



*"A national park like no other!"*



®

*Urho Kekkonen National Park*  
**VISITOR SURVEY**  
2017 • SUMMARY



METSÄHALLITUS | PARKS & WILDLIFE FINLAND





The trail from Kiilopää to Rautulampi climbs the Raututunturi fells.

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# Call of the wild

*Take in the vast expanses of the Urho Kekkonen National Park and the tales told by its fells, hiking to the cosy warmth of a hut by nightfall. A trekker's dream, the national park is situated right next to the services of Saariselkä. The wide-open landscape is also home to none other than Santa Claus, who lives on the mysterious Korvatunturi fell.*

Urho Kekkonen National Park profile

## URHO KEKKONEN NATIONAL PARK 2017

*The Urho Kekkonen National Park is managed by Metsähallitus Parks & Wildlife Finland.*

### DATE OF ESTABLISHMENT

The Urho Kekkonen National Park was established in 1983 to protect Forest Lapland's and Southern Lapland's forest, mire and fell nature as well as to secure nature-based sources of livelihood, such as reindeer husbandry.

### LOCATION

Northern and Eastern Lapland. In the municipalities of Inari, Savukoski and Sodankylä.

### AREA

- Second-largest national park in area: approx. 2,550 km<sup>2</sup>

- The national park area is divided into a hiking and nature tourism zone and a wilderness zone.

### NUMBER OF VISITS

- National park: 335,000 (2017)
- Saariselkä Customer Service Kiehinen: 341,107 (overnight stays 2016)

### NATIONAL PARK SERVICES

- Marked trails: approx. 200 km; Nature trails in Tankavaara (1–7km); Theme trails in Saariselkä and Kiilopää (1–21km); Nuortti Hiking Trail (loop trail 40km); Historic Ruijanpolku Trail (35km one-way); Kemihaara-Korvatunturinmurusta Hiking Trail (18km one-way)
- 17 open wilderness huts, 13 reservable huts, 2 open turf

- huts, 4 reservable turf huts, 7 day huts and 2 rental huts
- 27 Lapp pole tent (kota) and lean-tos, approximately 80 campfire sites, 3 cooking shelters, 6 open saunas
- Saariselkä Customer Service Kiehinen, Tankavaara Visitor Centre, Savukoski Visitor Centre Korvatunturi, Aurora Day Hut

### TYPES OF USE

Nature conservation, nature tourism, nature recreation, reindeer husbandry, research.

