



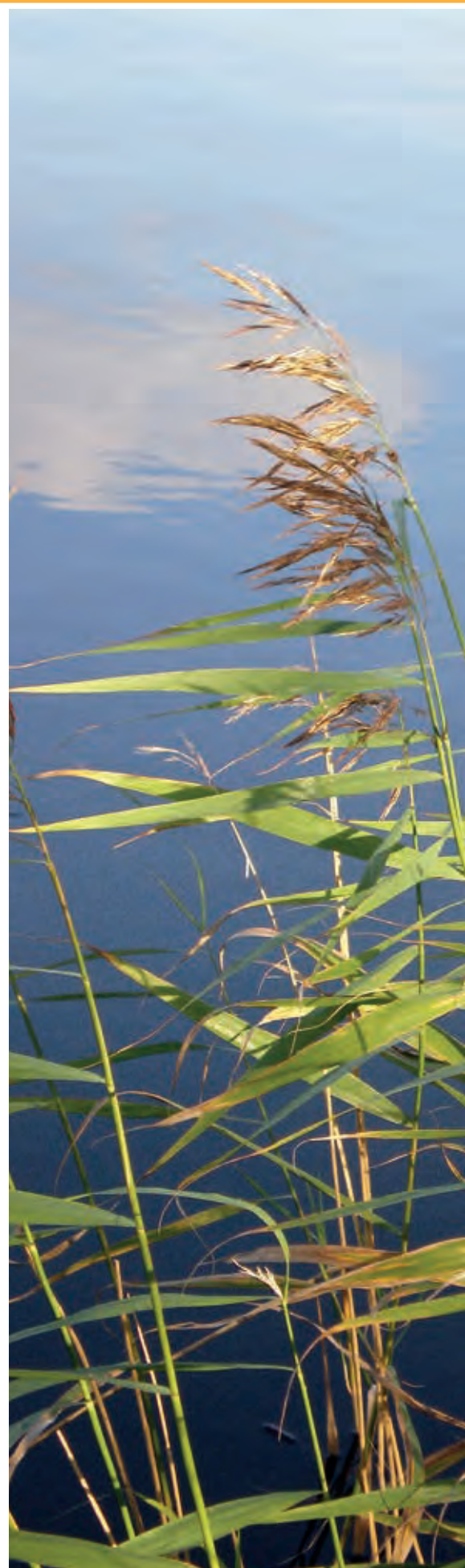
# GO OUTDOORS!

Information about Finnish nature and recreational opportunities in the great outdoors



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# Go outdoors!

This guide is designed to encourage people who visit or move to Finland from abroad to explore Finnish nature, to find recreational activities that appeal to them and to prepare food from natural ingredients such as berries, mushrooms and fish. The publication includes links to websites with more information. You can also read about the experiences of people who have moved to Finland from other countries and their thoughts on Finnish nature and recreational opportunities.

Spending time in the great outdoors has long traditions in Finland. Most Finns like pastimes that involve being outside. Finnish nature offers ample opportunities for exercise, relaxation or just enjoying the scenery. Finnish forests and lakes are also a source of tasty and healthy food, such as berries, mushrooms and fish. Enjoying nature is free, and the four seasons (winter, spring, summer and autumn) each present different recreational opportunities.





# From local woods to national parks

Finland is a country of thousands of lakes and vast expanses of forest, known for its unspoilt nature. Nature is on everyone's doorstep, even in big cities. Finland has a concept known as the freedom to roam, which gives everyone the right to enjoy nature, to pick berries in the forests and wetlands and to fish in the sea, lakes and rivers.

There are green spaces all around us. Parks, beaches, forests and other recreational destinations are never far away in Finland. For more information about where to go, visit the website of your local government. You can also venture

further afield. Stunning destinations can be found in national parks and recreational areas that boast a variety of safe options for enjoying the great outdoors. These areas are managed by Metsähallitus. Metsähallitus' Outdoors.fi website contains a lot of

Go online for more information about Finnish nature:

[www.visitfinland.com](http://www.visitfinland.com)

[www.finland.fi](http://www.finland.fi)

[www.ymparisto.fi/fi-FI/Luonto](http://www.ymparisto.fi/fi-FI/Luonto)

information about different kinds of destinations, some of which are sure to be close to where you live. Many conservation and recreational areas can be accessed by public transport such as buses. ♦



# Saša's journey from the Alps to the hills of Northern Finland

Saša, Slovenia

**"The best thing about Finnish nature is its purity and accessibility – the only thing missing is mountains!"**

Saša moved from Slovenia to Finland around five years ago. Saša grew up in a small village in the Alps. She has fond memories of the amazing views that she could see from the mountains.

