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Farkic, Jelena; Filep, Sebastian; Taylor, Steve

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Shaping tourists' wellbeing through guided slow adventures

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| Journal: | <i>Journal of Sustainable Tourism</i> |
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| Keywords: | tour guiding, slow adventure, outdoors, positive psychology, wellbeing |
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Shaping tourists' wellbeing through guided slow adventures

Abstract

Against the backdrop of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 3, good health and wellbeing, this paper reports on a study that examined how outdoor guides perceive their role in facilitating the psychological wellbeing of tourists who consume slow adventure experiences. These experiences, such as canoeing, stargazing or foraging, are characterised by a slower passage of time, immersion in the natural world and a sense of belonging to small social groups. Grounded in research on wellbeing from a positive psychology perspective, the study utilised semi-structured, in-depth, interviews with ten outdoor adventure guides in the Scottish Highlands and Islands. Following a hermeneutic interpretive approach to analyse the interview transcripts, the findings revealed how perceptions of time, meaningful moments and a sense of togetherness are choreographed by slow adventure guides to shape tourists' psychological wellbeing through immersive guided experiences, ultimately helping tourists to re-establish a much-yearned-for connection with nature. The study adds to tourism, wellbeing and sustainability literature by providing new perspectives on psychological wellbeing through guided slow adventures. In particular the findings contribute to positive tourism, or tourism and positive psychology field of research, by revealing how mindful and eudaimonic visitor experiences are organised by adventure tour guides in natural settings.

Keywords: tourist experiences, tour guiding, slow adventure, positive psychology, wellbeing

Introduction

The world is destabilised, troubled and trembling, with insecurities, risks and hazards embedded in all spheres of human lives (Turner, 2003). This state of the world has brought uncertainties and anxieties that give rise to what Beck (1992) and Giddens (1991) termed a risk society, defined as "a systematic way of dealing with hazards and insecurities induced and introduced by modernisation itself" (Beck, 1992, p. 21). Economies, populations and cultures are seen as nodal points of global processes of endless, uncontrollable flows, a world of social fluids (Turner, 2003). Global disturbances, such as wars, diseases and digital technologies,

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3 have been transferred and translated into distressed images and altered conditions of the human
4 body (Turner, 2003).
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7 Consequently, stress-related problems have become a global concern (WHO, 2020). The World
8 Health Organisation (2001) envisaged that by 2020, the year of writing this paper, depression
9 and related illnesses would become the largest causes of ill-health. The current Covid-19
10 pandemic has thrown health and wellbeing issues into sharp relief. In the United Kingdom, for
11 example, the government has stipulated that daily exercise is one of only four reasons that
12 people may leave their homes during 'lockdown' (UK Government, 2020), recognising the
13 need to maintain people's physical as well as psychological wellbeing. Pre-pandemic, human
14 wellbeing and the preservation and improvement of health had already come into focus in
15 global discussions of the sustainable development of humankind (United Nations, 2019).
16 Psychological wellbeing is known to be a strong predictor of people's good health and societal
17 prosperity (Keyes, 2002) and happy and healthy people are claimed to be better able to
18 contribute to the development of their countries; their physical and mental health is seen as a
19 driver, indicator and outcome of sustainable development (UNWTO, 2020).
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22 In recognising the conditions of the contemporary world and the need for ensuring the
23 sustainable future of all human societies, an ambitious global initiative, the 2030 Agenda for
24 Sustainable Development, has been adopted (United Nations, 2020). It represents the
25 cumulative outcome of global efforts to address sustainable development, building on the
26 substantial work undertaken by the UN, governments, NGOs and civil society since the 1992
27 Earth Summit. Among the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that it posits, the agenda
28 identifies good health and wellbeing (SDG 3) as a prerequisite for and a vital aspect of
29 development. Similarly, through developing the 'Tourism for SDGs platform', the UNWTO
30 (2018) encourages tourism stakeholders to engage in SDG implementation strategies and
31 advance their achievements through various initiatives. Its principal objective is promoting
32 greater engagement of the tourism sector with sustainable development and inviting industry
33 and academia to contribute to building new knowledge on improving people's wellbeing. In
34 this paper we respond to these calls by extending the conversation around human wellbeing,
35 particularly focusing on the benefits that immersive guided experiences in natural
36 environments may engender.
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39 Spending time in nature is not only considered leisure, but also therapy (Li, 2018). This has
40 long been emphasised as a means to ease stress, curb anxieties and promote inner calm. Nature
41 has been recommended as a space which heals ill bodies and ill minds, and for its benefits it
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3 has been considered a great contributor to people's psychological wellbeing and happiness
4 (Hartig, Mitchell, De Vries, & Frumkin, 2014; Huijbens, 2016). Likewise, in nature-rich
5 destinations, respite, adventure and compensation for alienated, accelerated and digitalised
6 lives are often sought. Nature-based tourism, with particular focus on slow adventure as one of
7 its forms, may in many ways help to cure 'postmodern ailments' by offering spaces for
8 restoration, rejuvenation and relaxation (Farkić & Taylor, 2019).
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14 This paper specifically focuses on guided slow adventure experiences, developed for tourists
15 who do not primarily seek 'hard adventure', characterised by risk and thrill seeking. Broadly,
16 the concept of slow adventure is considered a way of *being* in and consuming nature through
17 slower, simplified tourism practices (Varley & Semple, 2015). Immersive journeys that
18 facilitate an affinity with wild landscapes and are experienced in 'nature's timeframe' (Varley,
19 Huijbens, Taylor & Laven, 2020) are the qualities that lie at the heart of the slow adventure
20 experience. In this context, the role of the tour guide is crucial. It goes beyond the normative
21 conceptualisation of this profession, offering more hospitable services in order to deliver an
22 ever-more desired sense of comfort, security and wellbeing. This aspect of outdoor guiding,
23 which in many ways transcends technical expertise and services delivery, seems to be the
24 emergent critical inquiry into guiding practices and warrants further attention (Farkić, 2018).
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34 The research study reported here therefore addresses the following question: What is the tour
35 guides' perception of their own role in facilitating tourists' sense of psychological wellbeing?
36 Psychological wellbeing, for the purposes of this paper, is broadly defined to include both
37 hedonic wellbeing (a sense of pleasure and experiences of positive emotions) and eudaimonic
38 wellbeing, characterised by a sense of transformation, personal growth and meaning in life
39 (Filep, Laing & Csikzentmihalyi, 2016). This philosophical distinction in conceptualising
40 wellbeing is widely accepted in the tourism literature (Pearce, 2009; Nawijn & Filep, 2016).
41 Thus far, examinations of tourists' psychological wellbeing through guided experiences in the
42 outdoors have focused on adventure sport contexts (Houge Mackenzie & Kerr, 2017) and
43 spiritual tourist experiences (Parsons, Houge Mackenzie & Filep, 2019). Here we shift the
44 focus to outdoor guides and explore their experiences of the ways in which they facilitate
45 tourists' psychological wellbeing. In doing so, we aim to extend the knowledge around outdoor
46 guiding practices, taking into account the wellbeing dimensions of slow adventure journeys.
47 Firstly, we bring together ideas on slowness, nature and wellbeing, and discuss the ways in
48 which they together meet in the concept of slow adventure. We then approach the guiding
49 practices within slow adventure from the positive psychology perspective and introduce our
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3 research study and the methodology behind it. Finally, we outline the study's findings and their
4 implications for guiding practices in particular, and sustainable tourism development in
5 general.
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10 **Positioning the research: Sustainability, slowness and wellbeing**

