

INTRODUCTION TO RECREATION

This lecture will cover:

- Definitions of recreation
- History of outdoor recreation
- Trends in recreation
- European differences

What is the Outdoors?

- All those places where people can “get away from it all”.
- Countryside near home.
- Urban forest.
- Empty landscapes in parts of crowded countries.
- Remote wilderness.

Reasons for visiting the outdoors

- Physical exercise
- Release from the stress of city life
- For fresh air
- To get closer to nature
- Enjoyment of scenery and landscape
- Hunting and fishing
- Holidays/vacation

Problems caused by visitors

- Creating paths and trails
- Leaving rubbish and litter (including fly-tipping)
- Lighting fires and setting fire to trees and objects
- Picking plants and disturbing wildlife
- Damaging crops or disturbing domestic animals
- Wear and tear to the ground and vegetation.
- Pollution
- Vandalism
- Anti-social behaviour (“dogging”, drugs, drinking etc)

Visitors need managing

- In order for landscapes, habitats and wildlife to survive...
- ...and in order to fulfil the purpose and enjoyment of the visit...
- ...we need to manage both landscape and visitors in a balanced way...
- ...so that the qualities that people have come to find when they visit are not destroyed.

History of outdoor recreation 1

- High status people enjoyed hunting from early times. Special areas were set aside for this – hunting forests and parks.
- 18th and 19th centuries – landowners and newly wealthy industrialists pursued field sports, went on grand tours and developed a taste for scenery, especially mountains.
- In the late 19th and early 20th centuries the urban working classes started to demand access to the countryside to escape the slums.





History of outdoor recreation 2

- In 19th century railways made remoter areas accessible to the masses.
- In late 19th century onwards national park movements developed to protect scenery while encouraging access.
- In the 20th century, especially post-war, improved roads and mass car ownership further areas became available more freely.





History of outdoor recreation 3

- Nostalgia for lost pioneer life (especially in USA) has converted survival activities into leisure pursuits.
- The boom in cheap air travel has made visiting places even further afield much easier.
- As access has become easier for many and people have become more adventurous the range of activities has increased and has become more specialised.

In 1901 John Muir wrote:

“Thousands of tired, nerve shaken, overcivilised people are beginning to find that going to the mountains is going home; that wilderness is a necessity; and that mountain parks and reserves are useful not only as fountains of timber and invigorating rivers but as fountains of life.”



Escaping from the city

- There is increasing evidence that green spaces and natural areas are able to contribute to stress reduction.
- The outdoors can be seen as a “restorative environment” in many ways, through being close to nature, from physical exercise in attractive surroundings and from a pleasurable aesthetic experience.

Escaping from the city

- Urban environments constantly bombard us with stimulation and living or working there requires constant concentration.
- Natural areas stimulate us without effort, we do not have to concentrate, sounds are calming and colours help us to relax.

The Potential Drivers Of Recreation Over The Next 20 Years

There are a series of trends in European society that are likely to affect recreation demand.

These are based on western European studies but the trends are likely to affect the whole of Europe, though with some regional differences.

1. Decrease In Traditional Households

- Married couple households have fallen and the trend is predicted to continue. Cohabiting is becoming more common.
- Single person households will continue to increase – through widowhood, separation, divorce etc.
- Multi-households will increase (unrelated adults sharing a house)

1. Decrease In Traditional Households

Issue for recreation:

- A move away from traditional family patterns and outings.
- The rise in single person households has made people more reliant on leisure activities to meet new people and to spend time in the company of others.
- The park as a place for social intercourse

2. Changing Work Patterns

- Rise in part-time working and multiple jobs, partly to supplement incomes and partly for a more interesting life.
- Home working is becoming more popular – avoiding commuting, taking up opportunities provided by new technology etc.
- More career breaks and GAP years or sabbaticals.

2. Changing Work Patterns

Issues for recreation:

