

A person with short blonde hair, wearing a striped tank top, dark shorts, and hiking boots, is walking away from the camera on a wooden boardwalk. The boardwalk is made of weathered wooden planks and runs through a lush green field. In the background, there is a dense forest of tall, thin pine trees under a blue sky with scattered white clouds. In the lower-left foreground, a large butterfly with orange and black wings is shown in flight.

# Sustainable tourism in protected areas

*Guide for tourist companies*



METSÄHALLITUS

# THE PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

*This guide is intended for tourist companies operating in protected areas managed by Metsähallitus Parks & Wildlife Finland. Fluent cooperation between the tourism business and Metsähallitus Parks & Wildlife Finland promotes the operating conditions of nature tourism in protected areas. The goals of this collaboration include*

- *Sustainable nature tourism in national parks, other protected areas and on historical sites. In this guide, these areas are jointly referred to as protected areas.*
- *Making partner companies, Parks & Wildlife Finland and protected areas better known and enhancing their attractiveness.*
- *Increasing the impact of operations.*
- *Providing the best possible service for common customers.*
- *Uniform practices for tourism cooperation.*
- *Active and mutually beneficial interaction.*
- *Consistent, high-quality marketing and communications.*



## **Sustainable tourism in protected areas** *Guide for tourist companies*

3rd revised edition, 18 p., pdf

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COVER A hiker on the nature trail in Luosto

Photo: Anna Pakkanen, illustration: Juha Paso

ISBN 978-952-295-236-3

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**METSÄHALLITUS**

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# 1 WHAT IS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

*Sustainable development is a globally ongoing process of continuous and targeted change in society. The aim is to safeguard, for current and future generations, opportunities for a good life. According to the 1987 definition of the United Nations' Brundtland Commission, sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*

The starting point of Finland's national strategy for sustainable development is to combine the sustainable use, management and protection of nature and to ensure the wellbeing of citizens and the integrity of society so that the result is a competent Finland that utilises its strengths with a focus on sustainable development (the strategy group appointed by the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development).

Three dimensions, the ecological, economic and socio-cultural, lie at the centre of sustainable development. Hence sustainable development is cooperation in order to promote economic, social and environmental wellbeing.

## ECOLOGICAL

Ecological sustainability means the preservation of biodiversity and the adaptation of economic and material human activities to the Earth's natural resources and the carrying capacity of nature.

## SOCIO-CULTURAL

Socio-cultural sustainability means respect for human rights and equality. The aim is to increase well-being at the national and global level.

## ECONOMIC

Economically sustainable operations enable the provision of goods and services in a less stressful way for the environment, saving natural resources and energy. The aim is to develop the economy so that growth does not result in the depletion of reserves.



## Sustainable development and tourism

Because of the significant positive impact of tourism on the local economy and employment, the aim is to secure the operating conditions of the tourism industry for future generations. In line with the principles of sustainable tourism, environmental resources should be exploited with respect to the natural environment and the uniqueness of local communities.

From the ecological viewpoint, sustainable tourism aims to ensure that the environmental values, the functioning of ecological systems, and the occurrence of species native to the area are not compromised. In order to assess sustainability, factors such as wear of the hiking terrain, air pollution, energy efficiency and the impacts of tourism on threatened species are monitored on a regular basis in tourist areas.



## 2 SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN PROTECTED AREAS AND HISTORICAL SITES

*National parks, other protected areas and historical sites are highly important as factors that attract tourists. It is possible to utilise protected areas for tourism purposes, as long as this is coordinated with the objectives of protection. Metsähallitus Parks & Wildlife Finland and the UNESCO World Heritage sites in Finland share the principles of sustainable tourism, which we take into account throughout our own operations and in our cooperation with tourism entrepreneurs.*

We promote sustainable tourism. In order to achieve this goal, we cooperate to...

### 1. Support the preservation of valuable features at the sites and promote their protection

- Natural and cultural values are important factors in terms of attracting tourists
- We inform visitors of the values of the site and their protection and encourage visitors to act responsibly
- We develop services and direct the use of the sites, taking into account demand and the site characteristics

- We mainly use existing routes and service structures
- In construction, we also take account of local natural and cultural values
- We ensure that tourism does not compromise natural or cultural values and we prevent any harmful impacts proactively

### 2. We minimise the load on the environment

- We promote opportunities to travel to the destination on public transport with low emissions
- We increase the duration of visitors' stay in the area
- We operate with energy and material efficiency
- We set a good example in environmental issues
- We enable and encourage visitors to act in an environmentally friendly manner



### 3. We strengthen local aspects

- Local knowledge, research information, experience and culture provide a starting point for delivering experiences
- The guidance provided is of high quality, and operators know the area and local conditions well
- We increase the appreciation of the site by means of high-quality tourist services
- We cooperate and offer local residents and visitors the opportunity to take part in the management and development of the site