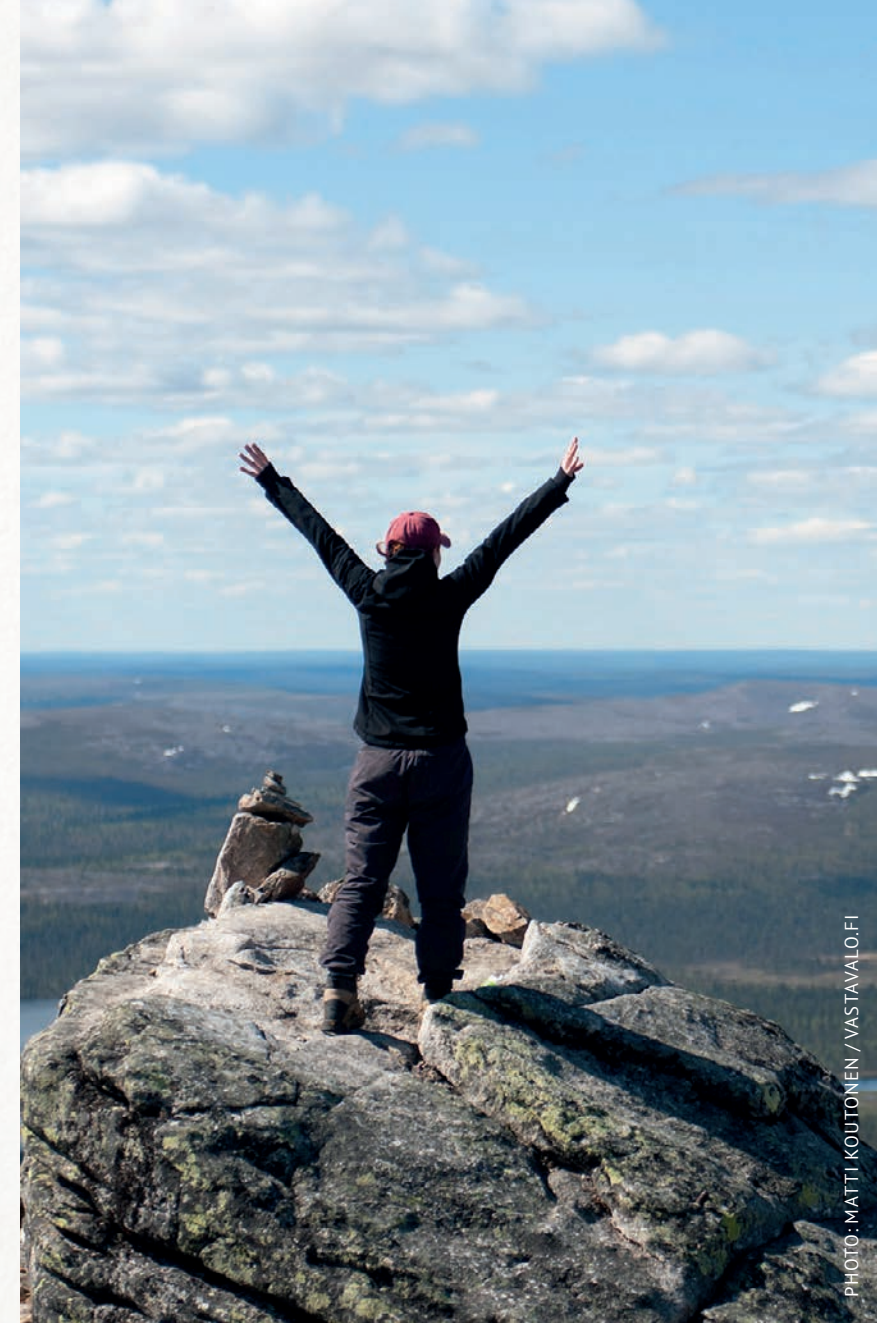
