Friluftsliv: The Scandinavian Philosophy of Outdoor Life

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Abstract

This paper explores the roots of the Scandinavian outdoor lifestyle of friluftsliv and its philosophical implication as well as its applications for environmental education. Friluftsliv as a philosophy is deeply rooted in Norway and Sweden but has lately obtained a more superficial meaning by the commercialization of outdoor activities. The philosophy and biology of friluftsliv is explored showing its importance as a means, in environmental education, to facilitate a true connectedness to the more-than-human world.

As a Norwegian I was born and raised with the Scandinavian philosophy of outdoor life called «friluftsliv», which describes a way of life that is spent exploring and appreciating nature. When I cycled across Africa in 2011 I discovered my passion for slow adventure and slow traveling which ultimately led me to buy a sailboat in 2015. I lived aboard for two years and sailed along the Norwegian coast singlehanded during winter. Today I work as a photographer and filmmaker, and whenever I’m not on a job I spend my time exploring the vast amounts of mountains, fjords and islands here in Norway. I’ve recently started recording my hikes, and I post them regularly to YouTube. If you want to follow along, head over to my YouTube-channel and consider subscribing. What is ‘friluftsliv’? How an idea of outdoor living could help us this winter. Get outside, says this Norwegian concept that promises to make the pandemic’s colder months more bearable. 5 Minute Read. Along the way, they’ve won a prestigious Norwegian wilderness award. In her short life, Mina Floriana has spent more than 300 nights sleeping in a tent. In Norway this is not as outlandish as it might seem in other nations. The Reads are simply following the concept of friluftsliv, which translates roughly to “open-air living” and is deeply engrained in the country’s heritage. From the remote Arctic to urban Oslo, friluftsliv means a commitment to celebrating time outdoors, no matter the weather forecast. Remember life before COVID-19 when it was fun to come home after a long day and settle into your comfy couch with a hot cup of tea and maybe a fuzzy blanket? Yeah…that hygge lifestyle, that being one of coziness and comfort, is something you’d never expect to tire of. Since its origin, friluftsliv has become an important part of Scandinavian culture, so much so that outdoor activities occur all year round, despite deep winter freezes and large snowfalls. The BBC reports that Swedes, Norwegians, and Danes use the term to refer to lunchtime runs mid-work day, commuting by bike or cross-country skis, or meeting up with friends at the lakeside sauna to catch up. The Scandinavian philosophy of friluftsliv focuses on enlightenment through spiritual oneness with nature. The contemporary context, however, misleads us into believing that performing adventure sports in nature is a means to achieve friluftsliv. To be honest, it really isn’t. Even in school, I didn’t understand the high emphasis on outdoor and adventure, the weekly skiing or hiking trips, or the importance of an entire week organised just for skiing in nature. Then I learned about friluftsliv in Norway, which literally translates into “open air life.” That’s when I discovered a contradiction in its historical context and contemporary practice. Friluftsliv appeared while I was digging further into the history of the Norwegian law allemannsrett.