

# Finnish Ecotourism

Ecotourism for Finns is an important aspect of culture and lifestyle in Finland. Finns have a strong connection to nature and the environment, so ecotourism is an important way for them to explore and enjoy nature while simultaneously taking care to protect it.

For Finns, ecotourism means:

- **Proximity to nature:** Finland is a country with an abundance of forests, lakes, rivers and picturesque landscapes. For Finns, ecotourism is an opportunity to dwell and breathe fresh air amidst the beauty of nature. They value the opportunity to spend time in nature, in an atmosphere far from the hustle and bustle of the city.
- **Sustainability:** Ecotourism for Finns is also about sustainability. It is important to operate in a way that minimises the negative impact on the environment. Finns attach great importance to nature conservation, the preservation of biodiversity and the sustainable use of natural resources.
- **Education and respect for nature:** Ecotourism for Finns is also linked to education and respect for nature. Finns try to learn as much as possible about nature, animals, plants and ecosystems. They respect the environment and try to keep it intact so that future generations can also enjoy its beauty.
- **Physical activity and well-being:** For Finns, ecotourism is also about being physically active outdoors. Enjoying nature, such as hiking, canoeing, skiing or cycling, is a way for them to stay healthy and fit while enjoying the beauty of the surrounding world.

Ecotourism is of particular importance to Finns, as it helps them to stay in close contact with nature and benefit both their well-being and the environment.

Both citizens and SMEs in Finland, including hotels and tourism companies, are trying to develop ecotourism in various ways to promote sustainable travel and minimise the negative impact on the environment. There are many examples of measures implemented in Finland, inter alia:

- **Certifications and standards:** Many hotels and tourism companies strive to obtain certifications and meet certain sustainability standards. An example is the Green Key certification, which honours facilities that meet certain criteria related to environmental protection, energy management, water management, waste recycling, etc.
- **Resource saving:** Tourism companies take measures to reduce the consumption of natural resources such as electricity and water. This may include installing energy-efficient lighting, reducing water consumption through, for example, the use of efficient irrigation systems, recycling and minimising the waste generated.
- **Local products and services:** Hotels and tourism companies support local communities and the economy by favouring local products and services. This fosters local entrepreneurship, reduces CO2 emissions associated with the transportation of products and promotes the unique culture and traditions of the region.
- **Education and awareness:** Tourism companies engage their visitors through education and awareness of sustainability and environmental protection. They can organise lectures, workshops, educational tours, provide information about the region's nature and culture and encourage responsible travel practices.

- **Nature conservation and restoration activities:** Working with organisations and local communities to protect nature, perform ecosystem restoration activities or participation in species conservation programmes. Tourism companies can support projects to restore habitats, enhance biodiversity or protect endangered species.
- **Ecological transport:** tourism companies can seek to reduce the environmental impact of transport by promoting modes of transport with a smaller carbon footprint, such as bicycles, public transport, electric cars or participation in CO2 offset schemes.

Many cities and regions in Finland are involved in ecotourism projects and practices.

- **Helsinki:** Helsinki is one of the leaders in sustainable tourism in Finland. The city promotes ecotourism through initiatives such as Helsinki Green Capital, which focuses on green solutions, environmental protection, clean energy and care for nature in the context of tourism.
- **Rovaniemi:** Rovaniemi, located in the polar (arctic) zone, is known as the capital of Father Christmas and as a popular destination of the northern lights. The city is committed to sustainable tourism development, taking care to protect the environment and Sami culture. Practices include ecological tours, nature and environmental protection education and the promotion of local products.
- **Turku:** Turku, Finland's oldest city, is also committed to developing ecotourism. There are a number of eco-related projects in the city, such as keeping the water clean, protecting nature in the archipelago and promoting conscious travel and eco-friendly practices in hotels and restaurants.
- **Åland:** The Åland Islands, an autonomous province of Finland, place a strong emphasis on sustainable tourism development. The Åland Islands offer a unique nature and marine environment that is protected and sustainably managed. The islands promote ecotourism, education on marine conservation and encourage the use of environmentally friendly means of transport.
- **Kuusamo:** The Kuusamo region, located in north-eastern Finland, is famous for its natural beauty, including Oulanka National Park and Riisitunturi National Park. The region promotes sustainable tourism, offering a variety of outdoor activities such as hiking, climbing and skiing, which are done in a sustainable and environmentally friendly way.

Finland's cities and regions are making efforts towards ecotourism and sustainability, which translates into increasing environmental awareness among local communities, tourists and tourism companies.

It is noteworthy that Helsinki is named as the winner of the 'Green Capital' title under the European Union's programme that rewards cities for their sustainable development. Helsinki has a number of green initiatives, such as the promotion of clean energy, sustainable transport, energy efficiency in buildings and conscious waste management.

- **HELSINKI CITY BIKES:** As part of the Helsinki City Bikes project, the city provides bicycles for hire for residents and tourists. The system is based on the principle of city bikes, which encourages the use of an environmentally friendly mode of transport and reduces CO2 emissions.
- **NATURA VIVA:** Natura Viva is an educational programme in Helsinki that aims to increase nature and environmental awareness among locals and tourists. The programme offers excursions, workshops and other activities that allow participants to discover and appreciate local nature.



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The well-known Arctic SnowHotel & Glass Igloos, on the other hand, is an example of ecotourism in Rovaniemi. The facility offers accommodation in an igloo made of glass, allowing observation of the aurora borealis and other natural phenomena. The property is built with natural and ecological materials such as ice, snow and wood. In addition, Rovaniemi is known as the home of Santa Claus, and Santa Claus Village is a popular tourist attraction. The city and tourism operators in Santa Claus Village are taking environmental measures such as reducing energy consumption, segregating waste and using green transport solutions. In addition, Rovaniemi is part of the Sustainable Arctic Destination programme, which focuses on sustainable tourism development in the Arctic regions. The programme promotes sustainable practices in the areas of tourism, environmental and Sami culture protection, as well as educational activities.

All these examples show how differently Finnish cities and regions engage in ecotourism projects and practices, promoting sustainability and environmental protection.



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