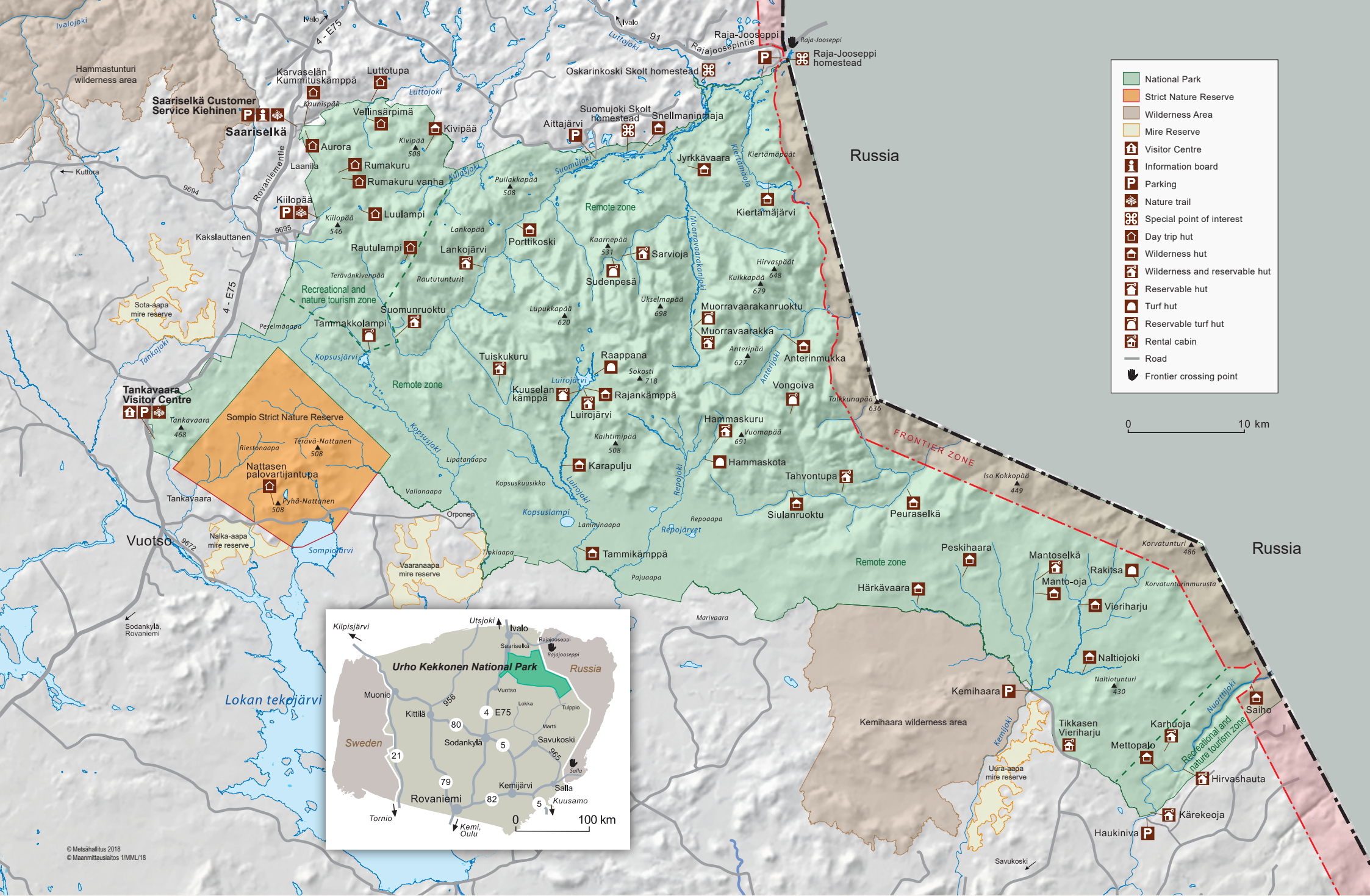


