

# Tips for sustainability communications

A travel industry manual for  
better marketing and communication



Visit Finland

# Table of content

<b>1. ECOLOGICAL SUSTAINABILITY</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Environment.....	6
Water .....	7
Air .....	8
Land .....	9
Forest.....	10
Cleantech.....	11
<b>2. ECONOMICAL SUSTAINABILITY</b> .....	<b>12</b>
Training .....	13
Sustainable competitiveness .....	14
Financial and social stability .....	15
<b>3. SOCIO-CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY</b> .....	<b>16</b>
Equality and happiness for all.....	17
Respecting local culture and traditions .....	19
<b>4. ETHICAL PRACTICES</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b>5. FURTHER READING</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<i>Involving the Finnish travel industry in the battle for our climate</i> .....	<b>24</b>
<i>Finland has space, quiet and forests – the very things travellers want right now</i> .....	<b>28</b>
<i>Finland has the world’s largest organic wild collection area and the cleanest food in the EU</i> .....	<b>31</b>
<i>Socio-cultural responsibility – a challenge for the travel industry</i> .....	<b>34</b>
<i>Preserving the bond between man and nature is necessary for a sustainable future</i> .....	<b>38</b>
<i>Circular economies help dwindling sources last despite rising consumption</i> .....	<b>40</b>

## Dear reader

**Congratulations! You’re part of the travel industry in a country with many wonderful things to share!**

Tourism is one of the fastest-growing industries in the world. Finland is also a hot destination at the moment, which has boosted tourism in Finland to new heights.

Tourism is a notable employer and benefits communities in many ways. However, we need to remember the principles of sustainable development and consider the environment, natural resources and local people as well. Sustainability is valued and it can also benefit businesses financially.

Finland can proudly claim several accomplishments for sustainable development that are based on scientific research. You can find a few of them in this manual and use them in your own marketing and communications. A separate toolkit for businesses provides you with practical resources for sustainable operations.

We believe our industry must be maintained and developed together. Join us and help build a better tomorrow!

**This manual has been produced and written by Visit Finland and Anu Nylund, Mood of Finland**

## Travel in numbers



The number of international journeys surpassed one billion in 2012. In 2030, people are estimated to go on 1.8 billion trips abroad. The travel industry generates around 10% of the world's GDP.



In 2017, people who live outside Finland visited our country 8.3 million times. Overnight stays by visitors grew a staggering 14%, hitting a new record at 6.6 million.



The biggest sources of visitors are still Russia, Germany, Sweden, the UK and China.



The Finnish travel industry employs around 140,000 people, and the number is expected to reach 180,000 by 2025.

Source:  
World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)

# 1

## Ecological sustainability

Ideally, tourism should increase appreciation for the environment and provide resources for its conservation. Environmental sustainability aims to produce the absolute minimum amount of damage to the environment, benefit the region and ensure that natural resources are not depleted prematurely.

Climate change is a global issue, and its deceleration is one of the goals of environmentally sustainable tourism. At the current rate, our global average temperatures are expected to rise by up to 5 °C during the 21st century. The international agreement on climate action aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 50% in time for 2030 and ultimately get rid of fossil fuels altogether: some scenarios picture a carbon neutral society being a reality as soon as in the 2050s.

The travel industry can affect environmental sustainability by making long-term choices in energy production. Another tool for travel destinations and regions is the so-called load capacity classification, which calculates how much strain the region can bear and how many travellers can be accommodated. Included factors are e.g. the supply of clean water, waste management, energy sources, the soil's suitability for construction and impact on the local nature and ecosystems. Accommodation capacity is an effective tool for limiting the number of visitors.

# Environment

The environment is a concept that includes natural surroundings, constructed habitats and social domains. Sustainable travel must consider all of these elements.

**! Finland is one of the world's greenest countries.**

The Environmental Performance Index (EPI) places Finland among the ten greenest countries in the world and the best at Environmental Health. According to the Pollution Index, Finland has the world's cleanest air and environment.

**! Finland is among the top EU nations in renewable energy.**

Around 35% of Finland's electricity is produced with renewable energy sources. Our national renewable energy strategy also includes timber and recycled biofuels. Finland aims to have renewable sources make up 50% of our consumption and have 55% of our energy produced domestically by 2030.

**! Up to 92% of all bottles are recycled in Finland.**

Finland has a very high recycling rate. Plastic bottles are recycled after one use.

**! Finland has the world's first circular economy roadmap.**

Circular economy aims to preserve materials and their value in use for as long as possible. Instead of hawking products, services and smart digital solutions become the key economic driver.

**! The Finland We Want in 2050: a societal commitment**

The societal commitment is a key tool for implementing the UN Agenda for Sustainable Development and a shared goal for Finland's future.

More on the subject from page 24 in Involving the Finnish travel industry in the battle for our climate and from page 38 in Circular economies help dwindling resources last despite rising consumption.

Photo: Eeva Mäkinen



Photo: Juho Kuva

# Water

We should be proud of Finnish water. By 2050, the world's population will require approximately 70% more food and 50% more water than in 2010. Finland is a pioneer in water technology and engineering. In future years, this know-how is believed to be in high demand globally.

**! Finland has the richest water resources on Earth.**

There are 187,888 lakes, 336,000 km of shoreline, 178,947 islands, 32,383 springs and 647 rivers in Finland. 10% of Finland's land area is covered with fresh water.

**! Finland is the world's only nation where all ports freeze over in the winter.**

Finland is located entirely above the 60th latitude and is the only country in the world where all the ports would freeze without icebreakers. Thus, Finland is the world's foremost authority on icebreaking. The first icebreaker started operations in Finland in 1890, and the first Finnish icebreaker was built in 1939. A staggering 80% of all icebreakers include Finnish design and 60% of the world's icebreakers are built in Finland.

**! Finland has the world's cleanest water.**

Finland also invests the most into protecting water purity. Finland has an abundance of high-quality natural water; around 60% of all drinking water is sourced from ground water and the rest from surface waters, i.e. lakes and rivers. Up to 80% of all lake water and 40% of river water is classified as good or excellent in quality.

More on the subject from page 28 in Finland has space, quiet and forests – the very things travellers want right now.



