

Educational Travel Product Recommendations

"Educational traveller wishes to experience the Finnish education system and learn together with the locals."



2020

Visit Finland

Dear Reader,

These educational travel product recommendations aim to assist all educational travel service providers in developing and delivering attractive, profitable, safe and sustainable educational travel products.

The reputation of Finland as a top country for education has reached education professionals around the world. The Finnish education system is known to be one of the best in the world. However, relying solely on PISA results and the strong brand of Finnish education is not sufficient. Finnish schools, as well as nature and youth centres, sports institutes etc. provide a wide variety of interesting learning topics ranging from STEAM and phenomenon-based learning to innovation and entrepreneurship as well as social and movement skills.

Educational content provided by Finnish public schools should become part of a full-service package offered by Finnish travel companies. This way we can build a sustainable travel service network in Finland, and consequently, ensure high quality service development and economically sound operations for educational travel.

Sincerely yours,

Päivi Antila
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Visit Finland, Business Finland

The product recommendations have been made in collaboration with **Kirsi Mantua-Kommonen**, VisitEDUfinn.

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Definition of Finnish educational travel

Educational travel can be divided into two main categories:

1. Study tours for education professionals, school administration and government officials
2. Study tours and school camps for students

FOR EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS, attractive topics include the Finnish curriculum, school management, phenomenon-based learning, STEAM subjects, social and teamwork skills, pupil-centred learning and early education, among others.

WITH ADOLESCENTS, Finland attracts groups of all ages, ranging from primary school to high school and all the way to university level. School camps, study tours and even sister school visits often combine educational content with leisure travel. The interest towards immersive learning in a Finnish school together with local pupils has increased rapidly.



Photo: Harri Tarvainen/Visit Finland

How to apply the Visit Finland criteria for internationalization in educational travel

VISIT FINLAND CRITERIA FOR INTERNATIONALIZATION

HOW TO APPLY THE CRITERIA IN EDUCATIONAL TRAVEL

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 Collecting feedback from both the customers and the participating schools is necessary for building long-term partnerships. Also, educate yourself about the progress and expertise of different partners in Finland.

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 Understanding the education system in the source market will make it easier for you to suggest tailored programmes. It is a significant advantage if you can serve your customers in their language.

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 Parity, transparency among partners, high business ethics and respect for local communities as well as efficient use of energy and other resources create a sound basis for sustainable services. Moreover, sustainability and Agenda 2030 may even be the prime focus of your educational content.

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 Check that your partners have the necessary permits when taking minors abroad. Make sure, in writing, that each partner has an up-to-date insurance policy, and define who is responsible for accidents in each location.

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

5. CAPACITY AND NETWORKS Secure the roles within your partner network through written agreements, so you can concentrate on your own core business and long-term development. Make sure to ensure a smooth customer journey from start to finish.

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 Private transportation is often necessary, since public connections between educational facilities can be time consuming. Be sure to work with reliable transportation partners.

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 and can be easily found and purchased through tour operators or other sales organizations, your website or other digital booking channels.

7. AVAILABILITY AND PURCHASABILITY Since educational visits are almost always provided upon demand, you should prepare flexible package suggestions with price estimates. Note that for professional educational visitors, the sales channels can be different from those for pupil groups.

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

8. AUTHENTICITY AND APPEAL Make sure that the experiences you offer are truly Finnish e.g. by using teachers that have been trained in Finland. Provide Finnish experiences also outside the classroom (outdoor activities, local food).



Photo: Elna Manninen/Keksi/Team Finland

Educational visitors from the perspective of cities and municipalities

A majority of Finnish schools are *public schools, operating on taxpayers' funds*, and therefore operating in accordance with the guidelines set by the local city or municipality policies. In contrast, most foreign guests come from *private schools*, where funding is largely provided by the parents of the pupils. Negotiating these different backgrounds to make a programme acceptable and attractive for both parties is an essential role for the travel companies.

