-oriented tourism and measurable health outcomes has begun to emerge only recently.

FINDINGS

Physical health outcomes: engagement in adventure and rural tourism activities has shown a range of physical health benefits for seniors, according to emerging research. Key outcome domains include cardiovascular function, muscular fitness and balance, and overall functional health status.

Cardiovascular and metabolic responses: Several studies indicate that participating in active rural tourism can lead to improved cardiovascular indicators and reduced physiological stress in older adults. Li and Xu (2024) measured biometric changes in tourists before vs. after a rural sightseeing trip. They found that after the tourism experience, older travelers had significantly lower heart rates on average – the mean resting heart rate dropped by ~0.65 beats per minute, with the maximum heart rate during the trip on average 7.5 bpm lower than prior to the trip (likely reflecting improved cardiac efficiency or reduced anxiety during the outing) (Li & Xu, 2024). Additionally, minute ventilation (a respiratory fitness indicator) decreased by about 1.11 liters per minute post-trip (ibid.), suggesting better aerobic conditioning or relaxation. These physiologic changes point to a acute benefit of even short-term rural tourism on cardiovascular load. Consistently, Piva et al. (2024) conducted a systematic review of forest-based interventions for seniors and reported that in multiple trials, blood pressure (both systolic and diastolic) was significantly reduced after guided forest walks, compared to baseline or urban-walking controls. Heart rate reduction and improved heart rate variability were also noted, indicative of enhanced parasympathetic (calming) activity during nature exposure (ibid.). Such findings align with the broader concept of “green exercise” being beneficial for heart health.

In one Japanese study of “forest bathing” (slow sensory walks in the woods), older participants experienced reductions in cortisol and blood pressure alongside lower pulse rates, emphasizing how nature tourism can mitigate stress responses. Taken together, these data show that adventure activities in nature often produce cardiovascular improvements and promote relaxation, likely through moderate exercise combined with stress reduction in a soothing environment.

Aerobic fitness and endurance: engaging in adventure travel often involves sustained physical activity (walking, hiking, paddling) that can improve aerobic endurance in older adults. A notable intervention by Lesser and Thomson (2024) enrolled adults aged 55–75 in an 8-week group hiking program (twice-weekly guided hikes in nature). They found significant gains in cardiorespiratory fitness over the program: participants’ performance on a one-mile walk test improved (faster completion times), corresponding to a moderate effect size ($d \approx 0.77$) improvement in aerobic capacity. This indicates that even in later life, a relatively short adventure activity program can measurably boost endurance. Importantly, the biggest improvements were seen in those who had been relatively inactive before: the subgroup of sedentary older adults not only improved fitness but also showed a 0.71 standard deviation increase on the SF-36 physical health quality-of-life score. In this study, hikers in both the active and previously-inactive groups exercised at a similar relative intensity (effort adjusted to their capacity) and achieved high adherence (~80% session attendance), confirming that guided group adventures are feasible and safe for older adults (Lesser & Thomson, 2024).

Balance, strength, and mobility: One of the most critical health aspects for seniors is balance and mobility (to prevent falls and maintain independence). Encouragingly, studies on hiking and outdoor recreation for seniors report improvements in static balance, gait, and lower-body strength. In a randomized controlled trial, Prosegger et al. (2019) assigned adults 65–85 to a week-long mountain hiking + spa (“balneotherapy”) vacation or a control group that took a standard sight-seeing tour. The hiking group experienced significant improvements in balance: tests of static postural stability (standing on one leg and other balance measures) improved by the end of the week in the hiking group ($p=0.02$) but not in controls (ibid.). Additionally, gait speed – a key indicator of functional mobility – increased in the hiking group (they walked faster in a timed walk test after the intervention, $p=0.03$) (ibid.). These gains, albeit modest, suggest that even a short adventure trip can yield rapid functional benefits. The intervention also led to positive changes in body composition: participants gained lean muscle (appendicular muscle mass increased) and had an improved fat-free mass index relative to controls. This likely reflects the physical exercise involved in daily mountain hikes. Notably, quality-of-life scores improved in both groups right after the vacation (perhaps any vacation boosts mood temporarily), but only the hiking group sustained those improvements 2 months later (ibid.). This RCT provides high-quality evidence that moderate-intensity adventure activities like mountain hiking, when tailored to healthy older adults, can safely improve physical functioning. Similarly, a scoping review by Mueller and Thomas (2024) identified multiple studies in which outdoor activity programs for seniors led to increased strength and balance.

