

A group of hikers, including a dog, are crossing a wooden bridge over a river in a forest. The hikers are wearing colorful outdoor gear and backpacks. The bridge is made of wood and has a simple railing. The river is calm, and the surrounding forest is lush with green trees. The scene is reflected in the water below.

Ensuring sustainability in Finnish national parks with the LAC method

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METSÄHALLITUS

Parks & Wildlife Finland

- Manages all state-owned protected areas, i.e. 18% of Finland's surface area:
 - **40** national parks
 - **19** strict nature reserves
 - **5** national hiking areas
 - **12** wilderness areas in Lapland
 - almost **3,000** other protected areas
 - and cultural heritage sites:
 - ca. 350 protected buildings,
 - ca. 2,000 ancient sites.
- Most of the established protected areas, including all national parks, belong to Natura 2000 network



A person wearing a blue jacket and dark pants stands on a rocky outcrop, holding a camera to take a photograph of a vast, rolling forest landscape. The forest is covered in trees with vibrant autumn foliage in shades of yellow, orange, and green, interspersed with dark evergreens. The background shows a distant horizon under a sky with soft, white clouds. The person is positioned on the right side of the frame, looking out over the valley.

**We manage and protect
Finland's most valuable natural treasures
in a responsible manner**

- **For the benefit of people and nature**

Ways of ensuring sustainability in protected areas

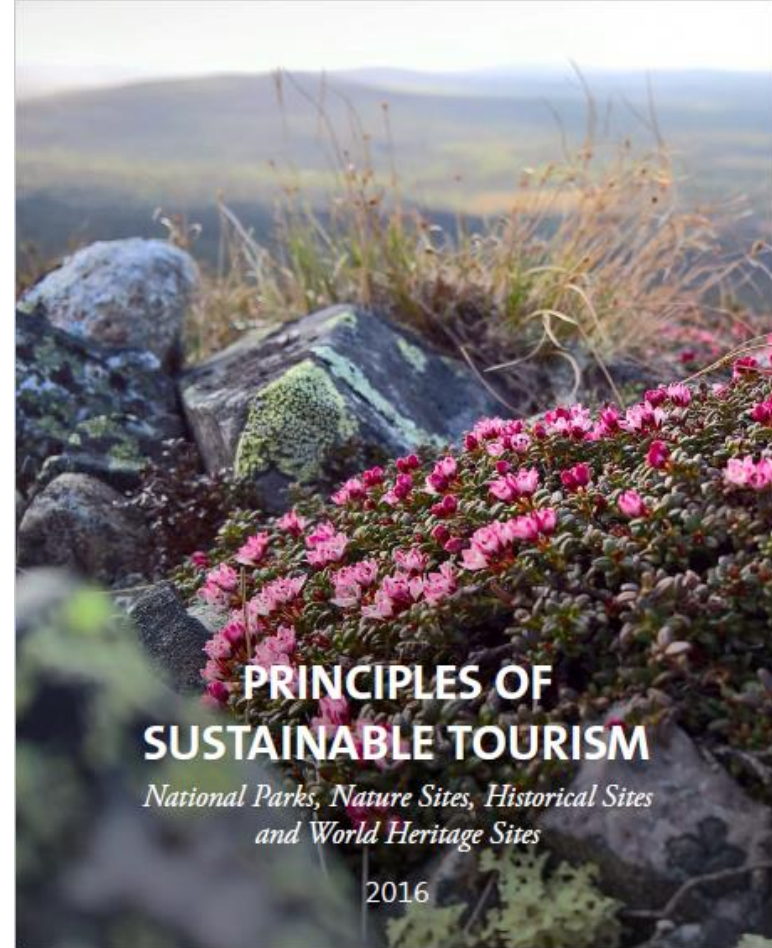
- Principles of sustainable tourism
- Limits of acceptable change (LAC) -process
- Sustainable tourism development strategies
- Cooperation agreements with enterprises operating in or adjacent to the national parks
- EUROPARC Charter for Sustainable Tourism (Syöte, Pallas-Ylläs)



Principles of sustainable tourism

National Parks, Nature Sites, Historical Sites and World Heritage Sites

- are important tourist attractions
- Can be utilized for tourism purposes, as long as this is coordinated with the objectives of protection
- Metsähallitus Parks & Wildlife Finland and the UNESCO World Heritage sites in Finland share the principles of sustainable tourism, which we take into account throughout our own operations and in our cooperation with tourism entrepreneurs.
- We promote sustainable tourism. In order to achieve this goal, we cooperate to...



