

Educational Travel Best Practices 2020

INFORMATION, TIPS AND GUIDANCE
FOR THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY



Visit Finland

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1. Combining public education with private travel services

Interest in educational travel to Finland grew rapidly before the COVID-19 pandemic suddenly halted all international travel. To be prepared for when educational travel is once again possible, we hope this guide will provide you with useful information. The purpose of this guide is to support the Finnish travel industry - especially destination management companies and incoming operators specialised in educational travel - in developing and delivering attractive and profitable educational travel packages.

From the travel industry perspective, one of the major challenges has been to arrange the necessary educational content for the visitors. The volume of groups from China, in particular, has risen steeply. Moreover, the Chinese are keen to join Finnish pupils at their schools

for phenomenon-based learning, and are often prepared to pay both for the learning experience and for extracurricular activities, making them a potential segment for profitable educational travel business.

It is great to see that more and more schools do welcome international guests to visit as part of the international education of their own pupils. Educational content provided by Finnish schools should become part of a full service package offered by our local travel entrepreneurs. This way we can build a sustainable travel service network in Finland, and consequently, ensure high quality service development, economically sound operations for educational travel, and clear focus on international education for the schools in the long term, too.

To help match the demand with interested hosts, we have, for the latter, firstly collected information about the various ways of operating educational visits in selected cities and municipalities, to increase understanding within the travel industry in regard to public-sector decision-making. Secondly, we have included a section on how to arrange learning opportunities outside schools, while following the renowned Finnish

experiential learning perspective. Thirdly, we have provided updated market information from some of the key educational travel markets regarding their interest in Finnish education. Finally, we have listed concrete recommendations for educational travel products according to the Visit Finland guidelines and criteria for international travel products in general, and safety and sustainability perspectives, in particular.

Päivi Antila
Manager, Educational Travel
Visit Finland



2. Educational visitors from the perspective of cities and municipalities

Various cities and municipalities have different ways of operating educational visitor groups.

The key principle necessary for the travel companies to understand is that 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.

Within the city or municipality framework in Finland, however, the school principals have broad freedoms and decision-making powers to develop a way of operating that best serves the **learning objectives for the international education** of their own pupils. Typically, this refers to sister school cooperation, Erasmus programmes (within the EU), or similar long-term frameworks. Furthermore, some cities have started to acknowledge educational travel as an additional **source of travel income**. However, not all local schools may welcome these visitors, since the schools prefer cooperation, where the **local pupils also benefit by learning from the visitors**, which is not always easy to accomplish with commercial visitors. In an ideal scenario, the visitors may fulfil all three of these objectives.

THREE PERSPECTIVES OF EDUCATIONAL VISITORS

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



Photo: Visit Finland/ Harri Tarvainen/North Karelia

3. Operational models

3.1. The National Capital: Helsinki

Naturally, the Capital Region attracts most educational visitors, with the national capital Helsinki receiving the largest number of visitors.

Due to the characteristics of being a national capital, **Helsinki** welcomes heads of states and education ministry delegations interested in Finnish education from every continent. One of the recent trends has been for guests from Asian countries to benchmark both early childhood education and primary school teaching, with guests originating from a variety of countries, including China, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Bangladesh, Singapore, Vietnam and Nepal.

Helsinki cooperates with capital cities across Europe, and has especially deep

cooperation with Tallinn, Stockholm and St. Petersburg, as well as Beijing and Moscow. The three main objectives of the city's international engagement are developing its expertise and capabilities, making Helsinki better known internationally, and growing Helsinki's influence and significance. Essential focus areas are **Smart City and digitalisation**, as well as **climate change prevention and sustainable development**. Furthermore, in the city's international engagement document, **education and expertise** is mentioned as one of the six strength-based focus areas.

So far, Helsinki has not created a centralised operational model for educational travel, but due to long-standing historical connections, the city's universities and schools are very well



HELSINKI

- Not all visitor groups can be accommodated due to substantial international attention
- No central operational model exists as yet
- Outlining the city's role in education exports is on the current agenda

networked internationally. Education in Helsinki has attracted international attention to the degree that not all visitor groups can currently be accommodated. Likewise, international courses for teacher development cannot be arranged at present. At the same time, there is

demand for the export of early childhood education, comprehensive education, general upper secondary education and vocational education to many countries. It is on the city's current agenda to outline and determine its role in such education exports.

3.2. The Capital Region:

Espoo developing the pupils' work-life skills

Espoo is part of the Helsinki metropolitan area, the locale of Aalto University and several vocational schools, and home to the headquarters of many major Finnish companies and start-ups. Consequently, there is strong demand for school visits from educational travellers – the local schools hosted about 600 educational delegations in 2019. Moreover, Espoo is a very international city with twin or sister cities in ten countries. The city is active in many international networks, and has experience in hosting guests with a broad spectrum of interests.

“For educational visits, Espoo designed an operational model following Finland’s success in the PISA rankings,” explains

Annika Forstén, Senior Planning Officer at the City of Espoo: “This started to increase the pressure to welcome educational visitors closer to the airport, as well as elsewhere in Finland.”

Espoo has set up a centralized information page with brief introductions to each of the more than fifty schools or day care centres that are prepared to welcome visitors if their schedule allows. “Each school introduction also includes information on the special areas of interest of the particular school,” says Ms. Forstén. As you can see from the examples in the table below, the possibilities cover a very wide range of learning topics and themes.

RANGE OF LEARNING TOPICS AND THEMES AVAILABLE IN DIFFERENT SCHOOLS AND DAY CARE CENTRES IN ESPOO:

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

The schools typically provide a guide in English, but also Swedish, French, Dutch, Hungarian, and Spanish are possible in some schools.

The fees are fixed at the city level, and in some schools it is even possible to experience a typical school lunch, or have some tea or coffee for an additional fee.

ESPOO

- More than 50 schools and day care centres are prepared to welcome educational guests.
- Each school or day care centre has particular topics of interest they would like to introduce.
- Prices, a list of schools and day care centres, and their areas of interest are published on the city’s website under International Espoo.

3.3. Kerava:

Equal international opportunities for all

The City of Kerava has developed a systemic model for international education and development. The model is tied in with the city's comprehensive internationalization objectives, and is backed up by the political decision makers. This approach takes into consideration all educational levels from early childhood education via basic education up to high school, identifying operational models applicable at all levels.

From the travel industry perspective, this model is very practicable. There is a central point of contact, which makes it easy for the customer to connect with a suitable kindergarten, school or high school available for a group of visitors arriving at a particular time. The price is pre-defined, as well. From the city perspective, the advantages of the central point of contact include more evenly spread opportunities for hosting visitors.

"We started developing the educational visitor programmes with a couple of interested schools, and since then nearly every school and kindergarten has hosted some group," enthuses **Terhi Nissinen**, Director of Basic Education at the City of Kerava.

The visitor programmes fall into three categories: 1) **educational highlights** is a

combination of visits to schools at various educational levels, designed for educational professionals, varying from half a day to three days, 2) **sister school cooperation**, which starts from as early as kindergarten level, and 3) **brief visits** to observe kindergarten or school activities, for which demand has been increasing.

"As we started to receive more and more requests for deeper introductions to the Finnish educational system and respective choices, we built a progressive teacher training programme, focusing on selected themes," Mrs. Nissinen explains.

"There was also an idea for an international children's camp, where children from Finland and various other countries would come together, but so far we have not been able to assign resources for this," Mrs. Nissinen says.

"Our pupils are very eager to meet representatives from foreign schools, and to learn and interact with them, whether pupils or teachers."

In Kerava, the policy is to only welcome visitors that contribute to the realisation of the curriculum. This implies that the visits need time for preparation in advance.

"The objective of developing transversal competences detailed in the curriculum in general, and **cultural competence, interaction and expression** in particular, is opened up with the opportunity to welcome international guests," says teacher **Anna-Kaarina Repo**, the contact teacher for the international programmes in Kerava.

"Our pupils are very eager to meet representatives from foreign schools, and to learn and interact with them, whether pupils or teachers. Since, today, children grow up in a very multifaceted world, with many of our pupils having international roots, it is all the more interesting to meet people actually living in different countries and cultural environments," Ms. Repo explains.

