



**Mapping and Performance Check of the Supply of
Accessible Tourism Services
(220/PP/ENT/PPA/12/6491)**

Case Study 15

Rovaniemi, Finland

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**European Commission
Enterprise and Industry Directorate General (DG
ENTR)**

“Mapping and Performance Check of the Supply of Accessible Tourism Services” (220/PP/ENT/PPA/12/6491)

Case Study: Rovaniemi

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Executive Summary

The case study focuses on the provision of nature-based tourism services and activities in Finnish Lapland, offered through a chain of providers and subcontractors, involving overall sectors such as travel agents, transport, catering, accommodation, and outdoor activities guides and event managers. The case study draws on the accounts of a statutory body which manages the network of services provided in state owned land, such as protected and wilderness areas, national parks, exhibition centres and hiking areas, as well as on the experience of a private business with strong presence in organising tours and activity programs for individuals or groups in the Lappish nature since 1982.

Among the main findings regarding the driving features of accessible tourism provision at a destination level is a prominent commitment to sustainable tourism which places visitor satisfaction and involvement into a holistic strategic framework seeking to promote sustainability of nature, culture, and local economies, as much as delivery of high quality services to all visitors that benefit their well being. Perhaps this is the most important transferrable “lesson” to be gained in this case study, even though adaptation of those principles can mean different services and facilities in different contexts of tourism provision.

With regards to innovative features, specialised technical standards have been developed further to national construction standards in order to ensure accessibility of outdoor nature based activities. In this sense, the case study forms good practice directly transferrable to similar contexts. Detailed information on available services is offered online, particularly as regards publicly managed areas, however initiatives have so far been limited mainly to mobility impairments.

The services offered have proven to respond to international tourist demand, with the most prominent example being that of repeat visits organised by a UK charity in the case of Lapland Safaris. For the public sector, international tourism is seen as paying off investments, especially as local demand is deemed low. Furthermore, high customer satisfaction is reported not only for disabled groups, but also other groups such as families, or elderly people, while accessible infrastructure also seems to offer higher capacity at high season. This seems to justify initial goals of offering equal level of services to all visitors and mainstreaming of investments for accessibility.

1.0 Introduction

The landscape at the city of Rovaniemi and its surrounding areas, as much as being the official hometown of Santa Claus, offer a unique competitive advantage to the destination, especially in terms of international arrivals, where visitors can enjoy a great range of activities such as snowmobile tours, reindeer sleigh rides and guided tours, as well as a variety of extreme sports, water activities and health and wellbeing programs. The case study focuses on the provision of accessible nature-based tourism services and activities as the most significant tourist attractions of Finnish Lapland, offered through a chain of providers and subcontractors, involving overall sectors such as travel agents, transport, catering, accommodation, and outdoor activities guides and event managers.

The development of accessible services should also be seen as a further advantage of tourist provision at the destination level, although there has not been any such official recognition or marketing initiative to promote accessible tourism. With the aim to gain transferrable lessons from good practice, the case study will explore the level and range of accessible services provided in the context of nature tourism, as well as the factors which facilitate consistency and integration across the supply chain.

For these purposes, the case study draws on the accounts of a statutory body which manages the network of services provided in state owned land, such as protected and wilderness areas, national parks, exhibition centres and hiking areas, as well as on the experience of a private business with strong presence in organising tours and activity programs for individuals or groups in the Lappish nature since 1982. Both cases have been key drivers in ensuring at least a basic level of accessible services across the supply chain they operate in, mainly driven by internal corporate objectives and expertise against a wider absence of policies, guidelines or strategies for accessible tourism at a destination level.

The former case, Metsähallitus, a state enterprise, and in particular the department of Natural Heritage Services (NHS) responsible for public duties like managing nature conservation and hiking areas and recreational use of state lands and waters, has been a key driver in implementing accessible planning and investments in nature based tourist services in Finnish Lapland, based on expertise of its staff but also induced by its wider commitment to the principles of sustainable tourism.

Box 1: What is sustainable nature tourism?

What Is Sustainable Nature Tourism?

The goal of sustainable nature tourism is to provide visitors with valuable experiences in natural surroundings in fully sustainable ways. The above principles for sustainable nature tourism in protected areas relate to the various ecological, social, cultural and economic

aspects of sustainability.

