

## TOURISM SERVICES IN NORTH KARELIA: SITUATION AND STRATEGIES

### Sources:

- Different traveling strategies of North Karelia region
- Pohjois-Karjalan matkailustrategian päivitys 2006
- Luontomatkailun mallimaakunta 2008
- Pohjois-Karjalan matkailustrategia 2007-2013
- Kontiolahden kunnan matkailustrategia 2009-2015

### Advantages and weakness of North Karelia

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local, rakish people: hospitality, immediacy and humour.</li> <li>• Karelian culture: Karelian food traditions and art have been utilized in tourism services</li> <li>• Unique nature, snowy winter and lake landscapes in summer</li> <li>• Koli</li> <li>• National co-operation: Karelia Expert matkailupalvelu Oy (tourism organization of North Karelia: marketing, tourism guidance, product development <a href="http://kareliaexpert.fi/">http://kareliaexpert.fi/</a>)</li> <li>• Good supply of holiday apartments and provincial tourism services</li> <li>• Fantastic know how to arrange events and conferences</li> <li>• Russia is possibility: near North Karelia, service supply replies on demand, attractive targets for Russian people</li> <li>• Many-sided wellness tourism targets: Bomba (Nurmes), Huhmari (Polvijärvi), Kuntohovi Joensuu, Pääskynpesä (Ilomantsi), Pajarinhovi (Kitee)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small enterprises have little resources (accommodation capacity and offering of program services is quite scarce)</li> <li>• Seasonal changes and the small size of enterprises: services are seasonal and entrepreneurship isn't professional. Traveling entrepreneurship is just a by job</li> <li>• New entrepreneurs aren't got to little municipalities so the development of traveling services is stagnant</li> <li>• Public financing is scarce</li> </ul>

### Advantages and weaknesses of nature tourism services

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three national parks: (Koli, Petkeljärvi and Patvinsuo): Koli is the most known about its national landscape, nature, karelianism, artists and as a winner of national hiking route competition</li> <li>• Beyond national parks, there are many other nature tourism targets, for example the hiking area of Ruunaa, many nature conservation areas, waters and thousands kilometres long routes for paddling, cycling, hiking and snow mobile</li> <li>• Location: The capital of North Karelia (The City of Joensuu) is in the crossroads of water routes and it is easy to get from the traffic stations to the nature routes. Other competitors haven't this advantage.</li> <li>• Karjalan Kierros project made a huge hiking and paddling route entirety that reach from Joensuu to North county and go around The Lake Pielinen. It has been financed over 600 000 euros and marketed very visibly. There are long and short routes which attract different users. The routes are both in</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In practice the maintenance and management of structures have been forgotten. Some of the routes are out of shape because of inadequate investments of money and time. Also the lacking of users and rupture of routes because of forest treatments are the reasons for poor condition of nature routes.</li> <li>• Unions of Recreational Region. There is only one union of recreational region in North Karelia. It has specialised in to maintain snow mobile routes <a href="http://www.pohjoiskarjalankelkkaurat.fi/etusivu/index.php">http://www.pohjoiskarjalankelkkaurat.fi/etusivu/index.php</a> Is it possible to enlarge union's action to maintain other routes too (for example nature trails)?</li> </ul>

<p>national parks and near urban areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During the Karjalan Kierros project arose a meeting convention that created a network of experts to maintain these routes. Good experiences have shifted from the one region to another. Good practices for well-working signs, maps, dry toilets, fire places and lean-tos are non-written tradition knowledge.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are no significant marketing for foreigners. The problem is instability of nature targets and the smallness and resource depletion of North Karelian enterprises. There is no time to marketing! (Foreigner will find the North Karelian nature from the program service enterprises or in internet)</li> </ul>
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### The goals of nature tourism

1. The structures of route networks have to put in order
  - remediation, planning and implementing to international level (need an organization and a common project of municipalities)
  - Better level (safety, signs, guidance, maintenance)
  - Maintenance and managing plans, safety plans
  - Classification for different routes
2. Cross-country cycling, absence on grounds for disqualification, polyfunction
  - Increasing the absence on grounds for disqualification ( Services of enterprises will be increased and multi functioned)
  - Routes for cross-country cycling, other cycling and dog sleds
  - Cross-country skiing, unbeaten snow skiing, snow shoeing routes, skating, routes that fit for everybody
  - Water routes have to get in order (there are no structures!)
  - New water products are created: rivers, small waters and for example lake Höytiäinen
  - Requirements for fishing tourism are created
3. Organization
  - Person in charge for maintain routes, regular employees, society for co-ordination
  - Structures
  - Finance, developing responsibility
4. Productization
  - Productization for nature routes, summer and winter use.
  - Programs for visitors
  - Interesting events enclosed to routes

