

# What is Educational Travel?



Visit Finland

#### PUBLISHER:

Business Finland/Visit Finland  
Porkkalankatu 1, PL 358  
FI-00180 Helsinki, Finland  
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#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Special thanks to everyone who gave their valuable time and expertise to create this guide!  
Arctic Travel Boutique: Tuija Sulkinoja; AuroraXplorer: Yan Dong; Business Finland/Visit  
Finland: Aster Lai, Anne Lind, Danye Liu, Shigeyoshi Noto, David Wu; Business Finland: Jukka  
Hahlanterä, Gurpreet Kalsi, Jani Toivanen; Finnish National Agency for Education: Lauri  
Tuomi; IDEAS Trip: Lily Zhao; KOULU Group: Jonna Holopainen, Antti Kaskinen;  
Let's Talk: Sean Carnegie-Brown; Ministry of Education and Culture: Jouni Kangasniemi;  
Oivanki Outdoor Education Centre: Riitta Laulajainen; Tytyrin koulu: Erna Huhtala; Vuokatti  
Sport Resort: Kristi Loukusa.

#### LAYOUT: SEK

#### PRINT: GRANO

2018

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# What is Educational Travel?

Finland is known and noted for its learning system and modern curriculum, which have led to our country having a substantial status in the global PISA rankings.

This success has attracted a new type of international traveller to Finland: One who travels here to learn about the Finnish education system. Such travellers include education professionals; government and municipal education officials; education company representatives; principals and teachers; and even school children coming for an educational camp to try the Finnish education style for themselves. The interest is often focused on a specific strength identified as something that differentiates the Finnish system; such as phenomenal and experimental learning, and utilising nature as a learning environment.

Educational travel differs from leisure travel, in particular, because it requires collaboration from both public and private sector participants. This guidebook shows how education travel typically combines a multidisciplinary team of professionals in order to provide the experience expected by the travellers.

To support this multidisciplinary collaboration, this guidebook hopes to offer some perspectives, tools, and tried and tested best practices. Our wish is that this guidebook will

inspire collaborators to come together to develop high quality education travel products. These products should have a clear focus on particular unique national, as well as local, strengths, which attract the selected customer segments. This will allow the industry to expand outside the traditional travel seasons to include year round opportunities.

This guidebook also provides market information from some of the key international educational travel markets, namely China, Hong Kong, South Korea, and the Gulf region, that have recently shown increasing interest in Finland as a travel destination. In these markets, Business Finland can also provide networking support for all the different participants.

I wish you increased success within educational travel!

**Anne Lind**  
Project Manager  
*Business Finland/Visit Finland*

# Education



# Travel



## PUBLIC SECTOR

Minedu  
Finnish National  
Agency for  
Education

Universities  
Science centres  
Camp centres  
Sports institutes

Schools  
Cities  
Municipalities  
Teachers

National parks  
Nature centres  
Nature guides

Travel sights  
Visit Region  
organizations  
Transportation

## PRIVATE SECTOR

Education companies

Councilors

Travel guides  
Interpreters  
Accommodation

Activities/  
experiences  
DMC/Incoming

# Finland is a Country to Learn From

The Finnish education system is enjoying international attention at the moment, and for good reason. Our system is internationally acclaimed for its excellent learning results. These are achieved thanks to highly educated professionals, the high quality content of our education system, the pedagogical way of managing schools, the trust within the school and within society, and in a wider context, the philosophy of continuous learning throughout life. The equal education system offers everyone opportunities for schooling and individual support, when required.

The desire for a deeper dialogue is fuelled by common challenges: education reforms are going on in many countries and the digital revolution is changing education rapidly, among many other topics. The importance of literacy, learning new things and vocational education are topics everywhere.

Because we do many things differently to the rest of the world, our reputation has spread and aware-

ness is growing. This also results in a growing interest in meeting us Finns and visiting the place where it all happens. The requests for deeper conversation are coming from all over the world, at the moment, especially from the Gulf region, China, South Korea, the USA, and Latin America, as well as Asian and African countries.

