



Adding Value to Community Tourism Cooperation Project

Study visit to Finland 13th - 16th February 2012



Päijänne Lake in summer

As part of the Adding Value to Community Tourism transnational project our first study visit was arranged by the Finnish partner Juotavan Hyvä Etelä-Päijänne ry and took place in February. The visit was attended by groups from Wales and Cyprus.



Päijänne Lake in winter



Information board in front of the Tallukka hotel

Day 1 – Monday 13th February: Both groups arrived at Helsinki on Monday 13th February 2012 at different times and were met by Anu Huusko, our Finnish partner. From the airport both groups were transferred to Tallukka Hotel in Asikkala municipality.

Day 2 - Tuesday 14th February: Anu met us at the hotel and we boarded the bus to be taken to Sysmä village for a seminar on "Aspects of marketing Finnish Winter Wonderland". The seminar took place in the Sysmä Village hall and we were joined by over 50 tourism industry representatives from the region as well as across Finland.



Sysmä Village hall

The seminar was chaired by the municipal manager of Sysmä Marketta Kitkiöjoki, who gave an overview of tourism activities in the region to date. When it comes to winter tourism in the Päijänne region, it is almost completely undeveloped branch of business in Sysmä. The Lake Päijänne is still waiting to be discovered and there are opportunities to create desirable and definite products to develop this area of business.



Participants from Wales enjoying a cup of coffee before the seminar

Kristiina Hietasaari of Visit Finland, talked about the possibilities and challenges for product development and marketing. The aim of Visit Finland is to develop and offer a high quality tourism product. There are three key themes set out, which are based on consumers' motivations for a holiday:

Silence Please – To take away the stress of everyday life Finland can offer silence and room to breathe, even in the cities. Visitors can relax and enjoy the slow pace of a cottage life in beautiful untouched countryside.



Winter scenery

Wild and Free – this theme is based on the assumption that everyone would like to experience at least one memorable adventure during their holiday. The Finnish nature offers year round opportunities for awesome adventures such as motor and dog safaris, "island hopping" by boating or canoeing in the archipelago.



Sibelius Hall in Lahti - home to Lahti Symphony Orchestra

Cultural beat – introduces the visitor to Finnish culture, architecture, local food, Santa Claus, and more contemporary trends such as fashion, design or heavy metal music.

Jyrki Oksanen, Visit Finland, talked specifically about the Päijänne region as an international winter destination. He provided good tips for marketing and promotion, such as the "Salami tactics": marketing, product, and distribution channels, a slice at a time.

Jyrki also talked about the effect social media has on the traditional distribution channels when it comes to marketing and promotion. The boom of social media networks has caused the traditional distribution channels to diminish. Because the behaviour of consumers has changed; for example they build their own networks and interact in a different way, it is important for tourism trade to incorporate social networking as part of distribution channel if a tourism business is to profit. The visibility at the marketplace is critical.

A thought provoking insight into the Internet behaviour of the Russian markets was delivered by Daria Ivanova from Finpro, a globally operating expert organization which helps Finnish companies to achieve international success. She highlighted that according to the Internet World Stats from 2010, when it comes to the top 10 internet countries in Europe, Russia has got the second highest number of Internet users. The Internet is used primarily for research of goods and services, but the Russians are less inclined to make purchase over the Internet. If Finnish (or any other country's) tourism trade wants to attract Russian markets, it is important to communicate in Russian.

The managing director of Lahti Travel, Raija Forsman gave an overview of tourism development in Lahti region. She stressed that tourism is one of the main employers in the region, employing over 3,500 people.

