

A vibrant forest scene with a yellow path, a rabbit, a mouse, a beetle, and a flower. The background is a lush green forest with moss-covered rocks and trees. In the top left, a modern building is visible through the trees. A yellow path winds through the forest. On the path, a brown mouse is walking towards the left, and a blue beetle is walking towards the right. A large orange rabbit is standing on the path, looking towards the right. A large white flower with yellow stamens is in the foreground on the right.

Helsinki

Join the
forest adventure

Stay on the trail!

Welcome to the forest adventure!

Helsinki has various forest areas, and some of them are delicate protected areas. Let's get excited about the nature surrounding us. The trail will take you on a responsible adventure.

The forest adventure booklet is intended for day care centres, lower level of comprehensive schools and environmental educators operating in urban nature in Helsinki as well as families during their free time. Everyone is invited!

The booklet contains ideas for many outdoor activities. Familiarize yourself with the tasks and the tools in advance as well as the knowledge boulders. The activities are suitable in particular for children aged 5–8, with an adult guidance.

We hope your moments in the forest are happy and memorable!

Take with you

Non-littering snacks
Seat pads
Cotton yarn
Frame
Loupe or magnifying glass
Small mirror

Hello there,
forest adventurer!
I am Marion the Magpie.
Join my friends on a journey
deeper into the forest.
Sharpen your senses and
follow the trail to the
adventure!

Walk the trail!

 Move like forest inhabitants:
walk on your tippytoes like a dung beetle, patter like a vole, jump like a blue hare!

 **Learn and feel refreshed**
Forests have health benefits and they offer a versatile environment to learn. Social and motor skills develop during adventures. The treasure chest of natural wonders will also refresh the mind during outdoor activities!

 Knowledge boulder

 Activity

 Discussion





Hi, my name is Sam the Garden Spider!
The vibration of the signal thread of my web sends me a message about an incoming snack. The forest trees also send messages to each other – through underground roots and tiny threads of mycelial filaments. In the air, messages travel on the wind.



Busy forests

Urban nature often attracts many people to a small area and nature degrades easily. Nature is especially vulnerable in nature reserves. You can play more freely in other local forests.

Caught in the web!



Help the garden spider by building a web between the trees using cotton yarn. Choose a place where you will not trample the vegetation. Are you able to sneak through the web without breaking it? Take your web with you when you finish playing.



The forest degrades in places where many people walk. Can you see exposed roots of trees? What does the ground look like in places where you can see where the roots go? How about where you cannot see the roots?

Invisible messages



A tree may be communicating with another tree right below your feet at this moment. Measure the roots of the trees. They can reach up to 40 paces from the tree.



We humans do not understand the messages trees send with our own senses. Trees have their own way of talking to each other. Trees work together by warning their neighbours of dangerous pests, for example. What do you think the trees in this forest are saying?



Hi, I'm
Billy the Blue Hare!
Early morning is my favourite
time of day. That is when I
listen to the forest and breathe in
its fragrances. My children, leverets,
are hidden here in the forest.
It is important that all of us living
creatures have peaceful places
to live and grow,
even in the city.



Protect nature by staying on the trail

Nature reserves are natural gems and often the most beautiful places in Helsinki. Nature reserves have been set up to protect natural diversity. You can identify nature reserves by their green and white boundary markers. Protection regulation signs will inform you of what you can and cannot do in the nature reserve.

Find out whether your destination is in a nature reserve:
hel.fi/stayontrail

Walking the trails

How are paths formed? Why does nothing grow on trails? Where can animals hide and build nests? What happens to the forest, if a large number of people walk outside the trails?

Stop on the trail

Close your eyes for a minute and prick up your ears like a blue hare. What can you hear? Where are the noises coming from?

Take a few deep breaths. Smell the air. Describe the smell of the forest to your friend.

Hi there, giant!

My name is Devan Dung Beetle.

I walk the trail and look for dung and decaying vegetable matter. I am always looking for small miracles in my environment: a beetle biting bracket fungus, moss spreading its spores and a colourful slime fungus lollygagging on a fallen log. Decaying wood is a research subject brimming with life.

If only there were decaying wood in every forest!

Take a very close look

Find an interesting plant, look for lichen, find movement. Examine something soft, hard and colourful. When you close one eye and peek through the loupe, the familiar becomes exciting!

You can use the mirror to peer under plants. What does the world look like for a dung beetle?

The known and the unknown forest

Which familiar species can you see near you? Do you see something interesting that you would like to learn more about?

Not all species in the forest are known yet. Looking at a piece of wood through the loupe, you might see tiny fungi growing on the surface. Some of these fungus species are unknown to science. Imagine what type of new species could you find in this forest?



Touch the forest

Diverse nature is valuable in itself — and vital to human health. Touching the forest soil will improve our resistance to disease and may protect us from illnesses. Woodlands have up to 10,000 times more microbes that affect our immune system than the sand in residential areas.





My name is Bessie Bank Vole. You may have met some of my family, because there are millions of us bank voles. I collect moss in my nest, and my home can sometimes be quite a work of art. Do you like the art exhibition of the forest?

Forest gallery

- 🌿 Frame the most interesting things in the forest. Make a frame out of cardboard or use loose sticks. You cannot take the forest home with you, but you can capture it in photographs.
- 🍃 Why are voles allowed to gather moss for their nests and people are not? What kind of artwork does not damage nature?
- 🌿 Leave the bank vole a small greeting by making a work of art using material on the ground. Make art and respect nature!

Who is allowed to leave marks?

- 🌿 Do you see marks left behind by forest animals, such as feeding places or droppings?
- 🍃 Why are animals allowed to leave many kinds of marks behind in nature, but human beings must be careful not to leave anything behind?

Explore and examine, but do not harm the environment!

Breaking the branches of trees or collecting spruce shoots and moss are not part of everyman's rights. You can create art with loose material found on the ground — but check that you are not in a nature reserve, first. Clean up any rubbish!

hel.fi/stayontrail

-  Forests located in existing or planned nature reserves
-  Other forest destinations



Learn more about your local forest or journey farther away. Here are some forest destinations that you can reach on public transport.

Helsinki



Urban Environment Division / Nature and Environmental Awareness, Mira Lainiola, Raisa Kyllikki Ranta and Mosafonttu Oy / Vappu Ormio 2022. Based on Harakka Nature Centre's forest adventure excursions / Ilona Tuovinen and Vilma Kaukavuori. Photographs in the collages Raisa Kyllikki Ranta, Mira Lainiola, Vappu Ormio, Eero Haapanen, Jussi Heilmäki, Tomi Muukkonen, Kaarina Heikkonen, Marianne Aalto, Kalle Meller, Tuomas Lahti, Jan W. Ahlfors, Antti Kuikka, Markku Halonen. Drawings and collages Vappu Ormio.