We believe in learning through dialogue, we, ourselves, also want to be open to new ideas. The Finnish public sector supports travelling in relation to the topic of education and the exchange of best practices as part of their work in international forums. Many international programmes and collaborations also include conversations with peers and visits to local institutions. For example, educational visits are often organised as part of EU, UNESCO and OECD meetings. We ourselves annually host around 80-90 high-level delegations to Finland around educational topics.

Along with the interest, educational travel is also increasing. It is important that visitors are provided with a seamless and satisfying expe-

rience on their visit to Finland, and that the targets for the visits are met. This requires common rules, responsibility from all parties involved, as well as close cooperation between companies and the public sector. This way, we will have educational travel services that meet the needs

of society, generate income, increase international understanding, and Finland's country brand value.

**Jouni Kangasniemi**

Head of Development

*Ministry of Education and Culture*

**The desire for a deeper dialogue is fuelled by common challenges: education reforms are going on in many countries and the digital revolution is changing education rapidly, among many other topics.**

# Education Finland

## - Growth Programme for Education Export

The Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI) has been commissioned to boost Finnish education export. The new growth programme – Education Finland – will support businesses, higher education institutions and other education and training providers in expanding in the international market. The programme is one of Team Finland’s growth programmes and financed by the Ministry of Education and Culture as well as the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment.

In 2014, the turnover of Finnish education export was about 260 million euros. However, the potential is much more significant. The Government programme has set a target to increase the turnover to 350 million euros by the end of 2018.

Enterprises, universities, and vocational education and training institutions are the main operators in education export. Digital learning solutions designed by Finnish com-

panies have already gained international success. Finnish excellence in teacher training has been sold to countries such as Saudi Arabia, Colombia, Indonesia, and South Africa. Schools employing Finnish teaching methods and teachers have been established in countries such as Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. Finnish expertise in curricula development and early childhood education and care has also attracted international interest.

Since the beginning of 2018, the vocational education and training reform has allowed the export of vocational qualifications. The most interesting education products include qualifications in entrepreneurship, management, metal work and machinery, the processing industry, social and health care, electrical engineering and automation technology, engineering, and product development. Potential for education export can be found at all levels –

liberal adult education institutions as well as high schools have also expressed interest in initiating education export.

Innovative education export companies are already gaining international recognition. Digital learning systems, learning content, and also games have started to find wider audiences. Innovative teachers have established many of these companies, or are supporting the companies as partners.

Globally, education export is big business, and the competition is tough. Finland still has some catching up to do, as many rival countries have been working on education export for decades. Nevertheless,

Finland’s competitive edge arises from its high quality education, excellent learning results, and the combination of pedagogical and digital expertise.

Moreover, education export has a clear impact on educational travel; More and more international education professionals want to come here to experience in person the country that is considered to be the superpower of education.

### **Lauri Tuomi**

Programme Leader  
*The Finnish National Agency  
for Education*

## Innovative education export companies are already gaining international recognition.

# The Link Between the Finnish Education System and Educational Travel


**Again and again, the Finnish education system is presented as the reason why international education professionals are interested in participating in trips to Finland. What should you know about the Finnish education system to be able to give a relevant introduction during an educational trip? In other words, what are the particular features and advancements within the Finnish system, which are considered to be the main reasons for the excellent learning results?**

In short, the education system in Finland consists of early childhood education and care, pre-primary education, basic education, upper secondary education, and higher education. Moreover, adult education is available at all education levels.

International guests are interested in all levels of education. Therefore, when planning an educational trip the best practice is to do what we preach; by taking into account the diverse profiles of the guests and hosts, and to plan the visits and discussions in a way that will serve the interests of every participant. In effect, when you know the existing level of understanding and consequent expectations of your guests, it is easier to plan and implement an interesting programme. Furthermore, for those

of us who have experienced the Finnish system, it is also important to update our own knowledge, since the system has evolved significantly over the past few decades, and continues to do so.

