



National Parks Finland

Benefits for nature and people



METSÄHALLITUS



Established to mark 100 years of Finnish independence, our 40th national park, Hossa, has many attractions including clear blue lakes, pine-clad esker ridges, and ancient rock paintings that give tantalising insights into the culture of Finland's early settlers thousands of years ago. Many new and upgraded facilities await visitors to the new park. www.nationalparks.fi/hossa

Creating worthwhile impacts

Metsähallitus is a state-owned enterprise responsible for managing about a third of Finland's total area. The business include Metsähallitus Forestry Ltd and Metsähallitus Property Development. The public administrative tasks within Metsähallitus are run by Parks & Wildlife Finland unit, consisting of National Parks Finland unit and Wildlife Service Finland unit. In addition to the management of protected areas, National Parks Finland provides facilities for hiking in these areas and Wildlife Service Finland for hunting and fishing in other state-owned areas.



The Metsähallitus units responsible for the different tasks strive to collaborate coherently to ensure that all the objectives defined for the management of Finland's state-owned lands and waters are effectively harmonised. Our own work at National Parks Finland also has an ever wider importance for society.

National Parks Finland will in future continue to manage Finland's national parks and significant historic sites, provide



Four Nature Days events during 2017, coordinated by Metsähallitus, are among the most extensive celebrations planned for Finland's jubilee year. More than 60 partner organisations have helped us to realise these events across the country. www.luonnonpaivat.fi/en-us

sustainable services for outdoor recreation, and promote nature conservation. At the same time we will increasingly work with the tourism sector on favourable developments, and enhance the role of outdoor recreation in promoting public health.

Our work directly boosts economic development in many rural areas of Finland, by creating local jobs and income. The local economic impacts of visits to national parks increased by 26% between 2015 and 2016, to a total of 179 million euros. Our EU-funded nature conservation projects particularly generate worthwhile work in rural areas.

To further improve our cost-effectiveness we focus on demand from the public when developing our services, and we are increasingly purchasing services from local partners.

Our work managing Finland's natural heritage is very important for the whole country. One of our key goals is to work with other Metsähallitus units to halt the decline in biodiversity in state-owned forests.

Our work is also important with regard to Finns' quality of life. The wellbeing of nature and the recreational use of natural areas are vital issues for us. Our efforts have been rewarded by steady growth in the numbers of visits to national parks, and they have also been reflected in 2017 in the great enthusiasm shown for the Nature Days events organised as part of the celebrations of the centenary of Finland's independence. In Finland nature truly brings everyone together.

**Timo Tanninen, Director,
Parks & Wildlife Finland**

Healthy parks, healthy people

Diverse natural environments provide habitats for many different species. Such settings are also a significant source of social, physical and mental wellbeing for people. For Finland such natural areas and their facilities for visitors also represent a major asset in terms of tourism.

Finland's national parks are becoming ever more popular. In 2016 they attracted a total of more than 2.8 million visitors. By purchasing services locally, these visitors contribute to the local economy.

During the years 2013–2016 we calculated wellbeing indexes for 23 natural

and historic sites under our management, by asking visitors to rate the health and wellbeing impacts of their experiences there. Visitors gave these sites an average rating of 4.25 on a scale of 1–5. Some 82% of visitors felt they had benefited greatly or considerably from their experiences. They were also asked to give a financial value to their visit, and the resulting average figure amounted to about 100 euros.

Collaborating to increase wellbeing benefits from nature

National Parks Finland protects and manages valuable natural and historic sites all around the country. We use public funds to provide free facilities and services for

outdoor recreation. This helps to encourage everyone to get out into natural settings, and create favourable conditions for business activities related to nature tourism. All of our partners are committed to observe the principles of the sustainable use of nature.

We work closely with researchers and other organisations who share our interest in the links between wellbeing and nature, including local authorities. Various studies including some of our own projects have demonstrated that experiencing nature can help people in many ways, for instance by relieving stress, speeding rehabilitation, and helping immigrants to feel at home in a new country.



HEALTH AND ENJOYMENT FROM NATURE

Our nationalparks.fi website contains practical tips for everyone from disabled people or families with small children to experienced trekkers. The site also spotlights the findings of collaborative studies examining the impacts of nature on wellbeing.

- www.nationalparks.fi
- www.nationalparks.fi/en/hikinginfinland/healthandwellbeing

Healthy parks, healthy people – the Health and Wellbeing 2025 Programme

This new programme aims to enhance collaboration linking wellbeing and outdoor recreation, not least by making it easier for everyone to visit local natural areas, as well as more distant natural attractions.

- <https://julkaisut.metsa.fi/julkaisut/show/2112>

Safe and accessible facilities encourage families to discover the scenic attractions of Finland's national parks.

