

## Special Stop III: Forest, how are you doing?

Hello!

I'm Lea, a forester in the Taunus, a German low mountain range. My team and I make sure the forest and the animals living in it are doing well, and we also make sure there's enough wood for furniture and houses. Maybe you're sitting on a wooden chair right now!?



Peter Leth@Unsplash

100,000 years ago, Germany was mostly covered in forests, mainly dominated by European beech trees, which have smooth bark and deep roots and provide excellent shade with their leaves. But today, you can find pine trees in many places, which typically grow at higher altitudes in the mountains where it's too cold for other types of trees. These pine trees, with their straight

trunks and rapid growth, have been planted by humans in many areas, often away from other types of trees. This means that forests are often not as natural as we might guess. Most of them are managed for forestry purposes, which involves cutting down the trees after a certain period and selling the logs. This logging process can be noisy and disturb many animals, significantly altering the forest environment. However, it's important to note that from wood, we can make an important renewable resource that is far more environmentally friendly than materials like plastic or concrete.



Markus Spiske @ Unsplash



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Due to climate change, our summers are getting hotter and drier. This isn't good for the planted pine trees as they can't handle these conditions, and their ability to defend themselves is decreasing. Wood-eating insects like the bark beetle, which happens to love pine trees, love this weather. As a result, the beetle population is growing rapidly, causing many trees to die. Additionally, because of climate change, the risk of forest fires is increasing. This is a major concern for us foresters. To ensure that we have healthy forests in the future, researchers all over the world are studying which tree types can survive climate change and its consequences.

**We'll meet you in the woods! Yours, Lea!!**

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## Questions and Exercises for the Extra Stopover Germany

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### For the younger ones

- 🦋 Which animals do you know that live in the forest?
- 🦋 What things in your group room/classroom are made of wood?
- 🦋 What differences between coniferous and deciduous trees do you know?

**Exercise:** Take a trip to the forest. Spread out at a short distance from each other, and if it's dry, you can even lie down. Close your eyes and listen to the sounds of the forest. Afterward, write or draw all the sounds you heard on a piece of paper and share them with each other.

**Tip:** *The forest treasure trove, teaching guide page 29, activity 22.*

### For the Older ones

- 🦋 Is there a lot of forest in Germany? Look up together on the internet how large the forested area in Germany is. What about other European countries?  
*In Germany, there are approximately 11 million hectares of forest, which is about one-third of the country's total land area. Countries like Sweden and Finland have much more forested land, but they also have significantly smaller populations. For example, you can check on <https://earth.google.com/> to see which parts of the world are covered by forests - they appear as dark green areas.*
- 🦋 Forests and wood are crucial in the fight against the climate crisis - can you explain why?  
*CO<sub>2</sub> is one of the greenhouse gases that warms the Earth's atmosphere. When a tree grows, it removes CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere and stores it in its wood. The CO<sub>2</sub> remains stored in the wood, even after the tree is no longer alive, such as when it's used in furniture or construction.*

**Exercise:** What emotions do you associate with forests? Do you feel as comfortable there as you do at home? Or perhaps you feel a bit spooked, and if so, why? Gather in groups and compare your experiences.