– "I love the hills up north. Open space feels good, although it's strange not to have high altitudes and still be able to see far away", Saša says.

Saša's first encounter with Finnish forests was at the Oulanka research station in Kuusamo. She fell in love with Finnish nature there and then, and, although she now lives in Oulu, Oulanka remains Saša's favourite place in Finland.

– "I didn't really have any fears or preconceptions about nature when I first came to Finland. I'm from a

place that has large carnivores and snakes. I wasn't afraid to venture into the woods by myself. I'm not used to wetland, though. I'm scared of sinking in, and walking on boggy ground feels funny", Saša says.

Saša likes sports and her favourite thing to do outdoors is exercise. She also likes nature for its calming and rejuvenating effect. She thinks that other people who have come to Finland from abroad should also explore the great outdoors, whether alone or with a friend.

– "My most unforgettable experience of Finnish nature was a hike from Hetta to Pallas. We could see in all directions, and the wilderness huts were great. I've had a lot of good experiences", Saša says.

She also has some slightly less

pleasant experiences, mostly to do with summer cottages.

– "We were staying at a cottage near Tampere and I woke up to a room full of mosquitoes. I also really dislike littering."

Saša believes that everyone should take advantage of the recreational opportunities that Finnish nature presents. .

– "There are so many different places to go. You don't need to go far. I live in Oulu and there are a lot of places that are easy to get to nearby. Ask a friend to join you if you don't want to go on your own. Finnish nature is relatively easy to get to grips with. There's a lot of information available so that you can plan everything in advance", Saša says. ♦



# Nittaya enjoys tranquillity

## Nittaya, Thailand

“The best thing about nature is the lack of noise.”

Nittaya grew up in Thailand but has lived in Finland for almost seven years. The cold winters took Nittaya by surprise. The thing she enjoys the most in Finland is peacefulness.

– “My favourite thing about Finnish nature is how quiet it is. I also like the fact that you can see animals. Thailand is very different: You have to go quite deep into the forest to see any animals.”

Nature is important to Nittaya. – “I like to drive around and look at the scenery, explore forests and listen to birdsong. There are a lot of lakes in Finland, and the country is really beautiful in the summer.”

Nittaya has read books about Finnish nature, and her family has also given her tips. She occasionally goes mushrooming and berry picking with her family. She also likes cooking

sausages on a campfire. Her favourite destination is a lake in Muhos, where she goes fishing and swimming with her son. The family has also spent nights by the lake. How has Nittaya learned to tell which mushrooms are edible?

– “We only eat boletes and only ones that we can definitely recognise”, Nittaya says. ♦





# Spending time outdoors has a positive effect on health and well-being

Spending time outdoors is good for you. Fresh air lowers stress levels, reduces anxiety and improves your mood. Outdoor activities are also a great way to build stronger ties with friends and family. Walking in the woods is good exercise and practice for physical skills such as balance and agility. That is why it is also useful for children to run around and play in the woods!

For more information about the effect of nature on health and well-being, visit

<http://www.luontoon.fi/retkeilynabc/terveyttajahyvinvointialuonnosta>



## Eric likes the smell of fresh air

### Eric, Rwanda

**“Finnish people know how to respect nature.”**

Eric, who is originally from Rwanda, has lived in Finland for 13 years.

– “The only things I knew about Finland before I moved here were that it was cold and that there were a lot of forests. I like geography a lot. I also knew about Father Christmas”, Eric says.

Eric is not afraid of Finnish wilderness, because Africa has a lot more dangerous animals than Finland.

Eric is studying nursing, and he likes taking his children to the park and walks to school in the mornings. He also likes sitting on a park bench in the summer and enjoying the greenness all around.

– “Without trees, the air would not be as good. I like the smell of fresh air. Although Oulu is quite built up, there are also a lot of trees. Residential areas without green spaces are like deserts”, Eric says.

Nature is important to Eric. He likes to read books about nature and history.