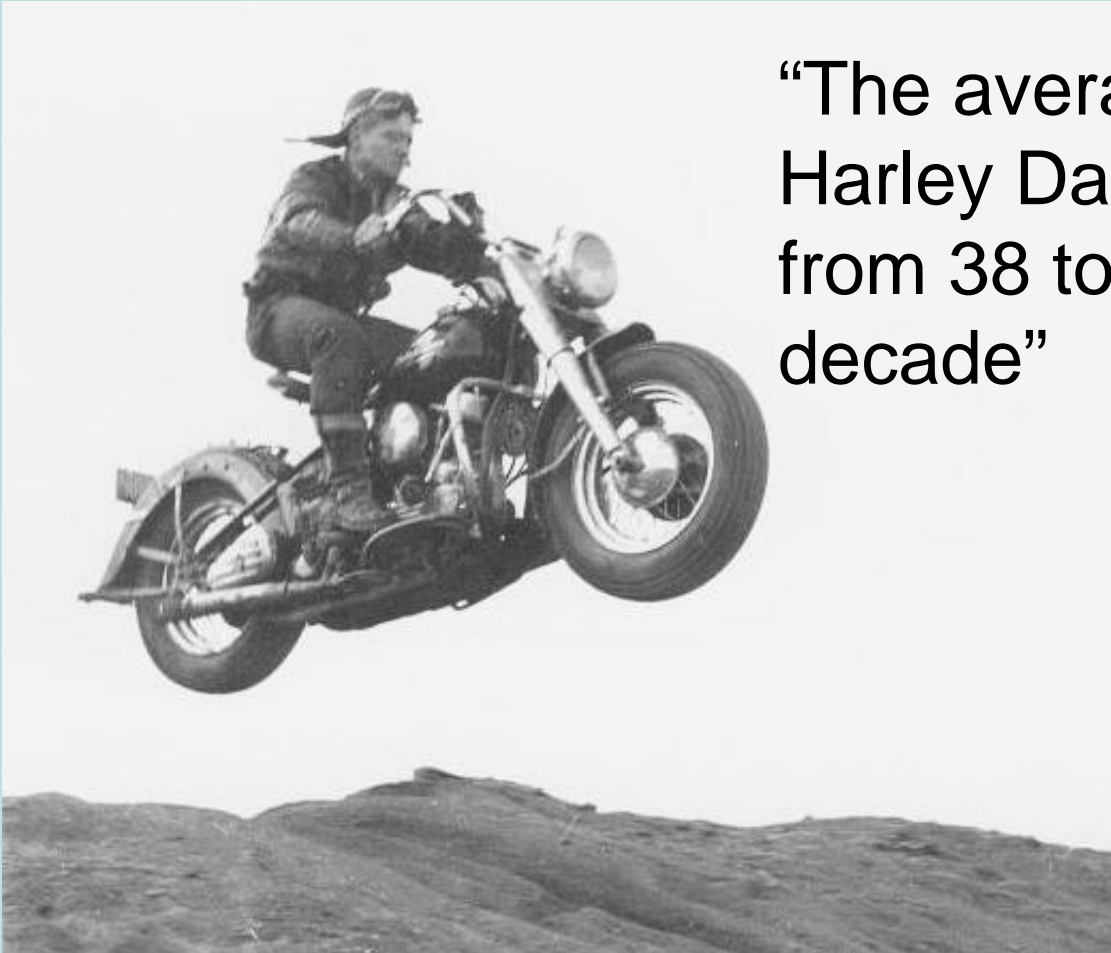
- A desire for more leisure and a need for greater flexibility.
- Greater work pressure has led to a demand for a better work/life balance.
- Leisure time needs to be flexible and fit around non-typical working weeks.

3. Ageing population

- People are living longer – life expectancy has risen and continues to rise
- Women still live longer on average than men and this trend is expected to continue.
- Agelessness is a growing trend: older generations enjoy activities not traditionally associated with “someone of their age”

3. Ageing population

“The average age of a Harley Davidson rider rose from 38 to 46 over the past decade”



3. Ageing population

Issues for recreation:

- Growing retired population with growing leisure needs in terms of
 - Frequency
 - Intensity
 - Varietyof leisure and recreational activities

4. Increasingly Affluent Society

- We are better off than we were – the economies are growing and incomes are higher. The Baltic states have good growth and increasing GDP per capita.
- The middle class is growing in size and becoming stronger.

4. Increasingly Affluent Society

Issues for recreation:

- Greater affluence increases overall demand for recreation.
- There tends to be much more choice of leisure and recreation opportunities.
- People are interested in travelling more widely.

5. Rise of the Empowered Consumer

- Consumers are becoming much more demanding.
- We are harder to please, have higher expectations and we complain more.
- In the Baltics the service economy is growing and people are learning to demand better service.
- As people travel more and experience levels of service in other places their expectations grow.

5. Rise of the Empowered Consumer

Issues for recreation:

- People are harder to please so that quality has to be better.
- Products and services have to “delight” – they have to be more than ordinary, standard examples.
- Recreational experiences – places, activities and services – have to be to a high standard of design and presentation.

6. Convenience Culture

- People perceive a lack of time in their lives: “I never seem to have enough time to get things done”.
- People value time and are willing to spend money to save it.
- Convenience therefore becomes an important means of making the most of time available.

