

# Outdoor activity product recommendations

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2020



Visit Finland



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## Dear Reader,

We have compiled these outdoor activity product recommendations as a support and internationalisation tool for companies and developers in the travel industry.

Similar principles apply across a wide range of activities, so we have compiled these recommendations under one heading. In English, the terms outdoor activity or adventure travel are commonly used for activities in nature.

Outdoor activities are a significant asset for tourism in Finland, as active adventurers or activity enthusiasts are one of Visit Finland's main target groups. This guide also presents Visit Finland's internationalisation criteria and practical examples of implementing the themes when planning outdoor activities.

Enjoy the outdoors!

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Kuva: Natura Viva

## Outdoor activities as part of nature travel in Finland

**IN FINLAND, NATURE IS ALWAYS NEARBY.** High-quality outdoor activities offer travellers the opportunity to experience Finnish nature with all their senses. Outdoor activities refer to actively moving in nature and spending time in different natural environments. The most popular outdoor activities include hiking, walking, cycling in various forms, water sports, such as kayaking or stand up paddleboarding, and winter sports, such as cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. Nature travel is a broad concept and is a part of tourism almost anywhere in Finland. Nature travel is also strongly linked to other themes, such as food, culture and wellness travel.

**Finland's strengths include clean and uncongested nature.** This offers a safe and superior environment to responsibly explore and enjoy nature across the seasons in the happiest country on

earth. In Finnish nature, you can experience four distinct seasons, from the darkness of the polar night and the splendour of the Northern Lights to the Midnight Sun. These unique assets are worth highlighting in content production and communications.

**Finnish Lakeland has its thousands of lakes,** the Coast and Archipelago is full of maritime charm, Lapland has unique fells and the cities have urban nature. There is a wealth of resources to promote our regional differences and strengths. What's more, unforgettable stories can be created with food and local culture alone.

**Outdoor activities are based on memorable routes** and the structures encountered along the way, such as lean-tos, campsites and vantage points as well as the services provided on location.

## Takeaways for outdoor activities from the Visit Finland criteria for internationalization

### CRITERIA FOR INTERNATIONALISATION

### TAKEAWAYS FOR OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

**1. QUALITY** You monitor customer satisfaction and develop the quality of your service based on the feedback you receive. You pay special attention to cleanliness and aesthetics as well as the details.

**1. QUALITY** You ensure that the outdoor activity is consistent with the information provided in advance and, if necessary, adapt it to the needs of the group. Your tools and equipment are appropriate and in good condition.

**2. SERVICE** You offer a seamless service package to your customer. Your staff is well acquainted with the customer group, has good language skills and is committed and professionally competent.

**2. SERVICE** You create an atmosphere that encourages learning and allows people to surpass themselves. You know the nature and services of the destination. You take into account the customers' personal needs and abilities as well as the different challenges during the activity. You know how to choose the right equipment for your customers and help make any adjustments.

**3. SUSTAINABILITY** As a responsible actor, you promote the principles of sustainable tourism; you take into account the well-being and needs of the local community and the environment in your activities, you support the local economy through your choices and you treat all customers equally.

**3. SUSTAINABILITY** Sustainable nature travel leaves no trace in the operating environment. You make your sustainability practices public. When planning the activities, you take into account the special needs of all the target groups. You price your service profitably and identify new business opportunities. You include local services in your route information.

**4. SAFETY** You ensure the safety of local residents, your staff and guests as well as compliance with the law and the regulations and recommendations of the authorities.

**4. SAFETY** You build the customer's sense of security in all the activities. You have up-to-date, written route and excursion safety documents and safety plans. You ensure that you have sufficient skills and experience to plan the activity safely, anticipate potential risks and prepare for them in advance. You communicate with the customer in a clear manner and with sufficient accuracy.

**5. CAPACITY AND NETWORKS** Your own capacity or the capacity offered through a cooperation network ensures a comprehensive service for independent travellers and/or tour groups. You are networked with the other service providers in the region.

**5. CAPACITY AND NETWORKS** In nature travel, co-operation extends widely beyond industry boundaries. You identify the different actors, their roles and responsibilities. You are actively looking for co-operation opportunities. You are involved in the development of the area and the routes, as this also serves your business.

**6. ACCESSIBILITY** Your service location has good transport connections or you can arrange transport from the nearest bus or train station or airport.

**6. ACCESSIBILITY** If your service is not easily accessible, it needs to have a particular pull factor. The shorter and more detached the activity, the more crucial accessibility becomes. You also consider the ease of getting on and off the route.

**7. AVAILABILITY AND PURCHASABILITY** Your products and services are clearly described and priced in the language of the target market or English. They can be easily found and purchased through tour operators or other sales organizations, your website or other digital booking channels.