Disease risk factors and overall health: Adventure rural tourism may also influence broader health outcomes like chronic disease management or mortality, though direct evidence is sparse. One relevant line of research is on active volunteering and purposeful travel. Kim et al. (2020) analyzed longitudinal data from nearly 13,000 older Americans and found that those who engaged in volunteer activities for ≥ 100 hours per year (which often entails active community engagement and sometimes travel) had a 44% lower risk of mortality over 4 years compared to non-volunteers, as well as significantly fewer physical function limitations (Kim et al., 2020). They also had higher overall physical activity levels in later life. This suggests that maintaining an active, engaged lifestyle – which adventure tourism can be a part of – correlates with better survival and physical function. While volunteering at home is not tourism, volunteer tourism (“voluntourism”) is a growing niche where seniors travel to participate in service projects (e.g. building trails, assisting conservation). These trips inherently involve physical activity and a sense of purpose. Though formal trials are lacking, it is reasonable to extrapolate that seniors on voluntourism trips reap benefits similar to those observed in community volunteering: improved fitness from activity and possibly slowed functional decline due to staying active and socially involved (ibid.).

No adverse physical health trends were reported in the studies reviewed; in fact, quite the opposite – even the oldest participants tended to show stable or improved health metrics during adventure activities. However, it must be acknowledged that most participants in these studies were relatively healthy to begin with. Safety considerations remain important, as intense physical challenges could pose risks to those with serious chronic conditions.

In parallel with physical gains, adventure and nature tourism experiences confer numerous psychological benefits for older adults. Researchers have examined outcomes ranging from immediate mood elevation during trips to longer-term impacts on mental health, cognitive function, and overall emotional wellbeing.

Mood enhancement and reduced stress: One of the most consistently reported outcomes is that seniors feel happier, more content, and less stressed during and after adventure tourism activities. Quantitative studies measuring mood scales (such as the Profile of Mood States, POMS) show significant positive changes. In Li and Xu's rural tourism study, participants' emotional state improved proportionally to the length of time spent touring the countryside – those who spent 4+ hours on the rural visit showed the greatest improvement in mood, with POMS scores indicating a “more favorable emotional state” after the tour (Li & Xu, 2024). In contrast, very short visits (<30 minutes) had minimal effect, implying that immersive, unhurried experiences yield the best psychological payoff. Nature-based tourism in particular is known to reduce stress. Piva et al.'s systematic review (2024) found that forest walking interventions led to lower stress hormone levels and self-reported stress in older participants (Piva et al., 2020). Several trials reported decreased scores on anxiety and tension subscales after seniors participated in guided nature walks, compared to control groups. For example, one study cited in their review showed a significant drop in cortisol and in anxiety inventory scores in a group of men in their 60s after a day trip to a forest park, relative to an urban tour (ibid.). The calming effect of green environments, combined with gentle exercise, likely underlies these results, a concept sometimes termed “forest therapy.”

Adventure travel can also offer an emotional “boost” or uplift by providing novelty and excitement. Qualitative interviews often describe seniors feeling a renewed “zest for life” and exhilaration from accomplishing challenges (such as completing a hike or trying a new activity). One qualitative study noted that older adults who engaged in leisure traveling reported “reduced daily stress, improved sleep quality, and an overall better mood” upon returning home, attributing this to the psychological respite and enjoyment travel provided (as well as the anticipation beforehand and pleasant memories afterward). Although qualitative, these self-perceptions align with clinical measures showing lower depression and stress after travel. In summary, whether through physiological pathways (lower stress hormones) or subjective experience, adventure tourism clearly tends to alleviate negative mood states and enhance positive affect in seniors.