### 4. We promote use of the sites to increase health and well-being

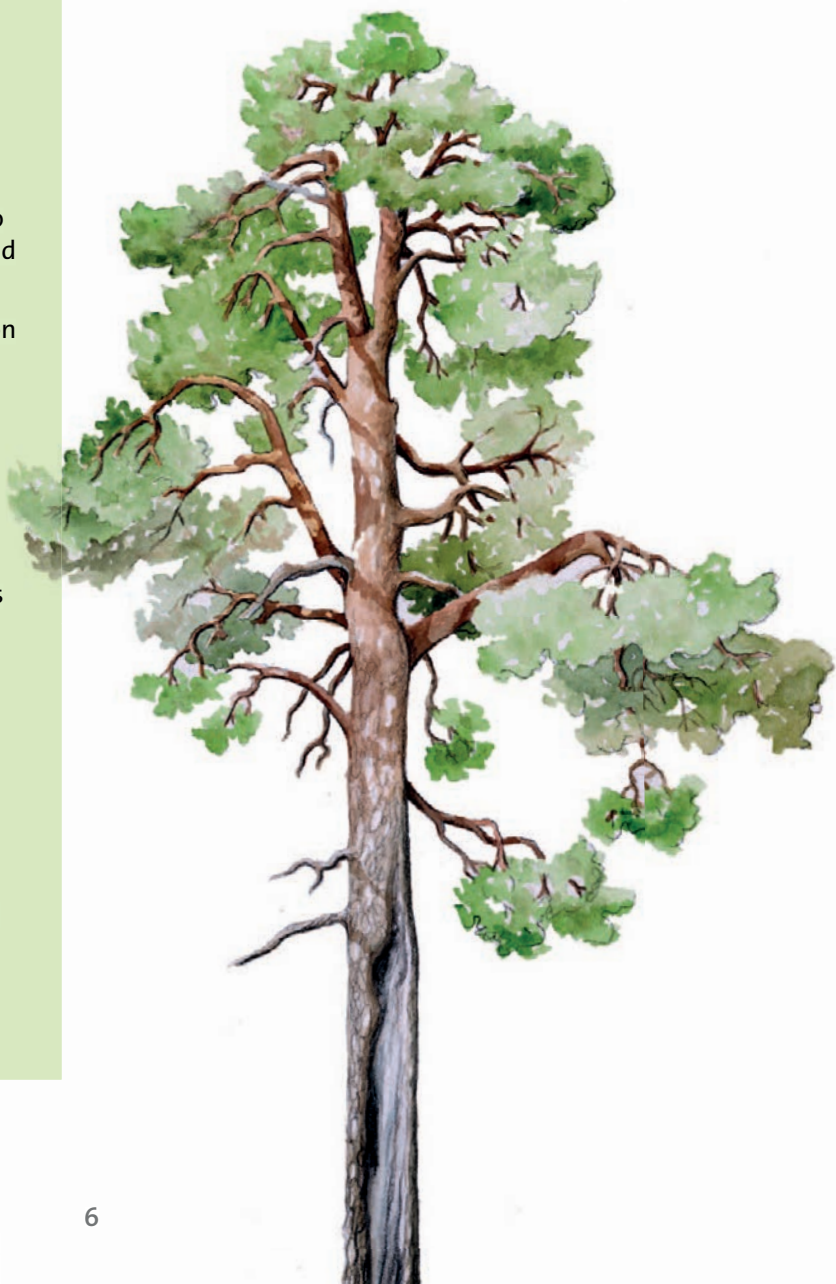
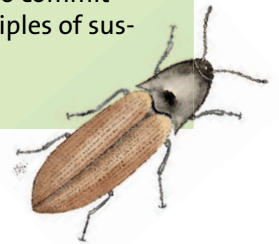
- We encourage visitors to engage in versatile natural and cultural experiences on their own and in guided groups
- We ensure the safety of all sites and services
- Our services promote equality
- We enhance visitors' opportunities to increase their social, psychological and physical well-being
- We promote local residents' recreation and improve living conditions in the area

### 5. Promote growth and job creation in the local economy

- We offer visitors high-quality services based on the attraction of the site
- We cooperate actively with other operators in the management of sites and the provision of services, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities
- We provide easily accessible and interesting information on the sites and services in advance using various channels
- We encourage visitors to stay longer in the area

### 6. Communicate together the values and services of the site

- We are committed to the values and basic messages of the site
- We communicate consistently and responsibly with different target groups both in Finland and abroad
- We collect feedback from stakeholders in order to improve customer satisfaction and our activities
- We organise training and cooperation events for operators in the area
- We encourage operators to commit themselves to these principles of sustainable tourism



### 3 COOPERATION TO PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

*Sustainable tourism is promoted in cooperation with tourism operators. The agreements between Metsähallitus and entrepreneurs active in the areas it administers commit the enterprises to compliance with the principles of sustainable tourism, to acting in order to make the areas better known, and to providing good service for customers.*

The partnership agreements are mutually beneficial, since for partner companies they not only involve access to areas administered by Metsähallitus and the right to use service facilities there for business purposes, but also marketing benefits and more opportunities to have an impact.

The partnership will provide the enterprise with greater visibility over Metsähallitus' Visitor Centres and over the popular [www.nationalparks.fi](http://www.nationalparks.fi) website. Partner companies are entitled to use the area's logo and have access to the results of visitor surveys, information on visitor numbers and about nature in the area, the sustainability of nature tourism and activities in protected areas. The company can use the information in its business and product development of nature tourism products.

