
VisitKarelia
The Soul of Finland
Destination presentation of North Karelia, Lakeland Finland
VisitKarelia
BY BUSINESS JOENSUU

Welcome to Lakeland Finland

Lakeland
The Heart of Finland

The **largest Lakeland district in Europe**, Finnish Lakeland, is a blue labyrinth of lakes, islands, rivers and canals, interspersed with forests and ridges. Finland has **188 000 lakes** and most of them are situated in the heart of Finland.

Reasons to visit Lakeland Finland:

- The land of the 1000 lakes
- Finnish national landscape
- Home of the sauna
- Have a holiday like the Finns do



How to get here?

Flights

Direct flights from Helsinki (HEL) to Joensuu (JOE)
Aircraft ATR, 72 seats (2+2), operated by Finnair
Flight time: 65 minutes

- HEL – JOE: Mon 1 flight, Tue-Fri and Sun 2 flights
- JOE – HEL: Mon - Fri 2 flights, Sun 1 flight

Trains

Daily 5-7 direct trains, operated by Finnish Railways (VR)
Travel time from Helsinki: 4 hours 35 minutes
Cabin classes: Eko, Extra relaxed class and Extra calm

Travelling by car

Driving time Helsinki – Joensuu: 5 hours (430 km)
Highway 5 via Lahti or Highway 6 via Lappeenranta

Very easy to drive, low traffic, good maintenance



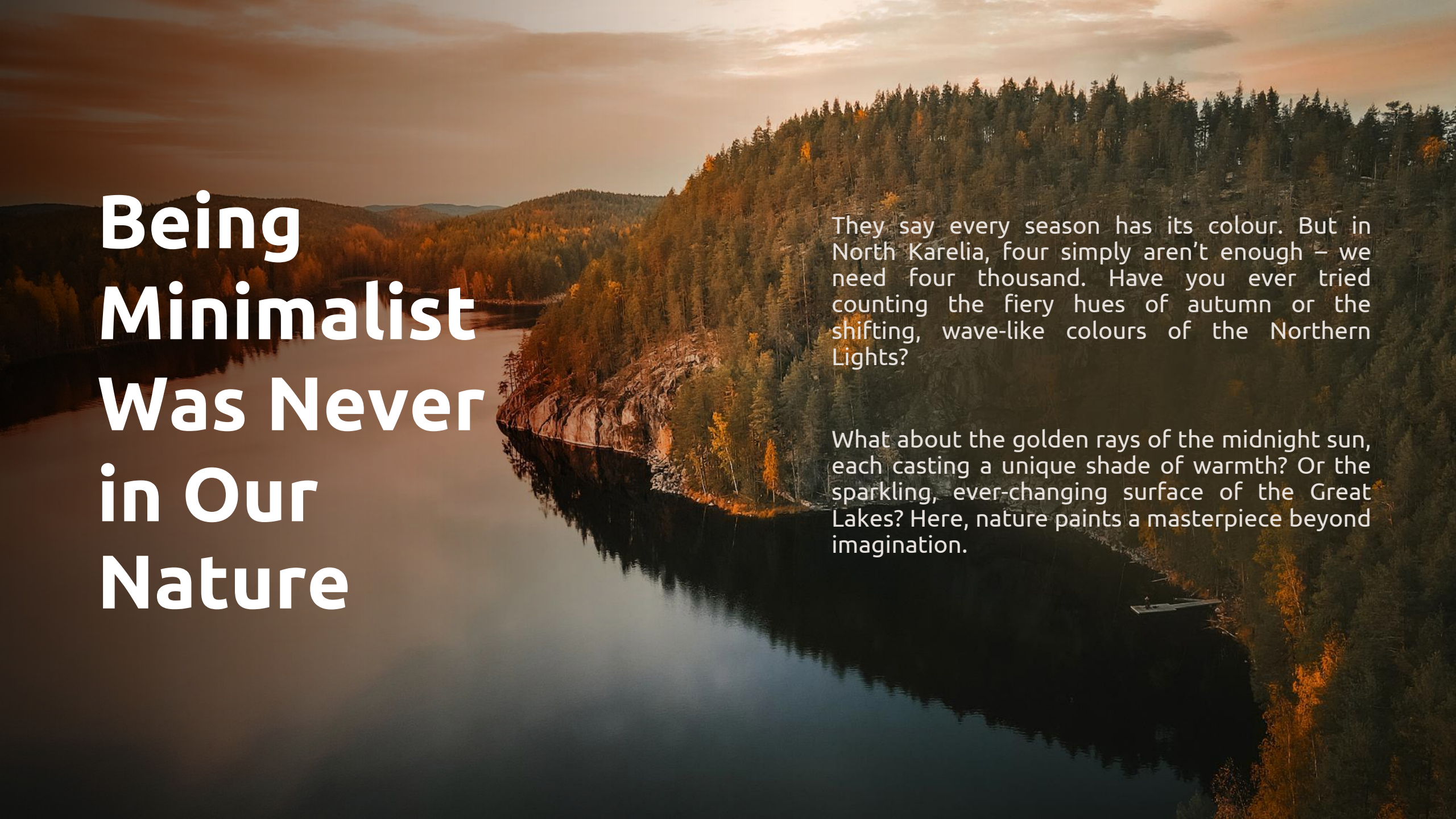
Welcome to North Karelia, Lakeland Finland