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

- Natural and cultural values are important factors in terms of attracting tourists.
- We inform visitors of the values of the site and their protection and encourage visitors to act responsibly.
- We develop services and direct the use of the sites, taking into account demand and the site characteristics.
- We mainly use existing routes and service structures.
- In construction, we also take account of local natural and cultural values.
- We ensure that tourism does not compromise natural or cultural values and we prevent any harmful impacts proactively.



2. Minimise the load on the environment

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



3. Strengthen local aspects

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



4. Promote use of the sites to increase health and well-being

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



5. Promote growth and job creation in the local economy

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



6. Communicate together the values and services of the site

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



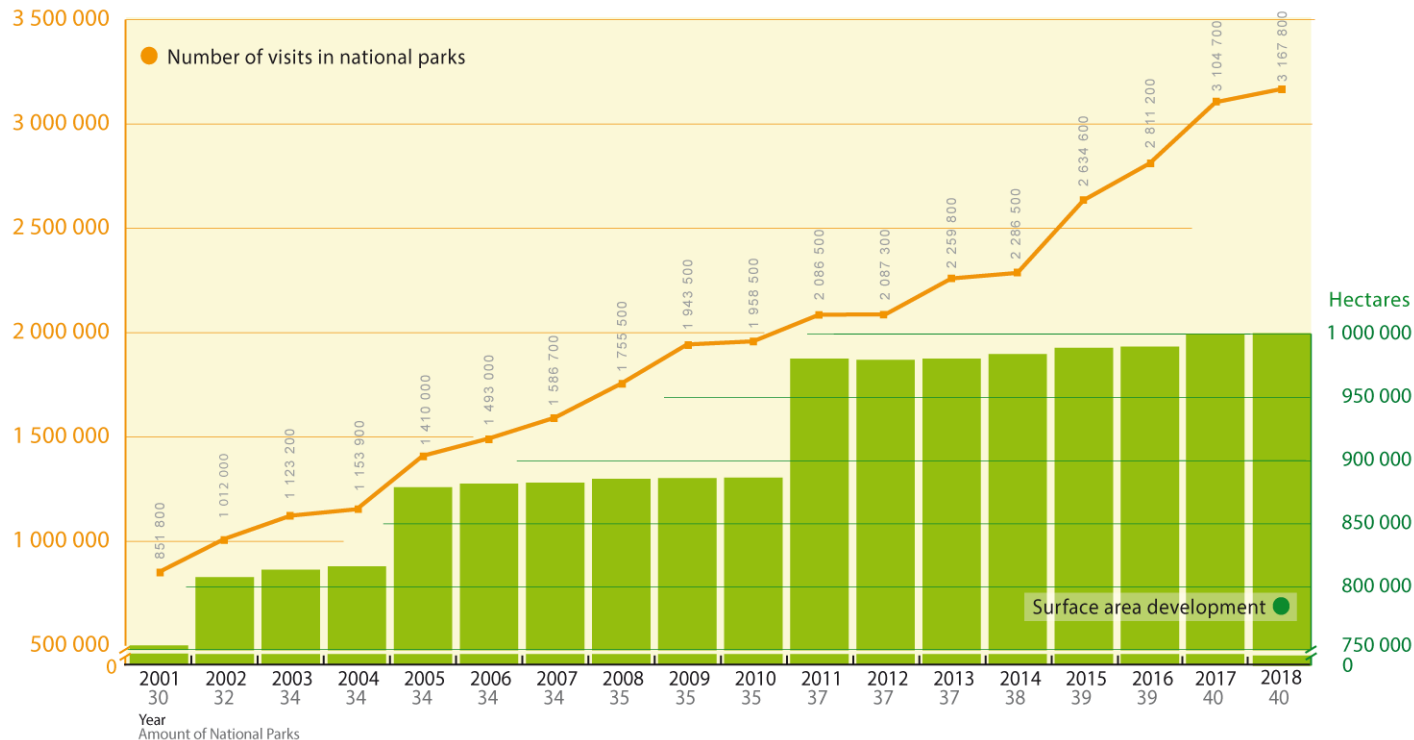
Cooperation agreements between enterprises and Metsähallitus

- Over 650 tourism business partners in Finland's protected area
- Two types of cooperation agreements:
 - Including use of services in the area (there is a fee for the use)
 - Without use of services in the area (free of charge)
- The aim of Metsähallitus is that all the entrepreneurship in or adjacent to protected areas is committed to the principles of sustainable tourism
- The enterprises committed to the principles of sustainable tourism obtain:
 - Enterprise's info and link to nationalparks.fi
 - Right to use the logo of the protected area
 - Various reports on nature and customer statistics
 - Regular meetings with Metsähallitus