Metsähallitus strives to ensure that all commercial and organised tourism activities in protected areas are based on partnership agreements. The aim is for the holder of the area to be aware of all commercial activities undertaken in protected areas, to facilitate better assessment of both positive and negative impacts of such activities.

To facilitate the development of nature tourism areas, it is important to assess the annual number of visits to the area, and the profile of the customer base, as well as possible. That is why the feedback received from partner companies and the customer data collected play a key role in the development of operations and cooperation.

#### READ MORE ABOUT PROTECTED AREAS:

- <http://www.metsa.fi/web/en>
- [www.nationalparks.fi](http://www.nationalparks.fi)
- [www.excursionmap.fi](http://www.excursionmap.fi)



# 4 PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS

## TYPES OF AGREEMENTS 2019

We use two types of partnership agreements:

- Partnership agreement for companies and organisations not using the campfire sites and rest stops in the protected area. This agreement is free of charge.
- Partnership agreement for companies and organisations offering services subject to a charge, which use the campfire sites and rest stops on the site or in the area. This type of agreement is subject to a charge for companies and organisations, and a fee will be charged for the use of rest stops or similar structures.

If a product provided for customers subject to a charge by a company, an entrepreneur or another business corporation includes the use of a serviced rest stop or similar structure, an agreement with Metsähallitus Parks & Wildlife Finland on the right of use is required in all cases.

The partnership agreement (inclusive of right of use) and separate charges are determined as follows: the basic fee for the agreement for the entire contract period is EUR 60 (+ VAT). In addition, the use of a rest stop managed by Metsähallitus (e.g. a campfire site, lean-to-shelter or toilet) is subject to a charge for the partner company.

The fee for use is EUR 1.22 per person per session (+ VAT). Under a Government Decree, Metsähallitus may additionally charge a fee for the use of other serviced structures or services on specific sites (e.g. the use of the harbour on an island).

A fee for use will be charged for the use of campfire sites, rest stops and huts as destinations for guided tours subject to a charge. Please note that the rest stops can be used by independent hikers at the same time, free of charge.

## Preparation of contracts

Partnership agreements related to tourism in national parks and other protected areas are prepared together with the partner companies. All agreements are concluded for a fixed term (3–5 years) at first, and can be renewed later for a fixed term (3–5 years) or until further notice.

The Park Superintendent of the area signs the agreements on behalf of Metsähallitus. Agreement templates have been prepared in Finnish, Swedish and English. For further information, please contact the Visitor Centres or the area Park Superintendent directly.

## MORE INFORMATION

Contact details and additional information is available online at [www.nationalparks.fi](http://www.nationalparks.fi) and <http://www.metsa.fi/web/en>.





# 5 THE USE OF LOGOS AND NAMES OF PROTECTED AREAS



*The logos of protected areas are registered trademarks of Metsähallitus. This gives Metsähallitus exclusive rights to the logos, which other parties can only use by permission.*

Metsähallitus Parks & Wildlife Finland wishes to provide partners with the possibility of using protected areas' logos in their communications. The main principle is that the right to use a logo is only granted to a partner company or another major corporation, such as a tourism association. For other parties, permission to use the logo can be granted once only, or for a fixed period. Written agreement is reached on whether use is free or subject to a charge. Metsähallitus provides the precise specifications of the logos.



**TÄSSÄ JUURI SYNTYI  
PERINTÖMME SUURI**

*Logos of Pyhä-Luosto National Park and historical sites.*

On the basis of the partnership agreement, the logo can be used for marketing and communication purposes, but the given permission only applies to a product or service, i.e. it may only be used in connection with the products and services related to the partnership. The use of the logo must not be misleading, but related to the national park or some other area that the agreement concerns. Permission to use the logo free of charge may constitute Parks & Wildlife Finland's input to joint marketing.

The logos of protected areas may be used in public communications materials free of charge, when informing people about protected areas or associated with content presenting the local natural environment or cultural heritage. Use of the logo signals

partnership with Metsähallitus and the protected area. The aim is to increase the attractiveness and visibility of protected areas, tourist centres and partner companies, and to support sustainable tourism. If there is a risk that customers will confuse the operations of the company with those of Metsähallitus, the logos must be used together with the texts mentioned below.

## THE PARTNERSHIP STATEMENT COULD BE AS FOLLOWS, FOR EXAMPLE:

- "Metsähallituksen luontopalvelujen yhteistyökumppani" or "Yhteistyössä Metsähallituksen luontopalvelujen kanssa"
- "Partner of Metsähallitus, Parks & Wildlife Finland" or "In Partnership with Metsähallitus, Parks & Wildlife Finland"

Companies will be charged each time they use the logo on sold goods such as souvenirs. The quality and message of the products must cohere with the objectives of the protected area in question. The royalty-based fee for using the logo is based on the sales price and number of products manufactured. A text stating that the proceeds will be partly channelled for the benefit of the protected area can be enclosed with the logo.