## 5. Sustainable development and quality

- Eco certificates for national parks and enterprises
- Ecological footprint. Creating a footprint and education for entrepreneurs
- Education for hunting guide. Eco schools? Camp schools?
- User surveys
- Information system: good practices
- Internet pages
- Creating an image, marketing
- Preservation of nature and hiking trails should include in certification criterions of forests

→ The purpose is to advance the multifunction of forests

→ Diversity of nature is one of the motives of nature tourism

## Nature trails

### Classification

#### 1) Main routes

- For example national parks (there are the most important trails)
- High quality and uniform entity
- Structures are made with sustainable methods
- Regular management practices
- Continuous developing based on experiences about routes

#### 2) Forest trails

- Least used routes
- Only for the experienced hikers

#### 3) Local trails

- Support exercise of local people
- Routes of program and travelling enterprises
- Managing criterions match with the criterions of main routes

## Co-operation

- Co-operation with different regions of county is a necessary part of developing tourism. Travelling centers and main enterprises are needed but also networks! For example Lapland. Karelia is so small scaled so co-operation must be continued.
- Special segments are marketing, selling and productization.
- Forums and organized support services are needed. Finance must be adequate and it has to be controlled efficiently. So, the flow of information and the best practices have to be agreed with key actors.
- Co-operation with universities, polytechnics and other institutes has to be continued and deepened.
- Tourism living with other successful livings must be increased so that both parties will benefit.

## Services and products

- The goal is international tourism flow that appreciates quality, nature, health and safety adventures
- The main products of North Karelia are products based on culture, nature routes and villages.
- **Activities, culture, cabin holidays, tours via North Karelia, wellness holidays and theme holidays** are very popular targets. Different theme holidays have been developed, for example Karhun hautajaiset ([http://yle.fi/uutiset/karhun\\_hautajaisista\\_uusi\\_matkailuvaltti/6398499](http://yle.fi/uutiset/karhun_hautajaisista_uusi_matkailuvaltti/6398499)) in Ilomantsi, Metsä hyvinvointimatkailun kohteena (<https://aducate.uef.fi/projektit/metsamatkailu/>) in Ilomantsi.
- International service productization in North Karelia: for example, Karelia Adventures, Metsänväki, ÄksytÄmmät (<http://www.aksytammat.fi/fi/etusivu/>), Koli Activ (<http://www.koliactiv.fi/>)

- Koli brand is well known in national and international scale
  - ➔ Services are year-round
  - ➔ Unique nature and culture ground
  - ➔ Karelian hospitality
  - ➔ Travelling capacities and co-operation structures have grown so the business is profitable
- **Enterprises have to have a high quality:** certificates, safety of adventures and language skills. Entrepreneurs have to get education (language, enterprise business, client service etc.). Business has to be professional. It has to be remembered that if services and structures satisfy demanding foreigner traveler they also would satisfy Finnish travelers.
- **Products have to be created with professionals that give good as possible service** (for example watching large beasts: there must be a high probability to see them!).
- **Price and quality have to reach the balance**
- **Original nature (which is a great nature target) can be returned** for example by building nests for big bird species, offering food for bears and elks and limiting hunting and disturbing moving
- **Different clients must be recognized and chosen:** landscape isn't just a beautiful place but also a place where you can do something interesting
- **Sustainable development and ecologically products** vs. un-ecologically and cheap flights. Looking for procedures that harm little as possible the nature of region. Not only ecological sustainability (environmentally friendly procedures, nature and landscape are utilized securely) but also cultural (increasing culture services, regionally culture tradition and nature values are treasured) social (social support systems, promotion of employment) and economical sustainability (developing enterprises, balancing seasonal changes, making more jobs..)
- **Countryside travelling and rentable holiday apartments** are the most significant image product in North Karelia! Continuous developing to over round and getting these services to electric booking system would bring new clients.
- **Eastern Orthodox Church as an image product** creates Karelian identity: targets to the rich packages together with New and Old Valamo monastery and Kuopio's orthodox church museum
- **Nature routes have developed well and they have been invested a lot.** Maintenance of these built routes must be ensured. Karjalan Kierros and snow mobile routes are lifted as clear products and these routes are marked very well.
- **Water routes and cruising have a great potential:** big lakes, Pielisjoki river, rapid route of Ruunaa with its diverse services and fishing tourism will be lifted amongst to the main products. That needs product development with good networks and co-operation in marketing. New water routes have to be investigated. Integrating fishing tourism, paddling and other moving possibilities in water is challenging. Fishing is one of the most used services by Russian people. Ice fishing and Church boating are exotic program products which have to be marketed better. Joensuu has harbours and a river fishing possibility that is great advantage
- **Music, culture and sport events,** for example biathlon stadion in Kontiolahti, Arena (sport and event center) in the city of Joensuu, Ilosaarirock in Joensuu
- **The Eastest point of EU** has to be utilized in marketing and connected as a part of program services of Ilomantsi-Tuupovaara.
- **Developing of border travelling:** tourism services of Central Karelia will be joined more efficiently to the border travelling segment. Public transport to Russia and especially to Saint Petersburg will be improved
- **New Year in Finland is some kind of brand.** The services of New Year have to be developed in North Karelia so the competitiveness would remain. Downhill skiing and spas are popular but diverse services are expected for them
- **Holidays in town, spas or boat cruising are asked year round.** Beyond short, couple of hours cruising there must be offered longer boat cruising.
- **In summer are round trips, short holidays and incentive-traveling popular.**
- **In winter are different activities popular,** for example nature safaris and skating.