"It is interesting to hear details, such as the length of the school day and amount of homework in China, or to see how much the visiting teachers value the opportunity of a field trip to experience the local nature, or how playful and eager to join in activities the foreign adults can be," describes Ms. Repo.

Some of the pupils also host the guests as part of their learning experience. "The pupils are able to introduce the school and different activities in their own words, which is different from the perspective of the host teachers," points out Mrs. Nissinen. "We also provide the host pupils with certificates, which can benefit them when they later apply for summer jobs, for example."

"The opportunities to test one's language skills, to ask questions and get authentic

answers directly from the visitors, to learn from their different customs and traditions, and to even perform for the guests are also appreciated," Ms. Repo says.

All this translates into the programmes in Kerava being suitable for visitors who also want to contribute to the learning experience of their hosts.

"Nobody here wants to be like an animal in a zoo, just being observed," Ms. Repo laughs. "We invest a lot of time in the quality of the visiting programmes. For example, when I have been hosting international guests, the city has hired a substitute teacher for my class, so I have not had to worry about my pupils getting left behind."

"We prefer to wonder and discover together with our guests; this way everyone gains from the visit," Ms. Repo concludes.

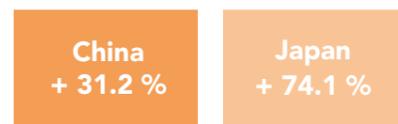
KERAVA

- Welcomes guests who are willing to contribute to the learning experience of the local children, too.
- Has a centralised online booking system for visits to schools and kindergartens, and an introductory video on the city's website under Educational visits.
- Provides visitor programmes and a progressive teacher-training programme.

3.4. Oulu: Educational travel as part of the city's international strategy

As the number of educational visits to the City of Oulu had significantly increased, there emerged a need for a clear model and a process for cooperation between the different stakeholders. In 2018, experts in service design facilitated a series of workshops where representatives from schools, kindergartens, and cultural institutions came together with HR and accounting professionals.

Overnight stays in Jan-Mar 2018:



Tutkimus-ja Analysointikeskus TAK Oy/Tilastokeskus

"We were lucky to have such strong agreement on the value and need for a clear operational model", recalls **Eija Ruohomäki**, educational coordinator at the City of Oulu. "Thanks to the service design process, we have now defined the roles for each

stakeholder, which also enables the further development of the cooperation".

Dovetailing the roles of the public sector operators in education and culture with those of the small businesses providing additional services led the development of the operational model. The increasing interest from Chinese and Japanese visitors, in particular, called for unified processes to be developed, as Asian visitors have different interests and more needs for additional services. To enable Asian customers to be able to buy high quality educational travel packages, the city has had to develop cooperation with private businesses, including activity service companies, destination management companies, and incoming travel agencies.

Another major issue was the pricing of the educational content. The objective was to find a model to follow the principle: **compensation is allocated where costs incur.**



Chinese education experts enjoying the nature school with Ms. Eija Ruohomäki.

"Based on average salaries, cost of facilities, and the preparation work required, among other factors, we know precisely the actual cost of a visit of a certain length, from planning through to implementation", Ms. Ruohomäki reveals. "Furthermore, we can easily allocate the compensation correctly between the schools, cultural institutions and administration, without having to worry that tax payers' money is being used to serve foreign guests," she explains.

Moreover, the operational model is integrated into both the Oulu city budget and strategic planning. Education exports and educational travel are one topic under the larger entity of **international development** in the City of Oulu, and, as such, transparent from the perspective of political decision-making, too.

3.4.1. Sister city cooperation with China

A major part of the process has been making a clear distinction between the international education inside the early education and school curricula, and commercial educational travel.

For the Chinese market, the policy is that the local schools only welcome pupil groups from sister schools. This supports the overall strategy for sister city cooperation. Hangzhou and Oulu are sister cities, and already foster ten sister school agreements. This network is likely to expand further, as more principals and teachers from Hangzhou come to Oulu to be further educated, and often wish to continue cooperation in the form of introducing a sister school programme.

To meet the significant demand from

pupil groups from elsewhere in China, the educational programmes of the museum and science centre Luuppi as well as the Valve Film School have opened up their workshops to foreign pupil groups. For school visits outside the sister school cooperation, Ms. Ruohomäki hopes the surrounding municipalities will step up: “We would be happy to refer the requests for school visits to nearby towns and municipalities who are not participating in the sister school programmes”, she says.



Photo: City of Oulu



Photo: City of Oulu

Hangzhou high school students visiting their sister school in Oulu.

3.4.2. Educational experts and entrepreneurs from Japan

The City of Oulu has selected Japan as another focus area for education exports. The visitor groups include education professionals and entrepreneurs, and entrepreneurship education is one specific area of interest. Another significant topic is early childhood education and care.

Furthermore, a new initiative around functional language teaching has led to the

development of school camp programmes of 5 and 10 days tailored for the Japanese market, in particular. These programmes provided by **Oulu-opisto**, which is a liberal education institution owned and run by the City of Oulu, focus on spoken language skills integrated with immersive cultural experiences, and are ready to welcome the first Japanese pupil groups as soon as the corona crises is resolved.

OULU

- Provides programmes for expert visitors.
- Schools welcome children's groups only from sister schools (China/Hangzhou).
- Educational children's programmes are available at the museum and science centre Luuppi/Tiedekeskus Tietomaa, and at the Valve Film School.
- Oulu-opisto has developed functional language teaching camps aimed at Japanese pupils.
- Provides a central point of contact.
- Hopes to be able to steer children's groups interested in school visits to nearby areas.



Japanese education professionals visiting Sampola in Oulu.



The Valve Film School in Oulu offers educational programmes for both pupils and teachers.

3.5. Lohja:

Active schools and passionate teachers

“On a global scale, the Finnish school is truly a wonder,” summarises mayor **Mika Sivula** from Lohja. “The Finnish education system has lifted our tiny country all the way to the top of the international rankings, so I do hope that we continue to appreciate and further cultivate it.”

This strong, shared conviction is one of the motivations for the warm welcome given to educational travellers in Lohja. Educational travel is a genius way to harness the brilliant reputation of Finnish education for business, too, believes Mr. Sivula:

“I hope that not only national legislation, but also our attitudes will evolve to support us in developing operational models for international cooperation and education exports, so that we can continue to learn together: about life, about our world, about different cultures, and about each other,” Mr. Sivula says.

The personal relationships formed via educational travel may endure over many years:

“It warms my heart to see how pupils from Lohja make friends and connections to people from the other side of the world,” says Mr. Sivula and continues: “Modern applications allow us to keep in touch with our international network on a completely different scale than before, enabling us to tap into the vast potential from the perspectives of international cooperation and education exports.”

In Lohja, educational travel is organised from the perspective and initiative of individual persons, teachers, and schools, often cooperating with the private sector, with Chinese guests, in particular. The city sees this as a major resource, as personal commitment and relationships help build up long lasting programmes. So far, the city hasn’t undertaken detailed



The Mayor of Lohja, Mika Sivula, was present to witness the sister school signing between Erna Huhtala, principal of Tytyri School, and Tong Jing, principal of Chaoyang Experimental School, Beijing.



Chinese pupils meeting Mayor Sivula after a joint gala evening at Tytyri school.

cost calculations or defining fees for the educational services provided by the public sector: “As the volume of visitors grow, we may have to reconsider the need to charge some fees, especially from the operators that bring the most visitors”, says Mr. Sivula, and continues: “I don’t see the need to politicise this matter, since cooperation serves the benefit of all participants.”

This personalised approach means that there are rather big differences between the schools:

“Some schools have long traditions of Erasmus cooperation, for example, while others have built relationships through sister school cooperation, and yet others work with the local sports institute and their Chinese groups. Furthermore, one campus of the Laurea University of Applied Sciences, which also hosts international visitors and pupils, is located in Lohja,” Mr. Sivula explains and continues: “I believe it is better to rely on committed individuals rather than centralized top-down decision-making for such operations.”

