



THE INNOVATION JOURNEY

Rita Porkka is the CEO and founder of Naturest Ltd., a nature service company that offers forest pedagogy ("forest nature school") and nature-based wellbeing services in forest environment, in Northern Ostrobothnia. Rita has been living with her husband in Siikalatva since their children moved away from home. For her, the rural nature offers space and freedom that feeds creative thinking. After working for 20 years in various rural development projects for different organizations, Rita started to wish to do something else with her life and put her accumulated expertise into use. During her project work, Rita had been organizing forest pedagogy to school students. She then developed forest workshops to international educational travel groups and established Naturest Ltd. in 2020 with two female partners. However, during the pandemic Rita had to change her target group.



Currently, Naturest offers environmental education in the form of the forest nature school, event production, as well as nature care services in which the forest environment is harnessed for empowering or rehabilitating activities for individuals and small groups. Naturest activities are organized in cooperation

with a network of partners, all of whom are women. Since 2022, Naturest has been running the Nature Cafe Loppula at Sanginjoki nature conservation area.

THE INNOVATION IMPACT

Rita is offering new wellbeing services and, through the forest nature school, involved in spreading nature awareness. Sustainable development is close to Rita's heart, and the activities in Naturest are directed by the Visit Finland Sustainable Travel and Green Activities labels. Moreover, Rita is committed to social responsibility.



Naturest offers internships, also for immigrants, has had so far one wage-supported employee, uses furniture that was made in local prison programmes, and offers a 10% discount for associations of the public good. Rita has also arranged a free winter event for Ukrainian refugee families and participated in the restoration of a local lake, and in foreign species voluntary work.

USEFUL LINKS

<https://naturest.fi/en/naturest-home/>
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