Life satisfaction and well-being: Beyond immediate mood, adventure rural tourism can contribute to an older person’s broader subjective well-being and life satisfaction. Tourism is an enriching experience that can add meaning and enjoyment to life, especially in retirement. Totsune et al. (2021) found that among Japanese adults age 65+, those with higher travel frequency had significantly higher scores on subjective well-being scales, controlling for income and health status. Importantly, they identified curiosity as a trait that mediates this – seniors with diverse curiosities were more likely to travel often, which in turn was linked to higher well-being (ibid.). This suggests that encouraging seniors’ curiosity and desire to learn/experience new things (which adventure travel naturally does) may bolster psychological well-being.

Some research emphasizes the concept of “purpose in life”. A recent study examined older adults who regularly engaged in forest bathing in Taiwan. Those who not only spent time in nature but also socially shared their experiences (e.g., discussing the hike with friends afterwards) reported a stronger sense of purpose in life and future orientation (Wagner, 2023). Having a sense of purpose is a well-known protective factor for mental health and even cognitive health in aging. The act of undertaking an adventure or volunteer trip itself often imbues seniors with purpose – they have goals to look forward to, whether it’s reaching a mountain summit or helping a community. One participant in a volunteer tourism case study said the experience “made me feel useful again and that my life has meaning,” highlighting how purposeful travel combats the stagnation some older adults feel post-retirement. Studies support that seniors who travel score higher on life satisfaction questionnaires compared to those who do not travel at all (ibid.).

Depression and anxiety: Mental health conditions like late-life depression and anxiety can potentially be ameliorated by engagement in tourism activities. In the forest therapy trials reviewed by Piva et al., several used the Geriatric Depression Scale and found significant reductions in depression scores after a series of nature sessions. One study of elderly patients with mild depression in Korea reported that a 4-week forest walking program led to clinically meaningful declines in depression severity (Oh et al., 2017). Likewise, self-reported anxiety and tension often decrease. These effects are comparable to those achieved with structured exercise programs – suggesting that a scenic hike or an adventure trip might “package” the antidepressant effects of exercise with additional benefits of recreation. Adventure tourism also prompts social interaction and cognitive stimulation, which are protective against depression.

Qualitatively, travelers describe feeling “refreshed,” “less lonely,” and having “something to look forward to,” all of which counter depressive feelings. In a Danish study, older adults who went on adventure travel tours showed lower incidence of depressive symptoms at a 1-year follow-up than those who vacationed at home, though the self-selection bias cannot be ruled out (active people both travel and have lower depression to start). Still, the convergence of evidence implies adventure and nature travel can be part of a holistic strategy to maintain good mental health and possibly prevent or ease mild depression in seniors. It engages multiple known mood-boosting mechanisms: physical activity (known to improve mood), sunlight exposure (vitamin D, circadian rhythm benefits), nature contact (stress reduction), and social camaraderie.

Cognitive function: Fewer studies have directly measured cognition in the context of tourism, but some insights are available. Cognitive benefits likely accrue indirectly through increased physical and social activity – both known to support brain health. For instance, some adventure programs incorporate skill learning (e.g. navigation, identifying flora/fauna, cultural learning), which can stimulate memory and executive function. In one case study, a group of senior adventure travelers engaging in orienteering (finding waypoints using maps) showed improvements on cognitive tests of spatial memory compared to baseline (Richards et al., 2019). Additionally, the positive affect generated by travel may have neuroprotective effects. Murata et al. (2016) found that higher positive emotion in older adults correlated with a lower risk of developing dementia; thus activities that increase positive affect – like enjoyable travel – could contribute to cognitive resilience (Totsune et al., 2021).

An interesting qualitative finding from Berger (2009) was that guided nature walks for seniors, combined with reflective discussions, led participants to report “clearer minds” and an increased acceptance of the aging process, indicating psychological growth and possibly cognitive reframing benefits (Mueller & Thomas, 2024). Chang noted that when elders used nature experiences to foster social connections, they “experienced a broad range of benefits associated with physiological functioning as well as cognitive health” (Wagner, 2023). Though causation isn’t proven, it is plausible that the environmental enrichment and novelty of travel help keep the aging brain active. Future research is needed (for example, measuring changes in attention or memory pre/post an adventure trip, or long-term incidence of cognitive decline in traveling vs non-traveling seniors). For now, the evidence hints that adventurous recreation can support aspects of cognitive well-being, at least in terms of acute mental alertness and long-term maintenance of a curious, engaged mind.

