

LESNÍ KLUB JURTA, CZECH REPUBLIC

Case Study



A LITTLE BIT ABOUT THE KINDERGARTEN

The Jurta Nature Kindergarten opened in 2010 with a great contribution from parents. In 2013 we were legally registered by the Czech Ministry of Education. And in 2017, due to the national legal act recognising forest kindergartens in the Czech Republic, we became equal to the other ordinary kindergartens.

Jurta resides on a farm in the outskirts of Děčín in the north of the Czech Republic. The kindergarten is located in rural area surrounded with forests, meadows and rivers. There are pigs, cattle, geese, donkeys and sheep on the farm. The children encounter the life and work on the farm every day. They can observe the work on a farm, help feeding animals and learn about everyday life of the animals during the whole year.

As a base we use a wooden furnished hut equipped with a stove and a large bunk bed for the youngest children to have an afternoon nap. In the base there is everything we need to keep the children comfortable, e.g. extra clothes, tools, games, books and other teaching aids. There is a large garden with a place for fire, spaces for play in nature and an orchard next to the base.

There are 30 registered children aged 3-6 years old and 5 qualified staff teachers in the kindergarten. There is also a primary school in the farm area and school-children regularly meet their friends from the kindergarten when they go to school.



NOTE FROM THE HEADTEACHER



Petra Tanglová, Headteacher of the JURTA NATURE KINDERGARTEN, says on inspiring the use of nature in her setting and the staff's pedagogy:

"Nature kindergartens are already preferred by many parents in the Czech Republic. Still there are some questions by adults: Do the children get enough of education and sufficient care in the nature? Won't they be cold outdoors? Again and again the questions get answered and doubts disappear. Parents can see how happy their children are and this is the highest value."

We in Jurta open up the nature space to the children. They are supported to grow up without overprotection. I believe this is the only way for them to become free, self-reliant and responsible human beings. We give them a chance to experience everything on their own. We give them time they need so much to explore and observe the world all around them. In my personal experience there is now no other way than the natural or forest one – as you wish to name it."

There is a balanced ratio of free play and guided activities for children.

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SEE FOOTAGE FROM JURTA AT
<https://youtu.be/BMOx4iXJimY>

TIME OUTDOORS, HIKING IN THE FOREST, LEARNING IN AND WITH NATURE.

99% OF THE CHILD'S NURSERY TIME IS OUTDOORS. CHILDREN STAY INDOORS WHEN VISITING COMMUNITY FACILITIES LIKE LIBRARIES OR WORKSHOPS, AND DURING EXTREME WEATHER

We meet up in the garden around the base every morning. Children help to make and light a fire, taking care of it every day. During morning circle time together children split into two groups and at about nine o'clock we all set off to the surrounding nature spaces, often visiting favourite places in the woods and hills. Each place has its own name given by the children. In the afternoon, children play in the garden and help with jobs on the farm. They spend their afternoon enjoying free play or with seasonal activities like gardening or fruit picking. They also care for guinea pigs and rabbits.

Concept and vision

In Jurta Nature Kindergarten we offer education in natural conditions with plenty of outdoor activities, with opportunities to discuss children's own opinions and participate in the creation of the daily plan. We guide children to be responsible, self-reliant, self-confident team players ready to help others.

The teachers use a partnership and respectful approach to learning with the children. Relationships are based on mutual trust and dialogue. Children are encouraged to learn how to solve problems and how to talk to each other. The role of the adults is mostly supportive or they can help the child to find solutions if they need it.

Using real tools

Children work with real tools like a hand saw, carving knife or hammer and nails,



and with gardening equipment. They care about animals, carry out gardening and maintain the precious orchard plants. The children do many artistic activities to develop their talents and skills. They listen to and play music, they do fine arts and they play and watch their own theatre performances.

Engagement of parents

Co-operation and engagement of parents is very important to us. We invite the parents to be part of the kindergarten, share experiences or simply help maintaining and extending the kindergarten setting with their own skills. There are a number of events where parents (and/or grandparents) can participate and enjoy mutual experiences together with their children. Most appreciated in our setting are traditional events like an annual Family Orienteering Run in spring, Grandparents fairy tale reading, and our "Tea at five" gathering in summer. As well as this we

have voluntary work in the autumn working together in wood fuel gathering and cutting with a camp fire.

Challenging nature for the staff

We are happy to explore with children the challenging elements of nature, this is due to the staffs love of being in and with nature. The children then feel comfortable and safe around confident and happy adults. They see it's not just them learning something new, but also the teachers learn new things with them. We all enjoy new experiences every day together and how strong relationships develop.

It's the weather and nature who teach the children to adapt in various situations and overcome discomfort, such as extreme cold. On the other hand, nature is generous to us with its gifts, like fruits and vegetables planted, grown and nurtured by the children.