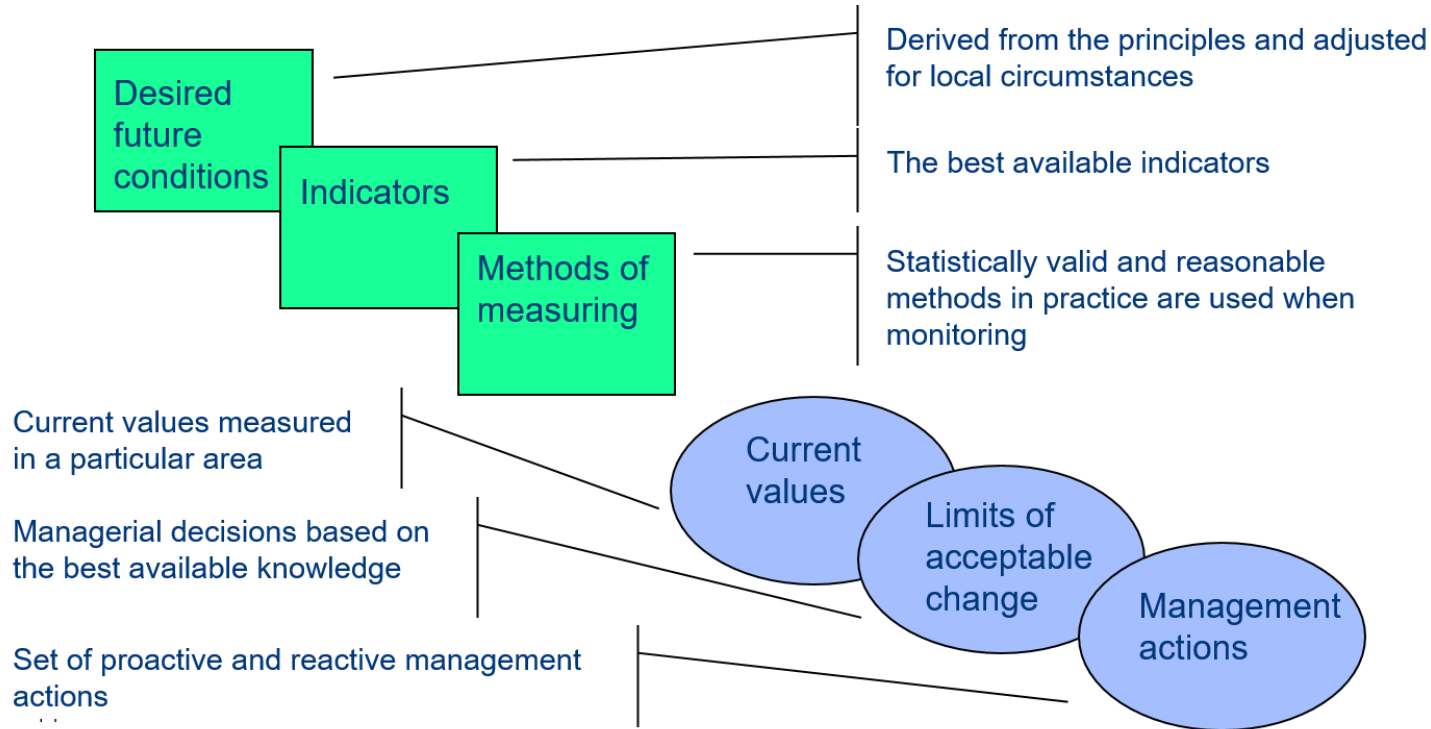
Visitation to National Parks in constant growth