The implementation should ideally also serve the learning objectives of the Finnish pupils. In this scenario, the visitors may fulfil all three of these objectives:

- Educational visitors contribute to the learning experience of local pupils
- Educational visitors are part of the city/municipality international development strategy, confirmed by the political decision-makers
- Educational visitors are a source of travel income



Learning topics

There is a wide range of learning topics that can be covered at Finnish schools:

Sustainable development	Multi-culturalism	Inclusive teaching and support	Flexible learning environments	Sports and physical activity	Co-operative teaching
Environmental education	Global education	Child involvement and support	Digital learning	Music	Shared leadership
Mathematics and natural sciences	International projects	Learning to learn	Digitalisation	Play	Team teaching
Entrepreneurship education	Active citizenship	Social and emotional skills		Drama, arts and media	Teacher teams
University cooperation		Animal-assisted learning	Communal ICT-architecture		Cross-disciplinary teaching

Several learning topics can also be covered outside the school environment:

- Coding, digital fabrication, robotics
- Filmmaking
- Finnish history and way of life
- Geological and biological diversity
- Innovation skills and STEAM
- Nature as a learning environment
- Social and life management skills
- Physical education and movement skills
- Sustainable development, environmental education and circular economy



Safety

THE IMPORTANCE of safety can never be over-emphasised, especially when dealing with minors. Keep this checklist in mind when preparing your educational travel programs.

Prepare well beforehand:

- When organising educational travel for children, check that your customer in the country of origin has the necessary licence for taking children abroad.
- Collect a criminal records extract for working with children from all your long-term employees.
- Check which are the nearest health centres and 24/7 doctor services open during each stay.
- Make sure there is at least one member of staff qualified in first aid present 24/7 with the children, carrying a first aid kit.
- Have clear written agreements for liability (including insurance coverage) in each and every stage of the travel package (e.g. accidents at a sports institute, at school, in traffic, at the accommodation or while shopping).
- Collect all the necessary information, including copies of travel permits (permission to travel without parents), passports, information on allergies, illnesses and phobias, travel insurance information and emergency contact information.
- Remember to state concrete actions that you will take to ensure safety, good hygiene and sufficient personal space for every customer.



Avoid injuries and other safety hazards:

- E.g. for ice and water activities, assign responsibility to a specific person who ensures that the guests and hosts always wear a helmet and life jacket.
- Leave all valuables, such as mobile phones, on the shore or provide waterproof packs for them.
- Never use a sauna where the stove is not separated by a protective barrier.
- In night trains, show a picture of the emergency brake handle before boarding the train and explain how it works. Provide cabin keys to the adults over seeing the group.



Photo: Visit Finland/ Harri Tarvainen/North Karelia

Sustainability in Educational Travel

SUSTAINABILITY AS A KEY EDUCATIONAL THEME

- Finland is a global pioneer of sustainability development – it is also a key theme in the national curriculum. You can include sustainability as a key educational theme for the guests as well. Interest in sustainability-themed educational travel programs is on the rise.
- In 2015, the United Nations agreed upon a programme for sustainability development and 17 detailed Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Finland has been one of the first countries to implement the programme with local focus themes “Carbon-neutral and resource-wise Finland” and “a non-discriminating, equal and highly skilled Finland”. This can provide further content for visits.
- You can make the sustainability principles visible and tangible for your guests by talking about them throughout the duration of their visit. Pinpoint examples to show how sustainability is an everyday matter, made up of small, individual tasks of recycling, saving water and energy, not leaving rubbish in nature, respecting the local school community and so forth.
- For a city tour, you can select topics such as how cities are dealing with climate change and what kind of practical solutions are being developed.

SUSTAINABLE WAY OF WORKING

- Without sustainable business practices, your company will not be a credible partner for educational travel. Make a point of operating according to the principles of parity, being transparent with your partners and practising ethical business.
 - Request information on both the Finnish and the foreign partners' status on sustainability development – bringing up the issue will encourage them in further development.
 - Consider the local communities and culture when deciding on suitable group sizes or places to visit. When hosting a large group, consider splitting into smaller groups for some visits.
 - Support the schools when designing your programme so the visit benefits learning for the local students, not only the guests.
- Select a means of transport that best complies with sustainability and safety criteria: public transport or private transport provided by a legitimate local company that takes sustainability seriously.
 - Select local foods and suppliers instead of goods imported from afar. Supporting local restaurants benefits the local community. Food is an important part of Finnish culture and our way of life, so trying out local foods can make for an interesting learning experience.
 - In summer and early autumn, Finnish forests are covered in nutrient-rich Arctic superfoods. Just remember, there are plenty of berries and mushrooms in the forests. Don't go too close to someone's house – be respectful and keep out of sight. Only pick what you can eat!

Links

EDUCATIONAL TRAVEL

[What is Educational Travel](#)
[Educational Travel Best Practices](#)
[Finland – Learn Like Never Before \(video\)](#)

INTERNATIONALISATION

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

SUSTAINABILITY

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



Photo: Elna Manninen/Keksi/Team Finland

Learn like never before

*Experience phenomenon-based learning
in a natural environment, developing your social
and professional skills in interaction with local
students and teachers.*

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