- North Karelia is **part of Europe's largest lake district and Finland's easternmost county**.
- It is home to **4 national parks** and one of **Finland’s national landscapes**: Koli national park.
- **UNESCO's Biosphere Reserve**

Reasons to visit North Karelia:

- Colourful and distinct seasons
- Land of stories
- Karelian heritage, traditions and hospitality
- Finnish luxury: saunas & lakeside holidays
- Unique Karelian culture





Being Minimalist Was Never in Our Nature

They say every season has its colour. But in North Karelia, four simply aren’t enough – we need four thousand. Have you ever tried counting the fiery hues of autumn or the shifting, wave-like colours of the Northern Lights?

What about the golden rays of the midnight sun, each casting a unique shade of warmth? Or the sparkling, ever-changing surface of the Great Lakes? Here, nature paints a masterpiece beyond imagination.

This is Where The Story Begins

North Karelia is more than just a tale – it’s a collection of stories, both ancient and new. It is the birthplace of the Finns, the land where the timeless story of our nation began.

You can hear these stories echoing in the rugged frontiers and resonating in the strings of the kantele. They thunder beneath your feet and beat within the steadfast heart of the bedrock. They sing through the voices of strong Karelian women and guide your steps along the paths once traveled by ancient storytellers.

Here, every moment becomes part of the story. Come and discover it for yourself.

Meet the Friendliest People Of The World’s Happiest Country



In North Karelia, hospitality is not just a gesture, but a way of life. Whether you’re exploring Karelian heritage or authentic culture with locals, or tasting generations-old recipes, you’ll feel the warmth of Karelian hospitality.

Here every welcome is heartfelt – and every table filled with tradition. Food is at the heart of Karelian culture, from the iconic karjalanpiirakka (Karelian pastries) to tasty stews.

Sharing a meal here isn’t just about eating – it’s about connecting, celebrating, and savoring the flavors of the region.

Disconnect To Reconnect In North Karelia

Do you feel how time slows down, and the world feels a little quieter?

In North Karelia you'll leave behind the distractions of modern life and rediscover what truly matters.

Immerse yourself in an authentic Karelian experience – whether it's the stillness of a lakeside cottage, swimming in the great lakes or enjoying the untouched beauty of the wilderness.

Nothing Quite Like a Karelian Kind

In North Karelia, it’s the kind people who leave the biggest impression. Warm, welcoming, and wonderfully original, Karelians have a spirit all their own. We’ll greet you with kindness, share stories as rich as our landscapes, and invite you to experience traditions that have stood the test of time. Come meet the people of North Karelia – because there’s truly nothing quite like a Karelian kind!



Places of interest



Koli National Park
The most iconic landscape of Finland.



Kolovesi National Park
Habitat of rare Saimaa ringed seal & ancient rock paintings.



Bomba, the Karelian Village
Authentic Karelian architecture.

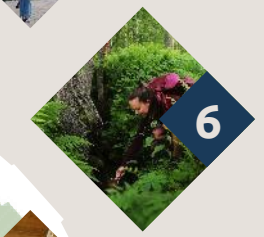


Patvinsuo National Park
Largest national park in southern Finland & habitat of bears.





Valamo and Lintula
Iconic Orthodox monasteries.



Petkeljärvi National Park
Rare ice age ridges and WW2 battle locations.



Parppeinvaara Rune Singer's Village
Traditional Karelian hilltop village with museum and a restaurant.