Amount of visitors



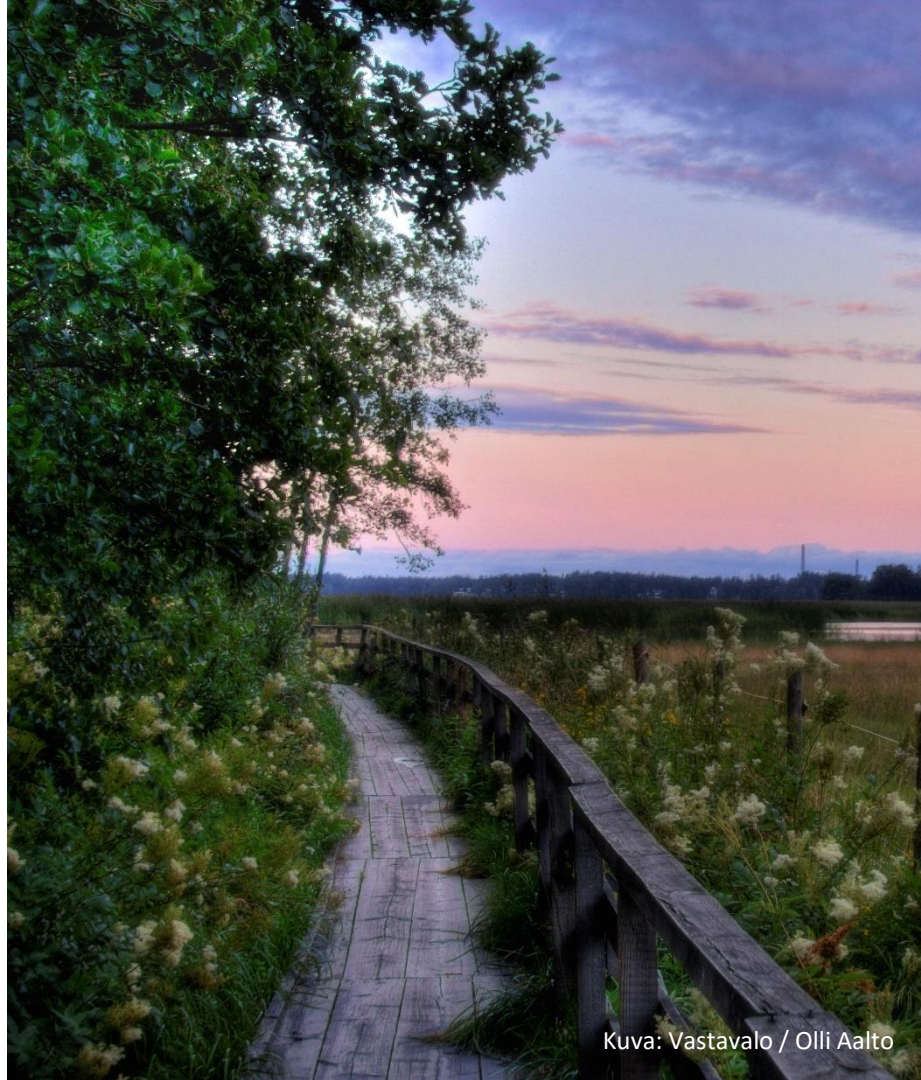
Sustainability (ecological, economical, socio-cultural)

→ General principles of sustainable nature tourism



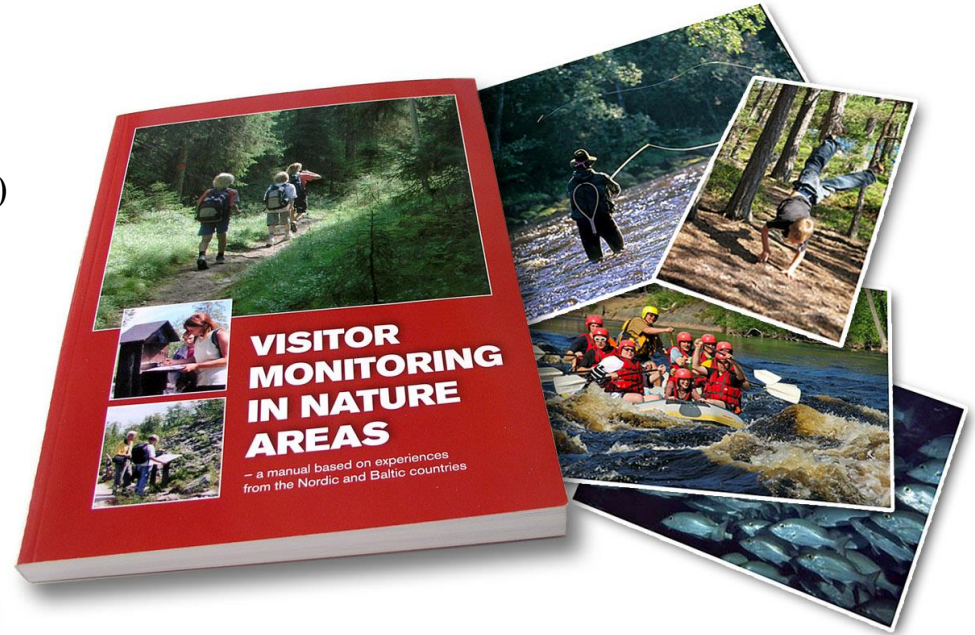
Criteria for good indicators

- Indicators must be **specific** to the measurement target
- Indicators must be **objective** and their variables clearly measurable
- Indicators must be **reliable** and their measurement repeatable to the extent required
- Indicators must be **sensitive** and **reactive** to sustainability related changes
- Measurements must be **reasonably easy** to implement
- Measurements must be **cost-effective**, making use of existing information whenever possible