PHOTO: MATTI KOUTONEN / VASTAVALO.FI

The Urho Kekkonen National Park was established to protect Forest Lapland's and Southern Lapland's forest, mire and fell nature as well as to secure traditional hiking activities and nature-based sources of livelihood, such as reindeer husbandry.





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# ONE OF FINLAND'S MOST POPULAR NATIONAL PARKS

*Hikers have shown a preference for Koilliskaira since the 1950s, even though the visitor numbers at that time were quite small. After the national park was established, the popularity of the area among hikers experienced strong growth.*

In 2017, Urho Kekkonen National Park had approximately 335,000 visits, making it the second most popular national park in Finland by visitor numbers. A majority of the visitors visit the park in March, April and September. Visitor numbers are constantly tracked using electronic visitor counters placed in the field. In planning hiking services, visitor flows are controlled in an effort to maintain sustainable growth in terms of natural resources and visitor satisfaction.

Urho Kekkonen National Park visitor numbers for 2013–2017. There were a total of 335,000 visits made in 2017.



PHOTO: INARI-SAARISELKÄ MATKAILU OY

*"I will definitely be coming back to hike here!"*



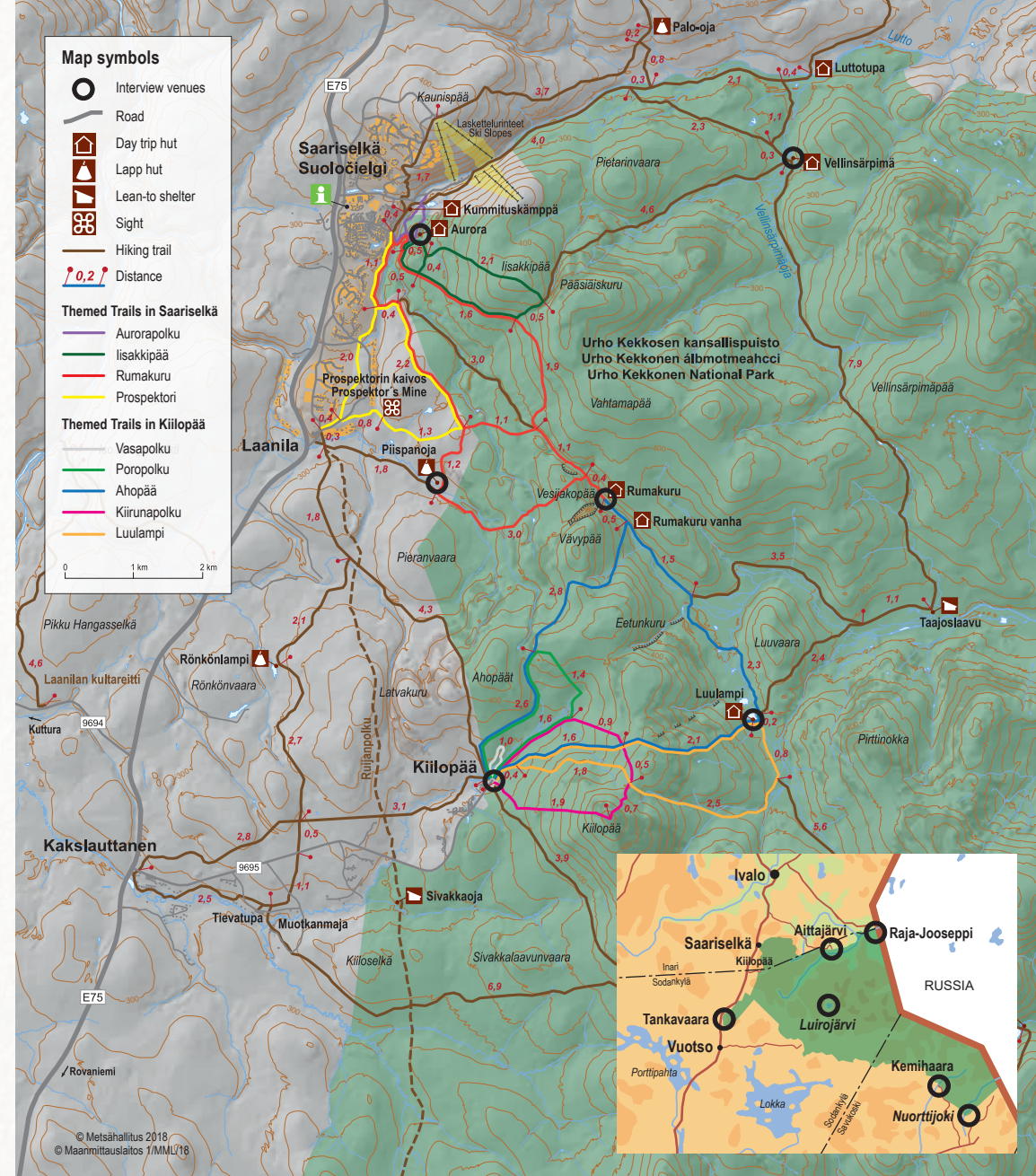
# VISITOR SURVEY DATA GATHERED IN THE FIELD

*Metsähallitus conducts uniform visitor surveys in popular protected areas, historic sites and hiking areas. Data is gathered on nearly all national parks, with surveys usually taken in five-year intervals.*

Visitor surveys provide us and tourism operators with key information on park visitors, their wishes and interests. Survey results help us to improve national park services and increase the attractiveness of the tourism area.

Visitor survey data on the Urho Kekkonen National Park was gathered from 20 February to 29 September 2017. The interview venues and number targets specified for them were set in advance based on the distribution of visitor flows. A total of 1,960 responses were collected. 91% of the respondents were Finnish tourists and 3% were local residents. Foreign tourists of 20 different nationalities accounted for 6% of the respondents.

Interview venues and response distribution		
Interview place	pcs	%
Kiilopää	378	19
Luulampi	331	17
Rumakuru	316	16
Vellinsärpimä	233	12
Aurorapolku	229	12
Luirojärvi	139	7
Piispanoja	106	5
Tankavaara	74	4
Nuorttijoki	51	3
Kemihaara	47	2
Aittajärvi	38	2
Raja-Jooseppi	18	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,960</b>	<b>100</b>



Interview venues.