She highlighted the development priorities for tourism in the region as:

- General image and awareness of the region at a national level
- Infrastructure for the tourism industry
- Networking for tourism trade
- Internet, E-learning
- Going strongly for international markets

Jere Rauhala, the Operational Manager of Metsähallitus, which amongst other activities administers the Päijänne National Park, talked about the tourism development in the Park. Currently, the National Park offers good basic services. However, according to statistics the visits to the Päijänne National Park are slightly in decline. A Masterplan for tourism development within the Park is being developed and caters for a number of opportunities including for example:

- More possibilities to get on to the shores, boats and canoes
- More possibilities to camp
- More tables and benches and other equipment
- Better toilet facilities
- Hiking route lines in Kelvenne island

Jere also mentioned an interesting project that came about as a result of local people getting together and wanting to do something about their heritage. The Hermits Hut on the island of Harhu was home to a fisherman (Hermit), who developed the world famous fishing tackle, known as Rapala. Local people respect the heritage of Hermit very much and they wanted to save the Hut for future generations. They approached Metsähallitus and as a result local volunteers started the renovations in autumn 2011 with Metsähallitus funding the necessary equipment.

Jere also focused on the importance of the role the private sector must play in the development of products and services within the National Park and stressed that the whole area will benefit from the good partnerships created between local people and the organisation.

CASE STUDIES

We had the opportunity to hear from two businesses operating within the National Park. Markku Lepistö talked about his "Call of the Wild" business, which offers activities such as fishing together with cooking the "catch of the day" , ice fishing, archery, traditional craft skills, hunting and other nature based activities. **Call of the Wild** www.eramaankutsu.com



One of Lehmonkärki VIP villas

Ari Yrjölä's business was established by his family in the mid 1960's and provides year round activities in the region. Providing year round accommodation in high quality villas the summer activities include fishing, boating, hiking, swimming, tennis, volley ball, Frisbee golf, flying; in winter visitors can enjoy snowmobile safaris, husky rides, cross country skiing, ice fishing, snowshoe walking. The business also caters for large groups and has conference facilities. **Lehmonkärki,** www.lehmonkarkki.fi

All presentations from the event can be accessed via www.loma-paijanne.fi (English version).

Back on the bus in the afternoon with Raija Hänninen, one of the local tour guides, we had a tour of Sysmä village. An International Book village, Sysmä can provide rent free accommodation to artists from across Europe in order to support cultural activities. The village



Raija explaining the history of the church to the group

also has an illuminated cross country ski track and a Museum of Local history and culture run by local people and situated in an old grain storage house dating back to 1855. We visited the Medieval church of St. Olaf, which dates back as far as late 1390's.



From the church we went to see the Kivitatti B&B on the island of Päijätsalo. The B&B is only a stone's throw away from the lake Päijänne. Set in the woodland, the walking paths start straight from the lodge door and there are many opportunities for swimming, fishing, boating and other activities as well as berry and mushroom picking in autumn with ice fishing, ice skating or ice sauna in winter.



The group coming out of the Kivitatti B&B



Approaching the new harbour area on the island of Päijätsalo.

From Kivitatti on our way to the Nordenlund manor we passed the new harbour area, which is a new development on the island of Päijätsalo.

The Nordenlund manor situated on the shore of Lake Nuoramoinen in Sysmä, is also an active farm and a tourism business with accommodation. Nordenlund is part of the *Sysmä Manors Tour* ("Sysmän Kartanokierros"), where the owners give guided group tours of their manor estates. Mr Ole Silén, whose family owned the manor for over 300 years, has told us about the long and colourful history of the manor and the



The group with Mr Silén on the tour of the manor

development of the tourism business.

We closed the day at the Tallukka hotel with a traditional delicious Finnish stew, topped up with mashed potatoes and cranberry jelly.

Day 3 – Wednesday 15th February: In the morning we were transported to the Iso-Naappila holiday village for our partners meeting. The meeting gave the partners a chance to catch up on our cooperation projects and discuss the opportunities for further cooperation as well as learning about the local projects.