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13 In recognising the need to secure the healthy future of the planet, tourism professionals have
14 taken interest in issues such as gross national happiness, quality of life and sustainable
15 development (Liu, 2003; Bushell, 2009; Schroeder, 2015). The contemporary world has
16 become more mobile, interconnected and fluid, and, despite the expectation that technological
17 change would increase people's free time, the pace of life has only accelerated (Rosa, 2013).
18 In the era of technological advancement, coupled with the increased pace of life and our
19 constant race for meeting deadlines, achieving goals and maintaining productivity, time seems
20 to flow ever faster; people's free time has been devalued, quality of life has been diminished
21 and physical and psychological health has become one of the major concerns. To address this,
22 prescriptions to take short, restorative trips into areas rich in nature have become a leading
23 trend in public health programmes worldwide.
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33 In the past several decades, the tourism industry has made attempts to promote responsible and
34 sustainable travel through development of niche products based on nature, such as ecotourism
35 or wellness tourism. Efforts have been made to deliver high quality tourism experiences and
36 connect tourists with destinations through, for example, spending time in nature and getting
37 entangled with local traditions, whilst at the same time protecting resources in host destinations
38 and communities (Liu, 2003; Koščak & O'Rourke, 2019). Pulling people to less trafficked,
39 healthier and greener destinations, and slowing down their activities, has become a new ethical
40 consumer trend. An attempt to subvert the 'fast world' and the cult of speed have been
41 embodied in the global slow movement (Honoré, 2004). The concept of slowness maintains its
42 focus on learning how to value and cultivate a sense of time and "restore meaning, authenticity,
43 security or identity to time-deprived subjects" (Parkins, 2004, p. 363). Slow tourism celebrates
44 simple, organic, local, traditional, affective and emotional dimensions of the experiences
45 gained through immersion in the destination and local way of life (Dickinson & Lumsdon,
46 2010). Slowing down has been adopted in tourism through developing experiences in remote,
47 rural or natural spaces, as they can offer the qualities that many modern tourists seek,
48 particularly focusing on extending time to savour the experience (Heitmann, Robinson, &
49 Povey, 2011).
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3 It has been widely acknowledged that wellbeing may be greatly improved through contact with
4 nature, which has prompted the redesign and development of diverse tourism products based
5 on natural resources (Kelly, 2012; Moscardo, 2009; Puhakka, Pitkanen & Siikamaki, 2017;
6 Smith & Diekmann, 2017). Visitation to wild natural environments far from urban centres,
7 such as nature reserves and national parks, espouse preventative rather than curative
8 approaches to personal health management (Smith & Puczko, 2013). Parks too play an essential
9 role in public health as they are easily accessible and available to people living in urban areas.
10 They not only offer space for sport and leisure, but also contribute to enhancing physical,
11 mental, spiritual, social and environmental health (Croy, Moyle, & Moyle, 2020; Maller,
12 Townsend, Pryor, Brown & St Leger, 2006). These positive effects are manifested, for
13 example, in the increase of self-esteem and mood (Kuo & Sullivan, 2001), ability to
14 concentrate (Van den Berg, Koole, & van der Wulp, 2003), enhanced happiness (Buckley,
15 2020) or spiritual empowerment (Curtin, 2009; Humberstone, 2011).

16
17 In the realm of outdoor adventure tourism, psychological, physical, and social wellbeing
18 benefits have also gained increased attention (Hanna et al., 2019). To date, however, there have
19 been few studies granting attention to the relationship between wellbeing and adventure
20 tourism practices (Houge Mackenzie & Hodge, 2019). By way of example, Kulczycki &
21 Lück's (2009) study suggested that "various components of the adventure tourism experience
22 [...] have the capability to actively contribute not only to health, but also to wellbeing" (p.
23 176). Houge Mackenzie and Hodge (2019) and Houge Mackenzie and Brymer (2018)
24 highlighted eudaimonic and hedonic experiences in the construction of psychological
25 wellbeing through undertaking adventure sports in nature, although their focus was not on slow
26 adventures.