*"National parks are honest-to-goodness treasure troves for connecting with nature."*



# THE NATIONAL PARK VISITOR BASE TENDS TOWARD AN OLDER CROWD

*The average visitor to the Urho Kekkonen National Park is over 50 years of age and comes for cross-country skiing in March-April. Visitors spend an average of four hours in the park.*

Over 25% of all visitors are older. Visitors expressed a desire for more accessible trails and structures in the national park to meet the needs of older visitors.

## With the family or friends

Most park visitors come with their own family or friends. In most cases, visitors come in groups of 2–5 people. Approximately 9% of all visitors come alone.

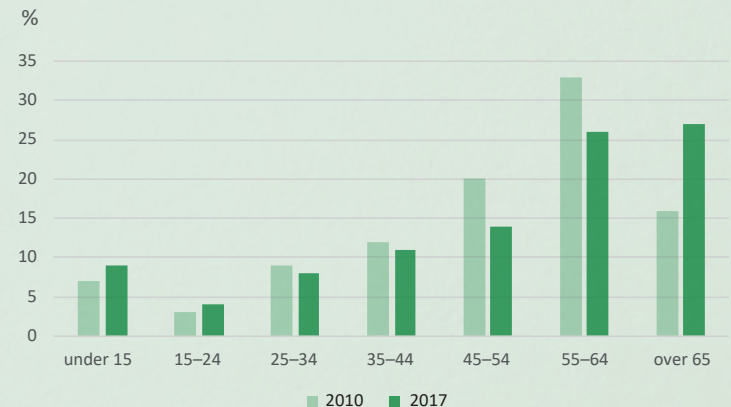
*"The best tourist destination for me and my family, bar none!"*

### Urho Kekkonen National Park visitors

Average age	54 years
Gender	women 54%, men 46%
Season	summer-autumn 41%, winter 59%
Length of stay	day visitor (4 hours), hiker (approx. 6 days)



### Change in visitor age structure 2010–2017





# A TRUE WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE FOR EVERYONE

*In the Urho Kekkonen National Park, visitors can experience the feel of the wilderness on long treks as well as backpacking, cross-country skiing or biking on trails in the day hiking area, right next to Saariselkä.*

Visitors to the Urho Kekkonen National Park mostly go cross-country skiing and walking. Most visitors do 1-3 activities during their visits to the park. Approximately one out of every three visitors engage in various nature watching activities and hiking.

## Biking growing in popularity

The new park rules allow for a wider range of biking activities on marked activity trails within the national park. The survey revealed that biking rose to become the sixth biggest activity when respondents were asked to name just one key activity in their interviews.



PHOTO: TAPIOTTYNYS



PHOTO: PIRIO SEURAJÄRVI





## FELL HUTS – A WARM RETREAT FOR HIKERS AND SKIERS

*Marked trails are located in close proximity to visitor centres, while more demanding wilderness routes can be found in the central and eastern sections of the park.*

A majority of the park visitors visit the areas just adjacent to Saariselkä and Kiilopää. The park's most popular wilderness destinations are found in its central areas (Luirojärvi, Sokosti).

### Regional distribution of visits

Place to visit	pcs	%
Saariselkä area	1,445	74
Kiilopää area	1,331	68
The middle parts of the park (e.g. Luirojärvi, Sokosti)	205	11
Tankavaara	174	9
The northern parts of the park (e.g. Aittajärvi, Raja-Jooseppi)	126	6
The southeastern parts of the park (e.g. Kemihaara, Nuortti)	109	6
The eastern parts of the park (e.g. Kiertämä, Anteri, Jauru)	72	4
The southern parts of the park (e.g. Orponen, Marivaara)	12	1
Other	41	2
<b>Total answers</b>	<b>1,949</b>	

(Respondents were able to choose multiple locations for their visit destinations)



PHOTO: MATTI KOUTONEN / VASTAVALO.FI

### One out every four hikers

74 % of the Urho Kekkonen National Park visitor survey respondents were day hikers. Approximately one of every four visitors stayed overnight in the park. The most popular place for overnight stays among visitors was their own accommodation (e.g. tent). Overnight stays in wilderness huts were nearly as popular.