Ruunaa rapids
The best white water rafting location in Finland.



Outokumpu Old Mine
One of a kind unique and historic mining museum.

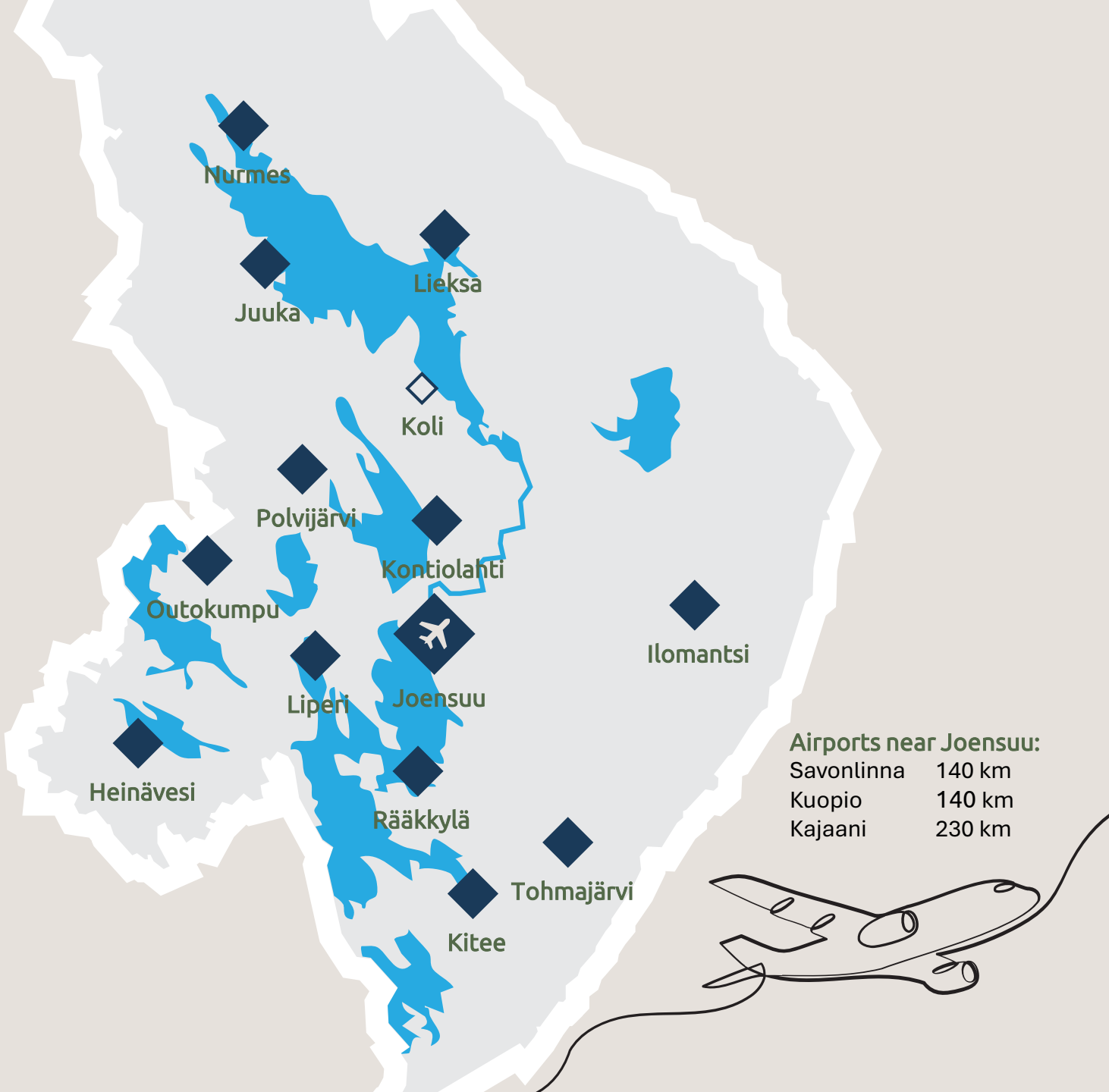


Kontiolahti Biathlon Stadium
Biathlon World Cup.