27
28 Beyond tourism, leisure studies and outdoor recreation scholarship have substantially
29 contributed to the knowledge around the health benefits of activities in nature. The health
30 aspects of spending time outdoors have been highlighted, and directly linked to overall human
31 happiness and anxiety reduction (Humberstone, 2015; Martyn & Brymer, 2016). Scholars have
32 researched the benefits of embodied and non-representational aspects of undertaking physical
33 activities in natural environments (Thorpe, 2004; Thorpe & Rinehart, 2010; Humberstone,
34 2011), while works on the political dimensions of the environment in lifestyle, alternative and
35 adventure sports have much relevance in understanding the concept of wellbeing (Mellor &
36 Shillings, 2010). The concepts of adventure or wilderness therapy also bring some in-depth
37 insights into the health benefits of undertaking activities in natural environments (Gass &
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3 Russell, 2012). For example, the Japanese practice of *shinrin-yoku*, or forest bathing, nicely
4 illustrates the simple act of being in the outdoors, as it encourages nature-based tourists to slow
5 down and take their time in reconnecting with nature (Smith & Diekmann, 2017). As no studies
6 have examined slow adventure experiences through guides' perspectives, there is value in the
7 application of this perspective to help further understand wellbeing in such contexts.
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12 In expanding the slow adventure concept to include the wellbeing dimension, we build on the
13 idea of slowness (Farkić & Taylor, 2019) to discuss its role in enhancing tourists' psychological
14 wellbeing through guided slow experiences. Cognizant of the ongoing pandemic at the time of
15 writing this paper caused by Covid-19, it appears timely to discuss issues of human wellbeing
16 and means by which psychological elements of the potential existential crisis may, in part, be
17 addressed. This study therefore aims to explore guided slow adventures to better understand
18 wellbeing outcomes of slow adventure guiding practices.
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26 27 **Slow adventure and outdoor guiding**

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29 Slow adventure is one of the emergent trends in nature-based and peripheral tourism that
30 responds to the call for sustainable development. Inspired by the slow movement and *friluftsliv*,
31 the Scandinavian philosophy of outdoor life (Gelter, 2000), it has been widely accepted both
32 as a theoretical concept and a tourism product (Varley & Semple, 2015; Farkić, Taylor &
33 Bellshaw, 2020). Building on the postulates of slowness, the aim of slow adventure is to
34 introduce consumers to the simplicity of just 'being' in the outdoors – in responsible and ethical
35 ways. Such immersive entanglements with natural environs are generally augmented by a
36 skilled guide, as a crucial element of the experience. Slow adventure offers consumers the
37 luxurious commodity of taking time to dwell in nature, being more mindful and developing a
38 connection with their environment (Sheldon, 2020). It also allows space for disconnection from
39 the stressful and disturbing stimuli by which the modern world is overly saturated (Fullagar,
40 Markwell & Wilson, 2012). In conceptualising slow adventure, Varley and Semple (2015)
41 introduced its four critical dimensions: time, nature, passage and comfort. Whilst their initial
42 proposition of the concept looked into bodily, temporal and environmental aspects of the
43 journey, it did not directly discuss the possibilities for improving wellbeing. This was
44 addressed by Farkić and Taylor (2019) who suggested that slowing down may improve health
45 and reduce anxieties, stress and depression, particularly in more affluent, digitalised and time-
46 deprived societies.
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3 In the slow adventure context, the guide's role is crucial. It is their responsibility to interpret,
4 mediate and navigate people through unfamiliar wild spaces and negotiate harsh environments
5 and, more importantly, to keep the group together and provide them with care. Definitions of
6 tour-guiding normally focus on the possession of professional knowledge, and managerial and
7 communication skills (Ap & Wong, 2001; Weiler & Black, 2014). However, previous research
8 has showed that it goes beyond the general adventure guide's role as they help to create client
9 value and positive experiences through their instrumental, educational, relational and
10 choreographic practices (FarkiĆ, 2018; Rokenes, Schumann & Rose, 2015). On multi-day trips
11 in particular, accommodating and managing group activities transcends solely technical
12 competency. Their behaviour goes beyond the delivery of services as per script, to include
13 softer, more hospitable acts, which are seen as an amalgam of hospitable service skills and
14 personality traits (Pantelidis, 2014; Varley, FarkiĆ & Carnicelli, 2018).

15
16 The social dimension of guiding practices is paramount to comprehending slow adventures.
17 Slow adventure tours normally gather a small number of participants, thus, social involvement
18 and building *esprit de corps* within the group is crucial. Natural environments provide space
19 for more intimate social interaction and building social ties, as well as for engendering
20 community identity (Rantala & Puhakka, 2019). This not only ties the group together but also
21 enhances tourists' immersion in and understandings of the immediate cultural landscapes
22 (Hansen & Mossberg, 2017). While professionalism in service delivery is often seen as a
23 formal behaviour, or a code of conduct, informality is considered immediate, relaxed, friendly
24 and unofficial behaviour which may permit more meaningful social interactions to unfold and
25 allow for wellbeing possibilities. A guide's professionalism encompasses both service skills
26 and creating pleasant atmospheres in which clients feel cosy, and which allow for social
27 intimacy (Ap & Wong, 2001). This is one way that guides demonstrate their 'withness': their
28 egalitarianism and engagement with the group (Pyyhtinen, 2016). Such convivial ambience,
29 prompted by guides, fosters togetherness, belonging, sharing and intimacy, all being qualities
30 that imbue a sense of *communitas*, comfort and wellbeing in shared social spaces, indoors and
31 out (Sharpe, 2005; Varley et al., 2018). Acknowledging the multitude of roles that the outdoor
32 guides are already enacting, it seems appropriate to explore how they perceive their role in
33 facilitating the psychological wellbeing of tourists.