- **Nature adventures, rafting** etc. are popular. People are looking for **adventures and experiences. Also unusual targets, nature, environment, activities and the exotic of new travelling target allure tourists.** Some things that are self-evidence for local people can be very attractive for foreigner point of view, for example silence and darkness with starry sky.
- Different regions have their own strengths and regionally main products are developed in different segments: **countryside travelling, nature, culture, experiences and events, sports, wellness, food and movie travelling**
- **Travelling centers** offer accommodation services for big crowd of tourists that helps tourism to develop a profitable business. Koli, Bomba, Joensuu, Ilomantsi and the region of Center Karelia (Pajari/Puhos) are the important travelling centers.
- **The product consists of entity of many actors** so stable quality of products has to be taken account. Small enterprises have to develop themselves more professional
- Productization:
  - ➔ Attraction: for example nature attraction (national parks, nature trails, seasons, waters, program services)
  - ➔ Products: for example tours (daily trips to nature, hiking, nature adventures, fishing, group trips with specific theme, programs of meetings, culture travelling..)
  - ➔ Focus groups (Families with children in town, couples with no children, pensioners, nature hobbyists, photographers, enterprises, fishermen...)

#### Infrastructure of program services

- Well managed brake places
- Signs and info boards
- Marked trails and routes with up-to-date information
- Marketing material also in foreign language
- Rescue plans

#### Information systems

- Uniform information systems would ensure that the information will move from the one user to other users
- Today the information about hiking routes is often one man's property: all the information should get to the public information system
- For example a register about expertise of nature targets. That would help to educate new workers
- Hiking route guidance of North Karelia: information about region's hiking routes was collected and opinions of users were asked. All the routes were tested and the best routes were chosen to the guidance. There is a good internet page about some of the guidance's nature trails [www.vaellus.info](http://www.vaellus.info) . The amount of visitors has increased partly because of this good information.
- Consumer feedback!
- Matkailu Sampo project: tourism data will be compiled statistics. For example information about year round bed places, amount of tourism enterprises, employment effect of tourism enterprises and sales of accommodation and restaurant services. Also environment survey has been planned.

#### Strategies and monitoring

- Municipalities survey the situation today and create tourism strategy. Finding attraction factors and developing them will enhance the quality of services. Strategies are monitored regularly
- Tourism Strategy of North Karelia: County Union of North Karelia and Karelia Expert traveling service are responsible for implementing the strategy
- Indicators of monitoring: for example functional indicator (fulfillment of goals), quantitative indicators (investments, profits, amount of nights), qualitative indicators (client satisfaction monitoring), developing of traveling centers (Koli, Bomba, Joensuu, Keski-Karjala, Ilomantsi)

- Also provincial developing programs have been created. The most important programs in North Karelia are POKAT 2010, sub-regionally business strategies, The Region Center Program of Joensuu and EU-financing programs for the years 2007-2013