Photo: Aku Pöllänen

## Air

Clean air is a natural resource that too many have to live without. Changes in the air quality and climate are important indicators of environmental health. Air quality is measured and tracked at 90 different locations in Finland and can be viewed in real time through the Finnish Meteorological Institute's online service.



### **A WHO study ranks Finland's air quality as third-best in the world.**

The study compared measurements from 3,000 locations in 100 countries between the years 2008 and 2014.



### **The absolute cleanest air ever measured comes from Finland.**

The cleanest air ever recorded was sampled in the Pallas-Ylläs Natural Park, on Sammaltunturi in the municipality of Muonio.

## Land

### **Finland has the third-most land per person in Europe.**

There are an average of 18 people per square kilometer in Finland. Only Iceland (3.3 P/km<sup>2</sup>) and Norway (17 P/km<sup>2</sup>) are less densely populated.

### **Finland's bedrock is the oldest and most stable in Europe.**

The Earth is approximately 4,6 billion years old and its oldest rocks, certain types of gneiss found in Canada, were formed around 4 billion years ago. The oldest rock in Finland is 3.5 billion years old: the trondhjemite gneiss found in the village of Siurua in Pudasjärvi.

### **Finland is the world's safest country from natural disasters.**

Large-scale hurricanes, earthquakes or floods do not occur in Finland.

### **Finland has the cleanest food in the EU.**

Finland's statistics are compiled from 2,193 samples, of which 575 were produced in Finland. No residues were detected at harmful levels in any of the Finnish products.

### **Finland has the world's largest certified organic wild collection area.**

Finland's wild collection areas total 11.6 million hectares, which makes up 30% of the entire world's organic collection areas and nearly 38% of Finland's land area.

### **Geothermal energy could replace all the fossil energy used for heating in Finland.**

The average land temperature is above freezing throughout the country: 2–3 °C in the north and 6–8 °C in the south. Therefore geothermal energy could be used for heating in the entire country, albeit more effectively in the south.

More on the subject from page 28 in Finland has space, quiet and forests – the very things travellers want right now and from page 31 in Finland has the world's largest organic wild collection area and the cleanest food in the EU.

More on the subject from page 28 in Finland has space, quiet and forests – the very things travellers want right now.

# Forest

Finland's forests are an intriguing asset for tourism. They are beautiful to behold, improve air quality and act as carbon sinks. In fact, even spending time in a forest is beneficial for your health.

**! Finland is the most densely forested country in the EU and #10 worldwide.**

30% of the Earth's land area – 39 million km<sup>2</sup> – is covered by forests. In Finland, forests make up 72% of all the land area.

**! Our number of strictly protected forests and their percentage of all forests are some of the highest in Europe.**

Finland's natural forests are protected by restricting commercial use of ecologically valuable locations. Altogether, 12% of Finland's forests are protected. The total protected area is made up of legally protected sites as well as areas within commercial forests that maintain natural diversity. For the most part, nature reserves are off-limits from the public. Nearly 90% of Finland's commercial forests are PEFC certified. Any commercial activities within national reserves are required to meet the standards of sustainability.

Finnish everyman's rights guarantee everyone the right to enjoy nature freely, but also demand that visitors do not disturb the environment and leave no trace.

Photo: Teemu Tretjakov

# Cleantech

Finland has decades of experience in developing solutions that save natural resources, since our cold climate, long distances and lack of fossil fuel sources have taught us to be frugal with both energy and finances. And when cutting-edge technology, efficient use of natural resources and strong environmental know-how are combined, the result is world-class competence.

**! Finland placed second on the Global Cleantech Innovation Index in 2017.**

The Global Cleantech Innovation Index emphasises energy efficiency and the transportation sector. Points were also awarded for prospects in renewable energy as well as networking and financing opportunities for businesses.

Photo: Janne Ylitalo

# 2

# Economical sustainability

Economical sustainability aims to align human activities with environmental requirements so that economic growth won't stall and tourism promotes regional welfare. Travel businesses benefit their community by employing locals and therefore creating tax income for the region. Sustainable businesses always have long-term plans and put environmentally critically investments ahead of quick financial gains.

An environmentally sustainable business does not make single-use purchases, but invests in products and resources that will last and can be repaired if need be.

Finland's national tourism strategy sees improving profitability and the ability to invest as the cornerstones of economical sustainability for businesses. The travel industry

has a significant role in Finland's economy and is the strongest-growing employer in export-related fields. Finnish tourism has started on a road to success that is lined with people and set in genuine natural surroundings. Success requires financial stability, proper education and support for entrepreneurs.

Finland has made the strategic decision to aim for niche markets instead of mass tourism. Venture capital investors around the world are expected to be drawn to Finland's selective approach and improved profitability, which in turn should reduce the need for investments loans. Economical sustainability demands that all investments are considered and in line with the other factors of sustainability.



Photo: Julia Kivelä

## Training

### ! Finland's primary education is deemed the world's best.

What makes Finnish education supreme?

- Finland has no private schools, which eliminates competition and fosters co-operation among schools.
- Teachers are neither undervalued nor underpaid.
- Educational policies are based on research, not politics.
- Finland is not afraid of experiments: teachers can implement the methods they choose.
- Regular breaks are mandatory: pupils get plenty of fresh air and exercise.
- Homework is limited: most of the learning happens at school.
- Equal preschool opportunities are guaranteed for all.

### ! Finland tops the OECD in education.

Finland scores the highest overall when the following factors are included:

- Educational attainment level for population aged 25 to 64 (87% of Finns have graduated from secondary school)
- Scholastic performance by pupils (PISA scores for reading, mathematics and natural sciences)
- Average years spent on education (nearly 20 years)

### ! Finnish education is the world's third-best equipped for the future.

### ! Finland has the world's highest literacy rate.

The Nordic countries are the world's most literate nations. Finland is followed by Norway, Iceland, Denmark and Sweden.

# Sustainable competitiveness

Finland is an innovative and competitive country that favours entrepreneurship.

- ! Finland is ranked third-best in the world for sustainable competitiveness.
- ! Finland is Europe's third-best nation for commerce.
- ! Finland has the world's third-best economic environment for business growth.
- ! Finland is the world's fourth-most innovative country.



Photo: Olli Oilinki



Photo: Julia Kivelä

# Financial and social stability

Finland is considered a stable and safe country to visit.