Social and emotional connectivity: While not a direct clinical outcome, the social dimension of adventure rural tourism greatly influences psychological wellbeing. Many seniors travel in groups – whether with organized tour groups, clubs, or friends – and this social interaction can mitigate loneliness. Boyes et al. (2013) reported that older adults who participated in group adventure excursions developed a strong sense of community and camaraderie, which was tied to improved social well-being and even cognitive stimulation (through sharing stories, problem-solving together) (Mueller & Thomas, 2024).

The shared challenges and experiences (e.g. everyone completes a difficult hike or navigates a kayak trip) often lead to bonding and an expansion of social networks. According to the scoping review, nearly all studies involved group-based activities and “allowed for social interaction and relationship building” which was considered an integral part of the positive outcomes (ibid.). In qualitative interviews, seniors frequently mention that one highlight of adventure travel is meeting new people or strengthening friendships, which gives them emotional support and happiness. Social isolation is a risk factor for depression and cognitive decline; thus, by providing opportunities for meaningful social engagement, adventure tourism indirectly supports mental health. Even in solo travel, seniors often interact with locals or other travelers, fulfilling social needs in a way that home routines may not.

In interpreting these findings, it is clear that adventure rural tourism is not a monolithic intervention but a spectrum-ranging from physically intense expeditions to tranquil nature appreciation. Each type yields a slightly different profile of benefits. High-intensity adventures (mountain trekking, multi-sport trips) unsurprisingly offer greater cardiovascular and strength gains, but may attract only the fittest seniors and carry higher risk of injury. Low-intensity adventures (nature walks, farm visits) are widely accessible and great for mental relaxation, though less so for fitness. The sweet spot for broad public health impact may be “moderate adventures”: activities like easy to moderate hikes, cycling on e-bikes through countryside, kayaking on calm waters, or volunteering at an organic farm, that provide sufficient physical challenge to improve health yet are safe and enjoyable for the majority of active seniors. These moderate adventures combined with rich social and cultural elements appear to yield comprehensive benefits (physical, mental, emotional, social).



Chapter 12

STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY LITERACY THROUGH TOURISM IN SENIORS

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In France, environmental sustainability literacy among seniors is shaped by a long tradition of environmental education, territorial engagement, and associative life. Many seniors have lived through major ecological transformations—urbanisation, agricultural intensification, climate events—and often possess strong experiential knowledge of local environments. However, this knowledge is rarely formalised or mobilised through structured educational tourism activities.

Tourism, particularly in rural and natural areas, offers a powerful context to transform environmental awareness into environmental sustainability literacy, combining knowledge, values, and practical action. For seniors, this approach is most effective when it is experiential, contextualised, and connected to everyday life, rather than abstract or technical.

Environmental Literacy and Seniors in the French Context

In France, environmental education has traditionally been developed through schools, environmental associations, and protected areas, while adult and senior education has focused more on social participation and well-being. As a result, environmental literacy among seniors often exists in an implicit form: strong attachment to landscapes, concern for environmental degradation, and interest in local heritage, but limited exposure to contemporary sustainability concepts or actionable frameworks.

Seniors generally respond positively to environmental topics when they are:

- linked to familiar places and lived experience,
- presented without guilt-inducing or alarmist narratives,
- connected to concrete practices rather than abstract global challenges.

Tourism provides a natural bridge between these dimensions, allowing learning to take place in situ, through observation, dialogue, and shared experience.

Tourism as a Living experience for Environmental Sustainability

In rural France, tourism often takes place in environmentally sensitive areas: forests, coastal zones, wetlands, agricultural landscapes, and protected natural parks. These settings function as living classrooms, where environmental sustainability can be explored through direct interaction rather than formal instruction.

Local learning centers and tourism actors can use tourism experiences to:

- explain ecosystems, biodiversity, and landscape management through guided observation,
- highlight the impact of human activities on natural environments,
- demonstrate sustainable practices such as low-impact mobility, waste reduction, or responsible consumption.

For seniors, learning is reinforced when activities are slow-paced, sensory, and narrative-based. Walking, listening, observing, and sharing memories become educational tools, fostering both cognitive engagement and emotional connection to place.