**7. AVAILABILITY AND PURCHASABILITY** Your products are conveniently available for purchase through digital channels. You make good product cards in different languages and adapt them to the requirements of the distribution channels and customer groups. You update your product cards in different languages. You take advantage of digital interfaces between platforms.

**8. AUTHENTICITY AND APPEAL** In product development and marketing, you make use of authentic Finnish experiences and ingredients based on the pull factors, traditions, culture and lifestyle of your region.

**8. AUTHENTICITY AND ATTRACTION** You take advantage of Finland's natural attractions and regional differences. You keep the experience authentic and help people surpass themselves. As part of the outdoor activity, you include stories about the local culture and lifestyle.





## A successful nature experience

Regardless of their fitness level, nature travellers share the same motives towards all the activities: disconnecting from everyday life, recharging their batteries and relaxing in nature. Choosing an outdoor activity is determined by, among other things, the person's interests and abilities, previous experience of the activity and the equipment as well as the on-site offering at the travel destination, sense of safety and their expectations regarding the experience. The same activity can be organised at different levels of intensity according to the customers' abilities: it can be a gentle, relaxed walk or active exercise that pumps up the heart rate. If the equipment is in good condition and the service provider has a positive attitude, the weather or other conditions are less likely to cause dissatisfaction.

### Solo travellers

**SOLO TRAVEL** is a growing tourism trend, accelerated by tourism services shifting to digital distribution channels. Solo travellers want outdoor activities that are designed and priced for them and can be purchased at short notice. Reaching solo travellers requires collaboration, customer understanding, digital distribution channels, targeted marketing and management of competitive pricing methods and risk.

#### THINGS TO CONSIDER IN YOUR PRODUCT RANGE

- Different target groups and the customers' varying needs
- Different stages in the customer journey: the offering in the country of residence, en route to and at the destination
- Independent and guided outdoor activities
- Variety and difficulty of outdoor activities

## Product examples

### RENTAL EQUIPMENT

#### — Rental services

Rental equipment enables tourists to have independent access to Finnish nature. The rental equipment must be of high quality and suitable for the operating environment. A rental business also requires routes that are suitable for the customer's needs as well as sufficient information about the routes, nearby services, destinations for excursions and accessibility.

### SHORT EXCURSION (DURATION 2–24 HOURS)

#### — Day tour

During a guided tour, Finnish nature unfolds in all its beauty under the guidance of a professional guide. The excursion lasts 2–3 hours or one day at most. Nobody will travel to Finland just for this experience, but it can leave a lasting memory of Finland. These short activities require sufficient volume and a steady flow of customers to make a profit.

### COURSES IN SKILLS AND TECHNIQUES

#### — Skills courses

Learning a new skill is a great experience. When a course is organised at an appropriate nature site under a professional guide, it leaves a lasting imprint in the customer's heart. Courses in skills and techniques can range from one hour to several days when practising survival skills in nature, for example.

### ACTIVITY HOLIDAY IN ONE LOCATION

#### — Centralised tour

A variety of activities enables the traveller to experience many things in one location, which in itself is a good reason for the customer to travel to Finland. The product for sale is a combination of equipment rental, guided tours, courses on skills and techniques and self-guided tours.

### ROAMING MULTI-DAY TRIP

#### — Point-to-point tour

On a point-to-point tour, the landscape changes with every step or stroke of the paddle. Each day and night is a new experience. The program can consist of a single activity or a combination of many.



All these products and services are suitable for people that have different levels of fitness and technical skills, from beginner to active sports enthusiast. They can also be provided with various levels of accommodation. Apart from the courses in skills and techniques, all the activities can also be implemented independently.

### Self-guided outdoor activity

**SELF-GUIDED ACTIVITY** is based on rental equipment, useful route information, expert guidance and safety management. These comprise the product for sale. The service provider's task is to guide the customers in making the right choices in terms of safety, comfort and nature.

### Guided nature activity

At the heart of guided activities is the guide. They ensure smooth operation, safety and the well-being of the customers. A high-quality guided activity requires a rigorous plan that can be adapted to suit each group as needed.



# Elements of a good product description

## EXPLAIN IN THE HEADING

- Theme of the trip
- Type of outdoor activity
- Duration
- Level of difficulty
- Self-guided or guided activity

## EXPLAIN IN THE PRODUCT DESCRIPTION

- Describe the appeal of your region for the chosen outdoor activity
- Include sensory experiences
- Transport the reader's imagination deep into nature
- More content can be created based on food, culture and local stories

## INCLUDE HIGH-QUALITY IMAGES AND VIDEOS

- Happy and genuine people
- Impressive landscapes
- Details from nature and the excursion
- Photos and videos of the activities

### ASSESSING THE LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY OF OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

Provide the customer with enough information to assess how suitable the activity is for them.