Visitors covered an average distance of approximately 18 km per visit under their own power when visiting the Urho Kekkonen National Park. A majority of the visitors cross-country skied and backpacked. Longer distances were covered by skiing and biking. Visitors covered approximately 6 million kilometres under their own power in 2017. This is equivalent to travelling around the world 150 times on foot, bike or skis.

*"I can't begin to say how much I appreciate the network of free and well-maintained wilderness huts"*



# LANDSCAPES AND THE LURE OF NATURE

*Some of the main reasons for visiting the Urho Kekkonen National Park included scenery, experiencing nature, relaxing, escaping noise and pollution, and mental well-being. Over half of the visitors also stated that spending time with family and friends was important. Less common reasons for visiting the park included meeting new people and seeking thrills.*

## Main destination

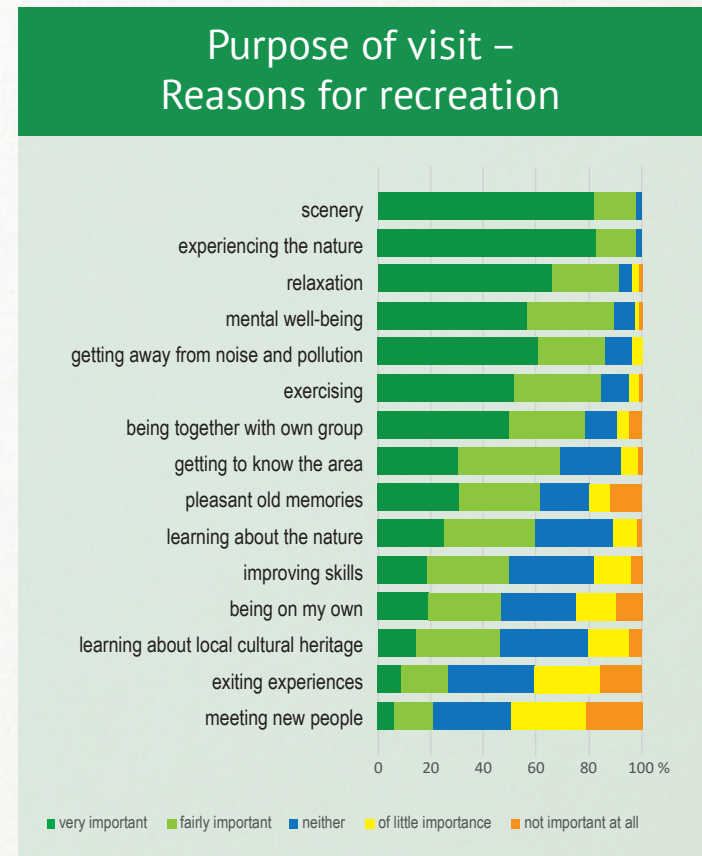
A majority of the visitors stated that the Urho Kekkonen National Park was the only or main destination of their trip. One out of every three visitors stated that the Urho Kekkonen National Park was one of the pre-planned destinations for their trip. Only 4% of the visitors said that they had not planned their visit to the park in advance. The primary destination of their trip was most typically Saariselkä.



PHOTO: PASI NIVASALO



PHOTO: PASI NIVASALO





# NATIONAL PARK MEETS VISITOR EXPECTATIONS

*The expectations that visitors had regarding the natural environment, recreational activities, trails and structures of the Urho Kekkonen National Park were met exceedingly well.*

The park's natural environment most closely met expectations, with visitors giving the park a 4.71 (out of a possible 5 points). No respondent answered "very poorly" to any question in the survey.

Expectations	Average
Natural environment	4.71
Opportunities for outdoor activities	4.44
Routes and facilities	4.46



PHOTO: PASI NIVASALO



PHOTO: TAPIO TYNYS

## Many regular visitors

77% of the survey respondents had visited the Urho Kekkonen National Park previously. They had visited the park an average of approximately 10 times over the previous five years. A visit to the Urho Kekkonen National Park also inspired visitors to return to the area.