- ! Finland's police force and public safety are ranked second-best in the world.
- ! Finland is the world's most stable country.
- ! Finland is the freest country in the world, along with Norway and Sweden.
- ! Finland is the second-least socioeconomically vulnerable nation and has the second-best abilities to overcome socioeconomic challenges.

## 3

# Socio-cultural sustainability in tourism

Socio-cultural sustainability aims to preserve cultural diversity and development from generation to generation, uphold equal opportunities to live a balanced life and ensure welfare and basic human rights for everyone. What can we do to support it? For one, we can support local products and services. On the other hand, we should also foster fair and equal working conditions.



More on the subject from page 28 in Finland has space, quiet and forests – the very things travelers want right now and from page 34 in Socio-cultural sustainability – a challenge for the travel industry.

Photo: Katja Lösönen

## Equality and happiness for all

**Finland is known as a haven of equality, and studies also show Finns to be very happy and satisfied.**

- ! Finland is known as a haven of equality, and studies also show Finns to be very happy and satisfied.
- ! Finland is the best country in the world for human wellbeing. Finland is the world's happiest nation.
- ! Finland is the second-most equal country in the world.
- ! Within Europe, Finns are the second-most satisfied with their life.

# Respecting local culture and traditions

Photo: Juho Kuva

Finland is a land of extremes with distinctive culture and a strong national identity. These extremes are rooted in history: both Eastern and Western influences are still present in our architecture, gastronomy and art. Our Arctic location has forced us to embrace extremes: summer's midnight sun is followed by the gloom of winter, when a hot sauna offers a respite from the cold. Finland is known for technological innovations, mobile applications and games, but our old traditions are still very much alive and we strive to live in harmony with nature.

## **Finland has more saunas per capita than any other nation.**

Different sources cite the number of saunas in Finland to be anywhere between two and three million, but no matter what the exact number is, we definitely have more saunas per capita than any other nation. Finns have been making saunas for more than 2000 years.

## **The Sámi are the only recognised indigenous people within the European Union.**

The Sámi reside in four different nations: Finland, Norway, Sweden and Russia. Their territory, Sápmi, stretches from Central Norway and Sweden all the way to Northern Finland and the Kola Peninsula. Their numbers vary according to criteria, but the Finnish Sámi Parliament states it at around 60,000.

## **Finnish is among the ten oldest spoken languages.**

Even though texts written in Finnish exist only from the 16th century onwards, its roots and history are much deeper.

## **Finnish grit, sisu, is world-famous.**

Finnish sisu has been popular among the international press lately. The Times put the word on the international map in January 2017. Previous mentions can be found as well: The New York Times discussed it in 1940.

# 4

## Ethical practices



Ethical practices demand that all people are seen as equals and provided with the same opportunities. They also forbid any abuse of adults, children or animals and demand that working conditions and compensation for work are always fair.

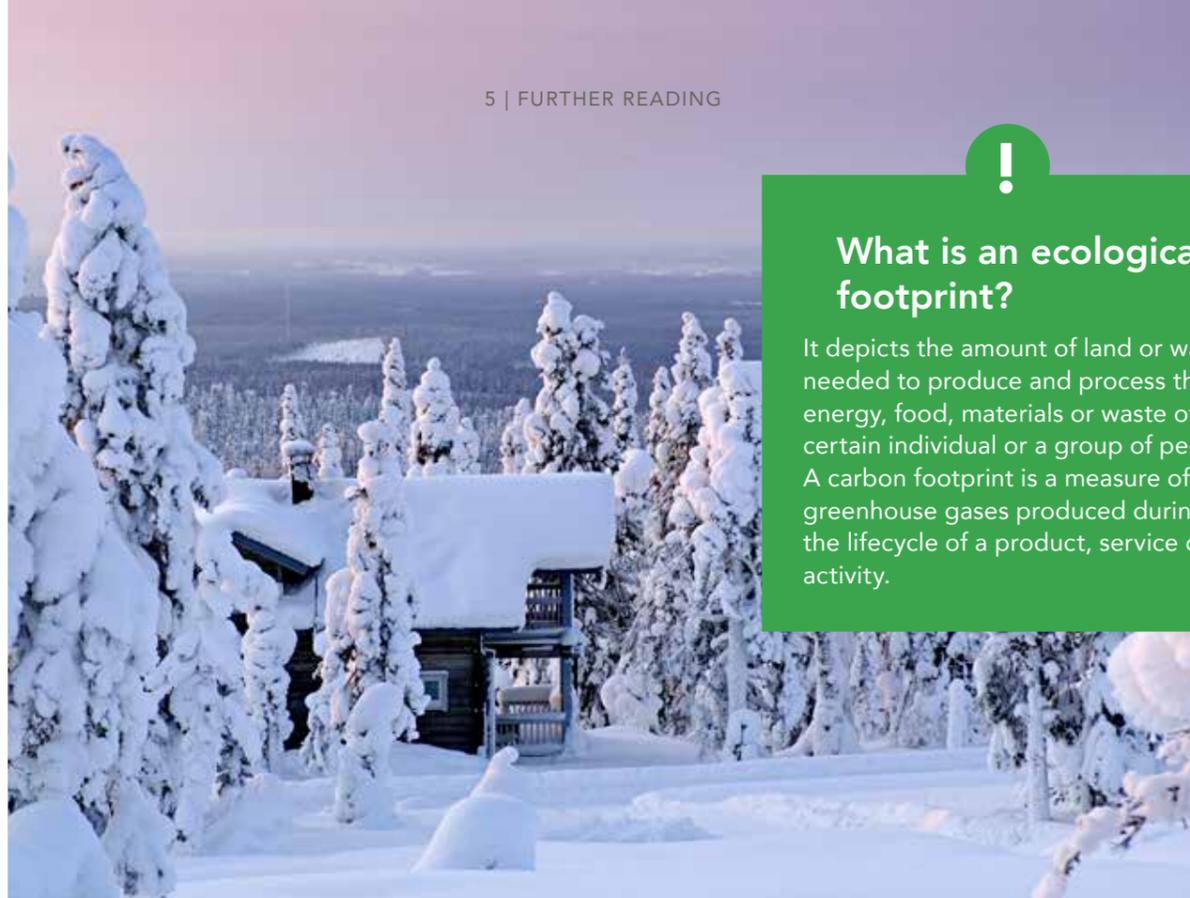
- ! Along with Denmark, Finland is the best at protecting basic human rights.
- ! Finns are the most trusting of others in Europe.
- ! Finland is the third-least corrupt country in the world.