LOHJA

- The City of Lohja warmly welcomes educational travellers.
- Schools operate international guest visits independently without a centralised operational model.

4. How do schools welcome educational visitors?

Whether there is a common model for welcoming educational guests to the city or not, the arrangements differ between different schools. Those schools that have already hosted groups tend to have a better-defined structure for the visits, developed through experience, but it's quite possible they also have fully-booked schedules.

From the schools' perspective, the earlier they receive a request to host visitors, the better. For example, if you would like to arrange a visit in January or February, it is best to contact the schools already at the beginning of the new school year starting in August. For visits longer than one day, this is even more important.

The school will want to know the number of guests, the age of the pupils (if participating), any specific areas of interest the group has, what kind of learning content the guests can provide for the visit, and the planned date(s) of the visit. Then, the principal and possibly the international contact teacher will select class levels for hosting the visitors and start planning, so that the visit is integrated into the curriculum of the school year. However, more detailed planning will not happen until a few weeks before the actual visit.

For shorter, observational visits, some schools are flexible and willing to schedule a visit a couple of months before the actual visit, but a shorter response time will limit the selection of schools available.

SCHOOL VISITS

- Book as early as possible, but preferably at the beginning of the school year, using the central booking system, if available, or by contacting the school directly.
- When booking, inform the school of the following:
 - * Requested date and length of visit
 - * Number, background (professional or school class), and level of language skills of the visitors
 - * Wishes for educational content
 - * Meal bookings
- Consider how your group can contribute to the learning experience of the local.



Photo: Business Finland/ Markus Sommers

Case study:

Muijala school opted for a two-week programme

Since 2017, Muijala primary school in Lohja has welcomed Chinese pupils twice a year, to participate in a two-week learning programme, partly taught by Chinese teachers. The programme provides a practical way to implement a multidisciplinary learning project, required by the Finnish curriculum. Planning takes more effort than it would without the foreign guests, but the learning results are all the more rewarding, too.

“The first group stayed for four weeks, and was fairly large, at 40 pupils,” recounts Taina Hämäläinen, principal of Muijala school, who added: “This period was too long from our school’s perspective, even though the visiting pupils had very good English skills.”

Since then, the programmes have been shortened. The length was changed to two weeks, and the 5th grade pupils host the guests. Teaching is provided only in English, which can be challenging, since the level of the language skills

of both the hosts and the guests varies. Therefore, for the latest groups, the programme was altered to include one daily class with another host class. This served the benefit of both the 5th graders and the other classes: while the others were also able to enjoy the possibility to meet and learn from the Chinese guests, the 5th graders had the opportunity to discuss with their teacher in Finnish, to review key learning points, or just to catch up. Also, the 5th grade wanted to keep up with their programme of reading authentic literature in Finnish even during the guests’ visits. So, the Chinese were encouraged to bring books for themselves to read during these classes, serving as a welcome break from the intensive programme for both groups.

Implementing the programme induces the need to bring in one additional teacher for the duration of the visit, so that there are always two Finnish teachers involved. Moreover, it is necessary to engage at least one adult who can

translate from English to Chinese, since the language skills and age of the visiting pupils and teachers varies from group to group. “The pupils joining from China have been between 9 and 12 years old”, explains Ms. Hämäläinen.

The programme further integrates learning subjects such as environmental studies, biology, geography, and mathematics. Arts and crafts are also typically included, because the guests enjoy experimenting with Finnish handicrafts, especially learning woodworking and metalworking skills, as well as textile skills. The Chinese teachers, for their part, usually introduce calligraphy and Chinese language skills to the Finnish pupils. Furthermore, the programme may include music, and sports and physical education at Kisakallio sports institute, which has been a key external partner for this programme.

The biggest challenges are connected with the pre-planning of the visits, since the Chinese guests require a very detailed programme beforehand. On the other hand, they are flexible with changes, and demand flexibility from the Finns, as well, as they typically come up with further ideas and requirements on the spot.

Another major point learned over time has been that it is necessary to ensure that all insurances are in place, and that it is clearly defined who is responsible for what. With many different participants on the host side, it is important to define the roles and responsibilities of the school, the sports institute, and the families - where there are one night home stays included in the programme - and the guests, in case of any accidents.



Photo: Eina Manninen/Keks/Team Finland

5. How to support the hosting school when receiving educational visitors?

Concerning the actual visit, the role of the travel company varies depending on the level of relationship between the hosts and the guests. If it is the first time they cooperate, they will need a lot of support in communications.

First of all, you should be very active in **communicating the expectations of both sides to each other, and explain cultural differences**. Even if everything has been agreed upon in writing beforehand, the messages might not have been read in detail, or the people who made the arrangements are not actually present during the visit, so it is best to go through the plan in detail just before the visit with both sides.

During the visit, some misunderstandings will arise, and it is in your interest to solve these during the visit, to the satisfaction of both hosts and guests, to build future cooperation possibilities.

Typical concerns are often to do with spoken English skills, as the accents of each party's spoken English can be very different, making it difficult to understand one another. Furthermore, the major cultural shock between traditional classroom teaching and modern Finnish **"learning to learn"** through project work in teams may appear chaotic to the guests during a short visit. Moreover, the guests may be suffering from **jet lag**, be **hungry** due to the very different dietary habits, or the children may even be **home sick**, which may manifest itself as stomach pain or headaches. Therefore, when hosting professional educational groups, in addition to possibly needing help with language translation, it is just as important to extend the cultural understanding of both sides. Unless the major cultural differences that exist in the society influencing education are explained, the discussions of the two parties will not lead to very fruitful insights.



Photo: Elna Manninen/Keksi/Team Finland

Chinese and Indian societies, for example, are extremely competitive. Parents send their children to school camp to gain international learning experience, which it is hoped will assist them in gaining access to top-ranking universities in the west after high school. Therefore, even young children may feel under very strong pressure to learn something re-

markable during their short visit to Finland and the Finnish school. Consequently, helping them self-evaluate according to the Finnish style, and verbalising the learnings they are experiencing will help them have a clearer perception of it and, as a result, release them from the pressure of performing at their best.



Photo: Riku Pihlanto

6. Educational opportunities outside the school building

As, on the one hand, Finnish school days are relatively short compared to those in most source countries and, on the other, finding a suitable school to visit can be a challenge, it is beneficial to offer Finnish learning experiences that take place outside school.

Increasingly, Finnish educational professionals and cultural institutions are developing programmes for learning outside school. For example, public and private institutions, nature centres, science cen-

tres, museums and sports institutes offer the same programmes in English for foreign guests that Finnish pupils also enjoy during local school camps. Moreover, some internationally-oriented Finnish teachers have created specific programmes, to provide authentic learning opportunities.

We briefly introduce some of these below. The learning topics are referential, since many programmes combine several learning subjects into one programme.

LEARNING TOPIC

CODING, DIGITAL FABRICATION, ROBOTICS



Photo: Code School Finland

PROGRAMME PROVIDER

BUUTTI EDUCATION:

Workshops using the latest technology of the University of Oulu's Fab Lab to create Northern lights. The experiences with programming and digital fabrication will provide skills that help the students stand out and develop their careers in the future.

CODE SCHOOL FINLAND:

A curriculum for coding, robotics and artificial intelligence. The teaching materials comply with the Finnish national core curriculum, and offer multidisciplinary projects that integrate with subject studies. On-demand teacher training and workshops for children available. Product highlights include a school camp concept **Robotics Escape-Room Camp with Finnish co-students**. Oulu and Helsinki.



Photo: Visit Turku

TURKU UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES AND UNIVERSITY OF TURKU (bookable via Visit Turku): Programming workshops creating games, interactive stories, animations and **LEGO®** robots. During the workshops, students learn the principles of programming, the programmability of objects and how to create games.

FILMMAKING



Photo: Valve Film School

VALVE FILM SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN:

Filmmaking workshops for school camps, teacher training and pedagogical consulting implemented via phenomenon-based and experiential learning. Oulu.

Filmmaking workshop is a fun way to learn.