Accommodation capacity

Joensuu **1960** Original Sokos Hotel Kimmel, Boutique Hotel Lietsu	**Lieksa** **1212** Break Sokos Hotel Koli, Break Sokos Hotel Koli Kylä, Tarina-aho	**Kontiolahti** **472** Venejoen Piilo, Sampon Mökit
Nurmes **1286** Break Sokos Bomba, Hyvärilä, Guesthouse Pihlajapuu, Laitalan Lomat	**Liperi** **230** Ollilan Tupa, Leveälahti Cottages	**Kitee** **820** Ruoke Holiday Village, Karjalan Helmi
Outokumpu **40** Kyykerin Kartano	**Ilomantsi** **350** Guesthouses Mantan Majatalo, Möhkön Rajakartano, Kuuksenkaari	**Heinävesi** **222** Valamo Monastery, Police jail cell
Juuka **90** Koli Freetime	**Polvijärvi** **92** Saarila Farm Accommodation	**Tohmajärvi** **159** Villa Valkea, Itärajan helmi
Rääkkylä **118** Villa Ruusula, Koivuniemi Camping, Paksuniemi, Karelia Cottages	**7000** **Total amount of beds**	

Beds in registered accommodation (more than 20 beds): **6253**
Beds in unregistered accommodation (less than 20 beds): **798**



Airports near Joensuu:

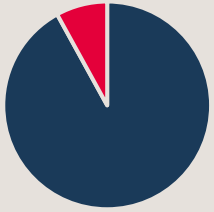
Savonlinna	140 km
Kuopio	140 km
Kajaani	230 km

Key figures of North Karelia

515000
overnights in 2025

Our key source markets:
DACH, Benelux
UK, France, Spain and Italy

Objective:
1 M
Overnights by 2030



Source markets
92 % domestic
8 % international

112 €

Average room rate per room per night in 2025

(vs Lapland 179 € per room per night)



7000
total bed capacity

TOP 10

International Markets
Germany, Sweden, The Netherlands, Switzerland, Italy, USA, France, Estonia, UK, Austria

32 M€
Accommodation Income in 2025

53% of Europeans stay between

May-Sep

Recognitions & awards

- The most authentic cultural and nature tourism destination 2026 – European Travel Awards
- Venejoen Piilo – Best accommodation of the year 2025 (Scandinavian Outdoor Group)
- Karhun Talo Pilgrimage around Lake Pielinen – Best outdoor product for individuals 2025 (Scandinavian Outdoor Group)
- Koli – Outdoor travel destination of the year 2023 (Scandinavian Outdoor Group)
- Break Sokos Hotel Bomba – best hotel in Finland 2024 (Finnish Travel Gala)
- Korvenkota smoke sauna – best sauna in Finland 2024 (influencer award)
- Äksyt Ämmät foodie tour - best food tourism product 2015 (Hungry for Finland competition)
- Särkiselkä - best beach in Finland 2022 (MeNaiset, Finland's largest women's weekly magazine)

EUBusiness news
European Travel Awards 2026
VisitKarelia
North Karelia
Most Authentic Cultural & Nature Tourism Destination 2026

Lietsu Boutique Aparthotel
Top 3 nominee for best hotel in Finland in 2026 (Finnish Travel Gala) and Karelia à la carte company of the year 2025

Äksyt Ämmät DMC
Top 3 nominee for best specialist tour operator in Finland in 2026 (Finnish Travel Gala)

Hermanni Vineyard
Only Nordic vineyard in Fifty Places to Drink Wine Before You Die 2026

Venejoen Piilo
Best accommodation of the year 2025 (Scandinavian Outdoor Group)

Karhun Talo Pilgrimage around Lake Pielinen
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Koli
Outdoor travel destination of the year 2023 (Scandinavian Outdoor Group)

Sustainability

Responsibility and sustainable development are key themes in Finland's tourism strategy and also one of the key goals in tourism development in North Karelia.

Many of our companies have achieved Sustainable Travel Finland certificate or are on their way to achieve one. You will find STF certified companies marked with Sustainable Travel Finland label in VisitKarelia's product manual.

For more information, please visit:
Stories of Sustainability in North Karelia | VisitKarelia



unesco
Biosphere Reserve

Biosphere Reserve

North Karelia is home to **one of the two UNESCO designated biosphere reserves in Finland**.

Established in 1992, it is the **first biosphere area in Finland** to be acknowledged in UNESCO's the Man and the Biosphere programme of 784 (2025) biospheres worldwide.

Biosphere reserves are **learning sites for sustainable development**, whose mission is to promote the conservation of biodiversity and cultural heritage, as well as the sustainable development of livelihoods through the active participation of local communities.