6. Convenience Culture

Issues for recreation:

- People are drawn to activities which seem to use their time well – easy to get to, easy to use, little preparation time.
- Recreation areas close to where people live are seen as most convenient for regular use.
- People are willing to pay for convenience.

7. Networked Society

- Always on – internet is available 24 hours a day, many large supermarkets are open 24 hours a day.
- Last minute planning – this is easy with mobile phones and email.
- People can belong to virtual groups interested in similar activities.
- Sense of safety – mobile phones offer people confidence when outdoors (as long as there is a signal!)

7. Networked Society

Issues for recreation:

- People expect to be able to arrange their business and leisure lives at the last minute and at any time.
- People expect things to be available and places to be open at the last minute and at any time.
- People may rely on mobile phones to get them out of trouble if they get lost or are injured.

8. Experience Economy

- Western European countries are mature economies (Eastern Europe will catch up).
- Desire for material things is being replaced by a desire for higher needs such as belonging, community and experiences.
- There is a rise in the popularity of adrenaline sports.
- More things are packaged and sold as experiences.

8. Experience Economy

Issues for recreation:

- Outdoor recreation provides a location for experiences.
- Recreation can be packaged as an experience and marketed as such.
- Some adrenaline sports can take place in outdoor locations as part of the experience.

8. Experience Economy



“GO APE” is a type of adrenaline experience based on climbing trees and swinging like an ape.

9. Increasing Ethnic Diversity

- This may affect some places more than others, or in different ways.
- Expansion of the EU eastwards has opened up migration from east to west.
- Different ethnic groups have different recreational traditions; some may not use the countryside or use it in limited ways.

9. Increasing Ethnic Diversity

Issues for recreation:

- Where there is a high proportion of minority ethnic groups there may be little provision for them.
- Information needs to be provided in different languages.
- In Estonia there may be differences between the Russian and Estonian cultures. Will this increase or decrease over time?

9. Increasing Ethnic Diversity



People from mixed ethnic groups being introduced to cows.

10. Rise of Single Issue Politics

- Confidence in traditional institutions has been failing (in some countries more than others).
- There is a greater engagement with single issue politics.
- People are more inclined to become involved in single issues that are closer to their interests, especially environmental issues.

10. Rise of Single Issue Politics

Issues for recreation:

- People take an active interest in the countryside, the future of agriculture (factory farming), animal rights (anti-hunting) and the environment (saving forests).
- Protection of landscapes and use for recreation may be demanded.
- Some activities may become impossible, eg certain forms of hunting.

10. Rise of Single Issue Politics



Anti-fur wearing protesters, typical of single issue politics.

13. Greater Awareness of Environmental Concerns

- The natural world is changing rapidly
 - More floods
 - Oil reserves peaking
- Europe is becoming wilder
 - Rural depopulation leads to abandoned landscapes
 - Wild animals are returning to places they have not been for many years
- There is a greater public feeling of responsibility

13. Greater Awareness of Environmental Concerns

Issues for recreation:

- The awareness of the environmental agenda encourages people to spend more time caring for and appreciating the natural world.
- The wilder Europe has potential as a market for wilderness experiences and nature tourism.
- Transport and use of fossil fuels will become a more important issue over time.

14. Fragmentation of Leisure

- Expansion of the tourism industry leads to greater diversification of leisure.
- There has been a rise in niche activities
 - Power gliding, jet skiing, advanced mountain biking
- Some activities come and go in popularity
 - Skateboarding, BMX biking
- Potential conflicts add to current tensions
 - Anglers/canoeists; horseriders/cyclists

14. Fragmentation of Leisure

Issues for recreation:

- Opportunities for niche activities need to be seen and acted upon by recreation providers.
- The short period of popularity of some activities should be recognised.
- Methods of conflict management are needed.

14. Fragmentation of Leisure



Special tracks for extreme mountain biking cost money. How long will the craze last?

15.Changing Urban Landscape

- Population decline.
- Increasing urban sprawl, especially commercial development.
- Movement of people from city centres to new rural settlements within easy reach of the city.
- Shrinking cities in eastern Europe leaving vacant inner city areas.

15.Changing Urban Landscape

Issues for recreation:

- Changing distribution of population in cities so that location of recreational areas needs to be considered in planning strategies.
- Protection of land on urban fringes from development pressures.
- Integration of housing with recreation areas to keep to standards of provision.