LEARNING TOPIC

FINNISH HISTORY AND WAY OF LIFE

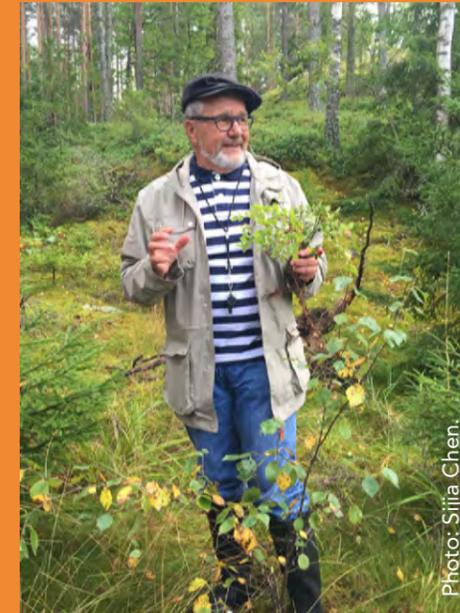


Photo: Sijia Chen

Guide Matti teaches you all you need to know about blueberries and bilberries in Fiskars.



Photo: Susanna Yläjärvi Serlachius museums.

"Helga Kvist" will interview the kids to see if they have what it takes to work for the paper company.

PROGRAMME PROVIDER

FAMILY FARMS:

Family-owned farm resorts in the Finnish countryside offer a peaceful environment with various nature activities such as berry picking, ice-fishing, open-fire cooking and getting to know traditional Finnish domestic animals.

MUSEUMS: There is a vast network of public and private museums suitable for youth groups in Finland, such as **the National Museum, the Finnish Museum of Natural History** and the many art and design museums. Some notable examples include:

- **Archipelago museum Korpoström** in the Turku Archipelago
- **Maritime Centre Vellamo** in Kotka
- **Rosala Viking Centre** with an entire reconstructed Viking village
- **Serlachius Museum Gustav** in Mänttä providing dramatised history and art programmes
- The world's first **Spy museum** in Tampere providing a different perspective on European history
- **Åland hunting and fishing museum** focusing on the various aspects of the Finnish archipelago and the sea.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT FINNISH MUSEUMS:

<https://www.museot.fi/en.php>

LEARNING TOPIC

GEOLOGY



Geological and biological diversity at Rokua Geopark.

PROGRAMME PROVIDER

UNESCO GLOBAL GEOPARKS:

Rokua Geopark in the Oulu region tells the story of the previous Ice Age: How the shifting ice shaped the local nature, and how people followed the melting ice and retreating coastline, leaving a permanent mark on the environment.

Lauhanvuori-Hämeen kangas in Southern Ostrobothnia depicts the development of the landscape from ancient mountains to the present mire. The most important features of the area are its long and multi-stage geological history, valuable mire entities, the Susiluola Wolf Cave and some of the finest bubbling springs in Finland.

INNOVATION SKILLS



At Arkki pupils learn innovation skills and STEAM through architecture and design as real-world phenomena.

ARKKI: School of Creative Education for children and youth where pupils learn innovation skills and STEAM through architecture and design as real-world phenomena. Arkki's education programme has been certified by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture as a national extracurricular creative education programme. Arkki Finland school is in Helsinki.

NATURE AS A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

NATURE CENTRES: Learning-centred exhibitions, information and nature films. They are situated in **National parks** across the country, and the network includes over 20 centres run by **Metsähallitus** and its partners. Many of them also offer short programmes for pupils, and can be combined with learning activities on a nature trail of the surrounding National park.

SOCIAL AND LIFE MANAGEMENT SKILLS



Safety is taken seriously at the Oivanki Outdoor Education Centre. Canoeing instruction session by Panu Päivärinta of Oivanki.

YOUTH CENTRES: There are nine national youth centres across Finland operating under the supervision and funding of the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture. With an emphasis on experiential learning within group work, they support young people's social skills and self-esteem. In addition, they have facilities for outdoor activities in natural surroundings and premises with full board and accommodation.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND MOVEMENT SKILLS



The pupils of Karjalohja school joined their Chinese visitors for a day of sports at Kisakallio sports institute.

SPORTS INSTITUTES: Finland has 11 sports institutes that are each a combination of an educational organisation, a training centre for elite athletes, and a leisure centre for the public, also offering school camp programmes including accommodation. For Olympic training, each institute specialises in specific sports, for example skiing (**Vuokatti** and **Rovaniemi**) or ice hockey (**Kuortane** and **Vierumäki**.)

STEAM (SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, ARTS, MATHEMATICS)



Photo: EduGems

EDUGEMS:

Education programmes based on Finnish research and certified by Education Alliance Finland, with focus on STEAM, Sustainability and Global citizenship. Project-based, student-centred study methods aim to teach collaborative and constructive 21st century skills to students, and provide training for teachers in Education for Sustainable Development. Helsinki Metropolitan Area, Lapland and online.

INTO SCHOOL:

Creativity education through music, and arts enhancing problem-solving and linguistic skills as well as boosting self-confidence. A variety of creative activities from arts to science and technology forming an innovative and future-focused learning experience based on the Finnish National Core Curriculum. Helsinki.

UNIVERSITY OF TURKU:

Workshops to learn about physics and chemistry in a fun way, experimenting with interesting physical phenomena in a science laboratory.

Science Centres Heureka in Vantaa, **Arktikum** and **Pilke** in Rovaniemi, **Tiedekeskus Tietomaa** in Oulu, and **Forest Museum Lusto** in Punkaharju near Savonlinna feature an interactive exhibition, and some also have other learning programmes.

Arkki see above under innovation skills.

Also nature centres, vocational schools and other universities offer a variety of STEAM programmes.



Photo: Laura Sarioka

Science Centre Arktikum

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION, AND THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY



Photo: Yan-Dong

REUSE CENTRE: Circular economy, reusage, recycling, and environmental responsibility related workshop programmes for pupils; study material and training for school and early childhood education by **Environmental School Polku**; and motivation and education programmes and information for designated adult environmental educators by **Education Service Tuuma**. Helsinki Metropolitan Area.

KIERTOKAARI: Technical visits related to the circular economy and waste management (waste-to-energy, material efficiency etc.) in Oulu.