Great places to experience the nature of North Karelia Biosphere Reserve include **Koli, Patvinsuo and Petkeljärvi National Parks; Ruunaa Hiking area** or some of the nature reserves, like **Koivusuo or Kesonsuo**.

Biosphere sustainable development partnership network enhances opportunities for regional sustainable development. Partners set their own sustainable development goals and commit to them. You will find biosphere partners marked with below logo in VisitKarelia's product manual.

POHJOIS-KARJALAN BIOSFÄÄRIALUE
North Karelia Biosphere Reserve

Joensuu airport



Population of North Karelia: 162,000

Operation: year round

Flight time from Helsinki: 65 mins
(distance by ground: 440 km)

Joensuu airport is part of Finavia network

- Flexibility with slots and arrangements

Ground handler: Joen Service Oy.

Joensuu is uniquely positioned in the heart of North Karelia allowing easy access to all its and Lakeland destinations.

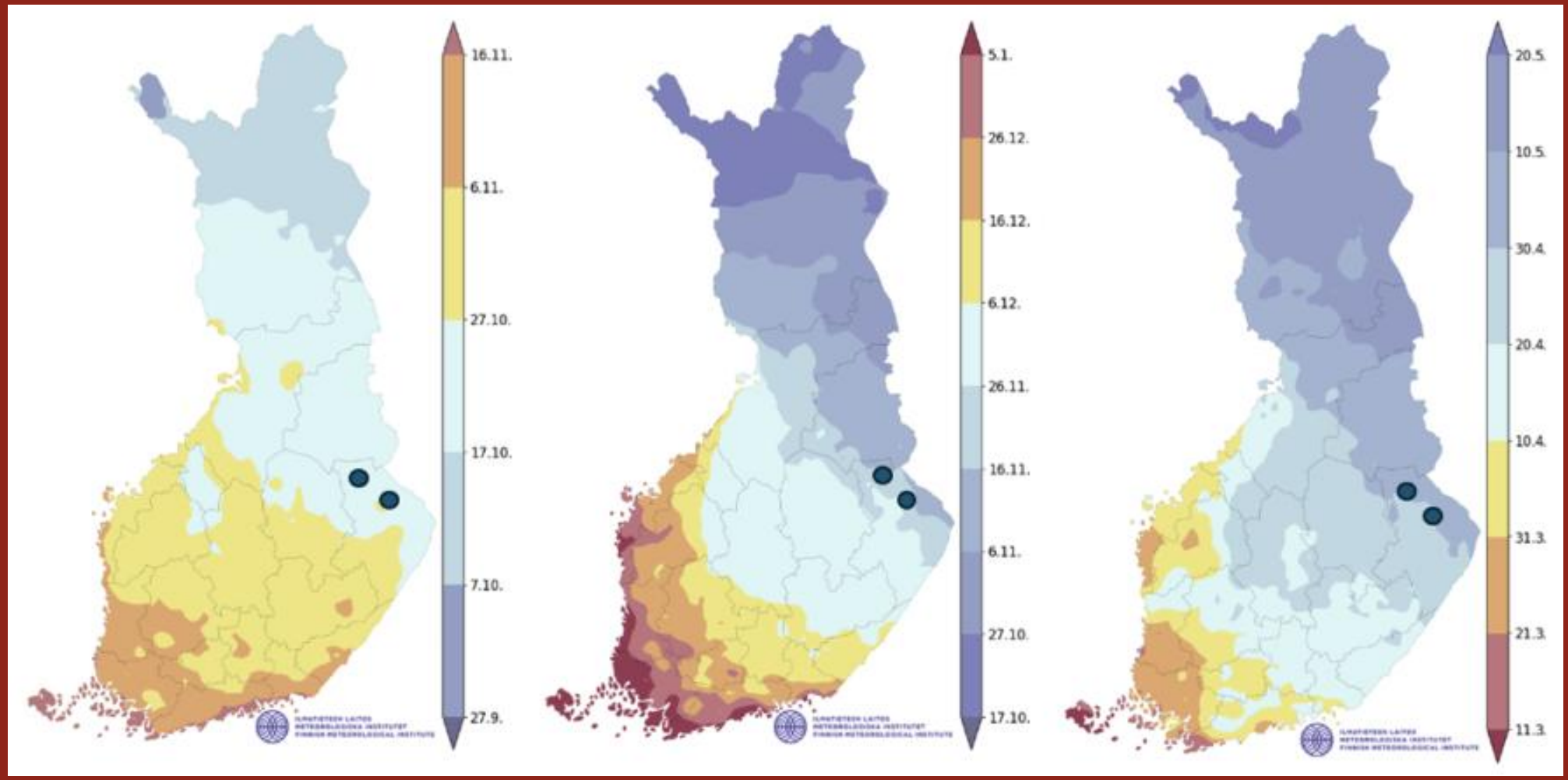


Best time to visit North Karelia

	CHANCES OF AURORA	SNOW COVER	DAY LIGHT HOURS	ICE SWIMMING	WILD SWIMMING	HIKING & BIKING	FISHING & FORAGING	SNOWMOB. & HUSKIES	PRICE vs. AVERAGE	CROWDS & SEASON
JANUARY	Good	Great	5 -7 hrs	Yes	N/A	Snow		Great	Average	Low
FEBRUARY	Good	Great	8-10 hrs	Yes	N/A	Snow		Great	Average	Low
MARCH	Good	Good	10-13 hrs	Yes	N/A	Snow		Great	Average	Low
APRIL	N/A	Slight	13-16 hrs	Yes	N/A	Ground		Maybe	Lower	Low
MAY	N/A	N/A	17-19 hrs	N/A	Good	Ground		N/A	Lower	Shoulder
JUNE	N/A	N/A	19-20 hrs	N/A	Great	Ground		N/A	Higher	High
JULY	N/A	N/A	17-20 hrs	N/A	Great	Ground		N/A	Higher	High
AUGUST	Great	N/A	14-18 hrs	N/A	Great	Ground		N/A	Lower	High
SEPTEMBER	Great	N/A	12-14 hrs	Maybe	Good	Ground		N/A	Average	Shoulder
OCTOBER	Good	Slight	9-12 hrs	Yes	N/A	Ground		N/A	Average	Shoulder
NOVEMBER	Good	Good	6-8 hrs	Yes	N/A	Snow		N/A	Lower	Low
DECEMBER	Good	Great	4-5 hrs	Yes	N/A	Snow		Great	Lower	Low

North Karelia region is a snow-proof destination