– “I find nature conservation and

ecology really interesting”, Eric explains.

Eric likes the Finnish attitude towards nature.

– “Even young children know how to respect nature”, Eric says.

Eric thinks that all people who have moved to Finland from other countries should explore Finnish nature.

– “There are so many opportunities in Finland. You could start by going camping. Cooking sausages on a campfire is great”, Eric says. ♦

# Freedom to roam

Freedom to roam is a well-established practice in Finland. It means that everyone has the right to explore nature without any special permits, barring a few exceptions.

## Under the right to roam, you can

- ✗ walk, ski or cycle anywhere except in people's gardens and areas designated for specific purposes,
- ✗ explore woods and cross fields, meadows or plantations as long as no damage is caused,
- ✗ set up camp and stay for brief periods of time anywhere except in the immediate vicinity of people's homes,
- ✗ pick berries, mushrooms and flowers,
- ✗ use boats, swim and bathe in lakes and rivers and in the sea and walk across frozen water bodies in the winter,
- ✗ engage in angling and ice fishing and
- ✗ walk dogs as long as dogs are kept on a leash in built-up areas, public footpaths and other similar areas.

## You must not

- ✗ cause disturbance or damage to others,
- ✗ access private gardens and intrude on people's privacy by camping too close to their houses,
- ✗ disturb or hurt animals,
- ✗ cut down or damage trees, collect dead wood, shrubs, moss or similar on someone else's property,
- ✗ build a fire without permission from the landowner,
- ✗ litter,
- ✗ drive a motor vehicle off-road without permission from the landowner or
- ✗ fish using any other technique except angling and ice fishing or hunt without a licence.



There are certain restrictions on the freedom to roam within nature conservation areas. It is worth reading the rules and any visitors' guides before visiting places such as national parks.

For more information about the freedom to roam, visit

<http://www.luontoon.fi/RetkeilynABC/yleista/jokamiehenoikeudet>



# How safe is it to explore Finnish nature?

For more information about bites and stings and about treatments, visit [http://www.terveyskirjasto.fi/terveyskirjasto/tk.koti?p\\_artikkeli=spr00012](http://www.terveyskirjasto.fi/terveyskirjasto/tk.koti?p_artikkeli=spr00012)

Finland is a very safe country. Nevertheless, you should always pick your activities and location according to your knowledge and skills. Changes in seasons and weather conditions also need to be taken into consideration. To ensure your safety, always read up about activities beforehand and follow any safety instructions.

## Some people are afraid of wild animals.

Bears, wolves and other large carnivores try to keep away from humans, and you are very unlikely to meet them. For more information about large carnivores, visit [www.suurpedot.fi](http://www.suurpedot.fi). The website has a wide variety of

information about large carnivores in Finland and instructions for what to do if you do come across them.

The only venomous snake in Finland is the adder. An adder bite or an insect sting can cause a life-threatening allergic reaction in some people. It is always wise to buy a pack of snake bite treatment from the pharmacy before you head into the wild. If you do get bitten or stung, follow the instructions on the package and call the emergency number 112.

Ticks have also become more common in Finland in recent years. The best way to protect yourself against ticks is by wearing the right clothing and shoes.

## Sonkran will never forget the first time she saw reindeer

### Sonkran, Thaimaa

#### “Seeing reindeer for the first time was amazing.”

Sonkran was born in Thailand and moved to Finland four years ago. She knew very little about her new home country when she first arrived.

– “The only things I knew about Finland were that it was cold and that there was a lot of wilderness. I was a little bit afraid of bears. We don’t have bears in Thailand, although I’m used to living close to nature”, Sonkran says.

Sonkran’s favourite outdoor activities are running and walking. She also skis in the winter and picks berries in the summer.

#### What is the best thing about Finnish nature?

– “It’s not too hot in the summer, and there are a lot of trees. I also like the fact that there are mushrooms and berries in the forest that I can pick”, Sonkran says.

Her favourite experience in Finland so far is seeing reindeer, because there are no reindeer in Thailand.

– “I don’t want to see a bear”, Sonkran says.

Sonkran’s friends have told her about Finnish nature. She thinks that everyone should explore the great outdoors.