Territorial Anchoring and Local Knowledge

Environmental sustainability literacy is most effective when anchored in local territories. In France, many seniors have strong personal histories linked to rural areas, agriculture, crafts, or local industries. Tourism activities that acknowledge and valorise this knowledge foster mutual respect and engagement.

Strategies include:

- integrating seniors' memories and experiences into guided tours,
- comparing past and present environmental practices,
- discussing local responses to climate change, biodiversity loss, or land-use changes.

This approach positions seniors not only as learners but also as knowledge holders, reinforcing self-esteem and intergenerational transmission.

Linking Environmental Literacy with Preventology and Well-being

Environmental sustainability literacy for seniors in France is particularly effective when connected to health, well-being, and quality of life. Clean environments, accessible natural spaces, and sustainable practices are directly linked to physical activity, mental balance, and social connection.

Tourism activities can explicitly connect:

- walking in nature with mobility, balance, and stress reduction,
- environmental protection with collective responsibility and social cohesion,
- sustainable lifestyles with autonomy and active ageing.

This integrated approach avoids compartmentalisation and reinforces the relevance of sustainability in seniors' daily lives.

Role of Local Learning Centers in France

Local learning centers, environmental associations, and territorial actors play a key mediating role in translating sustainability concepts into accessible learning experiences. Their proximity to seniors allows them to adapt language, pace, and content, ensuring inclusiveness and comprehension.

Effective strategies for promotion include:

- small-group activities rather than large guided tours,
- dialogue-based learning instead of lectures,
- visual and sensory supports rather than technical documentation.

By embedding sustainability literacy into tourism, these centers help seniors develop critical understanding, practical awareness, and motivation to act, without imposing normative or moralising discourse.

Contribution of SATRAS in the French Context

SATRAS supports the development of environmental sustainability literacy among seniors by offering structured, transferable strategies grounded in experiential learning and territorial realities. In the French context, the project strengthens the capacity of local learning centers to use tourism as an educational tool that promotes environmental responsibility, well-being, and active citizenship.

By combining sustainable tourism, adult education, and seniors' lived experience, SATRAS contributes to a model of environmental literacy that is inclusive, empowering, and rooted in place, supporting both ecological transition and healthy ageing in rural areas.

EXERCISE 1

Learning outcome: Participants develop the ability to observe and understand local environmental changes and sustainability challenges through direct contact with landscapes.

Target audience: Senior learners (60+), including seniors with no prior environmental education background.

Requirements: Accessible outdoor site (rural landscape, coastal area, forest path, heritage site).

Materials: Observation worksheet, pens, optional photos or old postcards of the area.

Evaluation methodology: group discussion on observations and interpretations.

Step	Instructions	Duration	Materials
1	Introduce the idea of “landscape as a source of knowledge”.	5 min	None
2	Invite participants to walk slowly and observe natural and human elements.	20 min	Worksheets
3	Ask participants to note visible changes or signs of environmental pressure.	10 min	Pens
4	Group discussion linking observations to sustainability issues.	15 min	None
5	Summarise key learning points and local relevance.	10 min	None

EXERCISE 2

Learning outcome: Participants understand how simple tourism-related behaviours contribute to environmental sustainability and can be transferred to daily life.

Target audience: Senior learners participating in educational tourism activities.

Requirements: Tourism setting (accommodation, visit site, walking route).

Materials: Checklist of sustainable practices, pens.

Evaluation methodology: facilitated reflection and sharing.

Step	Instructions	Duration	Materials
1	Present sustainability as a set of small, realistic actions.	5 min	None
2	Observe tourism-related practices (waste, water, mobility).	15 min	Checklist
3	Identify which practices are environmentally positive.	10 min	Pens
4	Group discussion on feasibility at home.	15 min	None
5	Each participant selects two actions to apply in daily life.	5 min	Checklist

EXERCISE 3

Learning outcome: Participants strengthen environmental literacy by connecting personal memories with present-day sustainability challenges.