16. Changing Perceptions of Risk

- Heightened sense of risk
 - Push for more formalised/regulated activities
 - Health and safety regulations
 - Differences in urban/rural fears.
- Specific outdoors recreation issues
 - Criminal activity in parks
 - Disease (eg. Lymes disease)
 - Dangerous areas (cliffs, mines, quarries)

16. Changing Perceptions of Risk

Issues for recreation:

- Concern for safety versus fear of litigation in cases of injury.
- Women feeling fearful of going to parks and other places alone.
- Parents unwilling to let their children go out to play alone.

17. Balance of Conservation to Recreation

- Nature protection designations increasing and management needs to meet EU targets – HAPs, BAPs.
- Archaeological sites need to be protected from damage by visitors.
- People like to visit reserves and watch wildlife

17. Balance of Conservation to Recreation

Issues for recreation:

- Recreation creates the potential for ecological damage
- A mutually beneficial balance between conservation and recreation is needed

18. Sustainable communities

- In some areas rural populations are growing, in others declining
- Need for more or better housing in rural areas
- Need to services to be maintained in rural areas
- Alternative economic bases for rural communities are needed as traditional sources of employment decline

18. Sustainable communities

Issues for recreation:

- Recreation and nature tourism seen as new economic base for rural communities.
- Services to tourists can be provided by small-scale entrepreneurs
- Issues of shared equity – who pays and who benefits?

19. Social inclusion

- Polarisation of incomes – the rich are getting richer and the poor poorer
- Growing disparities in participation in recreation
- Growing political will in some countries to address this.

19. Social inclusion

Issues for recreation:

- Greater income disparity leading to outdoor recreation dominated by higher income groups.
- Need to bring recreation provision closer to where people live and to make it easier to participate.

20. Availability of information

- Needs to be clear and understandable by all users.
- Detail in information is important for disabled users and many formats may be needed.
- Lack of confidence is a significant barrier to participation overcome in part by good information

20. Availability of information

Issues for recreation

- Information is one of the keys to involvement
- The availability, quality and means of distribution of information needs to be addressed.

21. Re-tuning to nature

- There is a media overload (now over 8 billion websites... Supermarkets stock over 40 thousand products).
- Nature is seen as a means of escape even more than previously.
- Increasing evidence of the resorative effects of nature.

21. Re-tuning to nature

Issues for recreation:

- People crave relief from stresses of life and seek solace on nature.
- Nature needs to be easily accessible
- The evidence base for the restorative qualities needs to be strengthened.

22. Declining mental health

- There are rising numbers of cases of mental ill-health
- Dramatic increases in the levels of drug consumption (anti-depressants)
- Increasing evidence that the outdoors can help to cure depression.

22. Declining mental health

- Issues for recreation:
- Outdoor recreation will increasingly be promoted as part of the means of overcoming depression.
- More research to strengthen the evidence base is needed.

23. Drive to greater activity and health

- Europe is becoming ever more unhealthy: obesity is increasing, though more in some areas than others.
- Physical inactivity has a significant cost to the health services.
- Green exercise is increasingly being prescribed - 30 minutes per day.