## The use of Metsähallitus' logo

Partner companies may use the Metsähallitus logo to indicate cooperation with Metsähallitus, in order to promote sustainable nature tourism. Metsähallitus logos with instructions for use are on Metsähallitus' website at <http://www.metsa.fi/web/en/logo>

Communications material which includes Metsähallitus logo must be approved by Metsähallitus prior to publication. Depending on the case in hand, the person who prepared the agreement, the Park Superintendent or the person in charge of the partnership agreement may grant approval.

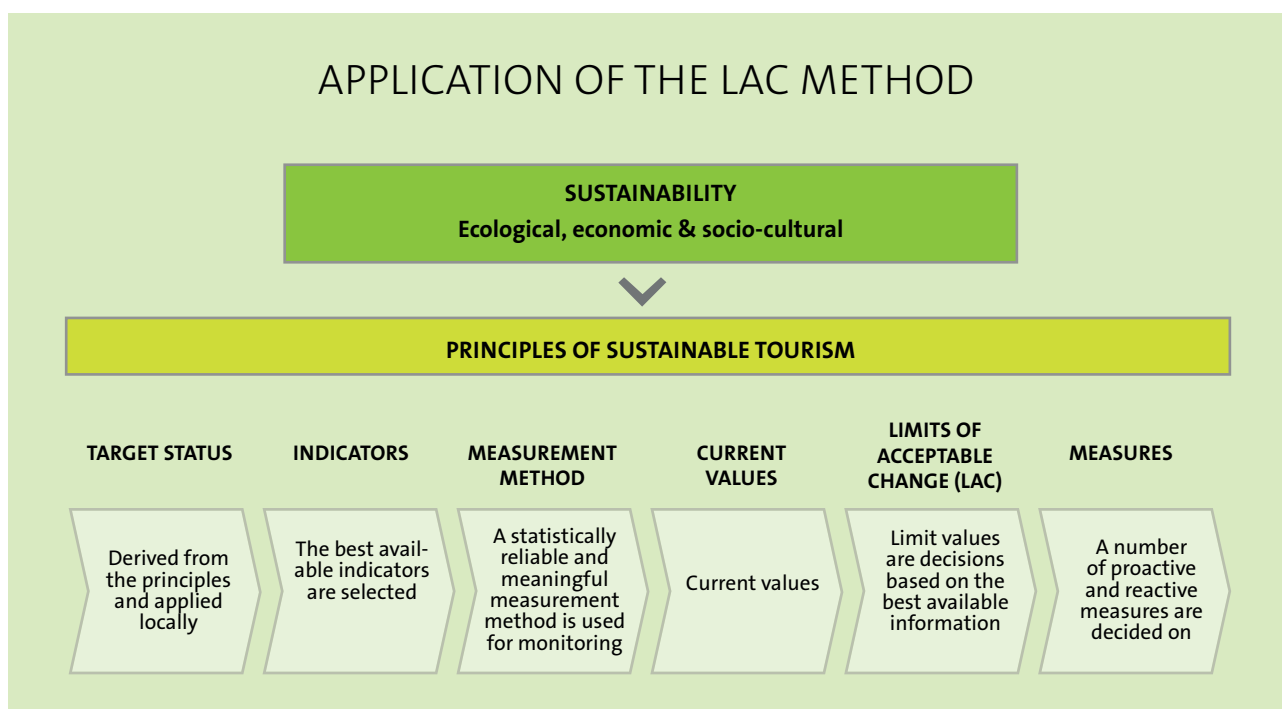
# 6 ASSESSING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF TOURISM

The sustainability and environmental impacts of tourism can be assessed using various measurement methods. Metsähallitus has chosen the so-called LAC method (Limits of Acceptable Change). In tourism development, the LAC method can be used to assist in monitoring the status of tourist areas and the preparation of development plans.

Based on the principles of sustainable nature tourism, a target status has been defined for each nature tourism area. The aim is to develop activities in each area in line with that status. This method involves defining the limits of acceptable change in various components, i.e. the range of variation within which any environmental changes caused by them should remain.

The environmental impacts caused by tourism are measured using suitable indicators. If necessary, preventive corrective action can be taken based on the current status, if there is a risk that the agreed limit values will be exceeded or undershot. The indicators measure factors such as wear and tear of the environment, visitor numbers to areas, and the impacts of tourism on the local economy and culture.

Bog bilberry.



# 7 LITTER-FREE HIKING

## Litter-free hiking prevents the generation of waste.

A joint effort by Metsähallitus and hikers to reduce the quantity of waste and its environmental impacts is the best way of implementing litter-free hiking in protected areas.

We want to reduce the amount of litter in nature and the damage caused by waste transport in the wild, and to improve opportunities to sort and compost waste. At the same time, we provide hikers with the opportunity to act for the benefit of the environment.

The number of mixed waste containers has been reduced at rest stops and information on waste has been increased correspondingly. Hikers are responsible for bringing their waste from the wild to regional waste sorting points, in accordance with the guidelines provided.

### Why bother?

Traditional waste management at hiking destinations has both direct and indirect environmental impacts. Indirect impacts mainly arise when waste has to be transported out of an area by mechanical means. Waste transport causes noise and emissions and erodes the soil.