### Marketing

- Co-operation with foreign country marketers. For example, North Karelia is in about 30 German tour operation's brochure and about 45 % from German travelers book up their trip via tour operations or travel agency!
- There are also few travel agencies that are specialized in Finland or Scandinavia: tailored travels, especially in winter Finland programs are offered a lot
- Municipalities and traveling enterprises do co-operation with Karelia Expert
- Co-operation with different enterprises: common brochures with different languages, good internet pages and information points
- In a certain tourism center different services can be offered by many enterprises: all the services are found near
- Also internet is used so good internet pages are quite an effective marketing channel
- Image marketing: nature, culture, Karelian tradition
- Stories are important when you are marketing traveling services
- Marketing is based on the target group: nature tourism, health tourism, round trip tourism
- Common marketing: most important segments are active adult, families, enterprises
- Hiking routes: books, maps and internet pages help marketing
- Product marks, eco labels and ecological footprint. Eco labels give an image about green tourism services.

Example about eco labels in Finland:

- **PAN parcs**
- **Europarc Eroopan**
- **European diploma**
- **Eceat LUOMUmatkailu** (European Centre for Ecological and Agricultural Tourism)
- In North Karelia there are 3 enterprises: Kirstilän luomutila (Tohmajärvi), Puukarin Pysäkki (Valtimo), Mustavaaran seikkailu (Naarva)
- **Blaue Swalbe (1997) ja jäsenyys Forum Anders Reise FAR**
- **Äksyt Ämmät Ay Nurmes**
- **Ecolabel**  
To accommodation services and camping sites
- **Joutsenmerkki**  
Scandinavian ecolabel
- North Karelia's own **GTF Green Tourism of Finland certificate**

### Statistics

Statistics 1

Numbers of tourism sectors

<b>Sectors of tourism in North Karelia</b>	<b>Number</b>
Tourism enterprises	639 number of pieces (3)
Year round bed places	8 467 number of pieces (2)
Employment effect of Tourism enterprises	1 822 job years (4)
Sales of accommodation and restaurant services	98,38 million euros in a year 2006 (Same level as in the year 2000) (5)
Accommodation days of tourism	Didn't increase in 2000-century (6)

## Sources

- 2) MatkailuSampo-hanke, Pohjois-Karjalan matkailun tietokanta 2006 (Matkailu Sampo project, a database of North Karelia tourism 2006)
- 3) MatkailuSampo-hanke, Pohjois-Karjalan matkailun tietokanta 2006 (Matkailu Sampo project, a database of North Karelia tourism 2006)
- 4) MatkailuSampo-hanke, Pohjois-Karjalan matkailun tietokanta 2006 (Matkailu Sampo project, a database of North Karelia tourism 2006)
- 5) Pohjois-Karjalan talouskatsaus 1/2007 (Finance overview of North Karelia 1/2007)
- 6) Tilastokeskus 2007 (Statistics Center 2007)

## Statistics 2

An estimated accommodation capacity of some traveling centers (Estimates are from the web sites of centers) and a studied accommodation capacity of North Karelia's sub-regions (7)

	Levi	Ylläs	Ruka	Saariselkä	Tahko	Vuokatti	Joensuu region	Karelia of Pielinen	Center Karelia
Bed places (number of pieces)	18000	1800	16000	11 000	6 500	6 000	4 046	3 360	1 061

## Sources:

- 7) MatkailuSampo-hanke, Pohjois-Karjalan matkailun tietokanta 2006 (Matkailu Sampo project, a database of North Karelia tourism 2006)

## Statistics 4

Registered nights in North Karelia during the years 2000-2009 by different nationalities (12 biggest as a visitor amount) (8)

	Sweden	Germany	Russia	Britain	United States	Netherlands	Japan	Italy	France	Estonian	Switzerland	Spain	In all
2000	3504	8941	15987	2121	1014	2159	332	2123	1595	2089	1849	525	44239
2001	3580	8211	14904	2492	1082	2289	686	1609	1261	721	1740	673	41249
2002	2330	9606	13647	2288	730	2767	784	1189	1396	887	1616	913	40155
2003	3628	9456	13176	2551	1050	4781	849	1521	1441	729	1742	1167	44094
2004	3809	7482	12245	2345	885	4288	1005	1281	1550	974	2765	986	41619
2005	2 807	8954	11960	2146	1451	2977	719	1498	1398	727	3072	1276	40990
2006	2 924	8135	15820	2347	1505	3303	1149	2084	1937	1182	2445	1337	46174
In all	22582	60785	97739	16290	7717	22564	5524	11305	10578	7 309	15229	6 877	298520