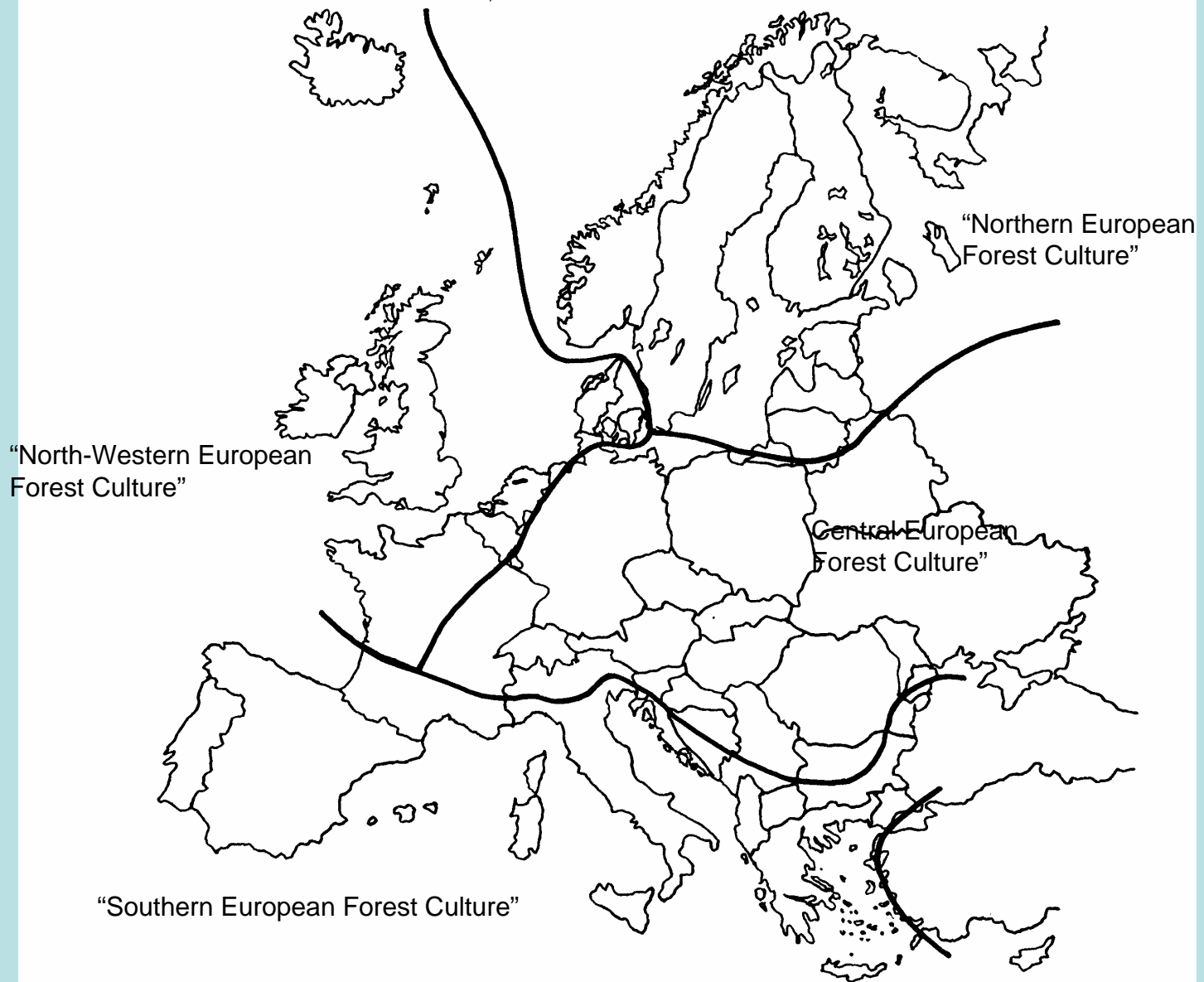
23. Drive to greater activity and health

Issues for recreation:

- Planning needs to take account of the role of recreation for health improvement.
- Recreation areas need to be planned and designed with health improvement in mind.

European differences

- There are many differences in the way outdoor recreation is approached in Europe.
- It is possible to identify different “forest cultures”, where the relationship of people to the forest is very different.



The northern forest culture

- This covers Norway, most of Sweden, Finland and the Baltic states.
- Here the forest is a major element of the landscape, the national economy and in the everyday lives of the people.
- Cities such as Stockholm, Oslo, Helsinki, Tallinn, Riga or Vilnius, tend to be set within and surrounded by large tracts of forest, which expand beyond the urban boundary.
- The cities have expanded into the forests and the people go out into them almost as much for mushroom and berry picking as for walking or skiing.

The central European forest culture

- This covers those countries with a mainly continental climate but with milder winters and warmer summers than the northern countries.
- The landscapes are quite forested but not so heavily as in the north, and the woods contain a higher proportion of broadleaves and are well managed.
- Many cities, such as Stuttgart or Vienna possess significant wooded tracts but these lie mainly at the periphery and may be former royal or aristocratic hunting estates with a long history of management and use.
- The people of the cities use these woods intensively for all kinds of recreation and the woods may be under considerable pressure.

The southern forest culture

- This zone occurs in the mainly Mediterranean countries, including southern France and also Portugal.
- The Mediterranean climate of hot summers and warm winters means that people live outdoors for a lot of the time, so that street trees, parks, squares and woodlands provide much needed shade.
- Forests may be significant in mountainous or hilly parts. Close to cities most forests were once reserved as hunting parks and are now used for recreation.
- In these countries the urban culture has grown apart from the forest culture. Fire is a major threat to forests with a high degree of public use.

The north-western forest culture

- This area includes Britain, Ireland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, southern Sweden, north-east France and Iceland.
- These countries lost most of their forest cover over the last 3 - 4 thousand years, so that forests now occupy a small percentage of the land area.
- Many forests are now of plantation origin and are intensively used. In popular culture forests are sometimes seen as alien places, so that urban people are less spiritually connected to them than in the Northern zone, for example.
- These are also highly urbanized and industrialized countries with dense populations who need space for recreation, but where private land is not always available for public access.