More on the subject from page 28 in Finland has space, quiet and forests – the very things travellers want right now.

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# Further reading





### What is an ecological footprint?

It depicts the amount of land or water needed to produce and process the energy, food, materials or waste of a certain individual or a group of people. A carbon footprint is a measure of the greenhouse gases produced during the lifecycle of a product, service or activity.

Values have power in tourism

Photo: Visit Finland

## Involving the Finnish travel industry in the battle for our climate

### Climate change is our greatest challenge – now and tomorrow

The world's population is 7.6 billion at the moment and the UN predicts the number to reach 9.8 billion by 2050. Futurologists confirm climate change to be the greatest global challenge we have to face.

All nations have to reduce their emissions more than they have so far agreed to, if we hope to reach the goals set in the Paris climate agreement. The UN's goal is to stop global warming at two degrees Celsius compared to the pre-industrial age, while the current projection is five degrees. The EU will have to set stricter emissions goals, as the previously agreed 40% cut in greenhouse emissions (compared to the 1990s) by the year 2030 simply won't be enough. The new goals should be set no later than during Finland's EU presidency in 2019.

### Sustainable tourism – a challenge for the travel industry

Travellers are increasingly interested in the carbon footprint of their journey, and travel businesses are therefore inclined to inform travellers of ways to reduce their environmental impact.

One way of battling carbon emissions is donating to organisations that plant trees – or even taking part in reforestation projects. Travel services can use forests for alternative commercial purposes, which makes cutting them down for financial profit unnecessary.

Businesses can tackle the challenge by exploring different options, creating a sustainability plan, seeking certification, communicating their efforts to the customers and briefing their staff.

### Alternative energy can make a difference

The easiest way to minimise your carbon footprint is to adopt renewable energy sources for electricity and heating and reducing travel by car and air.

Finland is committed to the Paris climate agreement and the EU's emissions goals, and discussions are ongoing about the best alternative methods of energy production for these goals. On one hand, bioenergy promises to solve some of the problems, but the preservation of carbon sinks and sequestration of carbon dioxide with long-term solutions are key for the big picture.

In addition to bioenergy, other available alternative energy options include solar, thermal and wind energy. The Paris climate agreement places emphasis on truly low-carbon solutions and proper net efficiency: many alternative energy sources require energy input, which can come from fossil fuel sources.

### Santa and other Arctic inhabitants follow the situation closely

International climate studies suggest that the change in average temperatures is most prominent above the Arctic Circle, up to eight degrees Celsius by the end of the century. The Arctic ecosystem is said to have reached a "new normal", which means rising sea levels, changes in weather patterns and more extreme weather events.

Scientists agree that climate change has become a clearer cause or catalyst behind certain types of natural disasters. As glaciers melt, they affect sea levels and temperatures around the world – possibly even changing ocean currents. Natural disasters, such as hurricanes, heat waves, floods, wildfires and monsoon rains, also affect an estimated 40 million people each year.

### A northern challenge: freezing winters increase carbon footprint for hotels

Energy efficiency and carbon footprint reduction have become major staples in sustainability efforts within the accommodation sector. In the Far North, heating and cooling large properties often cause the greatest challenges.

Hotels must consider heating along with other factors, such as lighting, laundry, water efficiency and cooling, when calculating and optimising their carbon footprint. Investing in environmentally sustainable solutions and technologies often results in increased energy efficiency and lower expenses for large properties. Therefore sustainable solutions make sense financially as well.

The Finnish hotel industry has widely adopted environmental standards, and Finland leads the Nordics in utilising international environmental standards for buildings. According to Green Building Council Finland, there were already more than 120 buildings with LEED and BREEAM certification in Finland in November 2015.

### Case Harriniva: Renewable heating in the freezing cold

Pallastunturi, located in Fell Lapland, is home to the cleanest and freshest air in Europe. This is not an exaggeration, as an air quality monitoring station can attest to it. The same Finnish tundra along the Muonio river is also the location of Harriniva Hotels & Safaris, where the midnight sun, brilliant fall colours, northern lights and sparkling spring snow attract tourists from every corner of the earth. Winters are especially popular, despite the fact that temperatures can dip down to -40 degrees. The summers are more moderate: temperatures up to +20 are not uncommon.

## From oil to thermal without investments

Harriniva Hotels & Safaris used to burn 200,000 litres of oil every year to keep their properties toasty. Their main season is in the dead of winter, when the need for heating is also at its highest.

Harriniva wanted to take better care of the Lappish nature their guests come to enjoy, but finding a suitable green alternative for their large property took a long time. In the end, geothermal energy was the solution. However, it required drilling 14 kilometres of geothermal wells into the surrounding ground.

“There was a lot of drilling involved, but the whole process went very well. Construction didn’t bother our guests either. They did find certain layers in the soil that were hard to penetrate, but our geothermal solution provider, Adven, got the job done”, says Niina Pietikäinen, Director of Business Development and Partner at Harriniva.

Geothermal energy is often seen as a suitable solution for households, but Adven, a Finnish energy solutions provider, is specialised in providing environmentally friendly heating for large properties. Their solutions do not require major initial investments.

The benefits of geothermal energy, apart from environmental factors, include a steady source of heat without the fluctuations associated with the oil market and electricity providers. The cost will remain set for the duration of their contract, which is 15–20 years.

## Environmentally friendly solutions in Arctic conditions

The solution has helped Harriniva get rid of oil altogether, allowing their guests to enjoy even cleaner air in beautiful Fell Lapland.

“Geothermal energy has worked well and been reliable. Our guests have not noticed any difference from before. I would recommend geothermal energy to any other large properties as well. If it can work here in our Arctic conditions, it can work anywhere”, Pietikäinen assures.

## Case Vanajanlinna: tackling costs with geothermal energy

Vanajanlinna, a luxurious accommodation and event venue amid Hämeenlinna’s romantic landscape, is well-known among Finns, many of whom have fond, personal memories of the place. Vanajanlinna’s gorgeous grounds host hundreds of events for businesses and private parties every year.