Partners meeting - preparing for presentations

The Juotavan Hyvä Etelä-Päijänne ry is an association operating in the South Päijänne area in the municipalities of Asikkala, Padasjoki and Sysmä and the association is managing projects concentrating on the development of tourism. As part of their local activities

the cooperation project will concentrate mainly on the development of services in the South Päijänne area to meet residents' and tourists' needs: nature trails, theme routes, trails for children, new products for the winter season and so on. The aims also are to

- get ideas and share best practise from international partners
- to increase the cooperation locally among tourism trade and
- to strengthen the area's image as an activity and tourism destination

PLANED is the lead partner in this cooperation project and the main aims are to

- To share best practice through networking events, study visits, information exchange
- To share knowledge on how tourism providers in other countries work in partnership with local communities and organisations through networks to promote the tourism product
- To examine how other countries package and promote initiatives that relate to development of sustainable tourism

At the local level the project engages with community groups that develop community heritage and tourism activities to help them share best practice across Wales.

LAG Paphos and the Development Agency Lemesos represent our partners from Cyprus. Relatively new to transnational activities the Cypriot partners found the study visit extremely useful. As part of their activities locally both LAG Paphos and Lemesos will be looking at the development of tourism in rural areas through festivals and events for example.



Partners meeting in the Iso-Naappila holiday village

After the meeting we were able to have a look around the villa, which was again very well equipped with conference facilities and accommodation of a very high standard.

After lunch those brave enough were transported to Lehmonkärki for a snow mobile safari adventure, whilst the Planed officers went to Lahti to meet with Finnish partners from another project.



A quick tutorial with Ari before take off



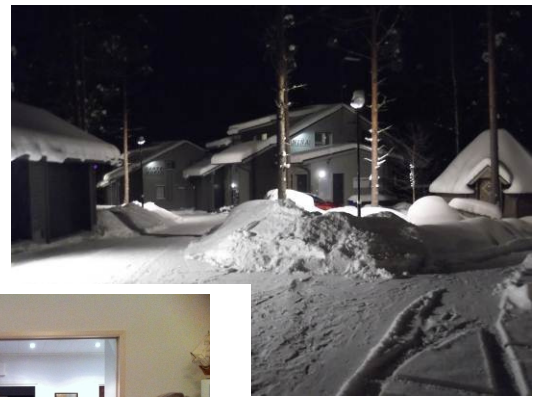
Kate in Lahti with Elina Leppänen, Liisa Helanto, Pirkko Kaskinen and Tauno Linkoranta, all actively involved in rural development through the Village cares and connects project, together with Kaj Loman who coordinates cooperation projects for LAG Päijänne Leader ry. Elina, Liisa, Pirkko and Tauno visited Pembrokeshire in June 2011 to look at examples of local community planning / action, and how through PLANED support, communities have been able to achieve proposals within their action plans.



In the late afternoon the group re-joined to visit the M/S Elbatar, the only boat business which is based in Padasjoki Marina. MS Elbatar provides day cruises to the National Park in the summer months. The National Park is unique in that it can be only accessed by boat in summer or by snow mobiles or by skiing in winter. It was a little strange to see the boat stuck frozen in ice,

but it was a nice surprise to find that it was pleasantly warm inside. The group sampled local food cooked by the boat owners and also listened to their story about how they developed their business.

Just up the hill from the boat overlooking the harbour is the Kullasmarina holiday complex, which offers luxury villas. Built only a few years ago, the villas have been granted the highest five star rural travel MALO quality award.



The group with Mr Toivo Heikkinen in one of the Kullasmarina villas



Back at Lehmonkärki Ari talking about traditional local food

From Kullasmarina the group returned to Lehmonkärki for a farewell dinner comprised of traditional local Finnish food. As already mentioned the Lehmonkärki holiday complex offers great facilities all year round and the group had a chance to see a couple of villas, saunas and other facilities.

Day 4 – Thursday 16th February. On our way to Helsinki airport we had a quick stop at a shopping complex in city of Lahti, where we were sad to say goodbye to Anu, and left for Helsinki full of inspiring ideas.