Ecological sustainability involves respecting natural values. Not all areas are suited to nature tourism. Social, economic and cultural sustainability depend on the impacts of nature tourism on local residents and communities, and also the experiences of visitors. Nature tourism has the potential to improve both economic and spiritual well-being, but poorly planned or badly organised tourism can endanger natural features and local cultures, and also disturb other people using natural areas.

www.metsa.fi/sustainablenaturetourism

For gaining a wider view of the context of existing and potential accessible service provision, the following table shows the size and number of statutory protected areas, wilderness areas, national hiking areas, recreational forests, and public water areas managed by Metsähallitus.

| Area Type | Number of Areas | Size of Area (sq. km) |
|---|-----------------|-----------------------|
| National parks | 37 | 9,807 |
| Strict nature reserves | 19 | 1,536 |
| Mire reserves | 171 | 4,618 |
| Herb-rich forest reserves | 51 | 12 |
| Old-growth forest reserves | 91 | 97 |
| Seal reserves | 7 | 188 |
| Other state-owned protected areas | 38 | 479 |
| Privately-owned protected areas | 106 | 83 |
| Protected areas established by Metsähallitus | 24 | 8 |
| STATUTORY PROTECTED AREAS (total) | 544 | 16,828 |
| Areas reserved for conservation programmes | 1,708 | 7,665 |
| Protected forests | 327 | 515 |
| Other protected sites | 576 | 1,930 |
| Wilderness areas | 12 | 14,903 |
| National hiking areas | 7 | 355 |
| Other recreational areas | 22 | 1,406 |
| Other areas | 45 | 3,683 |
| Public water areas (where not included above) | - | 23,730 |
| ALL AREAS OF LAND AND WATER | | 71,015 |

Furthermore, the case study draws on the experience of offering nature based tourist services to disabled groups at Lapland Safaris, a private business which organizes activity programs and events in nine destinations in Lapland. The tours are tailored to individual requests and seek to enhance health, well being and self awareness of customers through exploration of the Lappish

nature and culture. The initiative started in 1982 by two individuals and quickly grew in popularity and size, now serving 120,000 customers a year.

Box 2: overview Lapland Safaris

Lapland Safaris:

- Capacity to accept 8,000 guests a day
- Winter gear available for 12,500 and summer gear for 850 people
- 450 trained employees in season
- 45 employees around the year
- 120,000 guests a year
- 580 snowmobiles, 25 canoes and 7 punt-boats
- Own guide school
- Privately-owned

2.0 Overview and background information

Holding 1.9% share of international tourist arrivals in 2011¹, Finland continues to step up its tourism performance as the tourist industry has proved itself a significant part of the national economy. Already figures in 2012 showed a 5% growth in the number of foreign visitors in comparison to the previous year, reaching 7.6 million in absolute numbers, while “accommodation establishments in Finland recorded a total of 20.3 million overnight stays, of which domestic tourists accounted for 14.5 million and foreign tourists for the remaining 5.8 million”². The majority of incoming tourism comes from Northern Europe, in specific the neighbouring countries Russia and Sweden, followed by Germany and the United Kingdom.

The growth in tourism in the so-called “record year 2012”, translated into 2.3 billion Euros spent by incoming tourists alone in Finland, an approximately 3% increase compared to 2011³. Latest available figures on the tourism’s share of GDP are available from the year 2007, when “the value added generated by tourism amounted to €3.6 billion, i.e. 2.3% of Finland’s GDP. When compared

¹ UNWTO Tourism Highlights 2012 (p. 7)

<http://mkt.unwto.org/sites/all/files/docpdf/unwtohighlights12enhr.pdf>

² Border Interview Survey by Statistics Finland and Finnish Tourist Board 2013
http://www.stat.fi/til/rajat/index_en.html

³ Border Interview Survey by Statistics Finland and Finnish Tourist Board 2013
http://www.stat.fi/til/rajat/index_en.html

to value added elsewhere, that of tourism was larger than the food industry and almost twice as high as agriculture⁴.

Finnish Lapland, the destination under review in this case study, maintained 19% of overnight stays in 2012⁵. Hosting the hometown of Santa Claus and a vast number of recreational centers, nature conservation and hiking areas, where a great variety of outdoor activities are offered to all customers, the city of Rovaniemi is a striking example of accessible nature based sustainable tourism.