– “The woods are a great place to run, and walking is lots of fun too. It’s not too hot or dangerous in Finnish forests. Finland has a lot of unspoilt nature, and the summer is glorious”, Sonkran says. ♦







## Different kinds of destinations for enjoying nature and recreational activities

Finland has a lot of destinations that offer a wide range of outdoor activities and services. Signposted paths are easy to walk on, and wetland areas have duckboards to keep your feet dry. There are also designated areas where you can build a campfire and stop for a picnic. Some areas have wilderness

huts that are free for anyone to use and cabins for overnight hire.

Public footpaths are well-lit and maintained in the summer, spring and autumn. In the winter, these paths have prepared ski trails for anyone wishing to ski. Observation towers are provided for birdwatchers. ♦





# Ilya likes fishing and camping in national parks

## Ilya, Russia

**“We make juice from lingonberries and freeze mushrooms.”**

Ilya came to Finland to work seven years ago. He has settled well and loves living in Finland.

– “Finland is a great country. I love the pristine forests and the many lakes.”

Ilya already knew a lot of things about Finland before his move.

– “I grew up in Karelia near the Finnish border, and I even knew a few Finnish words, such as ‘sauna’, ‘karjalanpiirakka’ [a type of savoury pasty] and ‘kalakukko’ [fish baked inside a loaf of bread]. I tried to learn about the culture and to meet new people, because I couldn’t speak the language at first.”

Ilya has many hobbies that are related to nature.

– “I have always liked fishing, and I

quite often spend time in the woods. I also like the paths and wilderness huts in national parks. Ski trails in Finland are always well-maintained and free. I also started winter swimming at Tuira beach in Oulu three years ago. I have made a lot of good friends there. I also go ice fishing on Lake Valkeisjärvi near Oulu.”

Ilya’s favourite outdoor destinations are Kilpisjärvi, Inari, Aavasaksa and the national parks of Riisitunturi and Syöte. There are also beautiful places near Oulu, such as Koiteli, Hailuoto and Muhos.

– “Valkeisjärvi is where I go ice fishing in the winter. We also have our regular spots for picking mushrooms and berries. My wife makes lingonberry juice and the mushrooms go in the freezer.”

In Ilya’s opinion, the best things about the great outdoors in Finland are well-maintained wilderness huts, ski trails and forests.

– “I live in an apartment in the city, and it’s nice to be able to escape to the woods. If I feel stressed in the city, I know the woods will help me to relax. Clean, fresh air always cheers me up.”

Ilya has learned about Finnish nature from many different sources.

– “I’ve gone along on several excursions organised by the University of Oulu. I also have Finnish friends who have given me information, and I have looked things up on the internet. National parks usually have nature centres that have a lot of in-formation.”

Ilya is also keen to share his knowledge with other people arriving in Finland from abroad.

– “I once met a group of German tourists who were hitch-hiking to Helsinki. I told them to visit the national parks in Central Finland along the way. They later contacted me to thank me about the tip and said that they had loved the forests and trails.”

## Where to look for information about nature destinations?

### Metsähallitus’ website

✗ For information about national parks, recreational areas and other nature destinations maintained by the Finnish State across the country, visit [www.outdoors.fi](http://www.outdoors.fi).

✗ For information about nature destinations maintained by Metsähallitus and to print out maps of different parts of the country, visit [www.excursionmap.fi](http://www.excursionmap.fi).

### Local government websites

✗ For information about destinations near you, visit the website of your local government.

✗ In addition to the excursionmap.fi service, you can also print out maps from an online map service provided by the National Land Survey of Finland at <http://kansalaisen.karttapaikka.fi>.





# Recreational activities and healthy food

There are many ways to enjoy the outdoors. Some like exercising and camping. Others like observing flora and fauna. Spending time in the great outdoors is a good way to relax and enjoy new experiences.

Sitting by a campfire is a perfect way to spend quality time with your family and friends. Berries and mushrooms can be picked and frozen in the autumn and eaten all through the winter.

The range of recreational activities depends on the season. There are different activities available in the summer, autumn, winter and spring. Recreational opportunities also vary by region. Northern Finland generally has the most snow and the best conditions for skiing. The summer season begins earlier in Southern Finland. Central and Eastern Finland have the most lakes.