Direct impacts, i.e. those caused by hikers, include littering of the natural environment and biowaste

ending up in mixed waste, which results in the generation of methane gas in landfills and amplifies the greenhouse effect.

A neat and clean, well-maintained environment is a joy for everyone.



### DO THIS

- Pack your food in durable and washable boxes and bags. This helps to reduce the amount of waste.
- Place food scraps and other biowaste in the composter dry toilet at the campfire site. Remember that only biowaste may be placed in compostable waste. No other types of waste should be mixed with it.
- Burn clean paper and cardboard in the campfire or fireplace in a hut.
- Bring other waste away from the wild to the Ekopiste waste sorting points providing special containers for metal, glass and mixed waste.
- Clean up after yourself and maintain general cleanliness.



# 8 VISITOR MONITORING METHODS

## Visitor surveys

Metsähallitus carries out visitor surveys in popular protected areas, historical sites and hiking areas. By now, data has been collected on almost all of the national parks, and the surveys will be repeated at approximately five-year intervals. The surveys produce comparable data on visitors, recreational activities, use of the area, visitor satisfaction, duration of visits and visitors' spending.

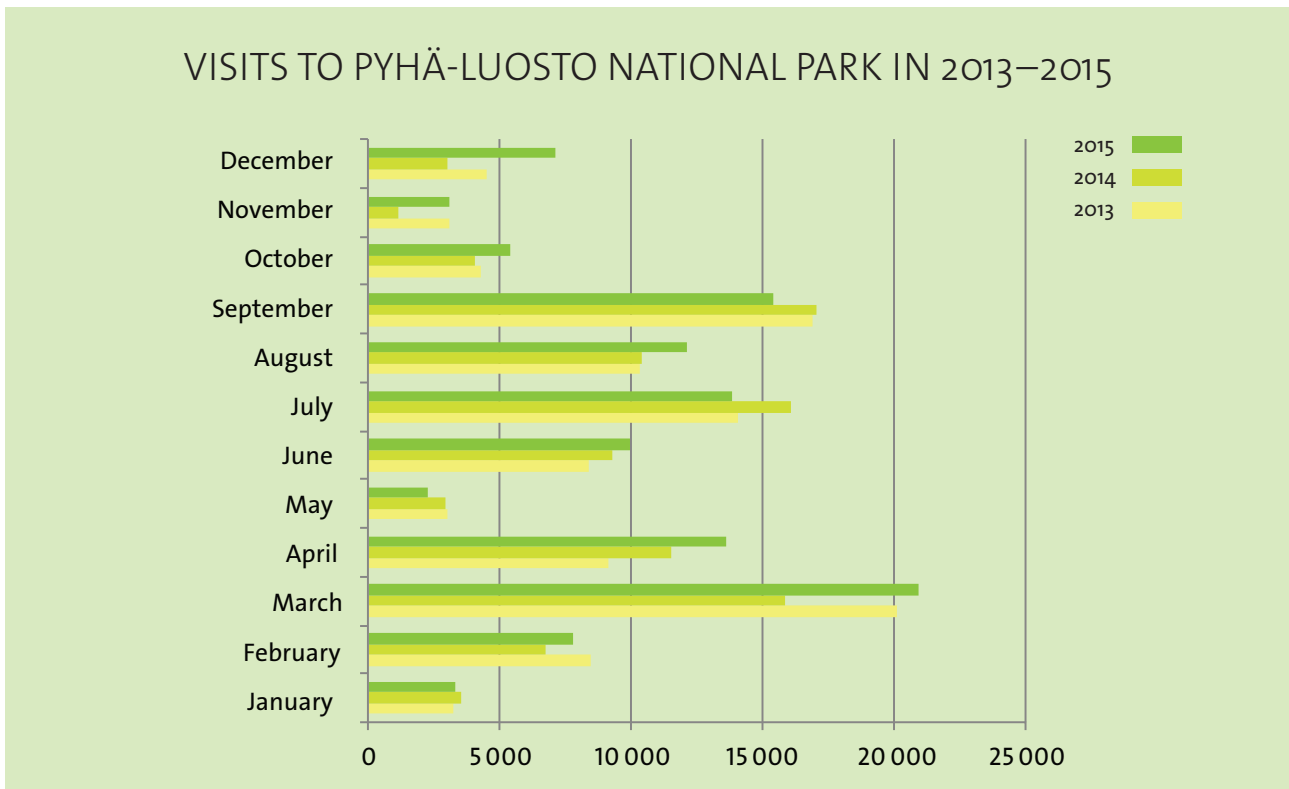
Visitor surveys provide information for the practical planning and management of areas. The results are taken into account in the positioning, dimensioning and maintenance of services, for example. Information on visitors and their wishes is particularly needed as changes are made to service structures. Visitors' opinions also influence the management of the natural environment. Visitor survey reports are available online at [julkaisut.metsa.fi](http://julkaisut.metsa.fi).

## Visitor counting

Visitor counters are mainly used for calculating the numbers of visits in protected areas – the estimated number of visits is always based on the best available data.