Approach to wellbeing

While the concept of wellbeing is far from new, its links with guiding practices are recent (Houge Mackenzie & Brymer, 2018). In general, wellbeing is considered a holistic concept encompassing temporary feelings as well as long-term contentment (Sheldon & Bushell, 2009; Smith & Puczko, 2013). Psychological wellbeing however is viewed as not only the absence of mental disorder and ill-health, but also the presence of positive psychological states, including both hedonic and eudaimonic aspects (Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009). The paper adopts this positive psychological conception of psychological wellbeing. The modern foundations of positive psychology have been linked to the humanistic psychology of the late twentieth century, especially to the works of Maslow, Rogers, Murray, Allport and May on self-actualisation, optimal functioning and the good life (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi 2000). Positive psychology – the study of what makes life worth living – has been precisely defined as an area of study that aims to emphasise the role of positive emotions, character strengths, and positive institutions in building human well-being and happiness (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Despite the early humanistic psychology roots however, modern positive psychology has taken on a distinctly positivist research perspective. It has been criticised for scientism – the belief that the positivist paradigm and the scientific method is the only trustworthy approach to examine happiness, well-being, and flourishing (Durstun, 2015). Another major challenge of mainstream positive psychology is that it traditionally includes a positive-only focus, one that is based on binary or dichotomous thinking. In reality, the positives and negatives often cannot be that easily separated and they commonly co-exist in various combinations as shown in the phenomenon of covalence (Lomas, 2016).

Taking into account these criticisms of the mainstream positive psychology, tourism and positive psychology scholarship has developed over the last decade, sometimes simply labelled as positive tourism (Filep et al., 2016). The studies in this field have been described by Ryan (2015, p. 195) as works where “psychometrics are generally absent.” In this way, the tourism research on positive psychology avoids methodolotry, the idea of privileging quantitative over qualitative and vice versa (Friedman 2003), unlike mainstream positive psychology. While both mainstream positive psychology and positive tourism conceptualise psychological wellbeing in hedonic and eudaimonic terms, the tourism studies de-emphasize the strict positive-negative dichotomy. It is recognised that tourist experiences (including slow adventures) may sometimes induce wellbeing involving challenges (akin to eudaimonia), as well as pleasurable or hedonic wellbeing (Filep & Deery, 2010). Varley and Semple (2015),

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3 for example, explained that extended immersion activities, like those in slow adventures, may
4 be felt as a deep sense of creative accomplishment. At the same time, they recognised that slow
5 adventure activities are characterized by hedonic wellbeing. Furthermore, they involve a
6 degree of challenge which requires stepping out of one's comfort zone (Houge Mackenzie &
7 Brymer, 2018). There is also evidence that spending extended time in nature, combined with
8 relaxation of the mind, boosts positive emotions. In a study using a positive psychology
9 perspective, Filep, Cao, Jiang and deLacy (2013) examined how tourists reminisce about, or
10 retrospectively savour, their outdoor holiday experiences. Emotions of joy, interest and
11 contentment were most commonly linked to experiences that involved observations of natural
12 scenery, strengthening the importance of spending time in nature. Partaking in activities, such
13 as cooking foraged foods or telling stories around a campfire, gives tourists the opportunity to
14 immerse themselves into prolonged interactions between self and the world, and subsequently
15 reminisce and savour their experiences (Varley & Semple, 2015). Therefore, the positive
16 tourism approach to wellbeing adopted in this paper is one that incorporates an appreciation of
17 pleasant feelings and positive emotions (hedonic wellbeing) as well as meaningful but often
18 challenging activities (eudaimonic wellbeing).

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31 In the slow adventure context, undertaking activities is not constrained by time but rather
32 conditioned by natural rhythms: changes of dark and light, fluctuations of the water's surface,
33 or the direction of the wind. Getting to know natural rhythms and discovering new ecospheres,
34 landscapes and inhabitants along the journey may be a solipsistic venture; however guided
35 experiences can in many ways make the difference. Consuming such experiences may lead to
36 both hedonic and eudaimonic outcomes, and to the deepening and rounding of the outdoor
37 experience.

38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 **Methodology**

47 48 49 50 ***Method and participants***

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52 Approaching psychological wellbeing as a human-constructed quality, the research was
53 entirely inductive (Rantala & Puhakka, 2019), which assumed the researcher's embodiment in
54 the research setting to collect the data. The empirical material presented in this paper draws on
55 semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted with ten outdoor guides between June and
56 August 2016 in the Scottish Highlands and Islands. Interviews were conducted post-tours, and
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3 were favoured as a non-standardised method as they allowed for flexibility in the direction of
4 the conversation (Evans & Jones, 2011). They nonetheless proved invaluable as they rendered
5 insights from the different epistemological positions of the informants and gave voice to those
6 who are on the front line, facilitating and co-creating the outdoor experience.
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10 We adopted a phenomenological approach as we were interested in understanding, description
11 and interpretation of subjective human experiences. In phenomenological explorations
12 informants are selected because they have had a lived experience of the phenomenon under
13 investigation (van Manen, 1990). Therefore, those informants who were most likely to provide
14 relevant information were targeted, and their voices are heard in this paper. The recruitment of
15 informants occurred during the tours in which the first author had previously taken part as a
16 paying tourist/researcher and during the guide training courses she had attended. The first
17 author eventually chose to interview ten qualified guides who had extensive experience in
18 guiding slow adventures, trips involving hiking, canoeing and sea kayaking for example. They
19 also developed and delivered a range of guide training programmes based on customer care
20 and improving the customer journey. Most of them had the highest coaching qualifications in
21 scientific and commercial diving, as well as commercial skippering, by which their competence
22 and expertise was accredited. Some of them had experience of leading expeditions or
23 operations management, while others were professional underwater photographers and
24 filmmakers; some also taught as university lecturers.
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36 Through in-depth interviews with these experts, knowledge was gained about their cultural
37 background, personal lives, clients, anecdotes from previous tours, and, most importantly, their
38 personal guiding experiences. During the interviews, the questions were broad and designed to
39 avoid influencing the respondents' answers in any way, and were continually adjusted
40 according to the flow of conversation. Substantive literature preceding the interviews had been
41 taken into account, but attempts were made to avoid prior theoretical assumptions as much as
42 possible in line with our qualitative approach (Connell & Lowe, 1997). A large corpus of data
43 was eventually generated, consisting of the verbatim transcription of the semi-structured
44 interviews. Each finding inevitably had agency in layering, shaping and constructing the
45 knowledge around lived experiences of guiding in the outdoors.
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56 *The approach and interpretation of interview transcripts*

