

KEY TAKEAWAYS from the Via Alpina Youth camps on inclusion in outdoor activities

Outdoor spaces are often seen as open to all—but in reality, they present barriers (economic, social, personal, physical, and cultural) to many.

Practical strategies for inclusion

Inclusion starts before the first “real” step

- ▲ Preparation for a hike begins long before the first step—with reflection and planning, where inclusion is not an add-on but the starting point.
- ▲ Before any outdoor camp or hike, share clear information: distances, elevation, accessibility, expectations – some people need more details to feel comfortable!
- ▲ Host a pre-hike Q&A session (e.g. virtual call) for participants to ask questions, discuss adaptations and build trust.

On the trail

- ▲ Start each day with a clear, calm briefing—it sets the tone and reduces uncertainty.
- ▲ Allow enough time for basic logistics (packing, getting ready, leaving a hut).
- ▲ Remember: the journey itself is the destination. Avoid overly ambitious goals.
- ▲ Make space for play, laughter, and spontaneity—joy fuels connection.
- ▲ End each day together—gather reflections, impressions and insights, and mention the plan for the next day.

” *Mountains are not just for the physically strong—they are for those who are strong at heart.*
– Marjeta Čič



Mindset for inclusive leadership

- ▲ Leading inclusive hikes goes beyond technical know-how—it calls for empathy, collaboration and a warm, welcoming attitude. A genuine smile can make all the difference.
- ▲ Celebrate small wins out loud—highlighting effort and progress builds confidence and strengthens group spirit.

Impact of mountain experiences

- ▲ Resilience
Overcoming physical and emotional challenges cultivates strength.
- ▲ Empowerment
Achieving a summit or overcoming fear increases confidence and self-worth. The same applies to communicating in a foreign language.
- ▲ Connection
Shared goals foster solidarity, trust and intercultural bonding.
- ▲ Mental well-being
Nature grounds us, calms the mind and reconnects us with ourselves.

Non-formal learning

- ▲ Is vital for developing skills, self-awareness and confidence beyond the classroom.

” *A mind that is stretched by a new experience will never go back to its old dimension.*
– Sir O. Wendell Holmes

Inclusion is not a final goal but a continuous process of curiosity, courage, learning and connection. It is about how we choose to live with diversity and difference.

Booklet & Information

Mountains for All: Embracing Inclusion in Mountains and Outdoor Activities



More about the Via Alpina project