**SEE OUR VISITOR COUNTING REPORTS**  
online at  
<http://www.metsa.fi/web/en/visitationnumbers>





## 9 ENVIRONMENT AND QUALITY AT METSÄHALLITUS

*Metsähallitus implements an environmental and quality control system based on the ISO 14001 standard, in order to monitor and manage the environmental impact of activities. The common environmental goals of Metsähallitus business units are confirmed annually. Based on the principle of continuous improvement, the environmental system's performance is regularly monitored through external and internal auditing and a feedback system. Environmental objectives include the preservation of biodiversity, the promotion of socio-cultural sustainability and the functionality of ecosystem services.*

Metsähallitus group produces versatile services and products based on the use, management and protection of natural resources. Business areas include forest management and wood procurement, the production of forest tree seeds and seedlings, the sale of soil resources, land sale services and land rental. Public administration duties managed by Parks & Wildlife Finland include the management of protected areas and other nature conservation tasks, and

promoting the recreational use of nature alongside hunting, fishing and off-road traffic matters.

Environmental aspects and risks are estimated annually. To manage environmental impacts and constantly improve environmental management, we define environmental goals, objectives, guidelines and monitoring methods. For employees and others involved in our activities, our environmental and quality management system doubles as an operational system, providing practical guidance and policies in all areas of work. Our employees use this system on a daily basis.

Metsähallitus annually communicates the economic, ecological and social results of its activities, as well as the environmental impacts and changes in the level of environmental protection. Local residents and stakeholders are always provided with the opportunity to help plan the use of natural resources.



# 10 PROTECTED AREAS IN FINLAND

Many types of protected and wilderness areas have been established to protect Finland's valuable natural environment. Nature is not protected solely to preserve biodiversity, but also to safeguard people's wellbeing and living conditions. Many protected areas also preserve nationally valuable landscape values and the cultural heritage. State-owned protected areas are managed by Metsähallitus. Metsähallitus also manages ancient monuments protected under law and other valuable historical sites.

## National parks

National parks are large areas with varied natural features. As the nationally and internationally most valuable part of our nature, they are natural attractions in themselves. National parks provide visitors with the experience of peace in spectacular scenery. Marked trails vary from easy to challenging. In the largest parks, visitors can hike and stay overnight. The total number of national parks in Finland is 39 in 2016.

## Strict Nature Reserves

Finland's 19 strict nature reserves are primarily reserved for nature conservation and research purposes. They are also used for teaching purposes, if this does not compromise nature conservation in the area. Strict nature reserves are conserved in their natural state, in order to facilitate the monitoring of changes in nature due to natural causes. As climate change progresses, their importance is emphasised. Strict nature reserves are mainly closed to the public. Their conservation regulations are stricter than in national parks.

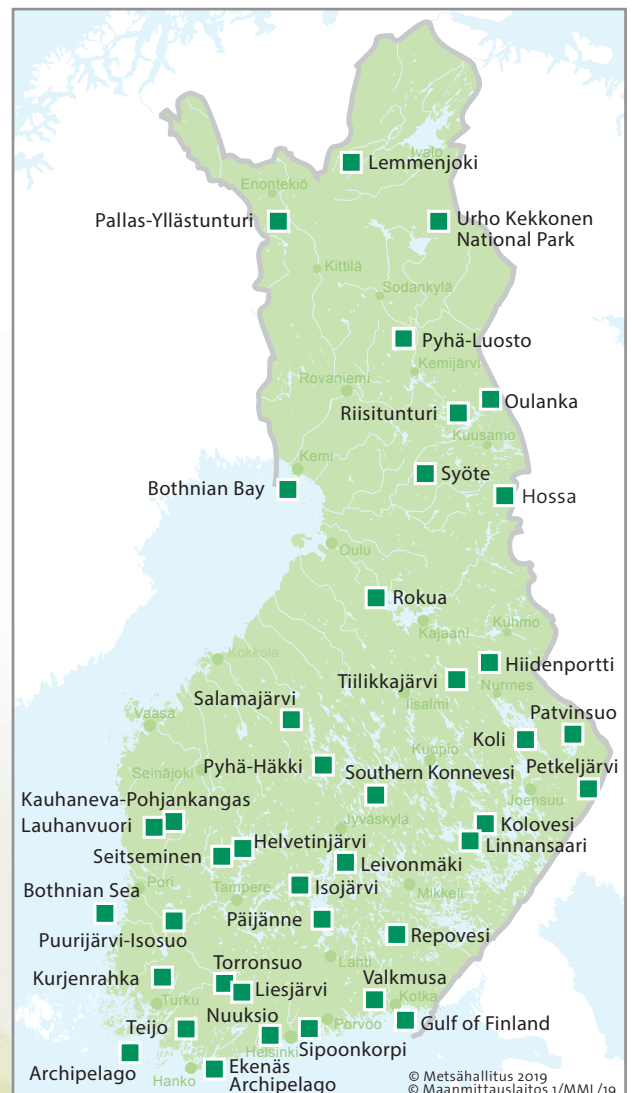
## Mire reserves

In the 1980s, 171 mire reserves were established for the conservation of mire nature. Most of these are mire complexes such as aapa bogs or raised bogs; the country's best bird mires are in these protected areas. In most cases, the public has access to mire reserves under Everyman's Right. In some reserves, hiking, berry and mushroom picking, hunting and fishing are restricted in order to protect nesting birds.