*"The expanse of the place, the far-reaching vistas, pristine nature, silence – even the air seems richer in oxygen than anywhere else in workaday Finland."*



# EXCELLENT HIKING SERVICES

*Visitors considered the current quantity of services to be good.*

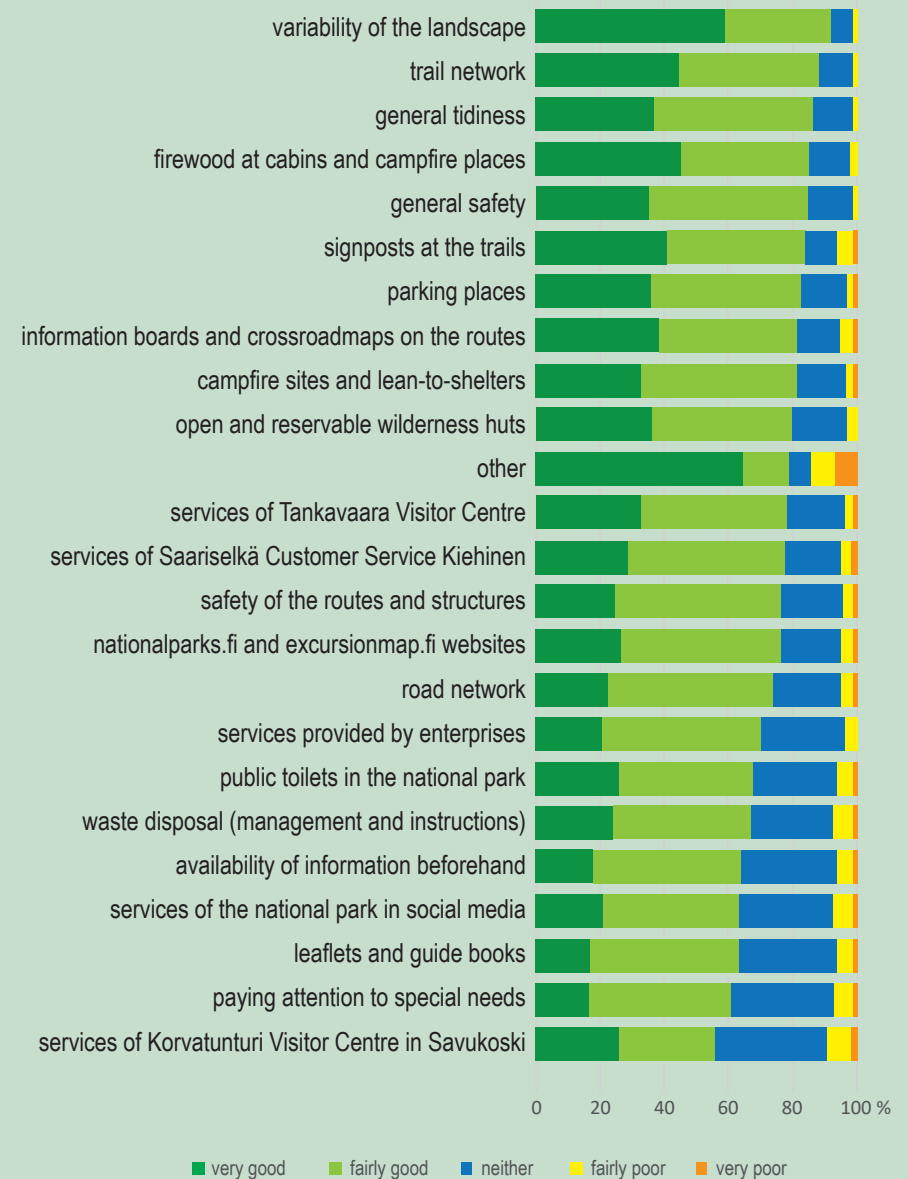
Visitors were most satisfied with the variety of scenery, the trail and track network and firewood arrangements. Trail and track markings, general cleanliness, safety and parking facilities also received praise. In the free-form feedback section, visitors were concerned about the fact that many of the park structures were old and needed renovation or replacement. In particular, visitors felt that the duckboards on the trails were in very poor condition.