The most striking feature that seems to drive the provision of accessible services in these cases is a strong commitment to sustainable tourism, which along the concepts of nature preservation, respect to local cultures and promotion of local economies, further encompasses the principle of equal provision of services to all visitors as well as that of the active involvement of customers in the planning of services. Coupled with increased demand of these services by disabled groups, particularly in the case of Lapland Safaris as it will be discussed later on, the case study builds a strong case for socially responsible business as the main motive for developing accessible tourist services.

This becomes perhaps more evident particularly in the absence of any specific national policy measures targeted at disability with regards to tourism, culture or leisure. Nevertheless, the mentality of providing “a safe, healthy, pleasant, socially functional living and working environment which provides for the needs of various population groups, such as children, the elderly and the disabled” underpins the national Building Act (132/1999)⁶, as much as the national technical standards included in the Building code of the country. Similarly, transport legislation foresees the need for providers to define quality standards of service for different population groups, including persons with disabilities, while municipalities receive subsidies to provide accessible transport services on a local level (Decree 275/2010).

Finally, disability awareness and policy mainstreaming seems to grow nationally with efforts such as Finland's Disability Policy Programme 2010–2015, which includes 122 measures in 14 policy areas so as to strengthen equality. Among the five main pillars of the program, there is a commitment to enhancing accessibility across social sectors⁷. These objectives seem to fit in

⁴ Tourism account 2007, April 2009, Statistics Finland <http://www.visitfinland.com/travel-trade/tourism-statistics/>

⁵ Accommodation Statistics 2012, Statistics Finland <http://www.visitfinland.com/travel-trade/tourism-statistics/>

⁶ ANED DOTCOM Finland Accessibility <http://www.disability-europe.net/content/finland-c1-transport-accessibility>

⁷ Finland's Disability Policy Programme 2010–2015 <http://www.sosiaaliportti.fi/en-GB/the-handbook-on-disability-services/finlands-disability-policy/>

well with the main strategic goals of the destination's tourism strategy 2006-2016⁸ which although it does not explicitly address accessible tourism, it aims at doubling the number of tourists and length of stays, through actions such as researching customer needs and defining market segments as well as implementing marketing which is carefully planned and targeted on specified groups.

⁸ <http://www.rovaniemi.fi/loader.aspx?id=3b56c475-2990-4989-80fd-01d82a09d50c>

3.0 The integration of the supply chain

A primary characteristic of the enterprises interviewed for the purposes of this case study, is indeed the very wide network of suppliers they engage in offering tourist services. Although destination level strategies or initiatives with regards to accessible tourism are in fact lacking, these actors have succeeded in ensuring at least a basic level of accessibility of services across the supply chain they operate in, mainly driven by internal corporate philosophy and expertise.

As quoted by the Senior Planning Officer Mr Erkki Tuovinen, “NHS cooperates with the tourism sector at company, destination and regional level for the development of sustainable nature tourism”. Important attractions and venues such as national parks, protected areas, nature centers and recreational infrastructure, are made available to both individual tourists as much as tourist businesses on demand, while certain facilities are also used and managed by the city of Rovaniemi, such as the Pilke Science Center. In turn, the city of Rovaniemi works in partnership with local tourism companies to market the destination, through Rovaniemi Tourism and Marketing Ltd, 51% of which is owned by the city of Rovaniemi and 49% by more than 150 local tourist suppliers.

Likewise, in organizing activity programs according to individual customer profile and demands, Lapland Safaris cooperate with a chain of suppliers, including transport services, hotel and restaurants, husky and reindeer farms, adaptable sleigh rides, travel agencies and tour operators. As also pointed out, external stakeholders who may also be involved in the delivery chain also include safety authorities, airport services, local marketing organizations, and local tourist attractions and facilities.

One main observation with regards to factors facilitating a seamless accessible supply chain is a rather bottom up approach based on corporate social responsibility, rather than a more top down formal approach, such as adhering to policy or funding regulations for instance. It is also worth noting that no specific certification, award or labeling schemes are in place in both (statutory and private sector) cases.

At the heart of such business ethics is an explicit commitment to the principles of sustainable tourism among all subcontractors, as is evident in the case of the Natural Heritage Services. This commitment is induced by the very mission of the enterprise to protect the natural features of state owned land and water, at the same time as promoting outdoor recreation and well being to residents and visitors. A key feature of adhering to the principles of sustainable tourism involves active cooperation with local residents, authorities, tourist companies or other stakeholders on commonly agreed guidelines, a feature which facilitates that is integration of the supply chain.