## Different kinds of outdoor and recreational activities:

- ✗ Walking in the woods and along trails and public footpaths
- ✗ Nordic walking along trails and public footpaths
- ✗ Camping
- ✗ Observing flora and fauna
- ✗ Running along trails and public footpaths
- ✗ Skiing
- ✗ Snowshoeing
- ✗ Climbing
- ✗ Hiking
- ✗ Cycling and mountain biking
- ✗ Photography
- ✗ Orienteering
- ✗ Downhill skiing
- ✗ Boating and sailing

Nature is also a great source of food. Finnish forests are full of different kinds of berries and mushrooms. Lakes and rivers are brimming with fish. Berries make a healthy addition to your diet. They can be eaten on their own or with yoghurt or porridge, for example. You can also bake delicious pies with berries.

## Ways to get wild food in Finland

- ✗ Berry picking
- ✗ Mushrooming
- ✗ Fishing

For more information about recreational activities, visit [www.luontoon.fi/harrastukset](http://www.luontoon.fi/harrastukset)

For more information about berries and mushrooms and about how to use them, visit [www.arktisetaromit.fi](http://www.arktisetaromit.fi)

For more information about fishing, visit [www.vapaa-ajankalastaja.fi](http://www.vapaa-ajankalastaja.fi)



# The winter is too long for Dan

## Dan, China

### “The winter is too long!”

Dan, who lives in Oulu, moved from China to Finland a little over eight years ago. All she knew about Finland before her move was Father Christmas and the fact that there were a lot of trees and rivers.

One of Dan’s most memorable experiences in Finland is seeing a herd of reindeer cross the road. She has warned her children about bears. Dan likes spending time outdoors with her children.

– “I take my children out to the woods, and we also sometimes pick mushrooms in Rovaniemi.”

Sharing her haul of mushrooms is one way for Dan to spend quality time with her friends.

– “We bake mushroom pie and learn about each other’s cultures at the same time”, Dan explains.

In Dan’s opinion, the best things about Finnish nature are clean water, the abundance of trees and fresh air. For her the fact that air is not polluted and that it does not cause illnesses is very important.

– “The blue skies in the summer are beautiful”, Dan says.

However, the winter is too long for her.

– “I think the winter is too long because you can’t see the sun. That’s not good.”

Dan has learned about Finnish nature from books and television programmes. She has also received tips about picking and using berries from her family.

– “My son’s grandmother always puts berries in her porridge in the morning. You can also buy berries, such as strawberries, at the market in the summer”, Dan says.

Dan also has a couple of tips for people moving to Finland from abroad.

– “It can seem too quiet at first. The food is clean and good. Finnish people don’t talk very much, but they value their homes and work very highly”, Dan says. ♦







## Getting involved

You can explore Finnish nature alone or with your family and friends. If you want to meet new people or learn new skills, it is worth considering joining a group or an organisation or getting involved in activities and events organised by local governments.

Most associations, organisations and sports clubs charge a small membership fee and there is also often a fee for taking part in courses, but public events are usually free.

✗ **Join a local branch of the Outdoor Association of Finland.** The Outdoor Association of Finland is a national promoter of outdoor activities and healthy recreational pursuits, and the organisation has many local branches. The Outdoor Association of Finland also organises different kinds of training courses. [www.suomenlatu.fi](http://www.suomenlatu.fi)

✗ **Children and young people can take part in activities run by the 4H organisation.** 4H organises activities locally and nationally. Its local branches run activities such as clubs, courses, events and competitions [www.4h.fi/](http://www.4h.fi/)

✗ **Learn new skills with the Guides and Scouts.** There are millions of Guides and Scouts around the world. [www.partio.fi/](http://www.partio.fi/)

✗ **Ask your school for tips about hobbies and excursions.** Students can ask their school for information about hobbies and excursions.

✗ **Get involved in the Finnish Association for Nature Conservation.** The district and local branches of the Finnish Association for Nature Conservation organise different kinds of volunteer activities and outdoor clubs. [www.sll.fi](http://www.sll.fi)

✗ **Join a sports club.** Sports clubs also organise nature-based physical activities, such as orienteering events. For more information, visit the website of your local government.

✗ **Go along to public events.** Information about events is published on the websites and event calendars of local governments, associations and organisations. Nature centres also organise regular events for the public.



# Victor loves Finnish summer cottages

## Victor, Hungary

**“I have fallen in love with forests and Finnish summer cottages.”**

Victor from Hungary moved to Finland six years ago.