North Karelia is known for its distinct four seasons and reliable winter snow. The upper parts of North Karelia have about the same amount of snow as Rovaniemi. See the snow cover map for the Bomba and Koli destinations, based on 30-year historical data.



Typical date for first snow cover **Starting date of permanent snow cover** **Ending date of permanent snow cover**

8 reasons to visit North Karelia

Experience snowfilled winter in Koli & Bomba
(pages 12-13)

Stay in unique accommodation
(pages 16-17 and 24)

Experience local Karelian culture
(pages 7, 9, 11, 13, 17, 19)

Cruise through the Great Lakes of North Karelia
(pages 8-9)

Taste, forage and learn to make local delicacies
(pages 18-19 and 21)

Holiday with a purpose to conserve the Saimaa seal
(pages 14-15)

Live like a local and enjoy sauna & 'mökki' by a lake
(pages 22-23)

Join one of our many events
(pages 26-27)

LAVITA IBU **WORLD CUP BIATHLON 2026/2027**

KONTIOLAHTI

26.–29.11.2026



The next LaVita IBU World Cups Biathlon

in Kontiolahti, Finland:

26.–29.11.2026

7.–12.12.2027

Elämys DMC offers travel packages to World Cup.

www.kontiolahtibiathlon.com

We’re Here to help you

We at North **Karelia's destination marketing organisation VisitKarelia** are here to help you as a travel trade with all things North Karelian. Whether you are searching for the best attractions, pre-planned routes or hidden highlights, our team can help you find a suitable solution to your customers.

If you need help with **product development, supplier contacts or marketing material**, do not hesitate to get in touch. We also organise **joint marketing campaigns** and organise **fam trips**.

Come and experience the Soul of Finland in Finnish Lakeland!

Contact us at

- visitkarelia@businessjoensuu.fi
- or by telephone: +358 010 419 8016







Terhi Millar
Development Manager

terhi.millar@businessjoensuu.fi
+358 50 343 2095

Heidi Lemmetyinen
Project manager

Heidi.lemmetyinen@businessjoensuu.fi
+358 50 338 5151

Marianne Markkanen
Marketing expert

marianne.markkanen@businessjoensuu.fi
+358 50 346 0568

Thank you & we look forward to hearing from you soon!

VisitKarelia