EDUGEMS: See above under STEAM

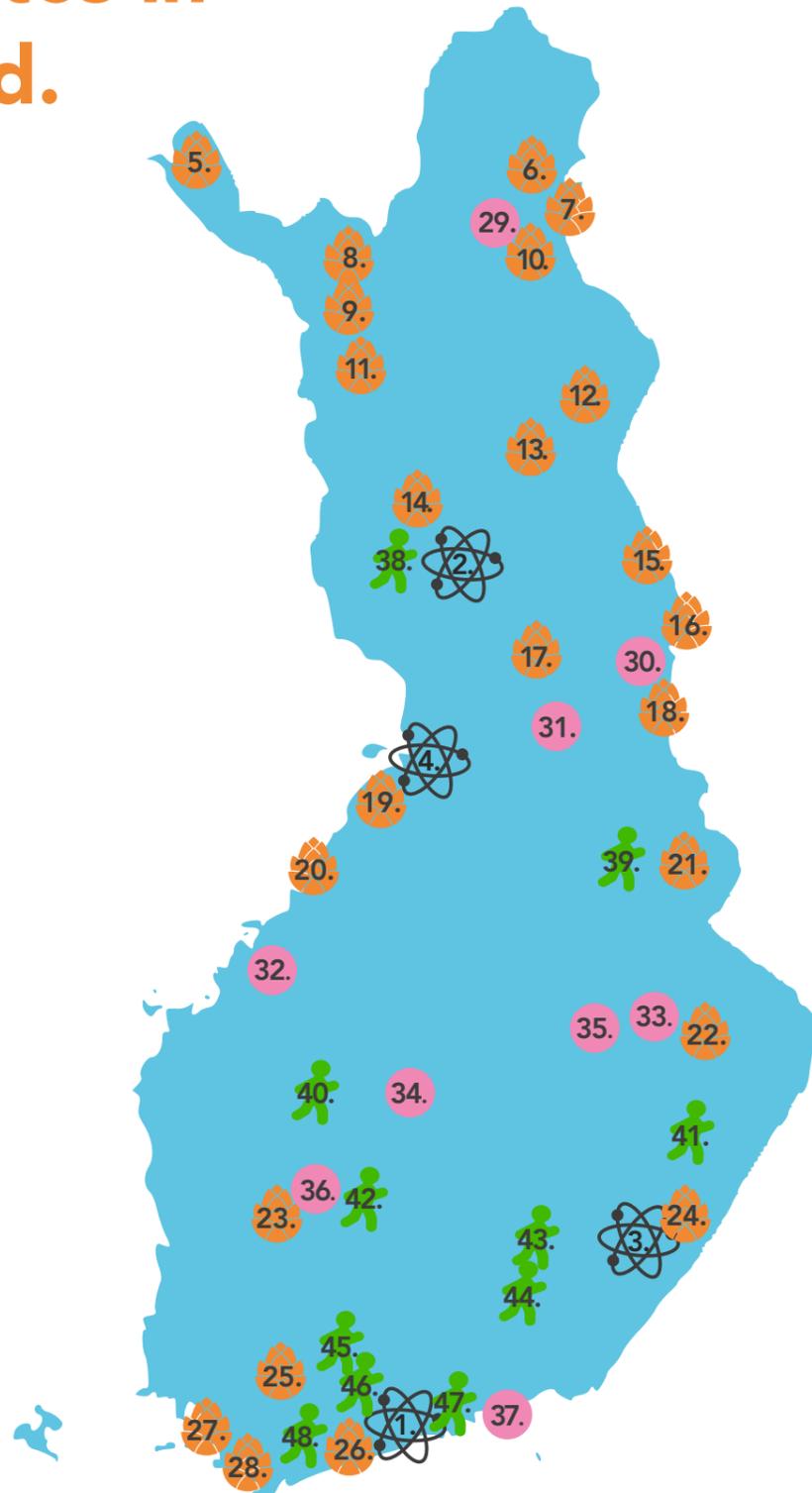
UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI CENTRE FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION HY+:

For more mature students, the Urban Visit concept showcases the best practices of the Helsinki metropolitan area – including how cities are dealing with climate change and what kind of practical solutions are being invented. The visits also present university education related to sustainable cities as well as good governance practices such as citizen participation and engagement.



Photo: Yan-Dong

Nature centres, Science centres, Youth centres and Sports institutes in Finland.



Science Centres

1. Vantaa
2. Rovaniemi
3. Punkaharju
4. Oulu

Nature Centres

5. Kilpisjärvi
6. Northern Lapland
7. Ivalo
8. Fell Lapland
9. Pallastunturi
10. Saariselkä
11. Yllästunturi
12. Savukoski
13. Pyhä-Luosto
14. Pilke
15. Oulanka
16. Kuusamo
17. Syöte
18. Hossa
19. Liminka Bay
20. Kalajoki
21. Kuhmo
22. Koli
23. Seitseminen
24. Saimaa
25. Häme
26. Haltia
27. Teijo
28. Ekenäs

Youth Centres

29. Vasatokka (Inari)
30. Oivanki (Kuusamo)
31. Pikku-syöte (Pudasjärvi)
32. Villa Elba (Kokkola)
33. Hyvärilä (Nurmes)
34. Piispala (Kannonkoski)
35. Metsäkartano (Rautavaara)
36. Marttinen (Virrat)
37. Anjala (Kouvola)

Sport Institutes

38. Santasport
39. Vuokatti
40. Kuortane
41. Tanhuvaara
42. Varala
43. Vierumäki
44. Pajulahti
45. Eerikkilä
46. Kisakallio
47. Solvalla
48. Kisakeskus

7. Market updates

7.1. China market update



The reputation of Finland as a top country for education has started to reach education professionals in China, and also school camp organisations are promoting Finland as one camp destination. In just a couple of years, China has become by far the largest origin of educational travellers to Finland, both professionals and campers, and a very visible share of the educational visitors to the Capital region, Kerava, Lohja and Oulu, as explained above.

In China, educational travel is a very big business, with parents investing a major share of their total income into their child's

education over several years. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Finnish education attracted interest from more and more market segments, and in new educational products. On the down side, the demand for school visits outstripped supply, and consequently, the rapid growth of the industry attracted lots of new entrepreneurs, some of whom, unfortunately, did not always research the relevant regulations related to the travel industry in general, and organising travel for school children, in particular. Hopefully, this market update will help solve these problems.

7.1.1.

Market segments in China: Both public and private

The Chinese visitors represent several segments that have different interests and budgets for the educational travel products offered in Finland. For example, visitors from public and private sectors differ significantly: private school principals or educational entrepreneurs may have a business visa and, consequently, travel more freely looking to find ways to improve the competitive ability of their own business, whereas civil servants have limited possibilities for travel, needing an official clearance for their travel itinerary to be allowed to apply for a visa, which means longer processing times. Both groups appreciate meetings with education officials in Finland, but for the latter they are a prerequisite for the travel permit, to begin with.

The Chinese are really interested in Finnish education in many ways. For the professionals, attractive topics include the Finnish curriculum, school management, phenomenon-based learning, and STEAM-subjects, and also social and teamwork skills, pupil-centred learning,

and other topics supporting early independence skills, which continue to amaze Chinese education professionals.

Concerning adolescents, Finland attracts groups of all ages, starting from primary school all the way to high school, and up to university level. School camps, study tours and even sister school visits often combine educational content with leisure travel. However, there are two very different types of pupil groups: on the one hand, those consisting of pupils from a single school, with teachers influencing the decisions, and, on the other, those arranged by private camp organisations that market their trips to families in their network. The school groups are more price-sensitive, while the private organisations have very high service and quality expectations, which can be difficult to fulfil unless you have Chinese staff.

Regardless of the type, when working with under-aged children, the single most important issue to check is if the Chinese customer organisation has an official au-



Photo: Janne Kommonen

thorisation to take children abroad – this is something that not even all Chinese know is obligatory.

The interest towards immersive learning in a Finnish school together with local pupils has increased rapidly. Before the pandemic, more and more pupil groups wanted programmes with several days in a school. Additionally, since the Finnish school day is short, these groups also need educational programme provided after school hours. In contrast, some Chinese camp organisations would prefer that their groups would stay in the camp centre for all the learning activities, which sets high demands on creating full-day learning programmes at the camps.

The different customer segments may also require different payment methods. Not all Chinese organisations are authorised to make international payments,

yet they might try to get around this fact and order services directly from abroad. Consequently, they might propose making cash payments even for very substantial sums (e.g. 35,000 euros), or making payments to personal bank accounts (!), leaving the receiver to answer the Finnish bank's inquiries regarding possible money laundry or tax avoidance. Furthermore, even authorised international payments are controlled by monthly foreign currency quotas, and the payment terms set at a national or city level may change. Therefore, it can be beneficial to test the payment channels in practice early on in the process, for example by charging a substantial booking fee. For risk management, practices such as drawing up written agreements detailing the responsibilities of the different parties, including Finnish partners, and demanding full pre-payments from the customers have become essential.

7.1.2. Partnering for product development

"It is important to work together with the Chinese partners, since they know the needs of their end customers, and can help match your offering with those needs," says **Lisa Li** from Visit Finland Shanghai office. "Also, bonding closer with key DMCs in Finland will help in developing new and diversified product packages to find a suitable niche."

Brudy Zhao, founder of BEAP Education based in Helsinki, has been organising study tours to Finland since 2014: "Due to the pandemic, China is now encouraging national travel between Chinese provinces, also to boost the local economy. Regarding education, online development is the hot topic now," he says.

"It concerns platforms for online education, on the one hand, and educational content, on the other," Mr. Zhao says. "So far, the tools have been quite simple, such as live screen meetings and videos, but now there is a huge need for further development."

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, interest in importing Finnish education has increased:

"Chinese partners are considering importing Finnish education to China now, at this critical moment," says Lisa Li: "Introducing Finnish camp or education concepts inside China, while travel is not possible, might also help to restore travel when it is once again possible. The need for educational travel remains."

Meanwhile, it is important to protect the ownership of the service content, when education is exported to China.