### Vanajanlinna cherishes their history and environment

The high-value property itself is a historical landmark and has been deemed a cultural heritage site of protected architecture by the Finnish Heritage Agency.

The culturally valuable destination becomes even more appealing to conscientious travellers when the hotel and its adjoining golf course start using environmentally friendly geothermal energy for heating and cooling.

“Many of our guests tend to wonder what the maintenance costs on such an old, valuable property. In fact, they often ask us. We’re proud to tell them that soon our historical property will use clean, renewable energy for heating”, Vanajanlinna’s CEO Pekka Vihma explains.

### No obstacles for geothermal energy

Heating a historical property is not entirely simple, and finding an environmentally friendly, renewable source of heat has been on Vanajanlinna’s agenda for a long time. Geothermal energy fit the bill: it is green, cost-effective and reliable.

Initial examinations of the site have shown that geothermal energy can be harvested at Vanajanlinna. Bedrock can be found at a suitable depth and groundwater is not an issue. A geothermal solution would also benefit Linna Golf, the golf course located a short distance from Vanajanlinna.



“Geothermal energy is a cost-effective heating solution for our sizeable property. It would also boost our eco-friendliness and reduce our carbon footprint”, Vihma envisions. Specific plans for harvesting geothermal energy at Vanajanlinna have already been established and will be implemented in the near future.

Photo: Kaisa Sirén



## Land of space

On average, there are only 18 people per km<sup>2</sup> in Finland. Only Iceland and Norway have more space per person.



Photo: Elina Manninen

# Finland has space, quiet and forests – the very things travellers want right now

A growing number of travellers want to break free from their busy lives and seek relaxation in nature. They want to have new experiences in nature: see northern lights, breathe in fresh air and enjoy some solitude. Finland is a prime destination for them, as we have plenty of space and the world's cleanest air, as shown by studies.

## Natural beauty as far as the eye can see

The positive health effects of forests are widely known. However, very few countries can offer the complete silence or wild foods of Finland's forests. Asian travellers might even find forests slightly daunting, and they often prefer exploring our woods with the added safety of a tour guide.

Other travellers do appreciate our clearly marked hiking trails, both on land and in our natural waters. Our freedom to roam, clean nature and good infrastructure are definite draws for travellers. Many travellers who have made their way to Finland appreciate the vast emptiness of our nature: a landscape void of human touch, wilderness in its natural, harmonious state.

Thirty per cent of the Earth's land area – 39 million km<sup>2</sup> – is covered by forests. In Finland, forests cover 72% of the land area, making Finland the most densely forested country in Europe and the tenth-most forested country in the world. Finland is also blessed with waterways and has the most fresh water in the world.

Finland is home to exceptionally permissive everyman's rights, giving everyone access to pristine beaches and invigorating natural surroundings – for free. Metsähallitus – The Forest and Park Service – maintains 40 national parks around the country, providing excellent access to marked hiking trails.

## Tourism is met with enthusiasm – at least for now

On average, Finns travel a lot, even racking up close to a million package tours per year. People's opinions on tourism are mostly positive, and its associated benefits, such as improved employment and new life for remote regions, are recognised widely.

In a matter of years, travel has become one of the fastest-growing industries in Finland. Its metrics are followed closely by professionals and laypeople alike, as the media shows increasing interest towards tourism. Overnight stays by international visitors have gone up from 5.7 million to 6.6 million in three years.

The greatest relative growth can be seen in Lapland, especially in terms of international interest. Regional statistics show that tourism generates a total of €932 million in demand, of which close to 400 million comes from abroad.

In proportion to the number of inhabitants, Lapland receives the most visitors in Continental Finland: 181,000 inhabitants, nearly three million yearly visitors. If projections hold true, the number of visitors should continue to grow for a few more years at more than 15% annually.

The Finnish travel industry wants to make sustainability part of their trade. Air travel has a very large carbon footprint, which we should all try to address. Some of the ways include promoting nearby destinations, spending more time in one location, favouring ground transport and building flight connections with fewer layovers.

## How many travellers can Finland's forests and fells hold before the quiet – and magic – is gone?

Finland is not a likely destination for mass tourism, which is why increased tourism is seen as positive. But we do have to keep the growth in check, calculate regional capacities and especially listen to the locals. We have a great opportunity to differentiate Finland as a country that welcomes visitors – as a country that prepares for the challenges of tourism proactively and responsibly.

## Finland has the world's largest organic wild collection area and the cleanest food in the EU

### Food from the woods

Getting fresh food from the wild is one of the perks of living in a country of many forests and few people. Wild food, organic production and local produce are international trends, which makes our nature-inspired cuisine a potential draw for travellers.

Finns have always been good at utilising the offerings of our forests and waters, and luckily, that tradition has survived throughout the centuries. Everyman's rights allow anyone to pick berries, mushrooms and wild herbs. So unbeknownst to us, we have been on a diet of so-called superfoods – long before the health benefits of wild berries were a global topic.

### ! What is organic?

Organic wild products have to be traceable. Their collection areas are bound by the same regulations as other organic production sites. Non-organic fertilisers or pesticides cannot be used in locations that are approved for organic collection. All collection areas also need to be away from sources of pollution. Yearly visits from inspectors are part of organic wild production as well.

### Wild food is not necessarily organic

Everything that grows wild in nature is not automatically considered organic. Marketing edible wild plants as organic is only possible if the wild collection area and the person in charge of production are certified in the system that oversees organic production. Finland's wild collection areas total 12.2 million hectares, which makes up 30% of the world's organic collection areas and nearly 40% of Finland's total land area. Experts suggest that nearly all of Finland's forests could be certified as organic collection areas without altering current forestry practices.

## We have reason to be proud – Finland has the cleanest food in the EU

Finns appreciate purity and origins in their food. In fact, studies show our food to be the cleanest in the EU. Finland's statistics are compiled from 2,193 samples, of which 575 were produced in Finland. None of the Finnish products showed any unwanted traces beyond harmful levels.

Travellers also value clean, local food. Which is why Finland is starting to gain fame for our delicious, high-quality cuisine. We have many exquisite specialities, such as fireweed shoots, also known as the asparagus of the North. When prepared correctly, its taste is stunningly similar to asparagus! Rowan berry buds resemble bitter almond and can be used to spice springtime dishes, while nettle pesto has become a national staple of the summer for many.