Conservation and public services



Lake Saimaa's unique freshwater seal population is increasing thanks to conservation work. TIMO SEPPÄLÄINEN / METSÄHALLITUS

National Parks Finland manages state-owned protected lands and waters throughout Finland, securing nature conservation and providing sustainable facilities and services for visitors to these areas. We also contribute to the management of privately-owned protected areas in collaboration with their owners and local public authorities.

We work using public funds under the supervision of the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, and Parliament.

We are constantly building up our knowledge of Finland's threatened species and habitats, and our rich cultural heritage. We also compile statistics on visitor numbers, and review visitors' feedback. We target our management measures and services cost-effectively to ensure that

Finland's valuable natural and cultural features are preserved, and that people can enjoy them without harming them.

Wide-ranging services to meet popular demand

Our natural areas and cultural heritage sites have more than six million visitors every year, while our nature centres welcome about a million visitors. Many visitors discover these places with help from our popular websites nationalparks.fi and excursionmap.fi. In our areas we maintain facilities including nature centres, nature trails, picnic sites, campfire sites with freely usable firewood, public jetties, wilderness cabins, ski-trails and snowmobile routes, together with our local partners. We particularly strive to develop sustainable facilities in the most popular areas. We

The newly accessible former military island of Vallisaari, just off Helsinki, attracted 90,000 visitors in summer 2016.





Every year thousands of volunteers make valuable contributions to National Parks Finland's conservation work, by restoring habitats or surveying threatened species, for instance. ANSSI RIIHIAHO / METSÄHALLITUS

have increasingly been outsourcing such work and collaborating with local firms.

Conservation projects bring benefits

We actively use external project funding to support our nature conservation work. EU LIFE funds particularly enable us to realise valuable conservation projects together with our local partners.

Through the Freshabit Project, 30 partners will work under the supervision of National Parks Finland to enhance nature

conservation and nature tourism in eight selected areas with ecologically valuable inland waters. This project will run from 2016 to 2022, using EU funding amounting to 12 million euros.

The Saimaa Seal LIFE Project aims to help Finland's unique population of Saimaa ringed seal. Actions include the creation of artificial snowdrifts during winters with little snow, to provide suitable places for the seals to make their breeding dens.

The Species-rich LIFE Project helped to preserve ecologically diverse herb-rich



Areas of suitable habitat for threatened white-backed woodpeckers have been restored through the EU-funded Species-rich LIFE Project. ILKKA MARKKANEN



Syöte National Park provides beautiful natural settings for popular activities like cross-country skiing and mountain biking. HEIKKI KETOLA / VASTAVALO.FI

woodland and meadowland habitats in 64 Natura sites around Finland. The Light & Fire LIFE Project is restoring sunlit habitats including esker slopes and sand dunes to benefit their typical flora and fauna.

We also use external funding to enhance historic sites around Finland. Two significant former military islands – Vallisaari near Helsinki, and Örö in the Archipelago National Park – were recently transferred to Metsähallitus's administration, and we have purposefully converted these islands into attractive destinations for visitors interested in nature and history. Through an international project we are also developing tourism focusing on castle ruins and old fortresses around the shores of the Baltic Sea.

Ecologically valuable inland waters around Finland are being preserved through the Freshabit Project.



JARI ILMONEN / METSÄHALLITUS

Parks & Wildlife Finland

Parks & Wildlife Finland is a unit of Metsähallitus that consists of National Parks Finland and Wildlife Service Finland. Parks & Wildlife Finland reports annually on the outcomes of its work to the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

National Parks Finland

- manages state-owned nature reserves and historic sites
- provides free facilities for visitors to these areas
- compiles GPS data on conservation issues in protected areas
- participates in international collaboration on nature conservation
- maintains snowmobile routes

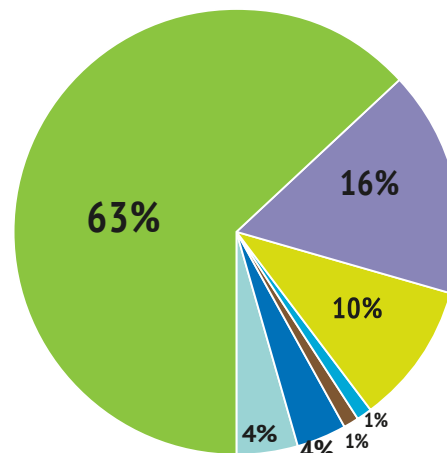
Wildlife Service Finland runs state-owned hunting grounds and fishing waters, also selling fishing and hunting permits and supervising these activities.

Working from the Baltic to the Arctic

Based across the country from our Baltic archipelagos to Arctic Lapland, Parks & Wildlife Finland's staff annually work a total of some 520 person-years. P&WF also employs many local contractors engaged in activities including tourism, hospitality and catering.

Public funding of our administrative work in 2016

Most of the P&WF activities are financed from government funds, though we also earn income from rentals and sales of fishing and hunting permits.