## Herb-rich forest reserves

The goal of herb-rich forest conservation is to preserve the best possible samples of typical forests in the herb-rich zone and to protect such areas and

## NATIONAL PARKS IN FINLAND 2019





their biologically most valuable features. Members of the public can enter and walk around herb-rich forest reserves under Everyman's Right, but camping and lighting campfires are forbidden by the conservation regulations applied. Valuable herb-rich forests are also preserved in other protected areas.

#### **Wilderness areas**

Twelve wilderness areas were established in Finland under the Wilderness Act in 1991. This was done to conserve their rugged wild nature, preserve natural livelihoods (as well as the Sámi culture in the Sámi Homeland) and develop the diverse use of nature. Each wilderness area covers at least 15,000 hectares, mainly without roads. Mining activities and the building of permanent roads are subject to Government permission in wilderness areas. Forests are preserved in their natural state. Wilderness areas provide an ideal setting for highly challenging wilderness hiking.

#### **Other protected areas**

Protected areas are established to ensure that all habitat types found in Finland are represented, while maintaining animal and plant species typical of these areas and conserving threatened species. In addition to the abovementioned protected and wil-

derness areas, protected areas have been established to conserve features such as bird wetlands, eskers, coasts and old-growth forests.

#### **Natura 2000 sites**

The Natura 2000 network is in place to conserve important biotopes and species throughout the European Union. The purpose of this is to preserve biodiversity. In Finland, Natura sites mainly include areas currently protected under the Nature Conservation Act, wilderness areas and areas covered by nature conservation programmes.

#### **Historical sites**

Ancient monuments and other historical sites offer glimpses of our cultural history heritage and a window to our shared past. Traces of ancient settlers tell the tale of human life as part of nature and sometimes the struggle against nature. Ruined castles, fortifications and military history sites bring us stories about power and government, defence as well as wars that swept across the country or raged on our borders. Work on heritage farms and nurturing the archipelago's culture foster our living cultural heritage.



# 11 INFORMATION ONLINE

## **Nationalparks.fi – choose your destination**

Whatever your hobby – demanding hiking tours in the wilderness or exploring a nature trail with children – it is always challenging to find a suitable destination and prepare in the right way. The Nationalparks.fi online service provides real-time information on hiking destinations and their services.

The site includes descriptions of Finland's national parks, state-owned hiking areas, many protected areas and other hiking destinations. The section Hiking in Finland provides a comprehensive info package on tour planning, hiking and the choice of equipment.

## **Excursionmap.fi – detailed maps of hiking destinations**

The Excursionmap.fi map service, produced by Metsähallitus, is designed for hikers, fishermen and hunters. It contains detailed maps of hiking destinations and fishing and hunting areas, provided on various scales. Map printouts enable navigation on the terrain.

Excursionmap.fi is an excellent tool for planning trips into the great outdoors. The search feature on the map service helps in finding national parks, state-owned hiking areas and wilderness areas in Lapland and huts, lean-to-shelters, campfire sites and other service structures for hikers. Routes and trails are also marked on the map.

## **National parks on Facebook**

Follow the Facebook pages of Finland's national parks to keep track of the latest news.

## **Eräluvat.fi**

The new Eräluvat.fi portal contains all of the information you need on fishing, hunting and off-road traffic on Metsähallitus lands. You can buy a license from the web store and find out more about the destinations.

Proceeds from the sales of Metsähallitus hunting and fishing licences are used for improving game habitats and the condition of fishing grounds. The aim is to manage fishing, hunting and off-road traffic issues sustainably, in order to maintain and improve the wellbeing of the natural environment in our

common areas. Metsähallitus' mission is to provide hunting and fishing opportunities for everyone, including people who would not otherwise have them.

## **Metsa.fi – Web service of Metsähallitus, State Forest Enterprise**

The Metsa.fi website presents the services and functions of Metsähallitus' natural resources sector. The site provides information about Metsähallitus as an organisation and its functions related to forestry, nature conservation, the recreational use of nature, and activities related to fishing, hunting and hiking as well as protecting cultural heritage.

## **Julkaisut.metsa.fi**

All Metsähallitus publications are posted on the julkaisut.metsa.fi website. The website contains all of Metsähallitus' research publications, guidebooks, plans, brochures of areas, maps and newsletters.