There is nothing to stop us from marketing regional cuisine like Italy, where provinces distinguish themselves through food. All of our regions have specialities that are not available anywhere else. Each region is home to their own authentic nature and culture, which should be utilised in tourism – as part of an enticing culinary narrative and experience, for instance.

## Wild food and the story behind it are sure to impress

Wild food has been part of our parlance for more than 10 years. It means food acquired straight from nature: berries and mushrooms, wild herbs and plants, fish and game. Reindeer can also be considered wild food, although they are not strictly wild the way game animals are. The concept of getting food from the wild has been part of our lives for thousands of years, although the name wild food is somewhat new.

Finland is an exceptional country in that we can go to the window in almost any house and point out a place where we can get wild food. We're also one of the few countries where everyman's rights allow everyone, tourists included, to freely gather food from nature.

"Can I really take these?", asks the Italian on a mushrooming tour. "Are you sure this legal?", the Dutch travellers wonder as they pick cloudberry in Lapland. A bilberry pie made with berries picked by the travellers themselves is an experience par excellence. "There is nothing like this", says the French visitor fishing for perch, only to be dumbfounded when the catch is smoked and devoured with new potatoes in the summer breeze.

Marketing this valuable connection to nature requires local entrepreneurs who can convey our age-old traditions of wild food into credible narratives and experiences. It takes will and competence.

## Wild food is part of our history and way of life

Finnish people have a unique bond with nature. Picking berries and mushrooms, staying at summer cottages, fishing and spending time in nature are still part of our life and keep new generations in contact with the wild. As we discuss the environmental impact of food, the importance of self-sufficiency and the value of local food, we have started to appreciate wild food more.

Hunting is also part of our heritage: our distant forefathers lived off game, fish and plants. Hunter-gatherers valued natural offerings, such as bird eggs, clams and crayfish, very highly. In recent times, we have started a discussion about insects as food, and although it may seem foreign and new to us, it is very likely that insects and larvae were used for nutrition in these parts during the Stone Age.

And during war times, wild herbs and vegetables were an important source of vitamins. When times were tough, Finns learned how to use wild plants as food and animal feed by reading Toivo Rautavaara. Our modern Rautavaara would be Sami Tallberg, an ambassador for wild food, who inspired restaurants to use wild herbs for flavour in the 2000s. The ELO Foundation, which works to promote Finnish food culture, has set wild food as one of their tenets.



Photo: Anneli Hongisto

## Wellness from nature

Since wild plants must grow on their own, they have to be sturdier and hardier than their cultivated cousins. They're said to contain more antioxidants, vitamins and minerals than farmed produce.

But for tourism, the experience of actually getting your food from the wild is even more important than the vitamins. A trip to the woods for mushrooms, berries or wild herbs can be a spiritual experience: a shared moment in the benevolence of nature. A very tangible expression of what's special about Finland. Such an experience does require a competent guide that knows their mushrooms and wild herbs.

Co-operation between the travel industry, wholefood operators and wellness service providers can create entirely new products and increased revenue for all. Food is an important part of travel, and poor food can ruin an entire trip. Wellness travel places especially high demands on food: travellers into their health and wellbeing want to make sure their holiday also includes healthy food that's made with clean, local ingredients.



Photo: Jussi Helttunen

## Socio-cultural responsibility – a challenge for the travel industry

### Travel is an important industry for all the factors of sustainability

Businesses often use financial metrics and scorecards to gauge their success. In order to be successful, businesses need to understand their customers, look into the future, make use of available research and other data, but also to build strategies on values, as travellers' choices are becoming more and more value-based. Environmental and Socio-cultural choices don't necessarily compromise profits – in fact, they often have the opposite effect.

"Modern tourism should be sustainable, both environmentally and socially responsible and equally beneficial for the traveller and the destination", travel researcher Auliana Poon states.

Poon manages to weave together all

the aspects of sustainable development; economic, environmental and Socio-cultural sustainability. One cannot exist without the other. A business cannot claim to sustainable until all the factors of sustainability are truly taken into account in practice. Social responsibility also includes safety and ethical practices.

Travel is an industry that has the potential to help protect endangered animals, cultures and nature. There is no way to offshore jobs in tourism. Tourism is also a significant employer and offers jobs to those who are marginalised in society.

### Corporate social responsibility is not just PR

Corporate social responsibility has been around as a term long before it was used

in the context of tourism, travel or even sustainable development.

Corporate social responsibility is considered to evolve with the times and their needs. Existing laws, employee rights and the current economic situation all affect what we consider common, self-evident and normal actions and responsibilities for businesses – and what is seen as value-adding accountability.

Corporate social responsibility, at its core, focuses on the company's ability to generate welfare in the surrounding society, community and people. A socially responsible business should be transparent; there are no ambiguities surrounding its assets and revenue. Charity and financial support for worthy causes are strongly linked with social responsibility. However, the point isn't making the best possible financial profit and then channelling funds into charity. Businesses should aim to act responsibly and sustainably in all their processes.

Acts of corporate social responsibility have been shown to create trust in the business behind the service. Companies that have proven themselves to be socially responsible are seen as fair towards their customers as well. A company that has successfully branded itself as socially responsible can reap the rewards of not only general goodwill, but financial benefits as well.

### Social responsibility is a growing trend in travel

The WTM (World Tourism Market) travel trade show in London includes World Responsible Tourism Awards, a day dedicated to responsible tourism. Since 2004, the day has culminated in choosing the year's best responsible travel businesses and concepts. When Lemon Tree Hotels was chosen as the co-winner of the 2016 World Responsible Tourism Awards, it helped put social responsibility on the map. The hotel chain was awarded for its involvement in solving social issues in innumerable communities. The chain is an example of a large corporation with international backers and a social backbone:

they are dedicated to offering meaningful employment to disabled and marginalised people. Lemon Tree Hotels is an inspiration to other large businesses that are willing to take on social responsibility as a key part of their operations: they are commercially successful and produce a notable benefit to their local communities.

They shared the award with Tren Ecuador, who have pioneered combining luxury services with social responsibility. Tren Ecuador is a train route that caters to high-end travellers, but unlike other similar train journeys, Tren Ecuador introduces their customers to the local culture and people: the journey includes meals and drinks made from local ingredients, local artisans sell their handicrafts at scheduled stops and the passenger are involved with local projects and co-operation. The service provides work for about 5,000 locals.