“The mission of NHS services is to create well being for people through recreational use and wealth for the local economy through sustainable use of protected areas, in the limits set by nature protection. Tourism is one of the main sources of livelihood in Lapland.” Mr Erkki Tuovinen Senior Planning Officer, National Heritage Services.

Further factors that have aided consistency in the delivery of accessible services include the technical expertise of staff, as well as cooperation with academia and disability organizations, observed in both cases in this study.

With regards to the statutory National Heritage Services, Senior Planning Officer Mr ErkkiTuovinen specialized in accessibility, has been key in designing adaptations as well as in maintaining communication and exchange of knowledge with relevant stakeholders. Indicatively, two seminars concerning accessible services took place in Rovaniemi in 2009 and 2010 in cooperation with the University of Lapland, which further to training led to a joint self-funded development project. The NHS further provides planning and consultation services to the city of Rovaniemi which manages the provision of accessible services at national and recreational parks, such as the Science Centre Pilke, through various social and educational service units.

National accessibility standards have formed the basis of accessible construction, to which Metsähallitus in cooperation with Suomen Latu, a leading recreational association, have further added classification standards of recreational trails (2003), including accessible trails. Furthermore, Metsähallitus has a collection of design models of cabins, fireplaces, outdoor toilets etc. including some accessible constructions.

Apart from technical experts, user representative organizations have also played an important role in developing, testing and disseminating information about accessible infrastructure and services. In specific, Metsähallitus has cooperated with the Finnish Association of People with Physical Disabilities and Kynnys ry, two major national advocacy associations based on the principles of equal rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. As the interviewee explains, some of the major outcomes of the cooperation have also been the creation of two online channels of information and communication regarding accessibility, namely Esteeton.fi and [Suomi kaikille](http://Suomi.kaikille) which have aimed at encouraging the creation of a co operation network where local actors, professionals and target groups participate.

Lapland safaris' expertise in serving disabled groups has also rested on the experience

Stakeholders have played an important role in designing accessible recreational constructions. In addition to Suomen Latu, different associations of disabled people have been consulted in planning process and testing services, e.g. [Invalidiliitto ry](#) and [Kynnys ry](#). Information and marketing cooperation has been made in creating [Esteeton.fi](#)- (Accessible) and [Suomi kaikille](#) – websites (Finland for everyone).

Senior Planning Officer Mr Erkki Tuovinen

National Heritage Services, Metsähallitus

of staff accumulated over more than twenty years successful cooperation with the “When you Wish upon a star” British charity, which

supports children with serious illnesses. In the early 1990s the staff was also involved in a thesis about accessibility carried out by students in the University of Lapland, which was eventually adopted as part of the guide course offered by Lapland Safaris. For Lapland Safaris, the repeat business in organizing activity programs and tours for children with illnesses and/or disabilities, has meant that investments and marketing efforts are continuous and growing, as explained by Mr. Rauno Posio, entrepreneur of Lapland Safaris, responsible for marketing since 1992.

As regards the statutory sector, there has been an understanding from the start that equal access to public services should be ensured, while it also gradually became clear that accessibility benefits different target groups such as families and the elderly. Nevertheless, as pointed out by the interviewee, further investment decisions largely depend on demand of services as well as strategic choices of the tourist industry.

As Sanna Kortelainen, from Rovaniemi Tourism & Marketing Ltd also explains, there have not been any specific strategies to promote accessible tourism on a destination level, which accounts for gaps in accessible service provision. It is however a developing issue which is seen as having a potential to contribute to growth.

“There have been both successes due to product development of our key suppliers like SantaPark where accessibility is taken well into notice and like in the hotels where you can book an accessible room, but there are also gaps in basic services such as information, brochures, signs, selling procedure and lack of actual technical devices. Providing accessible services and ensuring the service level though the chain of suppliers should be taken into better notice. We do not have yet any system or strategy for that.

But I think we all have noticed that is a arising topic and a tool for developing competitiveness.”

