

Health Travel Product Recommendations

“Health travellers seek high-level service and fast access to high-quality, personalised care”

2020



Visit Finland

Dear Reader,

These health travel product recommendations aim to assist all health travel service providers – including hospitals and clinics, medical tourism facilitators and the hospitality industry – to tailor their services for foreign health travel customers.

The presence of diverse cultures and traditions has a significant impact on health travel. Cultural differences may influence patients' attitudes on medical care as well as their ability to understand, control and face illness and/or the consequences of medical treatment. The key to positive customer experiences is the right type of communication, which requires not only having a common language but also sufficient cultural understanding.

Health travel is all about trust, and each detail matters. Each customer journey is different: remember to be flexible and adapt for the sake of your customer, offering personalised services instead of a "one size fits all" approach.

Sincerely yours,

Päivi Antila
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Visit Finland, Business Finland

The product recommendations have been made in collaboration with Medical Tourism Association Finland and HTI Partner.

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Definition of Finnish health travel

The main target group for Finnish health travel service providers are those who seek specialized medical treatment abroad because:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) similar treatment is not available in their country of origin b) they don't trust the quality of service c) the waiting times are too long. | <p>THE POTENTIAL TARGET GROUPS also include patients who need rehabilitation after surgery or therapy as well as customers looking for more information about their health (e.g. health check-ups and cancer screenings).</p> <p>THE HEALTH TRAVEL SERVICE chain involves diverse stakeholders, including hospitals and clinics, medical travel facilitators and butler services, hotels, airlines, restaurants, travel agencies and transportation companies.</p> |
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How to apply the Visit Finland criteria for internationalisation in health travel

VISIT FINLAND CRITERIA FOR INTERNATIONALISATION

HOW TO APPLY THE CRITERIA IN HEALTH TRAVEL?

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

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.

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.

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

1. QUALITY Actively use customer feedback to improve your services. Ensure that your partners share adequate quality targets. Consider working with an international accreditation organisation.

2. SERVICE Health travel customers' expectations differ greatly from leisure travel. International customers often look for more guidance and personalised services. Language skills and cultural understanding are of utmost importance.

3. SUSTAINABILITY Transparency, ethical business, respect for other people and the local community and efficient use of energy and other resources create the basis for sustainable development. Ensure that your services are accessible and non-discriminatory regarding religious and cultural differences.

4. SAFETY Ensure the safety of the entire customer journey with your partners. Remember to continually communicate about your company's safety and hygiene measures. Ensure sufficient personal space for every customer.

5. CAPACITY AND NETWORKS Your capacity or the capacity offered through the co-operation network ensures a comprehensive service for independent travellers and/or groups. There is a network of local service providers at your disposal.

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

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

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

5. CAPACITY AND NETWORKS Choose the right partners for you. Once you have a comprehensive partner network, you can concentrate on your own core business. Take care to ensure a smooth customer journey from start to end.

6. ACCESSIBILITY Always try to find the most appropriate transport for your customer. Transport connections by land (car/bus/train) can be an asset. Take care of pick-up services and escort from the airport/train. Also, butler services are appreciated in health travel.

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

8. AUTHENTICITY AND APPEAL Finland has been recognized as the happiest nation in the world, and high-quality healthcare is one of the cornerstones of Finnish society. Finland leads the rankings in the availability of the latest technologies. Health tech is the largest and one of the fastest-growing export segments of the Finnish high-tech industry. Finland also remains a world leader in digitalisation and one of the largest start-up ecosystems in the world. The exceptional purity of Finnish nature and air can also be an asset in health travel marketing.



Photo: Visit Finland



The value proposition of Finnish health travel

We provide fast access to high-quality care in a safe environment with excellent quality-price ratio – now and in the future.

The motivations behind health travel include access to higher-quality treatment or treatment that is not available in the traveler’s home country as well as prompt admission and

transparent pricing. In order to meet this demand also in the future, safety and sustainable business ethics are of utmost importance in health travel.

Communication

There are numerous “touchpoints” in health travel. Always make sure that communication across them is sufficient. Sharing the right information on time can avoid mistakes and ensure a positive client experience.