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3 The goal of phenomenological research is to grasp people's experiences and their reflections
4 on them to understand deeper meanings or the significance that such an experience has on an
5 aspect of human life (Smith, 2007). The analytical approach taken in this study was justifiably
6 phenomenological in nature. Heidegger's influence in shaping interpretive phenomenological
7 research is widely recognised and utilised in social sciences (Horrigan-Kelly, Millar &
8 Dowling, 2016). His phenomenological philosophy influenced the development of interpretive
9 phenomenological research methods that facilitate description and understanding of the human
10 lived experience as well as uncovering its underlying meanings. Heidegger's (2010 [1927])
11 hermeneutic method, which he called existential understanding, was thus helpful in facilitating
12 the interpretation of lived experiences of our respondents during the interview process, thus
13 situating them in the wider social context. Utilising this method, we were able to envision the
14 whole based on the individual experiences of participants in question, which are always related,
15 depend on each other and are therefore interpreted in a metaphorically circular way.

16
17 In the post-fieldwork period, literature was intensively consulted, with the aim of discovering
18 new theoretical insights that arose from the data. Intuitive coding, germane to interpretive
19 phenomenological studies, was used to highlight the emerging themes. The phenomenological
20 approach does not have step-by-step analytic requirements (van Manen, 1990); thus, the codes
21 were allowed to gradually filter and become more powerful than the others through the process
22 of reflection and sensemaking. Our intention, however, was to show how the informants framed
23 their own lived experiences of guiding. The first author interpreted the findings in relation to
24 the broader theoretical discourses on slow adventure, psychological wellbeing and
25 sustainability. The participants reported their guiding practices based on post-experiential
26 reflections and perceptions of the ways in which they contributed to tourists' psychological
27 wellbeing. In this paper we have included those responses that we felt had most relevance to
28 the scope of this study. Initials of the guides' names (e.g. DT) were used in order to adhere to
29 institutional ethical guidelines, as the guides did not consent for their identities to be publicly
30 disclosed.

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32 It is important to mention the researchers' positionalities, as they affect how our previous
33 experiences influenced the framing of this study (Ateljevic, Harris, Wilson, & Collins, 2005).
34 The first author undertook the doctoral research into tourists' experiences and guiding practices
35 on commercial outdoor tours on which this paper is based. The second author has been
36 developing an international research platform on the wellbeing of tourism stakeholders, with a
37 recent emphasis on the wellbeing of tour guides. The third author has been involved in the

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3 development of slow adventure since its inception as a marketing concept, applying its ethos
4 and basic tenets to the development of slow adventure experiences across Europe's northern
5 periphery. The three authors, each from their own perspective, have critically interrogated slow
6 adventure's potential to sustainably contribute to human wellbeing through guided experiences
7 in the outdoors. Granting attention to the outdoor guides, we now turn to discuss our findings.
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13 **Findings and discussion**

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15 In the discussion that follows we illustrate how the guides reported on tourists' sense of
16 wellbeing through their performances and practices, undertaking activities at a slower pace and
17 facilitating tourists' inward journeys. The section discusses three key themes that emerged
18 from the interview findings: quality time, as a predominantly hedonic wellbeing theme, and
19 two principally eudaimonic themes: flourishing through meaningful moments and a sense of
20 togetherness.
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28 ***Quality time: chronos versus kairos***

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30 The participants highlighted the potential for slow adventure to contribute to slowing down the
31 passage of time and allow tourists to savour experiences in wild nature. The importance of
32 slowing down and taking time to savour moments is widely linked to positive psychological
33 outcomes of greater wellbeing and mindfulness (Boniwell & Zimbardo, 2004). The conditions
34 that allowed for the connection with the natural environments, based on the participants'
35 accounts, were the time tourists spent away from everyday life, and the time that was used for
36 enjoyment, unwinding, reflecting and relinquishing. Here the participants referred to hedonic
37 aspects of tourist wellbeing. The *chronos/kairos* time binary illustrates the significance of
38 spending quality time through slow appreciation of experiences. Chronos expresses a measure,
39 a quantity of duration, whilst kairos is more qualitative in nature and has a special temporal
40 position. It signals a significant event that happens at 'that' time, which could not happen at
41 any other time, and cannot recur (Smith, 1969). It is the kairological time of a slow adventure
42 journey which renders it pleasurable and can help explain the hedonic aspects of being on slow
43 adventure holiday.
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54 Arguably, in the artificially imposed passage of time, measured by the modern clock, people
55 cannot fully realise their authentic being and thus drive themselves into alienation from the
56 self, and from others (Heidegger, 2010 [1927]). This is deeply rooted in people's busy,
57 structured everydayness that some find difficult to disconnect from, even for a short time.
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3 Partaking in unfamiliar activities in wild nature was not that simple for some participants. It
4 required making an effort to unlearn the daily routine, adapt to a new setting and learn new
5 skills, which for some were strange and uncommon practices, as one guide opined:
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9 I've had two males that couldn't cope with that [being in the outdoors]. It is funny
10 because they wanted, the ones that I struggled with were very high achieving, very
11 affluent males, Western males, whose lives were programmed, well planned, you know,
12 high performance at work, and the relationships, every minute is filled, someone who
13 is hard to say 'hey, chill out, listen to the bird song', they were like (looking at the
14 watch) for how long, for how long? [...] They are just not used to closing their mind a
15 little bit. (DT)
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21 As the guides explained, for these participants it was particularly difficult to exchange the
22 discomfort of being in and going slowly through the outdoors for the familiarity of busyness.
23 In such situations, the guides would aim to navigate tourists through space, encouraging them
24 to disconnect from their inherent adherence to 'chronos' and embrace the kairotic moment:
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28 At times I make the point of shutting up, you know, especially at beaches and nice
29 places, and I will actually say 'look guys, how about you just go find a nice space, take
30 lunch, just go and live it, you don't need me to tell you how beautiful it is, just go and
31 absorb it, sit on the sand, look at the sky, realise that this is a unique moment in time
32 that's yours so go and enjoy it and let's meet again in half an hour or whatever'. (DT)
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38 The guides played a vital role in delicately facilitating and choreographing tourists'
39 experiences, rendering them more immersive by connecting tourists with the place, navigating
40 their movements and actions, and making them take time to savour the experience. Here, time
41 was perceived as something subjective, as opposed to measurable, linear passage controlled by
42 the clock. Kairological moments, even if mediated, were deeply appreciated by participants
43 and felt as a true sense of enjoyment and pleasure. In describing the ways in which they
44 facilitated their clients' connection with the place, one guide explained:
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50 When you see what people view on the beach or on a lonely place, you just tell a story
51 that people used to live there, then there's a point in it, there's a silence, people are kind
52 of computing it, reflecting on it. (EO)
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56 An extension of this role sees the slow adventure guide subtly engineering and engendering a
57 form of respect for the surroundings (Sheldon, 2020), a personal stewardship over the
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3 landscape. For this to occur, extended time spent in the natural environment is vital, which this
4 guide recognised and confirmed:
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7 I help create the experience and it definitely is interpreting what they are seeing and
8 enhancing it. ‘Coz I think if I am looking at the outcome, I would like to see people
9 enjoying what they are experiencing, and understand it, and even more so, develop
10 some kind of relationship with it... some kind of responsibility, if they kind of want to
11 protect it or even just go and find out more. (EO)
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16 Slowing down to belong to the moment, and make a connection with the place or with others,
17 or even allow for small inward journeys and deep reflections, accounted for imaginative
18 processes of framing and recounting the experience (Semple, 2013). This kairological time
19 added value in the hearts and minds of participants, thus deepening their conveyance of hedonic
20 feelings.
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25 This is what slow adventure ultimately strives to achieve, in accord with Szerszynski’s (2002)
26 explanation that “we also typically experience kairological time not just as a succession of
27 meaningful moments, but as narratively organised into story-like wholes at various scales” (p.
28 183). Lived experiences interpreted through the lens of kairological time were mediated and
29 heightened by the guides’ interaction with the group: they facilitated tourists’ pleasure through,
30 for example, orchestrating the encounters with wildlife and otherworldly landscapes, evoking
31 memories and telling stories around a crackling campfire. Such encounters facilitated an
32 ‘emotional engagement’ with the guide, increasing situational consciousness and decreasing
33 the client’s chronotic awareness (Pearce, 2020). It is ‘just then’ when the slow passage of time
34 allowed people’s marginal selves to dominate and reframe more hedonic experiences, before
35 they re-entered the structure of their everyday realities.
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47 ***Flourishing through meaningful slow moments***