## Sources

- 9) Tilastokeskus 2006 (Statistics Center 2006)

## Statistics 5

Registered nights in North Karelia: growing goals to the year 2013

	2006	2010	2013
<b>National visitors</b>	415 000	480 000	540 000
<b>International visitors</b>	55 000	80 000	110 000
<b>In All</b>	470 000	560 000	650 000

Main products of different regions of North Karelia

<p><b>Nurmes</b></p>	<p><u>Events:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Winter events</li> <li>• Snow sledge</li> <li>• Winter products</li> <li>• Charm</li> </ul> <p><u>Meeting congress and incentive traveling</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Koli/Bomba co-operation products</li> </ul> <p><u>Culture traveling</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bomba –culture historia</li> </ul> <p><u>Nature tourism</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nature</li> <li>• Metsänväki-concept</li> <li>• The Lake Pielinen</li> </ul> <p><u>Round trip</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Karelian culture &amp; region of Pielinen: Bomba–Koli–Ruunaa</li> </ul> <p><u>Countryside traveling</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High quality holiday cottages</li> </ul> <p><u>Wellness</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bomba spa</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ilomantsi</b></p>	<p><u>Events</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pogosta ski</li> <li>• Karelia rowing</li> <li>• Winter events</li> </ul> <p><u>Culture traveling</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• War history</li> <li>• Parpeinvaara and tradition food center</li> <li>• Möhkö´s museum area</li> </ul> <p><u>Nature tourism</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Koitere</li> </ul> <p><u>Round trip</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parpeinvaara–Möhkö–Hattuvaara-triangle</li> </ul> <p><u>Wellness</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pääskynpesä</li> </ul>
<p><b>Koli</b></p>	<p><u>Events</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ahma ski</li> <li>• Landscape ski</li> <li>• Hunting fairs</li> <li>• Koli´s midsummer</li> </ul> <p><u>Meeting congress and incentive traveling</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International events</li> </ul> <p><u>Culture traveling</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The culture year of Koli-changing themes</li> </ul> <p><u>Nature tourism</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National park</li> <li>• World´s heritage target</li> <li>• The Lake Pielinen</li> </ul> <p><u>Round trip</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Round of Pielinen</li> <li>• Food tradition</li> <li>• Culture</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Art</li> </ul> <u>Countryside traveling</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High quality holiday cottages</li> <li>• Vuonisahti as a village traveling region</li> </ul> <u>Wellness</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hyvän Olon Koli Klubi (The wellness club of Koli)</li> </ul>
<b>Lieksa/Ruunaa</b>	<u>Events</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ruunaan huumaa</li> <li>• Vaski week</li> </ul> <u>Culture traveling</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• War history</li> <li>• Vaski week</li> <li>• The Museum of Pielinen</li> </ul> <u>Nature tourism</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nature trails</li> <li>• The rapids of Ruunaa</li> <li>• Beast photographing and watching</li> <li>• Fishing</li> </ul> <u>Round trip</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ferry boat trips</li> </ul>
<b>The region of Joensuu</b>	<u>Events</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ilosaari- and Ilovaarirock</li> <li>• Biathlon (Kontiolahti)</li> </ul> <u>Meeting congress and incentive traveling</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joensuu Arena</li> <li>• Valamo</li> </ul> <u>Culture traveling</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• War history</li> <li>• Finnish Film town (Kontiolahti)</li> <li>• The Old Mine of Outokumpu</li> <li>• Museums of Joensuu</li> </ul> <u>Nature tourism</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Winter, snow and ice products</li> </ul> <u>Wellness</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joensuu-Wellbeing</li> </ul>
<b>Center Karelia</b>	<u>Events</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Air- and motor sport center</li> </ul> <u>Culture traveling</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• War history</li> <li>• Rotgut factory</li> </ul> <u>Nature tourism</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theme trips</li> <li>• Fishing</li> <li>• Snow mobiles</li> </ul> <u>Round trip</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Border crossing</li> </ul> <u>Countryside traveling</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High quality holiday cottages</li> </ul> <u>Wellness</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PajarinHovi</li> </ul>