Sanna Kortelainen, Rovaniemi Tourism & Marketing Ltd

4.0 Provisions for cross-impairments

Availability of some basic accessible facilities, such as parking, entrance, or toilets, in all major recreational areas and nature centres has been the principle in development of infrastructure, for the Natural Heritage Services of Metsähallitus. National Parks and other important areas with larger demand for accessible services have also got some accessible trails, fireplaces, or sight-seeing places for instance, depending on terrain conditions.

So far, efforts have focused on customers with mobility impairments. Access with wheelchairs has been the minimum standard. All nature centers are accessible by wheelchairs, while some also have limited services for customers with hearing and visual impairments.

National Parks, Wilderness Areas and other protected areas are accessed free of charge. Motorized vehicles are not allowed in principle in protected areas because of nature protection, therefore NHS has not granted special licenses for disabled persons. The table below provides an overview of the main services/ activities on offer⁹:

Box 3: Services offered

Services offered

Services that are free of charge include access to hiking trails, wilderness huts, campfire sites and the services offered at the Nature Centres. These services are financed from the state budget. Services that carry a fee include fishing, hunting, rental accommodation and snowmobiling. These services are financed by the customers. The sale and leasing of plots of land for holiday homes is also a commercial service provided by Metsähallitus.

Information at Visitor Centres and Service Points

All visitor centres offer free advice and tips for getting to know the destinations in the nearby areas. In addition, groups can request a paid tour guide at all [visitor centres](#) and [several other customer service points](#) to introduce them to an exhibition or other theme at the visitor centre. It's advisable to book a guided group tour in advance. The guide will often reveal otherwise hidden details about the exhibition and make the stories come to life.

Guidance in the Terrain

In some hiking destinations, you can also find a tour guide in the field or at a wilderness hut. The guide provides information and advice about hiking free of charge. At some

⁹ A complete guide on the services offered at each destination is available on www.outdoors.fi

sites, a field guide also offers paid group tours of a hiking destination or information about its theme.

www.outdoors.fi

In the city of Rovaniemi, Metsähallitus runs the [Pilke Science Centre](#) hosting an exhibition of sustainable northern forestry.

The Pilke Science Centre

The Pilke House is accessible to people who are disabled. There is wheelchair access through the main door, and an elevator that carries visitors to the exhibition hall. A toilet for the disabled is available on the same floor as the entrance to the building.

The parking spaces for disabled people are located in front of Arktikum beside the steps, and there is an entrance there through Pilke's lower door. This entrance is ready to use when the Science Centre is opened.

A disabled person's personal assistant is admitted without a charge.

<http://www.tiedekeskus-pilke.fi/>

Furthermore, there are several areas with recreational infrastructure around Rovaniemi, which are all accessible. Some of the most popular are [Napapiiri Recreational area](#) and [Auttiköngäs](#). Napapiiri Recreational Area is a good stand alone example of providing a seamless chain of accessible services: the area is close to the city centre with good access by road, there is visitor information available on the web and on site, plus accessible infrastructure such as trails, fireplaces, toilets, and parking.

Regarding particular obstacles in ensuring accessible hiking areas, the interviewees pointed that there is need to find more sustainable materials replacing bare wood, which lasts only 10-15 years in moist climate. Metsähallitus has made development work with steel and gravel constructions on trails in order to ensure safe routes in the long-term.

Lapland safaris have specialized in providing services to children with limited functionality, including wheelchair users, in most of the activities offered such as adapted snowmobiles, Northern Lights tours, snow villages tours, visits to the Santa Claus village and reindeer pulled sleighs.

5.0 Business approach – building a business case for accessibility

The finding that the offer of accessible tourist services has in the cases at hand formed part of mainstream corporate strategy and goals, perhaps also explains the fact that it was difficult for the interviewees to estimate the cost of investments made for accessibility separately from business investments as a whole. For the public sector, ensuring equal access to all visitors goes hand in hand with the principles of sustainable nature-based tourism as well as the public duty to strengthen equality. This has translated to investment for basic level services and those required by law by most local suppliers, as explained by Sanna Kortelainen from Rovaniemi Tourism and Marketing.

For the private business, custom made activity programs describe its very operation from the start, while given the particularity of the destination, mainly the Santa Claus village which continuously attracts children with disabilities, there have been further motives in mainstreaming accessibility in the services offered so as to enlarge their clientele and ensure repeat business.