## Hiking services improved in recent years

Following the previous visitor survey, services offered in the Urho Kekkonen National Park were improved in several different projects. The renovation of trails and improvement of service structures resulted in increased visitor satisfaction.



## Use of services and quality assessment





# SATISFIED VISITORS

*The visitor satisfaction index is a figure, which is calculated as an average of the following factors: opinions on services and environmental quality, meeting of expectations and factors with an adverse impact on the visit.*

**"I'm very grateful for everything here"**

The nationally comparable visitor satisfaction index for the Urho Kekkonen National Park was 4.25. A score of 5 is very good and 1 very poor. The index can be used in national comparisons, providing a rough idea of visitor satisfaction with the visit to a national park in question. The visitor satisfaction index obtained in the 2010 visitor survey was 4.15. This shows an improvement in visitor satisfaction over the past seven years.



A score of 5 is very good and 1 very poor. The index can be used in national comparisons, providing a rough idea of visitor satisfaction with the visit to a national park in question.



PHOTO: AINI MAGGA

*"Unbelievably well-organised hiking conditions and the collaborative spirit is evident everywhere!"*





## NATIONAL PARKS A BOON TO LOCAL AREAS

*Respondents estimated that they spent an average of 101 euros per visit. Visitors staying overnight in the park or a neighbouring area estimated spending an average of 97 euros, while day visitors spent an average of 165 euros.*

On average, national park visitors spent the most money on accommodations. The second biggest expense was for food and daily needs purchases as well as for cafés and restaurants.

In 2017, the total impact that spending by national park visitors had on local economies by number of visits was approximately 36.6 million euros. The employment impact was approximately 366 person-years. Finnish visitors coming to local areas neighbouring the national park clearly had the greatest income effect (measured in euros).

National park visitor spending impact on local economies and employment (2017).

### Urho Kekkonen National Park impacts on local economies

Total impact		Minimum impact*	
Million €	Person-years	Million €	Person-years
36.6	366	22.4	224

\* Minimum impact describes the impact on local economies and employment of spending by visitors whose main or only destination was the Urho Kekkonen National Park.





PHOTO: PERTTI TURUNEN

## WELL-BEING FROM NATURE

*Questions were recently added to the visitor survey to chart the health and well-being impacts experienced by visitors.*

### National park visits promote long-lasting well-being

Approximately 90% of the respondents felt that the positive health and well-being impacts resulting from their visit to a national park also extended beyond their visit. Respondents felt that the mental impacts lasted the longest, with over half of all visitors stating that they remained long after their visit.

### Well-being in hundreds of euros

Visitors estimated that the health and well-being impacts of their national park visit were worth an average of 638 euros. The cash values given by respondents ranged from 1 euro all the way up to 3,000 euros. The median value was 300 euros, which can be considered a more reliable estimate of the health benefits provided by a visit to a national park.

Enhanced areas of well-being	Assessment (%)					Average (1-5)
	Fully disagree	Somewhat disagree	No opinion	Somewhat agree	Fully agree	
Social well-being enhanced (e.g. promoting working capacity, strengthening personal relationships)	0	2	14	38	45	4.26
Mental well-being enhanced (e.g. satisfaction with life, improved mood, recovery from mental fatigue, learning new things)	0	1	8	35	56	4.44
Physical well-being enhanced (e.g. maintenance of physical health and overall well-being, learning new skills)	0	1	6	30	56	4.55

Sense of well-being experienced by visitor survey respondents during their visit to the Urho Kekkonen National Park.

*"The impact that these have on both physical and mental health goes right back into the national economy one way or another."*



# CALL OF THE WILD



METSÄHALLITUS

PARKS & WILDLIFE FINLAND

Front cover photo: Päsi Nivasalo, Saariselkä fells looking east from Kiilopää  
Back cover photo: Tapio Tynys, Morning at Lake Luirojärvi.