"The need for educational travel is still there," confirms Mr. Zhao: "But, with the situation of the pandemic, it is more realistic to plan for summer 2021, at the earliest. Of course, we all hope that a vaccination will be available as soon as possible, but until then, parents will be too worried to consider travel for their kids."

"Fortunately, Finland has a good reputation of applying sensible rules, and of people following them," Mr. Zhao says.

7.2. Japan market update



In Japan, educational travel is also very big business with parents investing a major share of their total income in their child's education over many years. The Japanese education market has also started to acknowledge Finnish education. So far, the visitors have been educational experts, but the first attempts to also attract pupils were already showing some promise in the Oulu area.

"Entrepreneurship education is one specific area of interest to our Japanese expert guests," says Eija Ruohomäki, educational coordinator at the City of Oulu. "Another significant topic is early childhood education and care."

"Concerning younger pupils, functional language teaching seems to be interesting to the Japanese market," Ruohomäki continues.

"Traditionally, Japanese teachers and parents prefer home stay programmes with local families," says **Koichi Numata** from

Business Finland Tokyo office. "However, we may see some changes in attitude regarding concerns over hygiene and health due to the Corona virus pandemic. The government has been warning the public to avoid what is called "3C situations" which are closed spaces, crowded places and close contact, to minimise the chances of becoming infected. COVID-19 will have a very significant impact on travel behaviour in the new normal environment. Clear information about hygiene practices and guidelines would be useful, to show that preventive measures are being taken to ensure a healthy school experience during the stay",

"After the pandemic, Finland should have an advantage due to its fundamental strength of being a top-of-mind safe and clean destination among Japanese teachers and parents," estimates Numata: "2019 celebrated the 100th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries. There has been a growing interest among Japanese consumers in



Japanese group visiting Sampola in Oulu.

the Finnish lifestyle and cultural values, because of its simplicity and connection with nature. Consumer media are covering stories to discover the secrets behind "**the happiest country in the world**" from gender equality to the Finnish way of enjoying design furniture and interior decorations even during the time of quarantine. Finnish and Japanese people share similar values and mentality."

The typical school programmes and planning start well in advance. Sometimes, it takes 2 to 3 years of preparation, especially when changing the destination from another country. It is highly recommended to maintain proactive sales and promotions, Numata concludes.

7.3. South Korea market update



“Korea is at the top of the World’s Best Education Systems charts together with Finland,” points out **Gloria Choi**, Business Finland representative in Seoul, South Korea.

“Focusing on PISA results alone is therefore not sufficient, we need to find further competitive perspectives,” Choi stresses. “We should emphasise some figures or statistics concerning the best educational environment in diversity,” Choi suggests.

In other words, the educational travel products should focus on the differences between the Finnish and Korean systems, and the marketing materials should be both more visually appealing and more informative.

When it comes to marketing, Choi offers concrete ideas for using short video clips and photos shot during learning situations and leisure activities, and labelled with explanatory descriptions. For example: “Asian and local pupils practising social skills together at a camp in Finland”, “Entrepreneur education visiting a fast-growing education start-up”, “Lesson concerning the activity of the sun after the

previous night’s experience of hunting for the Northern Lights”.

Importantly, the short video clips (less than 10 min) should show what pupils would experience during the edu-tour programmes in Finland, to attract more attention and interest:

“However, the core or pedagogical main points should only be revealed during the actual visits,” Choi says.

Lastly, Choi agrees that Finns are generally too shy to communicate prices:

“Suppliers should provide sample itineraries with prices and group size to communicate with buyers,” Choi suggests. “If you don’t want to be too open or provide too many details, or give too wide a price range, you can simply include enticing information and an estimate of the price level, such as ‘starting from 50 euros per session’.”

Regarding the pandemic, Choi estimates that demand will only pick up once the pandemic is believed to be completely over.



Photo: Business Finland

7.4.

India market update

The high ranking of Finland in the PISA tests sparked interest among educational experts already several years ago. Recently, the first pupil groups have also found their way here to explore Finnish education combined with sightseeing.

“For the pupil groups, we focus on the premium private schools,” says Anshul Jain from Nordic Consult Group: “About one in four Indian outbound tourists are from Delhi or Mumbai, so these are natural geographical areas for us to concentrate on.”

For the Indian pupils, Finland is not close to the top of their travel bucket list, so developing attractive travel packages takes time and effort.

“We have had groups in the Helsinki metropolitan area and in Finnish Lakeland, combining leisure and education,” says Jain: “In India we have a saying, that we want the cheapest and best. The parents of children aged 12-17 prefer us to select comfortable hotel accommodation to come back to after studying in a Finnish school or spending a day at a camp,” Jain from Nordic Consult Group says. “Sightseeing and shopping are important parts of the tour, too.”

For the educational content, interaction with the local pupils is more important than the learning theme:

“Cultural interaction is the main motivation, so participating in an English class to discuss with the local pupils is a practicable solution,” he says. “For nature activities, training in survival skills in a forest resort works well.”

These children are well-travelled, and come from a society which is very competitive, with the kids competing against each other since early education.

The contrasting Finnish education system has been attracting progressive education developers in India already for some time.

“We were lucky to start cooperation with Tampere University, the University of Eastern Finland, and Turku University in a research project in creative learning in 2007, and officially set up CCE Finland in 2013,” recalls Heramb Kulkarni, Strategy & Operations of CCE (Council of Creative Education) Finland. “We have organised professional educational visits to Finland since 2013, and developed online learning programmes to help our customers

continue developing their pedagogical skills after returning back home.”

Mr. Kulkarni identifies some choices made within Finnish education development that are more significant from an Indian perspective: “First is the principle of equity, which is contrary to the Indian belief system,” Mr. Kulkarni explains: “It is difficult for Indian people to believe that equal opportunity for high quality education for all can lead to such a positive development of society.”

Secondly, keeping up the high education standard required for teachers, even in such situations where more teachers would be needed very quickly, further contrasts with Indian thinking: “Having more teachers, even if they are not highly qualified, is believed to support the development of India. In contrast, from experience in Finland, we know that consistently developing teacher training to achieve highly qualified teachers is a way to make a change for the pupils, as well,” Mr. Kulkarni says. “Finland upgraded the teacher qualifications with a Masters in Education becoming the required level even for the primary grades already in the 1980s. Recently, the National Education Policy 2020 #NEP2020 again puts emphasis on the teachers’ education, which could be an important learning point for policymakers.”

Thirdly, creative pedagogy truly makes a difference to learning results: “Many Indian parents still believe that the more hours put into teaching, the more the children will learn,” Mr. Kulkarni reveals: “During the school lockdown, the par-

ents demanded that the duration of online classroom teaching should be as many hours as the physical classroom teaching was before, not seeing that this is not the most productive way.”

Consequently, CCE Finland has put all its effort into developing better and more creative online learning experiences. Working together with schools and education officials in Delhi, Maharashtra and the young, progressive state of Chhattisgarh, or anywhere, where there is ambition to develop pedagogical leadership, CCE Finland is helping the schools and teachers. Creating better online learning lessons is based on increasing their understanding of developmental psychology and operating an online classroom.

“Our online teacher training programme and technology platform have won loyal customers and keep gaining new interest,” Mr. Kulkarni says: “In April 2020, together with the UNESCO Chairs of the University of Jyväskylä, we hosted a Global Online Conference for Creative and innovative challenges in education worldwide amidst the COVID-19 Crisis. This conference attracted 12,220 unique visitors from 64 countries, across five continents, exceeding all our expectations,” Mr. Kulkarni continues: “Combining proven technology with the latest creative learning content will be the best way forward for the time being.”

7.5. The United Arab Emirates market update

The educational travel market in the UAE is extremely diverse and highly fragmented both by the level of income and by the national and cultural origin of the pupils. Finnish education attracts potential interest, but is not yet very widely known.

“The UAE is the largest market for private schools in the world, with over 180 nationalities across 70 curriculums,” explains **Katia Al-Kaisi** from Education House Finland: “Consequently, there are huge differences between the schools, when it comes to progressive vs. traditional thinking, applied teaching methods, school fees, and inspection rating among others. This makes room for a range of providers and prices, too.”