48 Another important theme that has been uncovered in the findings is the state of flourishing
49 which was achieved through mediating, constructing and living meaningful moments during
50 tours. The physical and mental space that tourists came to occupy (according to the guides),
51 was in fact the ethos of slow adventure – it worked to encourage reducing stress-related
52 conditions and anxieties imposed by busy, structured lives, and at the same time fostered
53 responsible and sustainable behaviour in wild nature. The guides sought to teach the group how
54 to temporarily forget their long to-do lists and permanently busy lives, allowing them to not
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3 only better understand the natural world, but also what makes them fulfilled and enables their
4 own psychological wellbeing. In these out-of-the-ordinary moments, clients were more
5 predisposed to relax and feel a sense of freedom, epiphanies and deep spiritual connections
6 with the place. Such meaningful moments, which were often described as transformative by
7 the participants, formed the essence and fabric of the slow adventure experience. Guides played
8 a key co-creational role as ‘change-makers’ (Sheldon, 2020), facilitating potentially life-
9 changing, flourishing effects (Pritchard, Morgan, & Ateljevic, 2011). While it may seem that
10 renewal of the self was highly individual, such deeply meaningful spiritual experiences were
11 perhaps triggered by the presence of other participants, or the guide:

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19 It was a van talk with a lady who’s actually an extremely high-flying psychoanalyst,
20 she lived in Hollywood and she dealt with a lot of celebrities, she never divulged who
21 everybody was but you know, she was obviously very high-flying, she was actually
22 reduced to tears when we were talking just about life, about personal things and about
23 losses. I suffered loss, and she had a personal thing that happened to her, but we weren’t
24 answering each other’s questions, we were just talking and all of the sudden I became
25 aware she was crying, you know. I was driving, and it was difficult. I just put my hand
26 on her knee, you know, just this connection, you know, we were in it together, we
27 understand and afterwards, she was doing this laughing-crying thing... (EO)

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35 This opening-up and letting-go was a manifestation of Bauman’s (2013) assertion that “for us
36 in particular – who happen to live in ruthless times, [...] the word ‘community’ sounds sweet.”
37 (pp. 2-3). Another guide reflected more generally on the perceived impact of these experiences
38 on their clients’ inner-gaze:

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42 Working in the adventure travel industry really made me realise that we *are* changing
43 lives, we do make a difference.... So people are having life changing experiences when
44 they are spending time with you, when they are on holidays, when they have time to
45 ponder, when they have time to chill out and actually look at their lives and see what’s
46 not quite right. So that’s my favourite kind of experience, getting that sort of feedback
47 from people saying like ‘listen, thank you for providing me with the space and the
48 possibility to, yeah, change my life and to have these kind of moments that will be with
49 me for ever’. (SL)

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56 The guides demonstrated awareness of the meaningful contributions that they were making.
57 Their presence and empathy largely contributed to transformation of the self, a sense of
58 comfort, self-fulfilment, happiness and overall psychological wellbeing. In achieving this, the
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3 guide's role was to contextualise and approach each 'client' individually, which aligned with
4 the newest trends in global wellness provision (Global Wellness Summit, 2020). This finding
5 builds on previous research that explained how guides facilitated their clients' sense of
6 flourishing through spiritual tourist experiences (Parsons et al., 2019). The guide
7 adopted the spiritual advisor role, guiding clients towards
8 insight and enlightenment (Cohen, 1985), as well as facilitating
9 their inner journey, brokering their flourishing, and ultimately
10 enabling their eudaimonic wellbeing (Weiler & Black, 2014;
11 Parsons et al., 2019).