- The excursion can be classified according to different criteria by describing the location, conditions and different stages of the trip.
- Managing the technical skills and equipment required for the activity ensures that the activity is safe and can be implemented as planned.
- Longer excursions and challenging outdoor activities require physical endurance and familiarity with the outdoors.



# Digitalisation and outdoor activities

**DIGITAL SERVICES** make your work easier and free up time for doing other things. Take advantage of the ready-made digital systems that are continually being developed and maintained. Start one small step at a time, and many things will improve before you know it!

## CHOOSE A FUNCTIONAL E-COMMERCE SOLUTION THAT ENABLES

- automatic customer communication, so you can easily send all the required information to your customers. It will also help you scale your products.
- automatic export of information about the availability of your services to other systems and distribution channels. This way, you will reach more people and can also better serve individual customers.
- digital management and sales of your equipment, allowing you to utilize the full potential of your stock.

## TAKE ADVANTAGE OF DIGITAL ROUTE INFORMATION

A good route description combines information and inspiration. Inspiration can be roused with tangible descriptions and visual content.

## User-friendly route information

- Structured, visual, easy to understand and meets the needs of the target group.
- Photos, verbal descriptions and tracklogs are given priority.
- Include the length of the route, estimated duration, level of difficulty, uphill and downhill, route availability (when) and route accessibility (how).
- Include places to visit, services and products for sale on the route. This also increases the demand for outdoor activities.
- Provide route information on multiple channels.
- Leverage route information in productisation, marketing and sales.
- Use a variety of different platforms and technical solutions to display route information.
- Take advantage of route content produced by others.
- Select the route information platform according to the target group, intended use and market area.

### WHAT IS A TRACKLOG?

- A tracklog is the route drawn on a map.
- The tracklog is most commonly displayed with a GPX file. The file works on almost all platforms.
- The tracklog is ready to be published when it matches the route passing through the terrain and shows a single uniform route.



Image: Julia Kivelä

# Importance of routes

**ROUTE INFORMATION** gives the customer an understanding of the destination's suitability and plants a seed for the appeal of an outdoor travel destination. A single route can have such a strong pull that it attracts customers to the region.

The customers must be able to navigate the routes without worrying about getting lost or feeling insecure. Good signposting lets them tap into a flow state, break away from everyday life and enjoy nature and the activity itself.

Let the customer choose the most suitable options for using route information:

- GPS track
- Mobile
- Purchase of a printed map
- Map printout
- A combination of the above

The use of route information is influenced by the customer's personal preferences and technical know-how, the activity and the weather conditions, among other things.



# Special characteristics of sports travel

**THE SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF SPORTS TRAVEL** include the spirit of competition and the desire for experiences related to it. Whereas outdoor activities are about enjoying light excursions in nature, sports and exercise travel is focused more on goal-oriented activities. The travellers' goals may be to improve their fitness, time or distance or to measure their abilities in new and attractive environments. They represent a strongly growing niche target group. An active enthusiast is prepared to travel to new, even faraway destinations, to visit sporting events and training locations.

This clientele is a youthful (regardless of age) and active target group which is also interested in related services and products, such as wellness services and food. They are investing in a high-quality experience and are ready to spend money on services.

**FINLAND HAS EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITIES** to increase the number of international visitors who are interested in sports holidays, for instance around amateur sporting events. Events where the traveller takes part in the competition are popular. Examples of these include outdoor events, cycling, marathons, trail runs, Swimrun, OCR, triathlons and various skiing competitions. The region and companies should take advantage of the customer potential of sporting events and provide package travel services to the participants. This can extend their stay and maximise the benefit to the region. Many sporting events are well suited to the so-called slow seasons and help advance year-round tourism.



## Linkit

### NATURE

[Finnish national parks](#)

[National parks, visitor guidelines](#)

[ATTA: Adventure Travel Guide Qualification and Performance Standard](#)

### RESPONSIBILITY & SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL

[Tips for sustainable communication, Visit Finland](#)

[Tools for sustainability and communication, Visit Finland](#)

### SAFETY

[Työkaluja turvallisuuteen \(in Finnish\), Visit Finland](#)

[Safety documents for adventure services, Tukes](#)

[Safety on exercise and outdoor recreation routes, Tukes](#)

### DIGITALISATION

[Matkailuyrityksen digiloikan ABC \(in Finnish\), Visit Finland](#)





## A recipe for Finnish outdoor activities

*Stunningly beautiful nature, a winding path,  
an expert guide, high-quality equipment, the joy of exercise  
and the feeling of surpassing yourself. Take a deep breath.  
It's good to be outside.*

[visitfinland.fi](https://www.visitfinland.fi)



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