### Social responsibility creates narratives and success

#### Moominworld, Naantali

In all likelihood, among the first Finnish travel businesses to announce and promote their corporate social responsibility was Moominworld in Naantali, Southwest Finland. Their social responsibility stems from the company's story and has been a guiding light in their operations.

The company's CEO Tomi Lohikoski says the following in their corporate responsibility report: "The Moominworld theme park has been in operation for more than 20 years and remains true to the original values and philosophies of the Moomins. These values include respect for nature and people, consideration and caring for others. Greedy self-seeking has no place here. Moominvalley operates like a miniature society, where everyone works together for the common good!"



Photo: Flatlight Films

### Lapinlahden Lähde, Helsinki

Lapinlahden Lähde, established in 2013, is an event venue for mental wellbeing and culture in the former Lapinlahti Mental Institution in Helsinki. It is run by the Finnish Association for Mental Health. They wanted to preserve the old, historically and culturally valuable building as a place of mental wellbeing, provide spaces for those who need them and do their part in creating a livelier Helsinki. To get people involved.

At the moment, Lapinlahden Lähde leases space to 50 small businesses. The area has its own café and restaurant, both of which employ people in danger of falling through the cracks. Volunteers also organise a multitude of events for different organisations. The area is home to travel businesses that provide guides, activities and campfire cooking experiences in the urban environment.

### Myö Hostel, Helsinki

According to the Finnish Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (Kehitysvammaliitto), there are around 25,000 intellectually disabled individuals in Finland, but only 500 of them are currently employed.

Myö Hostel, a chic boutique hostel in Helsinki's Ruskeasuo, was started by two friends with a background in social work. They realised how hard it was to find meaningful, paid work for intellectually disabled people. Myö Hostel pays equal, fair wages to their disabled workers and is a true trailblazer for value-based travel businesses.

## Combining seasonal work and social responsibility can be challenging

The travel industry employs an estimated 140,000 people in Finland at the moment, of which 30% are young adults. By 2025, the industry is estimated to create another 40,000 jobs more. Tourism is a significant employer, especially in remote regions.

As tourism grows, more and more seasonal workers are needed. This is especially evident during high season in Lapland. Kitchen and waiting staff are in short supply, even though statistics say there should be enough trained candidates. Other vacancies are also chronically unfilled. Employees and employers simply can't see eye to eye.

Seasonal work can be very challenging: average wages are not very high, and employees might have to take care of ongoing costs back home as well as pay rent and other expenses in a holiday destination. Living conditions might not be ideal either: because apartments are in high demand, seasonal workers might have to share a tiny bedroom with unfamiliar colleagues.

The most socially responsible option would be to develop tourism towards longer seasons and year-round destinations. Before we get there, the most likely solution might be labour migration. When new workers arrive from abroad, they need to be thoroughly onboarded and briefed – the same goes for the rest of the staff as well.

Finnish travel companies are facing changes, but there are many opportunities involved as well, at least if the challenges are managed responsibly. Remember, travel is about people coming together.



Photo: Visit Finland

The Sámi are the only indigenous people within the EU.



Photo: Mikko Leinonen

## Preserving the bond between man and nature is necessary for a sustainable future

### Indigenous peoples exist around the world

Indigenous peoples and their cultures are a treasure that should be preserved and supported. The UN Development Agenda places special emphasis on indigenous cultures and their status. Education and language preservation are key issues.

The Sámi reside within four different nations: Finland, Norway, Sweden and Russia. Their territory, Sápmi, stretches from Central Norway and Sweden all the way to Northern

Finland and the Kola Peninsula. Depending on the criteria, the number of Sámi people is around 60,000 to 100,000. The largest Sámi population can be found in Norway. The Sámi population in Finland is approximately 10,500.

Lapland's regional agenda sets a goal for 2040 of preserving the vitality of Sámi culture and ensuring that their traditions are passed down to new generations. The Sámi should have an opportunity to complete a full education up to the Finnish Matriculation Examination in their own language, be that Inari, Skolt or Northern Sami.

### To see where we are, we must know the past

Land ownership, land use and national borders have caused conflicts between indigenous peoples and majority populations around the world; geographical borders are an issue as much as perceived borders that have etched into people's minds over time. But the hope is that co-operation will bring down the cultural and psychological fences between indigenous peoples and majority populations. In general, indigenous nations want to be recognised as people, understood and respected for their traditions and culture and made part of the geopolitical realities and histories of the past, present and future. The majority populations can do their part by considering their beliefs, prejudices and assumptions, acquiring information and learning from indigenous peoples.

### Tourism is an opportunity – when done right

The first question we need to ask is whether the indigenous people want to have open exchange of ideas and interaction – or is their culture somehow fragile and therefore best preserved from outside influences. Lapland's regional agenda for 2018–2021 includes a section on Sámi culture and a vision for 2040, which states the following on the Sámi people's means of livelihood and tourism: "The traditional Sámi trades, such as reindeer husbandry, fishing, hunting, foraging and handcraft, are still vital and practiced according to their cultural traditions. Co-existing means of livelihood, such as culturally and ethically sustainable tourism, offer additional support for their traditional trades.

Sámi culture values respect, and they want to be respected in tourism as well; they wish to have their own active role in regional travel. They want to end the exploitation of their people and culture as passive props, regional colour and exotic, primitive objects in the gears of tourism.

### Towards more sustainable tourism

We have a lot to learn from indigenous peoples: especially the "ethics of the land", which appreciates not only humans, but everything that is alive in our environment. Indigenous peoples cultivate ways of life that are sustainable and respectful towards nature; something we could use as examples towards a more sustainable future for all mankind.

The Sámi have endless stories and immense wisdom to share with travellers. However, respecting the indigenous peoples' absolute right to govern their own land, culture and community is extremely important. The Sámi themselves should decide the extent, form and location of their role in developing tourism in Lapland.



## Indigenous people

There are an estimated 370 million indigenous people worldwide. Native peoples have social, cultural, economic and political traits that set them apart from most of the population. Their ancestors populated their regions before people from other cultures or ethnic groups arrived.



