

General Principles for Sustainable Nature Tourism in Protected Areas

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As a part of work to contribute to sustainable tourism in protected areas, wilderness areas and the areas yet to be protected administrated by Metsähallitus in Finland, nine principles have been developed. These principles can be seen as a result of discussion focused on promoting sustainability in one of the fast growing livelihoods all around the world. Earlier inputs have been given by WWF, World Trade Organisation, World Travel and Tourism Council, Nordic Council of Ministers etc, which have made their own principles and recommendations.

Metsähallitus is a state owned enterprise which has the responsibility of about 27% of the Finnish land areas. The Natural Heritage Services of Metsähallitus is the administrator of 34 national parks, several hundred other protected areas, 12 wilderness areas and a great number of those owned by the State and taken in the conservation plans to be established in the near future. These areas cover together over 3 million hectares of the most beautiful and – as for the conservation of biodiversity – most valuable parts of Finland. At the same time, there are annually about one million visits in the Finnish national parks.

The nine principles are to be implemented since 2004 and they are prepared paying attention to the character of these areas and the roles of Metsähallitus herself, private entrepreneurs having their business there and all the stakeholders, which are active within or close to these areas. The principles can be seen as a long term goal. The implementation and application of these principles is an ongoing process.

The nine principles for sustainable nature tourism are as follows:

1. Nature values are preserved and the activity promotes nature protection
2. Minimum loading of the environment is assured
3. Local culture and heritage are respected
4. Customers' appreciation and knowledge of nature are promoted
5. Customers' opportunities to find recreation in nature are enhanced
6. Customers' mental and physical wellbeing are reinforced
7. Positive impacts are made on local economy and employment
8. Communication and marketing are of high standard and carried out with a sense of responsibility
9. Activities are planned and implemented in co-operation