Before the pandemic, there were already some promising initiatives. But for this new market to open up, the sellers need to be actively in contact with the customers to

build relationships and answer their questions directly.

“Experiential learning and curriculum enrichment form a significant part of the offering—for example a Week Without Walls. Arts and sports also play a big role, although STEAM and “more serious” subjects are a growing trend,” Ms. Al-Kaisi explains. “Lapland, Finland is starting to show in some offerings, too.”

The customer interest is scattered among various segments: teachers and other educational professionals, as well as pupils of all ages, so there is no clear single focus from which to start. A more strategic perspective could be one option.

“There is a clear divide in the quality of private and public schools, the latter being exclusive to Emirati citizens,” Ms. Al-Kaisi explains: “Public schools lag behind,



Photo: Harri Tarvainen/Visit Finland

so 60 % of Emiratis prefer to pay and put their children into private schools. However, the government has set ambitious quality improvement targets for public schools to be implemented already by 2021.”

This opens up further opportunities for Finnish education exports and expert visits.

Earlier, domestic and international school trips were very common for private school

pupils. Unfortunately, it is more difficult to estimate a speedy recovery for these pupil groups.

“After the pandemic, parents and schools will be looking for safe and clean destinations to send their pupils to, but, educational travel will change,” says **Nour Aridi**, Visit Finland UAE representative based in Dubai. “The bulk of the demand will first change towards online and virtual visits,” Ms. Aridi estimates.

7.6. Russia market update

The travel restrictions due to the pandemic will likely steer travellers towards safe, nearby destinations, which may mean that Finland will attract Russian visitors as soon as the situation allows.

The educational travel market in Russia can be divided into several subgroups: children's camps, children's tours, student travel and professional tours. "For children's groups, there are well-established connections between Russian and Finnish operators for camps and study tours, with little need for changes," says **Aleksandra Shakhnovich**, Visit Finland Sales Promotion Specialist for the Russian market. "In the St. Petersburg region, there is a long tradition of organising theme camps in Finland, for example for language learning, sports (especially ice hockey), arts, or mathematics. A new opportunity might be international language camps with guaranteed departures."

Typically, the Russian groups are rather self-sufficient and come with their own teachers, coaches and group leaders, with limited needs for additional programme. For study tours, the initiator is most often a school, but some societies and clubs as well as tour operators can also be the main trip organisers.

"For the study tours, the main educational content can be visiting a Finnish sister school, or international events such as science and sports competitions. For example, SciFest in Joensuu receives student participants from the Petrozavodsk area on an annual basis," Ms. Shakhnovich says. Sometimes Estonia or Sweden is combined with a trip to Finland.

Student travel, in turn, is most likely the biggest educational travel segment from Russia to Finland. Students of all ages are interested in studying in Finland and getting a Finnish education diploma: ranging from short summer courses to degree studies at universities, vocational schools and even high schools. However, this target group is usually rather self-sufficient, only looking for advice on study programmes, admission and visas, housing and other practical arrangements.

"For educational experts, Finland is, in many respects, considered a model country, and hopefully this will again translate into more visits, too," says **Virve Obolgogiani**, who has arranged educational visits from Russia to Finland already since 2005.

Ms. Obolgogiani is Executive Director of ECSEF, the Educational Cluster of South-East



Photo: Eilina Manninen/Keksi/Team Finland

Finland, and founder of ComDe Oy, which specialises in international educational services and consulting. Cluster connects organisations interested in international business relations in the field of education. The main focus of ECSEF is the export of knowledge and technology, and the members include vocational and adult education institutions.

"Due to the European political climate, the main trend in Russia over the past few years has been to learn from the leading national education institutions inside Russia, which do have world-class quality," Ms. Obolgogiani says. "Educational visits to Finland were just about to re-start again, right before the pandemic hit. Concerning the Finnish curriculum, environmental education and sustainability seemed to attract significant interest across Russia, in fact."

Unfortunately, the increasingly strained economic situation is bound to have an influence on educational expert travel, too.

"The budgets will be more limited, so concerning educational experts, it is likely that

they will spend less time and less money in the destination," says Ms. Shakhnovich. "Also, since the customers in St. Petersburg, in particular, know Finland rather well, they will try to minimise the role of the middlemen in the sales channel," Ms. Shakhnovich explains. "Accordingly, without Russian-speaking staff and an understanding of how the market works, the probability of success with them is slim."

"Hopefully in the long term, there will be more cooperation between Finnish and Russian schools, as we are neighbouring countries, after all," ponders Ms. Obolgogiani: "Such natural interactions at a young age would lessen prejudice and increase understanding between ordinary people outside international politics. Nowadays, Russian language skills are no longer an absolute necessity for children to be able to communicate with each other, since the English skills of Russian youth are very good, too," she concludes.

7.7. Summary of key market updates

In the tables below, you can find an overview of the topics of interest and the learning subjects from the perspective of each of the key markets, as estimated by the interviewed experts.

TOPIC OF INTEREST	CHN	JPN	KOR	IND	RUS	UAE
Cooperation between schools and families	•	•	•		•	•
Curriculum		•	•		•	•
Early childhood education				•	•	
Educational management		•	•		•	
Evaluation systems	•		•	•	•	•
Inclusion					•	
Learning results			•		•	
Learning support	•	•			•	
Pedagogical approaches			•		•	•
Phenomenon-based learning	•		•	•	•	
PISA	•	•	*		•	
The expertise and autonomous status of Finnish teachers			•	•	•	
The Finnish educational system in general	•	•	•	•	•	

* PISA is no longer a sufficient argument; we need some statistics relating to “the best edu-environment for diversity” or a similar measure.

LEARNING SUBJECT	CHN	JPN	KOR	IND	RUS	UAE
Arctic nature		•	•	•		
Crafts (textile, woodwork etc)	•	•			•	
Entrepreneurship education		•	•	•	•	•
Environmental education	•	•	•	•	•	
Geography	•	•		•	•	
Language education		•	•		•	
Media education			•			
Physical education/sports orientation	•	•		•		
Programming	•	•			•	•
Robotics	•		•	•	•	•
STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics)	•		•	•	•	•
Sustainability development		•	•	•	•	
Team working skills	•		•		•	
Visual arts	•		•			•



Photo: Markus Sommers/Visit Finland

7.8.

Other markets

In addition to the key markets discussed above, educational travel can attract customers from several other countries. Here you can find some further insights.

“In **France**, the Finnish school system is quite well known,” says **Sanna Tuononen**, Sales and Marketing Manager France at Visit Finland: “Official educational delegations including participants from the government have visited Finland, and the French media have covered the topic extensively. Other Finnish strengths, such as our nature, convenience of travel, and safety are also significant selling points.”

Tour operators specialising in educational travel are increasingly interested in Finland as a destination for children’s groups, both for private and public school pupils. The schools have two-week holiday periods in the autumn, at Christmas, during the spring break and around Easter, and these could provide new opportunities in addition to summertime study tours.

The size of the groups varies between 15-30 pupils. Affordable and suitable accommodation is the starting point for the route planning. Possibly, school visits and activities suitable for children of different ages are then added to the itinerary. The high price of the connecting flights in

Finland limit the possibilities to extend the tour beyond Southern Finland and Finnish Lakeland, but the customers are very interested in Lapland, too.

The UK market for educational travel consists of children’s groups, which need an educational travel agent officially licenced to take abroad groups of minors, and groups of teachers and other education professionals.

“The groups for children starting from the age of ten focus more on adventure than school visits,” says **Caroline Stanton**, Sales & Marketing Manager UK & Ireland for Visit Finland: “However, field trips with a focus on geography, forestry, or recycling, can be a significant part of the programme. For the educational professionals, the Finnish education system at large is interesting.”

Also **Latin American** countries have shown interest in Finnish education. “Typically, the expert guests have been owners or principals from private schools, engaging in active discussions during the visits,” says **Riku Korosuo** from Visit EDUFinn. “These guests also enjoy some time for self-discovery during their trip, the itinerary should not be as full, for example, as for the Chinese.”