21 ***Sense of togetherness in slow adventure experiences***

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23 A sense of togetherness was the third major findings theme. The tourists, according to the
24 guides, generally valued the comfortable feeling of immersion in the place: entangled with the
25 sound of splashing waves, the smell of seaweed scattered on the rocky ocean coast, or making
26 that connection with the traditions of the land. Varley's (2011) explanation that "participants
27 enjoy membership of vibrant, immediate (yet temporary) Dionysiac communities, immersed
28 in a lived critique of routinised everyday life" (p. 87) has much relevance to the interpretation
29 of the group's outdoor experience. Here we can turn to Turner's (1974) notion of *communitas*
30 to interpret the social aspect of guided experience, as through meaningful sharing of time and
31 space, personal stories, experiences and memories this vital quality occurred. A sense of
32 togetherness gradually emerged, creating equality and fellowship, resulting in friendships:
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41 And we just laughed, almost for seven days, with clients, they were such a nice group,
42 but very early on the whole group just gelled, just something kind of happened and
43 everybody just became the closest of friends. [...] At this meal in the evening, after a
44 great day we've been up in the corries, in the Cullins, so everybody was on a high, and
45 ready to just let go a bit and the food was good and they had wine and they loved my
46 stories... [...] It was just a great, uplifting period, I don't know, it was just very special.
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51 (EO)
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53 These socialities signified one of slow adventure's vital dimensions, as they greatly contributed
54 to tourists' feelings of belongingness, fulfilment and overall wellbeing. Guides created
55 familiar, communal spaces in which social capital was generated: pleasurable moments of
56 having a laugh, making friends, sharing a drink. These shared experiences created "a state of
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3 pleasant wellbeing and security, with a relaxed frame of mind and open enjoyment of the
4 immediate situation in all its small pleasures” (Hansen, 1976, p. 54; cf. Varley et al., 2018).
5 Slow adventure experiences are most often co-constructed with fellow sojourners as people
6 naturally focus on ‘being-with’ other people (Veijola, Molz, Pyyhtinen, Höckert, & Grit, 2014).
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8 This was true for both tourists and the guides:
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11 I’ve had some very deep times with people, which I think have been lovely and it kind
12 of connected us as humans. [...] With some I had some really deep times, we made
13 really good friends, I just can’t help it. It is a shame when it comes to the end of the
14 week and you have to say bye. (LS)
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19 This communal effervescence (Turner, 1974) was felt by the guides to unfurl naturally with
20 the shared experience of sitting around a campfire after a day of outdoor activity. When the
21 body was tired but the mind still alert, when everyone was unwinding and content with the
22 day’s challenges, discoveries and achievements, it was easy to fall into what the guide
23 described as ‘deep times’: emotionally-charged collective joy and exaltation. Such communal
24 moments strengthened emotions by “bringing all those who share them into more intimate and
25 more dynamic relationship” (Olaveson, 2001, p. 100). The feeling of comfortable, communal
26 belonging, even temporary and subtly orchestrated by the skilful guide, had the potential to
27 endure in the memory of the participants.
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35 The slow adventure experiences, based on the guides’ accounts, therefore created opportunities
36 for creating pleasant and inclusive atmospheres, *communitas* possibilities at the heart of an
37 outdoor experience. The guided journeys entailed elements of simplicity and togetherness,
38 post-prandial sharing of intimate spaces and atmospheres, and stories that were told in small
39 social circles and convivial environments. Frequent social interactions among the group
40 members broke down the imagined distance, built trust among them and allowed for deeper,
41 more meaningful moments. This eudaimonic quality enabled by the guides, and the consequent
42 emotional stability, engendered a certain sense of ontological security and wellbeing whilst
43 consuming slow adventure experiences.
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53 **Conclusion**

54 We have presented and discussed the ways in which guided slow adventures can offer
55 possibilities to increase psychological wellbeing through slow journeying in nature. The
56 creative time spent outdoors, whether actively doing or simply being, has taken on heightened
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3 significance as Covid-19 threatens to impose a new reality. Our conceptualisation of adventure
4 took a broader view, away from risk and thrill towards a definition encompassing slower
5 activities (Rantala, Rokenes, & Valkonen, 2016) such as foraging, stargazing, or simply being
6 still in time and space, savouring the outdoor experience. The study showed provision of these
7 guided slow adventures using wild and unfettered landscapes promoted, enabled and delivered
8 greater psychological wellbeing. In a modest way, these choreographed slow adventure tours
9 contributed to Sustainable Development Goal 3, good health and wellbeing. Through
10 navigation of slow adventure experiences, guides enhanced wellbeing by engaging tourists in
11 immersive activities, extending time, securing comfort and deepening their multisensorial
12 engagement with surrounding places and social groups. Ultimately, these experiences have the
13 potential to, even temporarily, slow down the tempo and alter perceptions of time, a challenge
14 in a culture of deadlines and expeditious achievements (Humberstone, 2015).

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24 The study aimed to give voice to the guides to explore their own perceptions of the ways in
25 which they facilitated hedonic and eudaimonic states among tourists. Whilst tourists'
26 perspectives were beyond the scope of the study, the perspectives of those on the front line of
27 service delivery were useful in illustrating the ways in which a sense of wellbeing was
28 constructed in slow adventures. To that end, each set of the empirical findings worked towards
29 deepening understanding of the guide's practices to deliver a sense of security, comfort,
30 homeliness and wellbeing during commercial outdoor tours (Varley et al., 2018). Firstly, the
31 findings supported the assertion that for slow tourism experiences to be felt and lived, they
32 often need to be mediated by the guides. Through slow, immersive consumption of
33 experiences, the disconnection between modern, affluent consumers and wild nature may
34 partly be overcome. Secondly, the findings highlighted the guide's role as a spiritual advisor
35 and a steward (Parsons et al., 2019), a person who has the power, in some way, to enact
36 meaningful moments in tourists, and in this way contribute to their flourishing; although we
37 cannot speculate on the durability of this effect. Lastly, the findings illuminated the
38 significance of the social aspect of slow adventures, and the role of the guide in enhancing the
39 sense of togetherness and belonging during tours, even if the participants had hitherto been
40 mere strangers. The illustrative quotes ultimately aimed to convey the message that slow
41 adventure guides may minimise tourists' anxieties and uncertainties and maximise their sense
42 of security and psychological wellbeing.