– “I didn’t know much about the country before my move. I knew that Finland is called a country of thousands of lakes, but I knew little else about Finnish nature”, Victor says.

Victor admits to having been a little nervous about Finnish weather.

– “I probably had some fears before I moved to Finland. I remember asking people about the climate quite a lot. I knew that it was going to be colder than what I’m used to but I didn’t know it was going to be this cold! I left a water bottle outside my tent during a camping trip in early September and the next morning it was frozen. That’s when I truly began to believe that

Finland is really cold”, Victor says.

Victor also finds Finnish culture fascinating.

– “We once took a trip to Lake Sevetijärvi in Lapland. We visited an open-air museum and learned about the life of the Sámi. I don’t tend to read books about culture, but I like comparing other people’s stories to my own experiences, culture and life”, Victor says.

Victor’s favourite leisure activity is sports. His number-one sport is football, but he also goes to the gym and likes running, cy-cling and hiking.

– “The Kaukovainio disc golf course is a great place to exercise in Oulu”, Victor says.

Victor’s favourite places to enjoy Finnish nature are riverbanks and shores of lakes. If there’s a lake nearby, the scenery is always beautiful. He also likes forests and Finnish summer cottages.

– I understand why summer cottages are so important for Finnish people. My first time at a summer cottage was an almost supernatural experience”, Victor says.

When Victor thinks about nature, he thinks about tranquillity and solitude, but not in a bad sense.

– “Everyone should go to a place where there are no computers at least twice a year. I often think how amazing it would be to live in the heart of a city only a few months a year and spend the rest of the year somewhere else. Teno and Lemmenjoki are my favourite places.”

Victor’s knowledge about Finnish nature comes from his friends and girlfriend.

– “I also look things up on the internet when someone mentions something interesting. There is a lot of information there.”

# Tharanga likes photography

## Tharanga, Sri Lanka

**“There are many recreational opportunities in Finland.”**

Tharanga came to Finland as an exchange student. After his year as an exchange student, he enrolled on a master’s degree course at the University of Oulu.

– “Once I had graduated, I found a job, and we ended up staying in Finland”, Tharanga says.

There were many things that Tharanga did not know before moving to Finland.

– “I knew that Finland was a cold place and also intriguing.”

Tharanga quickly made friends through his love of volleyball. Tharanga likes nature photography.

– “I take pictures of everything from the aurora borealis to butterflies.”

Tharanga occasionally goes running with his wife. He has also done hiking and kayaking.

Tharanga finds it important that there are many recreational opportunities in Finland. In Sri Lanka, people often don’t have time for leisure activities.

Tharanga is not scared of Finnish forests.

– “I’m not easily scared. Even bears and wolves don’t scare me. I have actually thought about trying to photograph bears.”

Tharanga is thankful for having friends who have allowed him to get involved in many different activities. He was quickly welcomed into a group that does things together. Trying to find information on the internet can sometimes be frustrating.

– “Students can look for like-minded friends in places like university mailing lists”, Tharanga says.

Finns are known as a nation of few words. In Tharanga’s opinion, it is still worth getting to know Finnish people.

– “You just have to be brave and introduce yourself to people. Finns may not be very open, but it doesn’t mean that they won’t talk to you”, Tharanga says.

Winter sports can be quite challenging for people who aren’t used to cold weather. It’s also useful to remember cultural differences.

– “Finnish people don’t always understand what it’s like to be from somewhere else. Downhill skiing is probably not the first thing you should try”, he says. ♦





# Planning your excursion and having the right gear

It is important to have the right gear regardless of your chosen activity or the length of your excursion. Waterproof clothing and comfortable shoes are a good start. There are many outdoor activities that require no special equipment but there are some that do. It is also useful to remember that the weather in Finland is very changeable. It is important to dress warmly, especially in the winter.

Metsähallitus, the Outdoor Association of Finland and the Guides and Scouts of Finland have created a web-site where you can find all kinds of useful information about outdoor activities and excursions. The website has tips for planning excursions, choosing the right

gear and cooking in the wild. There is also a section on basic wilderness survival skills. In addition, the website has information about how to stay safe in the wild and tips for looking after the environment.

Plan your excursion with the help of our online guide at [www.luontoon.fi/retkeilynABC](http://www.luontoon.fi/retkeilynABC)