Photo: Harri Tavainen/Visit Finland

“For the **USA**, the biggest potential for Finland is among college and university students,” says **Heli Mende**, Director, Head of Visit Finland North America. “This target group would be best reached through universities, but it takes a long time and resources to build up such networks. Technical visits for professionals is another opportunity.”

“Already, we have seen individual American and Australian teachers, who have travelled on a grant for personal development,” Mr. Korosuo says.

As a larger trend, educational visitors from most Asian countries have shown an interest in benchmarking both early childhood education and basic education, according to the evidence from several Finnish cities.

As long as the COVID-19 pandemic is not completely resolved with vaccinations, the travel restrictions between different countries will, of course, significantly influence the source of the guests. “Finland offers all of the things that have come to the forefront with COVID-19: natural wildernesses, ample space where social distancing happens naturally, safety, sustainability, and stability of the society” says Caroline Stanton. It can be expected that the travel regulations will first be eased from those countries, which have managed the pandemic the best, with EU countries being on top of the list. This can even provide some new opportunities for Finland as a destination for educational travel, since EU citizens may limit their travel to areas outside the EU for a longer period of time.

8. Visit Finland criteria for internationalization and recommendations for educational travel

Visit Finland has set criteria for all companies and services targeted at international travellers. Below you can examine a list of these criteria, and recommendations on how to implement them in your educational travel products.

Moreover, we provide you with a detailed list of safety issues to help you prepare

when providing school camp or study tour services for children and adolescents travelling without their parents, in particular.

And last but by no means least, we offer you perspectives on how to bring your services up to date considering one of the cornerstones of Finnish education in the 2020s: sustainability.



8.1.

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?

<p>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</p>	<p>1. QUALITY Collecting feedback from both the customers and the participating schools is necessary in order to build long-term partnerships. Also, educate yourself about the development and expertise of different partners in Finland.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>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 own language.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>3. SUSTAINABILITY Parity, transparency among partners, high business ethics, 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 comprise the essence of the educational content for the visit.</p>

<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>5. CAPACITY AND NETWORKS Your own capacity or the capacity offered through the cooperation network ensures a comprehensive service for independent travellers and/or tour groups. You are networked with other service providers in the region.</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>6. ACCESSIBILITY Your service location has good transport connections, or you can arrange transport from the nearest bus or train station or airport.</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>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 can be easily found and purchased through tour operators or other sales organizations, your website or other digital booking channels.</p>	<p>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 than those for pupil groups.</p>
<p>8. AUTHENTICITY AND APPEAL In product development and marketing, you make use of authentic Finnish experiences and ingredients based on the pull factors, traditions, culture and lifestyle of your region.</p>	<p>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).</p>

8.2

Safety recommendations for children's groups

SAFETY HAZARD:

HOW TO MANAGE:

UNCERTIFIED CUSTOMER

Check that your customer in the source country has the necessary **licence** for taking children abroad.

UNSAFE ADULTS

Collect a **criminal records extract for working with children** from each adult overseeing the children during the trip. A Finnish employer can also ask its long-term employees (working for you for more than 3 months) based in Finland to provide this extract, which the employee can order from the Finnish judicial administration's (Oikeushallinto) e-service.

SERIOUS INJURIES AND SMALLER ACCIDENTS

(Wounds, tick bites, allergies, mosquito bites, snake bites etc.)

Apply a simple rule for the process in serious injuries: **1 - Call 112, 2 - perform CPR and secure the patient(s), 3 - inform the relevant parties (company management, customer management, parents).**

Prepare well beforehand, and check which are the nearest health centres and 24/7 doctor services open during the stay of the guests.

Make sure there is **at least one member** of staff **qualified in first-aid** present 24/7 with the children, carrying a first-aid package.

Write clear agreements for who is responsible (and whose insurance) for each and every part of the travel package, for example accidents at the sports institute, at school, in traffic, at the accommodation, or while shopping.

ICE ACTIVITIES

Hitting head on the ice, breaking bones while skating



Photo: Laura Sarikka

Helmets are a must in all ice activities.

At sports institutes, for example, assign responsibility to a named person to ensure that the guests and hosts **always** put on **helmets**, and that the **skates** are properly tied – foreign guests might never have put them on before.



Photo: Yan Dong

The guests need help with putting on the skates.

WATER ACTIVITIES

Canoe flipping



Photo: Janne Kommonen

Leave the phones on the beach, put life vests on.

Assign responsibility to a named person to ensure that the guests and hosts **always** put on **life jackets**.

Leave all valuables such as mobile phones on the shore or provide waterproof packs for them.

SAUNA

Falling onto a hot sauna stove



Photo: Vuokatti

Never use a sauna where the **stove** is not separated by a **protective fence**.

Local hosts should guide the sauna experience.

OVERNIGHT TRAIN

Accidentally pulling the emergency break handle, locking oneself out of the cabin at night

Show a picture of the **emergency break handle** before boarding the train and explain what it is. Share cabin **keys** to adults overseeing the group.

COVID-19

Check the most recent instructions from the authorities and make sure to follow these and **communicate** them to both the hosts and the guests. Provide customers with clear and specific information about **hygiene practices and guidelines** to show that preventive measures are being taken to ensure a healthy school environment.

INSUFFICIENT COMMUNICATION

The biggest safety hazard comes from not having communicated beforehand

Collect the details of the children beforehand: copies of the **travel permits** (permission to travel without parents), passports, information on **allergies**, illnesses, and phobias, travel **insurance** information, and **emergency contact** information. Remember to communicate **concrete actions** with regards to ensuring safety, good hygiene and sufficient personal space for every customer, and any current guidelines to your customers in writing, and detailing insurance responsibilities during each part of the trip.



Photo: Visit Finland

8.3. Ingredients of sustainable educational travel

SUSTAINABILITY ISSUE:

Training and Certification



Sustainability as a key educational theme



HOW TO SOLVE:

Attend the **training available** via **Visit Finland Academy** organised together with **Visit-organisations** in Finland, to gain a broader understanding of sustainability as a topic.

Consider participating in the **Sustainable Travel Finland** programme created by Visit Finland. The programme is designed for Finnish tourism companies and destinations to develop more sustainable practices. The participants that have undergone the STF programme and fulfilled the criteria, get the Sustainable Travel Finland label.

Finland is one of the **pioneers** of sustainability development on a global scale, and it is a **key content in the national curriculum**. You can include it as a key educational theme for the guests, as well, with some partners listed in Chapter 6 as well as with local schools.

Agenda 2030 as a key educational theme

In 2015, the member countries of the UN 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 the visit.

Leading by example

Without sustainable business practices your company will not be a credible partner for educational travel. Make a point of operating according to the principle of parity, being transparent with your partners, and complying with high business ethics.

Also request information on both the Finnish and the foreign partners’ status on sustainability development – bringing up the issue will encourage them in further development.



Narrating sustainability

You can make the sustainability principles visible and tangible for your guests by talking about them throughout the duration of their visit: **Pinpoint examples** during different parts of the visit to show how **sustainability is an everyday topic** made up of small, individual tasks of recycling, saving water and energy, bringing back your own garbage from the forest, respecting the learning of the local school community, and so forth.

Reasonable group sizes

Consider the local communities and culture when deciding the suitable group size or the places to visit, if you host a large group. As Finns are less used to operating very large groups, your guests might not enjoy optimal experiences.

Consider local schools and communities

Support the schools when designing the programme, so that **the visit is beneficial for the learning of the local students**, and not only the guests. The **added value from the local educational content should benefit also the local schools, businesses and community**, since it is their taxes that helped pay for it.



Climate change

Finland invests in development in **clean energy solutions and prevention of climate change**, which is one of the focus areas of the City of Helsinki, as well. 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 invented.



Transportation

Select a means of transportation that best complies with sustainability and safety criteria: **Public** transportation, or private transportation provided by a **lawfully operating local company** that is acting on sustainability issues.

Food



Select **local foods and suppliers** instead of foods imported from far away. Supporting local restaurants benefits the local community. Food is an important part of the Finnish culture and way of life, which can make trying out local foods 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!



Visit Finland