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Theoretically, we hope the paper contributes to tourism, wellbeing and sustainability studies
by illuminating the existential aspects of being on holiday and the ways in which slow

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3 adventures can make a meaningful change in the lives of tourists. In offering novel ways to
4 approach studying human wellbeing, the findings highlight the relevance of quality,
5 kairological, time and slowness in tourism. In this way, the study responds to calls within
6 positive tourism research (Filep & Laing, 2019; Filep et al., 2016) for fresh investigations of
7 mindful and eudaimonic visitor experiences. In the future, wellness tourism researchers may
8 extend the research into tourists' wellbeing through examining the consumption of wellness
9 products and mediated experiences delivered in outdoor settings (Bushell, 2009). This also
10 creates space for further research into guiding practices, as well as into wellbeing of tour
11 guides, particularly inviting cross-disciplinary dialogues as well as novel, disruptive and
12 creative methodologies in their explorations.

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21 Lastly, new understandings revealed by participants in our study may open up new avenues for
22 developing guiding training programmes that include elements that foster clients' wellbeing.
23 The development and professionalisation of the tourism workforce are continual and highly
24 contextualised processes (Baum, Kralj, Robinson & Solnet, 2016). While there appears to be a
25 healthy demand for experiences that incorporate or focus on wellbeing in nature via slow
26 adventures (Varley & Semple, 2015), the challenges remain in terms of human capital, creating
27 guides who have the requisite skillset, ethos, care and desire. The lack of tourists' insights is a
28 limitation of this study. Future research could complement the findings by exploring the
29 experiences of guided slow adventure journeys from the tourist perspective and interrogating
30 their perceived wellbeing in relation to guiding practices.

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Allowing an expert to guide clients through an alien environment, enabling them to enjoy the
haptic, olfactory, auditory or visual phenomena – be it the sound of splashing waves, the
explosion of colours in the golden hour or the crackling of the campfire – may, briefly restore
tourists' peace of mind. In uncertain times after Covid-19, being slow and mindful might
alleviate some of the people's anxieties and fears. In slow adventure environments, guides can
foster longed-for feelings of reconnection, restoration, reunion or regeneration, and make a
modest, but a meaningful contribution to the psychological wellbeing of the troubled
inhabitants of the 21st century.

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For Peer Review

| Letter to reviewers | |
|---|---|
| <p>We wish to thank the reviewers for their feedback. We have amended the text where necessary and improved the manuscript as per the suggestions. We hope that we have now addressed all comments and brought the manuscript to a publishable format.</p> | |
| Reviewers' comments | Authors' response |
| Reviewer 1 | |
| <p>Amend sentence on page 3 as it still states: our aim was particularly to understanding how tourists' psychological wellbeing is facilitated – sentence doesn't make sense 'was particularly to understanding' but also it wasn't about how psychological wellbeing is facilitated as you don't know if it was or was not, it is about how guides perceive this.</p> | <p>Thank you for spotting this issue. We have now deleted that sentence. We have kept this phrasing: The research study reported here therefore addresses the following question: What is the tour guides' perception of their own role in facilitating tourists' sense of psychological wellbeing?</p> |
| <p>P4 'psychological illbeing' change to psychological health</p> | <p>We have made this change.</p> |
| Reviewer 2 | |
| <p>While the position of the guides in the research is much clearer, it would still be good to highlight the limits of the research. The authors suggest new avenues for developing guide training programs etc. Yet, one cannot really blend out the tourists themselves, whose views on the role of the guides seems to be a complementary and essential approach. They could be another research proposal.</p> | <p>To address this point we have added these sentences to the conclusion section: The lack of tourists' insights is a limitation of this study. Future research could complement the findings by exploring the experiences of guided slow adventure journeys from the tourist perspective and interrogating their perceived wellbeing in relation to guiding practices.</p> |
| <p>p. 10 the detailed information (diving/skippering/underwater photographers etc) are rather confusing as it is not clear how they inform the research. What is the 'highest' coaching qualification?</p> | <p>We have added information on the qualifications of the outdoor guides to speak in favour of their rich experience, technical competency and expertise and situate them within the AT sector as highly qualified workforce. This gives them the ability not only to instruct, coach and lead tourists, but also to foster tourists' wellbeing through their practices.</p> |

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| | The highest coaching qualification is the highest level of award one can possibly obtain in a certain sport (BCU level 5 Coach in sea kayaking for example). |
| Reviewer 3 | |
| JOST gives you 200 words of space in your abstract, but yours is 150 words. Make the most of this space, to emphasise the contribution to theory from your article. | Thank you for this suggestion. The abstract length is in line with JOST requirements however we have added two additional sentences. We have now highlighted the contribution of our study to theory. |
| What are the consequences for sustainable development through wellbeing? | To address this point, we have added references to SDG3 to the conclusion section. We now provide more information to clarify the consequences for sustainable development through wellbeing. |
| I believe that these articles have been published in JOST since you submitted your manuscript, and it may be relevant: Buckley, R. (2020). Nature tourism and mental health: parks, happiness, and causation. <i>Journal of Sustainable Tourism</i> , 28(9), 1409-1424. and Croy, W. G., Moyle, B. D., & Moyle, C. L. J. (2020). Perceived benefits of parks: the roles of information source exposure and park use. <i>Journal of Sustainable Tourism</i> , 1-20. | We have included these new references where they were relevant for the discussion around benefits of parks and green areas (p. 5). |
| Some references seem incomplete. | We have revised the references and added place of publication, editors and page numbers where missing. |