Sources of LAC indicators

- Visitor monitoring (counting & surveys):
 - Amount of visitation
 - Visitor satisfaction index
 - Health benefits
 - Economic benefits (Visitor spending effects)
- GIS database of services
 - State and quality of service infrastructure
 - Waste management
 - Consumption of firewood
- Species and biotopes
- Entrepreneur feedback
- GIS analysis of visitor flows



Examples of social indicators from Koli National Park

Year 2019



Principle 3: Strengthen local aspects

Indicator	Source	Measurement unit	Current value	Target value 2025	Limits of acceptable change	
					Min	Max
Significance of the area for the locals: amount of local visits	Visitor survey	Number of visits	39 100	52 000	41 700	-

Principle 4: Promote use of the sites to increase health and well-being

Indicator	Source	Measurement unit	Current value	Target value 2025	Limits of acceptable change	
					Min	Max
Share of constructions in bad condition	GIS data base PAVE	%	14	0	-	10
Share of routes in bad condition	GIS data base PAVE	%	16	0	-	10
Number of visits in the park	Visitor counting	Number of visits	190 900	250 000	180 000	300 000
Distance travelled in the park by one's own power	Visitor monitoring	Kilometres	1 016 200	1 250 000	1 000 000	-
Perceived health and well-being impacts, index	Visitor survey	1-5, 5 = best	4,22	4,3	4	-

Principle 4: Promote use of the sites to increase health and well-being

Indicator	Source	Measurement unit	Current value	Target value 2025	Limits of acceptable change	
					Min	Max
Experienced disturbances by visitors, index	Visitor survey	1-5, 5 = best	4,29	4,5	4	-
Experienced disturbance due to excessive amount of visitors	Visitor survey	1-5, 5 = best	4,14	4,5	4	-
Experienced disturbance due to the behaviour of other visitors	Visitor survey	1-5, 5 = best	4,32	4,5	4	-

Principle 5: Promote growth and job creation in the local economy

Indicator	Source	Measurement unit	Current value	Target value 2025	Limits of acceptable change	
					Min	Max
Total local economic impacts of visitor spendings	Visitor monitoring	Million €	19,6	30	20	-
Total local economic impacts of visitor spendings	Visitor monitoring	Jobs, full time equivalent	150	220	150	-
Tourists' length of stay in the park and its surroundings	Visitor monitoring	Visitor days (24 h)	202 200	270 000	200 000	-

Principle 6: Communicate together the values and services of the site

Indicator	Source	Measurement unit	Current value	Target value 2025	Limits of acceptable change	
					Min	Max
Visitor satisfaction, index	Visitor survey	1-5, 5 = best	4,08	4,5	4,1	-
Visitor satisfaction of visitors to Koli nature centre	Continuous feedback	1-5, 5 = best	4,3	4,5	4,2	-
Visitors' estimate of the fulfillment of their expectations during the visit	Visitor survey	1-5, 5 = best	4,45	4,5	4,1	-

Principle 6: Communicate together the values and services of the site

Indicator	Source	Measurement unit	Current value	Target value 2025	Limits of acceptable change	
					Min	Max
Number of visits to Nationalparks.fi -website	Google analytics	Page visits	-	-	-	-
Amount of enterprise cooperation agreements	ASTA	Number of agreements	60	80	60	-
Enterprises' estimate of the fulfillment of the principles of sustainable tourism	Enterprise feedback	1-5, 5 = best	4,06	4,3	4,0	-

The way forward

- New model for cooperation agreements
- New mobile practice for fee collection
- Sustainable Travel Finland -certificate for Finnish national parks
- New model and guidelines for sustainable tourism strategies



An aerial photograph showing a winding river or lake system flowing through a vast, dense forest. The forest is composed of many small, green trees, creating a textured appearance. The water is a deep blue, reflecting the sky and the surrounding greenery. In the background, rolling hills and mountains are visible under a blue sky with scattered white clouds.

Thank you!

metsa.fi/web/en/nature-tourism
metsa.fi/web/en/sustainablenaturetourism

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