As Senior Planning Officer, Mr. Erkki Tuovinen from NHS also remarks, it is similarly difficult to isolate impact/ benefits on disabled customers, as the adaptations made seem to benefit all visitors, in terms of higher capacity and comfort offered.

Investments made for accessible services are not possible to separate from total investments in Pilke Centre and recreational infrastructure. In outdoor infrastructure, accessible constructions have on average double cost compared to “normal” ones. But as mentioned, accessibility is not only for disabled. Another advantage of accessible infrastructure is higher capacity on eg. trails and fireplaces, which is useful for groups and high seasons.

*Senior Planning Officer Mr Erkki Tuovinen
National Heritage Services, Metsähallitus.*

Thus, according to the interviewee’s perspective, despite a considerable added cost for adaptations in outdoor areas, this has been offset by higher visitor satisfaction across the board. Nevertheless, this perception is not yet common practice among providers in the region, as explained. Hesitance to invest in accessible outdoor services is also relative to demand. In the case of Lapland, as noted, local demand is low; however the growth of incoming tourism is potentially key in developing accessible services.

“Even though accessible services are widely considered necessary for equality reasons and also useful for several other customer groups like families with small children and aging people, there has been lack of resources available for investments. Terrain is often difficult because of rocks and wetlands which makes constructions expensive. In Lapland, population is low and distances to recreational area can be long, which reduces local demand. On the other hand, tourism increases demand of accessible services and is a source of pay-back for investments.”

*Senior Planning Officer Mr Erkki Tuovinen
National Heritage Services, Metsähallitus*

6.0 Evidence of impact

Although it was not possible to measure and evidence the impact of the accessible services offered in the cases reviewed, all interviewees reported very positive customer feedback, while repeat business has been more evident for Lapland Safaris through their cooperation with the charity. For Rovaniemi Tourism and Marketing, although demand by disabled visitors for tourist services at a destination level is reportedly low, there are returning clients and increased customer satisfaction, while overall positive indicators are growth of tourism compared to the previous years, increased number of offers sent to clients, as well as good ratings by bloggers and travel writers testing and reporting on quality of services provided in Rovaniemi as a whole.

Metsähallitus has a standard monitoring system covering all major recreational areas, based on automatic visit counters and visitor surveys. We also have a system of estimating economical impact of nature tourism in local economy. Surveys has large background information, but need of accessible services is not included. So we don't have specific data of users of accessible services and their economical impact as tourists. Customer feedback is recorded, and it is very positive.

*Senior Planning Officer Mr Erkki Tuovinen National Heritage Services,
Metsähallitus*

The accessible services offered through the great number of nature centres, national and recreational parks, and wilderness and hiking areas have not received an official recognition or award, however they undoubtedly form good practice in nature-based tourism, particularly considering the practical difficulties in restoring accessibility in difficult geographic conditions. Adding to that, the work of National Heritage Services, Metsähallitus is underpinned by technical expertise and innovation in design standards, strong cooperation ties with key stakeholders as much as by long-term

commitment to sustainability and equality of service. Put in the words of the interviewee, *“as one of the major tourist destinations in Lapland, Rovaniemi could be one candidate with high profile in accessible services.”*

With regards to Lapland Safaris, recognition of excellence in provision of services as a whole has been offered through awards by the TripAdvisor (Certificate of Excellence 2013 and 2012¹⁰). The enterprise rates A+ in terms of company reliability (strongest in Finland Certificate¹¹), while the enterprise has won the 2011 national safety award in the tourism and catering field¹². With respect to accessibility of services, the continuous cooperation with the UK charity “When you wish upon a star” over the last twenty one years, adds to the reliability of the company in organizing memorable, inclusive activities in the Lappish nature.

7.0 Conclusions

The case study reviewed accessible services provided at a great range of nature conservation, recreational and hiking areas in Lapland, from both public and private sector perspectives. On the one hand, the public body National Heritage Services co-operate with a range of subcontractors and the city of Rovaniemi in providing accessible facilities at national and recreational parks and nature-based activities. On the other hand, Lapland Safaris, which organises activity programs and tours in the Lappish nature tailored to individual customers, cooperates with providers across the chain of travel agents, transport, accommodation and outdoor activities suppliers.