Photo: Olli Oilinki

## Circular economies help dwindling resources last despite rising consumption

### The world population rises while consumerism flourishes

The world population is rising inevitably, and consumption is guaranteed to follow. Unfortunately, the world's wealth is distributed unevenly. While the number of people living without food and clean water is on the rise, the middle classes are consuming more at an alarming pace. Finnish tourism also hopes to benefit from Asia's new, affluent middle classes.

At its current rate, our consumerism will unavoidably also consume the Earth: our natural resources are already diminishing at untenable rates. There is hope that the Asian market might abandon coal within a decade, but there are other issues at hand: people aspire for European and American lifestyles, and the culture of consumerism demands energy. As the need for energy rises, it might be tempting to go back to the cheapest source of energy, which is coal in Asia.

One reminder of the state of our finite natural resources is Earth Overshoot Day, which, alarmingly, comes sooner every year. It marks the statistical day when our environmental footprint outsizes the Earth's capacity to produce more natural resources and process the greenhouse emissions caused by fossil fuel use.

In the early 2000s, Finland's Overshoot Day was in October, by 2015 it was in August and in 2017, it came already in April. The Overshoot Day is based on calculations by the Global

Footprint Network. Their research shows that if everyone on Earth lived like us, we would need three more Earths.

However, we do have the power to change our ways, seek out sustainable means of energy production and live in a way that would allow future generations to enjoy clean, vibrant nature as well – we still have time to save the world from an environmental catastrophe.

### The world needs pioneers – circular economies could help

The world needs trailblazers and alternative solutions for continuous financial growth. Finland has set out to seek those solutions, and one of them is the world's first national circular economy roadmap and the plan of action that accompanies it. The roadmap is being developed by Sitra, The Finnish Innovation Fund, as well as the Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Ministry of Employment and the Economy and various industries and stakeholders.

Circular economy aims to maximise the retention of materials and their value for as long as possible. Instead of selling products, circular economies create revenue through services and smart digital solutions. Production as well as consumption should create the least amount of waste and trash possible.

Effective use of materials comes with environmental benefits, but circular economies also create financial and social opportunities. Finland's roadmap is believed to have great potential for international export.

### You can affect food waste

A sustainable food infrastructure that is based on circular economy would place more emphasis on local food and develop regional cuisine, but also pay attention to topsoil and farming methods. Local and organic food are environmentally friendly, sustainable options. Circular economy also aims to reduce food waste throughout the entire food chain.

Finnish households throw away 120 to 160 million kilos of food annually, which comes down to about 20 to 29 kilos per person, every single year. Food waste is an environmental abomination, but also pure economic waste: The Natural Resources Institute Finland has calculated that food waste taxes the average Finn €125 every year.

As a traveller, you can make a difference by choosing restaurants where meals are cooked from local ingredients. Also, never get more food than you can eat. Businesses that work in the food industry can make sustainable choices with ingredients, energy solutions, water use, waste management and recycling. You can also educate your customers in a friendly manner.

### One man's trash is another's treasure – and there is no need to own everything you use

#### Finland's first food waste restaurant LOOP

The non-profit organisation From Waste to Taste wants to reduce food waste and fight climate change.

The organisation has managed to realise what others have only dreamed about: they operate a restaurant with discarded ingredients. What started out as a pop-up restaurant has now become Finland's first food waste restaurant, Loop, located in Helsinki. The restaurant prepares their dishes from ingredients that wholesalers and producers would have otherwise tossed out.

Along with utilising food waste, the restaurant practices social responsibility by helping unemployed young adults, immigrants and those battling with long-term unemployment. They also donate a great deal of food to charities.

### Airbnb, a divisive example of circular economy

Circular economies also include economic service models where solutions replace manufacture. Cars, holiday homes, saunas and tools are some of the commodities that people are sharing, borrowing or renting more these days.

Money doesn't always change hands in circular economies, but seeking financial gain is not at odds with the ideology either. World-famous commercial examples include Uber and Airbnb, among others.

Airbnb is an American company and website that started in 2008 with the simple idea of allowing anyone to rent out their own apartment, room or other similar space to other users. The idea is good, but the service has proven to cause market distortion as well as tax evasion and underground economies. In many popular destinations, investors have acquired most of the available apartments, only to rent them out to tourists through Airbnb – for a hefty profit. This practice has pushed accommodation prices out of reach for the locals.

Many countries have set out legislation to govern Airbnb use, by e.g. setting restrictions on the number of nights allowed for renting and enforcing taxation of revenue from Airbnb. Travellers can influence the platform and ensure a more responsible future by doing some research on their accommodation and favouring options where they stay with a family in their home. This also gives travellers a chance to get to know the locals and their life – which, arguably, was the well-intended purpose of Airbnb in the first place.

### What's your innovation and commitment for circular economy?

The Finnish government has set out a strategic plan to develop circular economies. Its goals have something for everyone: Finland is a pioneer in bioeconomy, circular economies and cleantech. Developing, implementing and exporting sustainable solutions has helped improve our current account, increase our self-sufficiency, create jobs, reach our climate goals and ensure the health of the Baltic Sea.

Everything that can be produced locally, should be sourced locally. Purchasing Finnish products and services creates jobs and reduces emissions caused by transport. When buying products, make sure they are long-lasting and repairable.

The customer might not always ask the right questions, but representatives are free to talk about their company's solutions and values without asking. Ignorance is said to be bliss, but the right information can have a positive effect on consumer habits. As a business, you can set yourself apart from the others by making bold decisions and promoting your actions.

A neighbouring or competing business can also be an asset – you could cut costs by sharing some of your equipment. Small communities can share products such as sewing machines or snow shoes. An online booking system could even motivate people to get acquainted with digital services.



### Food waste

Food waste is edible food that has been thrown out or composted. Worldwide, around 30% of all food produced goes to food waste. The Finnish food chain wastes around 10 to 15 per cent of all edible food. Food production, transport and manufacture cause considerable emissions, which will have been for nothing, should the food go to waste.



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**Article 4: Socio-cultural sustainability – a challenge for the travel industry (p. 34–37)**

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**Article 5: Preserving the bond between man and nature is necessary for a sustainable future (p. 38–39)**

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**Article 6: Circular economies help dwindling resources last despite rising consumption (p. 40–42)**

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