- Ministry of the Environment €39.7M
- Income from rentals & permit sales €10.2M
- Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry €6.4M
- Ministry of Employment and the Economy €0.7M
- Ministry of Justice €0.7M
- EU project funding €2.3M
- Other funding €2.7M

Total funding allocated to our administrative work in 2016: €62.7M

National Parks Finland 2016

National Parks Finland achieved or exceeded all targets set by Parliament for our activities in 2016.

- We restored or managed areas of ecologically valuable habitat totalling 5,738 hectares (including 4,300 ha of traditional farmland habitats and 1,000 ha of peatland habitat).
- We surveyed 8,536 occurrences of threatened species.
- We restored several important historic sites, also developing related services for visitors.
- Our national parks welcomed 176,600 more visitors than in 2015.
- Our web services at Luontoon.fi (incl. the English version Nationalparks.fi) were used almost two million times (an increase of 23%), while our Retkikartta.fi (Excursionmap.fi) site was visited almost 3.7 million times (up 15%).
- Activities were realised through about 100 ongoing conservation, restoration and development projects.

We provide welcome work experience for inmates of open prisons (totalling about 60 person-years).

Volunteers made valuable contributions to our work in 2016, totalling about 24.5 person-years.

Areas managed by National Parks Finland

- 40 national parks (incl. the newest, Hossa, established on 17.6.2017), 19 strict nature reserves, and more than 600 other statutory nature reserves
- 12 wilderness areas in Finnish Lapland, 5 national hiking areas, and more than 3,000 other sites protected under various conservation programmes
- Approx. 350 legally protected buildings and structures and 2,000 ancient sites
- Some 3.6 million hectares of state-owned lands and 0.8 million ha. of state-owned waters.

Visitor numbers in 2016

- National parks: 2,811,200
- National hiking areas: 319,600
- Historic sites: 837,400
- Nature centres: 1,130,900
- Other popular attractions: 647,500

Facilities and services

Customer surveys assessing satisfaction levels regarding nature centres and outdoor facilities show a average rating of 4.3 (on a scale of 1–5).

During 2016 we maintained 6,000 km of trails and other routes, as well as 3,000



◀ Finland has an extensive network of national parks, hiking areas and nature centres.

Our national parks entice people to enjoy Finland's superb natural scenery. This improves their quality of life, and also brings public health benefits.

PENTTI HYTTINEN,
DIRECTOR GENERAL, METSÄHALLITUS

picnic and campfire sites. Planned reductions in the provision of picnic and campfire sites will target sites that are seldom used.

METSÄHALLITUS leads the way in diverse bioeconomy. We are a state-owned enterprise, responsible for the management of one third of Finland's surface area. We use and develop these state-owned land and water areas responsibly, in a way that maximises their benefits to society as a whole.

Organisation

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Board of Directors

Metsähallitus
Director General

Group Operations

PARKS & WILDLIFE FINLAND

**Metsähallitus
Metsähallitus Forestry Ltd**
Management of state-owned multiple-use forests and the sale of timber

**Metsähallitus
Property Development**
Plots for holiday homes and businesses, rock materials and project development

**Metsähallitus
National Parks Finland**
Management of national parks and other protected areas, hiking services, protection of nature and cultural heritage

**Metsähallitus
Wildlife Service Finland**
Production of hunting and fishing services, supervision of game and fisheries

Siemen Forelia Oy

MH-Kivi Oy



Metsähallitus, National Parks Finland

HEALTH FROM NATURE

- When exploring natural settings people feel fitter, more positive and less stressed.
- Just 15–20 minutes in a natural setting is enough to reduce your blood pressure.
- Each year visitors to Finland's national parks walk a total of about 34 million kilometres
- Easy trails, well-placed signs and good online information are provided to encourage people of all ages and capabilities to explore natural areas.

INCOME FROM NATURE

- Every euro of public funds invested in Finland's national parks by the authorities brings approximately ten-fold benefits to local economies.
- Finland's national parks and hiking areas benefit local economies by more than 190 million euros a year.
- Well-managed facilities for outdoor recreation contribute greatly to Finland's positive image as a great destination for tourists interested in outdoor activities and nature.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

- Our child-friendly facilities encourage families and schools to bring kids to our areas to experience and learn about nature. We also provide opportunities for volunteers to work in natural settings.
- Our active management of Finland's ecologically valuable areas contributes to the conservation of global biodiversity.
- The importance of outdoor recreation in promoting public health will continue increasing.

www.metsa.fi/web/en/parksandwildlifeinfinland

– Information about the work of National Parks Finland and Wildlife Service Finland

www.nationalparks.fi – Detailed practical guide to national parks and Metsähallitus' other hiking destinations and their facilities

www.excursionmap.fi – Free national map service for hikers

www.eräluvat.fi – Information about fishing and hunting at the Wildlife Service Finland website

Instagram: [@finnishparks](https://www.instagram.com/finnishparks)
Twitter: [@luontopalvelut](https://twitter.com/luontopalvelut)