Among the main findings regarding the driving features of accessible tourism provision at a destination level is a prominent commitment to sustainable tourism which places visitor satisfaction and involvement into a holistic strategic framework seeking to promote sustainability of nature and culture, local economies, and delivery of high quality services to all visitors that benefit their well being. Perhaps this is the most important transferrable “lesson” to be gained in this case study, even though adaptation of those principles can mean different services and facilities in different contexts of tourism provision.

With regards to innovative features, specialised technical standards have been developed further to national construction standards in order to ensure accessibility of outdoor nature based activities. In this sense, the case study forms good practice directly transferrable to similar contexts. Detailed information on available services is offered online, particularly as regards

¹⁰ <http://www.laplandsafaris.com/en/about-us/our-awards/tripadvisor-certificate-of-excellence-2013>

¹¹ <http://www.laplandsafaris.com/en/about-us/our-awards/the-strongest-in-finland>

¹² <http://www.laplandsafaris.com/en/about-us/our-awards/safety-award-in-tourism-and-restaurant>

publicly managed areas, however initiatives have so far been limited mainly to mobility impairments.

The services offered have proven to respond to international tourist demand, with the most prominent example being that of repeat visits organised by a UK charity in the case of Lapland Safaris. For the public sector, international tourism is seen as paying off investments, especially as local demand is deemed low. Furthermore, high customer satisfaction is reported not only for disabled groups, but also other groups such as families, or elderly people, while accessible infrastructure also seems to offer higher capacity at high season. To conclude, this seems to justify initial goals of offering equal level of services to all visitors and mainstreaming of investments for accessibility.

8.0 Recommendations

Some of the key recommendations for enlarging and enhancing the provision chain of accessible services put forward by the interviewees encompass the concepts of a wide cooperation network, focused and detailed planning, as much as commitment to meeting the needs of all guests:

- **Cooperation with other stakeholders** such as municipalities and the private sector is necessary to create high standard accessible destinations. Equally, cooperation with NGOs and user representatives is seen as essential for avoiding technical faults, but also in disseminating information about available services.
- **Professional marketing** through targeted information channels is seen as yet another important synergy in order to reach not only disabled groups, but other potential groups who benefit from accessible services. As pointed out, the use of mobile IT technology in marketing, but also tourist services, is only starting in Finland.
- Emphasis is placed on **easy to get information, easy to book or buy services** and quality **customer service**.
- **Careful planning** is necessary for meeting increasing access requirements, while it may also be more effective to focus on selected tourist services, before expanding accessible services across the chain of provision.

Best solution to increase funding of accessible recreational services is synergy of local social services and tourism, and in other dimension synergy of disabled and other consumer groups who need accessibility. By creating accessible destinations and resorts, investments could be affordable in economical scale, too. Accessibility should cover all necessary services and whole supply chains. This is possible only by focusing both public and private accessible services on chosen destinations and resorts.

*Senior Planning Officer Mr Erkki Tuovinen
National Heritage Services, Metsähallitus.*

Annex I: Criteria and justification for best practices

Table 1: Criteria and justification for best practice

| Criteria | Justification | On track/off track |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| Relevance | Specialised technical standards in place for outdoor nature based activities. Main strategy based on a holistic concept of sustainable tourism, which includes the visitor perspective and involvement. Services proven to respond to international demand. Detailed information on services offered on website (statutory sector). Accessibility however limited so far to mobility impairments. |  |
| Transferability | Practice transferrable mainly to destinations offering nature-based tourist services. Concept and strategy of sustainable tourism is replicable however in most contexts, in so far as it draws upon local economies and culture, nature protection and high quality services to visitors which benefit well being. |  |
| Efficient & Effectiveness | There has been limited evidence of impact in quantitative terms, however high customer satisfaction, repeat business for certain groups as well as benefits for other groups, such as families, elderly, etc are also reported. |   |
| Sustainability | Outdoor constructions are generally more costly, however investments are seen to pay off. Investments for accessibility are mainstreamed in available budget, which is usually state funded (as regards public sector). Not all private businesses wish to invest in accessibility due to low local demand, however business investigated receives major benefits from repeat business with disabled groups who visit from abroad. |  |
| Innovation | Basic infrastructure is provided in indoor facilities, while cross-impairments provision is so far limited. On the other hand, design standards for hiking trails especially owe to |  |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | expertise of staff at statutory body managing nature conservation and hiking areas in Lapland. | |
|--|--|--|