Doctor - patient

- Listening to the patient and actively engaging in a two-way dialogue is a crucial factor in this relationship
- The medical staff should win the patient’s trust
- For many international patients, it is vital to include family members in the information loop

Clinic staff - patient

- Contacting the clinic staff, should be made as easy as possible
- Depending on where your customers come from, offer several contact options including phone, email, WhatsApp, WeChat, and Viber
- The service hours (Finnish time GMT +2) and languages should be clearly communicated. It is recommended to offer service in several languages, taking into account the target markets of the clinic.
- 24/7 customer service is often highly appreciated by health travel customers

Medical travel facilitator - customer

The MTF acts as an interface between all relevant stakeholders and is the primary contact point for the patient for any non-medical inquires. Preferably, the MTF staff members should be able to communicate in the patient’s native language.

The primary functions of the MTF include:

- informing the patient about treatment options
- arranging or giving referrals about travel services
- assisting in processing medical information and payments
- meeting the patient upon arrival
- educating the patient about the local culture in order to manage expectations and avoid misunderstandings
- providing additional services requested by the patient

Clinic – medical travel facilitator

- Clinic and MTF should communicate adequate and up-to-date in all occasions that have impact on the operational arrangements made by MTF
- Clear responsibilities and a seamless service path guarantee a positive customer experience
- Unexpected issues must be communicated to the partner without any delay.



Digitalization

Digital visibility

Multi-channel digital visibility is a basic requirement. Make sure that the content and layout of your website gives a professional first impression. Share as much fact based information such as infection rates, treatment results, safety information etc. as you can. Otherwise, the customer will look for this information elsewhere.

Note especially:

- Search engine optimized, up-to-date content that creates trust
- High quality pictures and videos
- Consistent layout and navigation
- Availability and clear, transparent pricing
- Tone of voice matches with your target audience
- Website localized to all main markets – including the visual appearance (images, symbols, color preferences, website functionality etc.). Make sure the content is always in compliance with local standards.
- Professional spelling and grammar check
- Clear call-to-action, e.g. online booking option for a first appointment
- Mobile optimization
- Social media supporting a customer’s purchase decision
- Digital marketing campaigns supporting sales
- Monitoring results and managing information

Digital solutions for patient communication and monitoring:

1. Reduce uncertainty and help the patient to monitor and report about potential symptoms
2. Make it easier for international patients to contact the medical team before and after the procedure
3. Help the patient to prepare for the trip and submit necessary information beforehand and stay on track with the recovery plan once back at home

Remote appointments

Most of the doctors’ first visits and follow up visits can be carried out as video appointments. Confidential information can be sent by using a secure email or other messaging systems. By offering remote appointments, you can make it easier for the customer to book the first appointment, which often leads to a longer care relationship.

Second opinion services

In some cases, a patient or doctor may need another doctor’s assessment to compare treatment options. It is a regular practice that can provide both the patient and the treating physician with valuable additional information or support in choosing a treatment line. Second opinion services are usually offered remotely via a video service. Consider offering this option as it can also be a first step in building more in-depth partnerships with foreign clinics and hospitals.

Sustainability in Health Travel

We want Finland to be an excellent destination for health travel, both now and in the future. Stable finances and ethical practices are the foundation of sustainable business operations. It is also essential to communicate openly with Finnish stakeholders and consumers about what health travel is, how it affects domestic patients and how it will enable us to develop better services for the local communities as well.

Remember to follow these guidelines in all your operations:

- Make decisions that are sustainable for the future. By putting quality first when developing your services, you ensure the continuity of your operations.
- Be proactive in renewing and tailoring your services for different target groups and markets to ensure their future demand
- Only engage in fair and honest trading. Build your partnerships on openness and trust.
- Treat all your employees, guests and partners equally and respectfully
- Remember to take people's unique needs into account in your operations
- Train, guide and encourage your staff to act respectfully with people from different cultural backgrounds. Cultural sensitivity is vital due to the personal nature of health travel.
- Support local products, services and businesses and employ local people whenever possible
- Always take care of the safety of your staff and guests and comply with the law and official regulations
- Make climate-friendly choices and aim to reduce your carbon footprint with more efficient use of energy and resources
- Communicate openly about your current operations as well as further plans and visions – including successes and challenges

Links

HEALTH TRAVEL

[FinlandCare - Top-quality Healthcare from Finland](#)
[Health Travel ABC \(linkki tulossa\)](#)
[Medical Tourism Association Finland](#)
[EU Cross-border Healthcare](#)

INTERNATIONALISATION

[The Travel Industry Guide to Internationalization](#)
[All Visit Finland publications](#)

SUSTAINABILITY

[Tips for Sustainability Communications](#)
[Tools for Sustainability and Communication](#)
[Sustainable Finland](#)



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HEALTH FROM FINLAND

Fast access to high-quality care in a safe
environment with excellent value
– now and in the future.

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



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