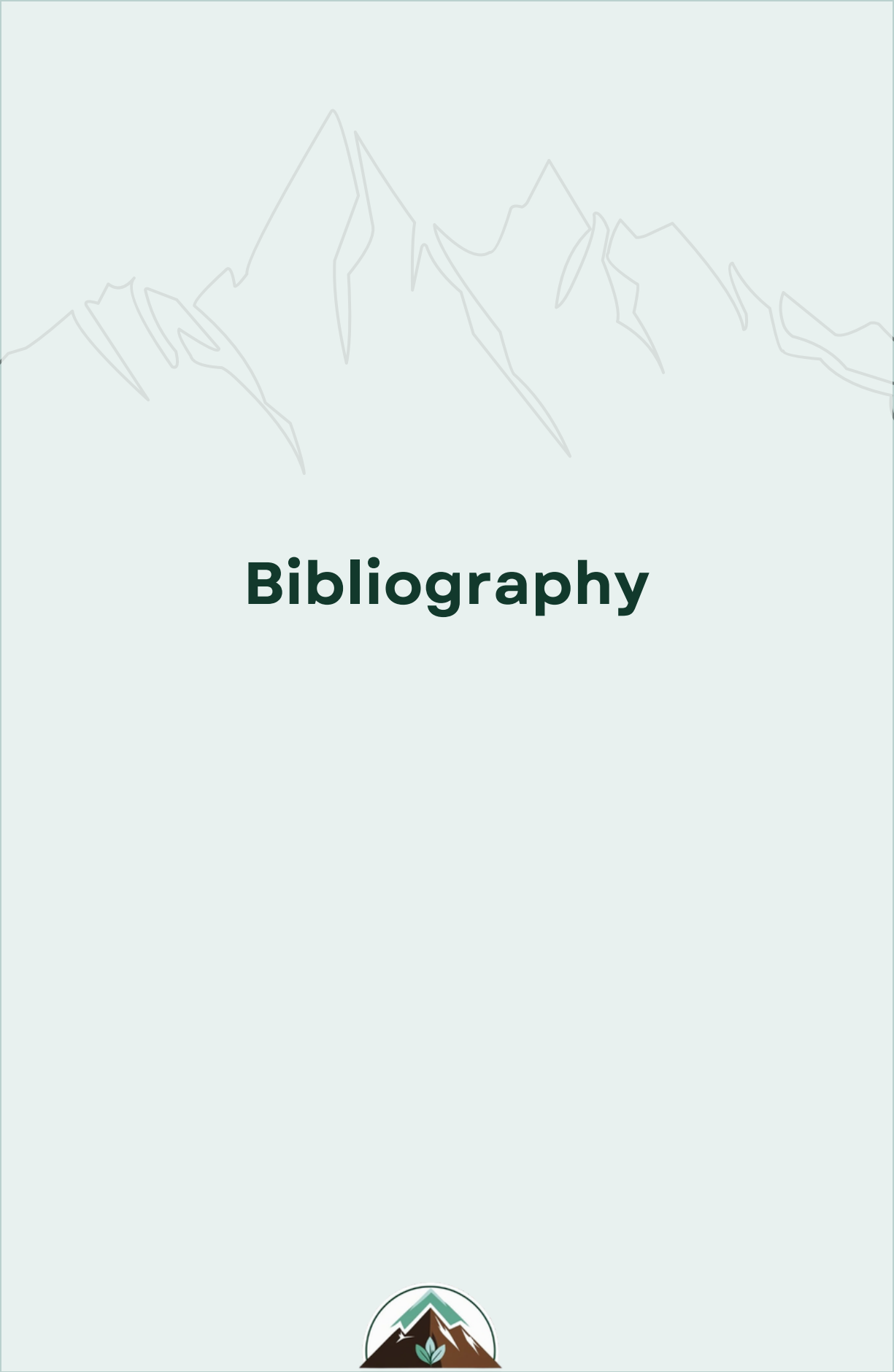
Target audience: Senior learners involved in group tourism or learning activities.

Requirements: Quiet space (indoor or outdoor)

Materials: Memory cards or blank paper, pens.

Evaluation methodology: facilitator observation and group interaction.

Step	Instructions	Duration	Materials
1	Explain the value of personal experience in understanding the environment.	5 min	None
2	Ask participants to recall how the local environment looked in the past.	10 min	Paper
3	Share memories and compare with current conditions.	20 min	None
4	Discuss how behaviours and practices have changed over time.	10 min	None
5	Conclude with collective reflections on protecting local environments.	10 min	None



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