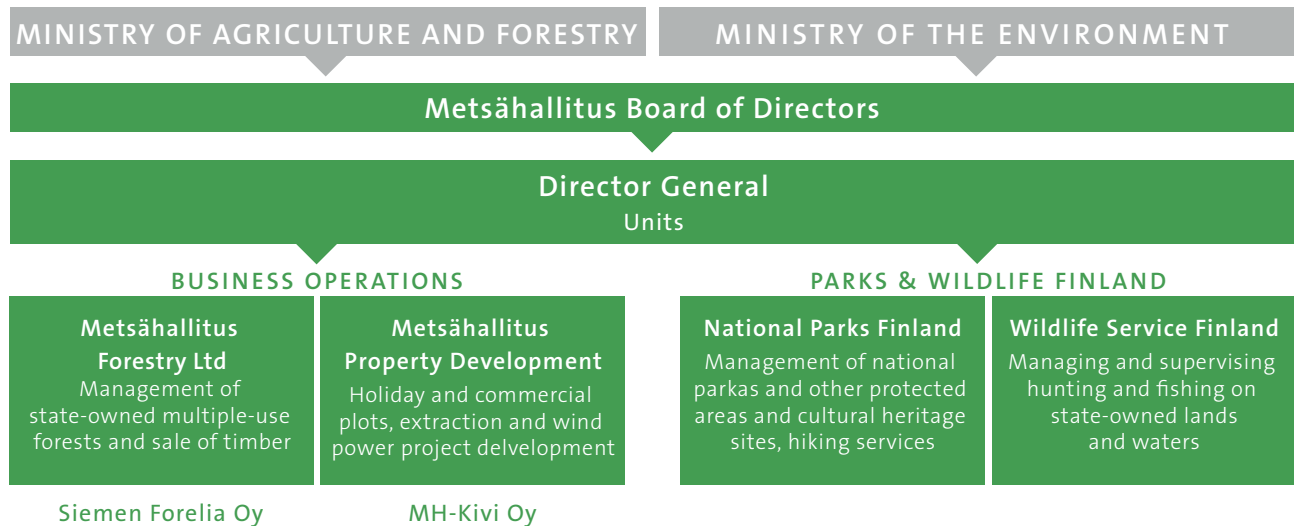


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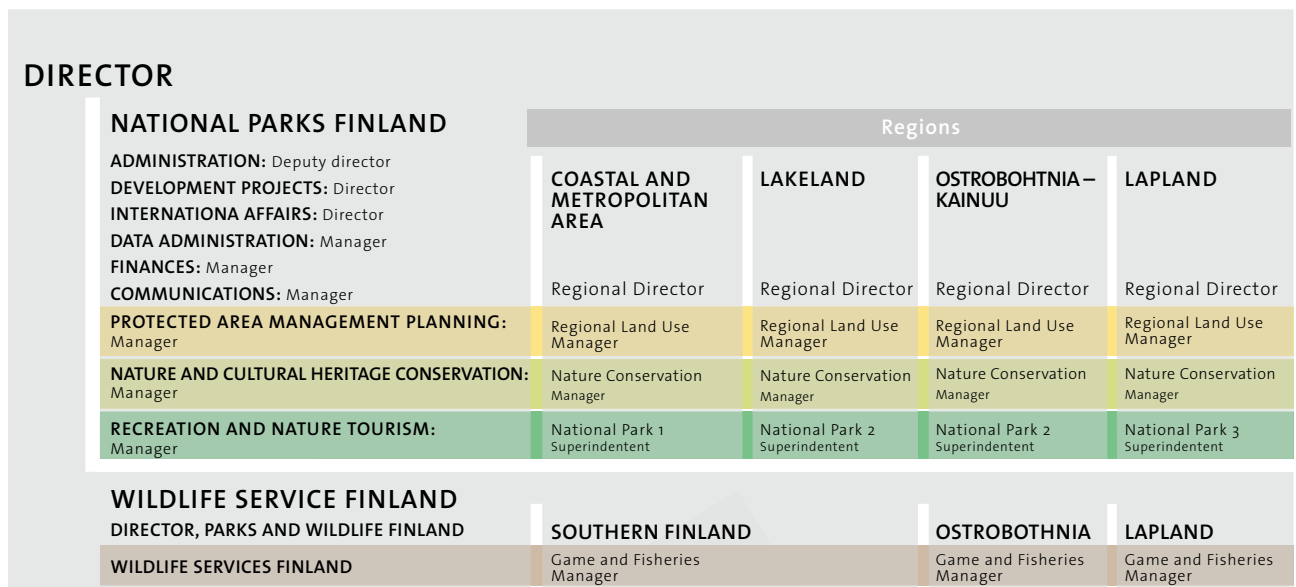
# 12 METSÄHALLITUS ORGANISATION

## METSÄHALLITUS ORGANISATION 2019



*Metsähallitus is a state-run enterprise (Business ID 0116726-7) whose tasks are divided between business activities and public administration duties that are primarily budget-funded. Separate business units have been established for different activities.*

## METSÄHALLITUS PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION 2019



# 13 CONTACTS

## Metsähallitus' customer service points



The total number of Visitor Centres, Nature Centres, huts and Customer Service points run by Metsähallitus in Finland's protected areas and hiking areas totals more than 40. The personnel provide information on protected areas and hiking destinations. Metsähallitus customer service points are always worth a visit before embarking on a nature trail or hiking route. Guide services are available for groups at Visitor Centres and in some places in the wild.

Visitor Centres also sell publications and products related to hiking destinations and the natural environment. For the contact information and opening hours of each customer service point, please see their website via the [Nationalparks.fi](http://Nationalparks.fi) portal.

DO NOT HESITATE TO CONTACT US!

Contacts for cooperation issues

- Customer service points
- National Park Superintendents
- Nationalparks.fi

 **METSÄHALLITUS**