The particularities of the Finnish education system are driven by values such as trust, continuous development of the quality of learning, and when it comes to development of the curriculum, consideration of the specific needs of each individual student, as well as every school. The autonomy of teachers, and the reinforcement of the self-direction of students are seen as key features for the success of the Finnish education system.



**Elsewhere the focus is more on memorising information rather than providing children with the means to understand various phenomena.**

## Early Childhood Education and Pre-primary Education Support the Development and Learning Abilities of a Child

Early childhood education and care (ECEC), and pre-primary education, consist of the teaching and care provided for children prior to the start of basic school education. Primarily, such education is organised in day care centres and family care. The Finnish ECEC is based on an integrated approach to care, education and teaching, the so-called “educare” model, and it has developed towards an increasingly goal-oriented direction. The National Curriculum Guidelines on Early Childhood Education and Care in Finland, approved by the Finnish National Agency for Education, guide the planning and implementation of the contents of ECEC and function as the basis for drawing up the local ECEC curricula. Each child receives an individual ECEC plan, designed in cooperation between the day care centre, parents, and the local parental clinic. Learning through play is considered an essential part of the Finnish ECEC.

Pre-primary education is provided for children in the year preceding the start of compulsory basic education. The aim is towards a unified continuum stretching from early childhood education and care to basic educa-

tion. Pre-primary education is provided free of charge, and since 2015, it has been compulsory for all children in Finland.

Pre-primary education is designed to support the development and learning abilities of each child while reinforcing their social skills and self-confidence through play and positive learning experiences. Another main goal is to detect any developmental disorders and, consequently, provide possibilities for early intervention, in order to prevent later difficulties in the child's development and learning.

The Finnish emphasis on creativity and play intrigues international education experts: Elsewhere the focus is more on memorising information rather than providing children with the means to understand various phenomena. Similarly, the smaller class sizes, the utilisation of nature and other learning environments, and the importance attached to time spent outdoors are considered interesting.



## The Basic Education Syllabus Is Completed During Compulsory Education

The nine-year basic education, or comprehensive school, is compulsory for all children. Basic education, including books and other learning material, is provided free of charge to every child aged between 7 and 16. This egalitarian and non-selective nature of Finnish basic education is remarkable, and therefore thought-provoking, for international guests. In developing countries, in particular, even having the opportunity of an education is highly dependent on the social status, profession, and income level of the child's parents. Furthermore, the wide range of related services that are also offered free of charge, such as daily school meals, transportation to and from school, childhood health care, and not least the right of those with disabilities to receive the equipment and support they need for learning free of charge, continue to astonish guests from other countries.

Basic education assumes both an educative role, as well as a role in upbringing; a task conducted in cooperation with parents. Consequently, the broader objective of basic education is to support a pupils' development as a person and into an ethical responsible member of society, and to equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary

for life. This emphasis on the child's membership of society and multiplicity of skills differs significantly from many other countries, where the focus remains on teaching knowledge and facts. Moreover, the recent trend towards catering for personal development becomes manifest in schools in the form of individual learning plans, and in the shift from a teacher-centred to a pupil-centred teaching and learning style. Over time, Finnish children of all ages take on more and more personal responsibility for their own learning.


Recent reforms of the curriculum have taken into account many aspects of development at the local and societal level. The organisers of education are advised to adjust the curriculum to match the local and national strategic development trends, while teachers are encouraged to develop the values and principles guiding their work environment based on their existing strengths. In practice, prioritising and organising the learning content, for example, according to the phenomenon-based approach, provides possibilities for more leisureed learning experiences, which facilitate the pupils' concentration. Additionally, increased focus has been placed on the meaningfulness of the learning experience for the



pupil, on supporting parents in the task of upbringing, and on the sustainable development of society.

Currently, there are about 2,500 schools providing basic education in Finland. Local municipalities orga-

nise most of the schools, and less than two per cent of comprehensive school pupils study in a private or state-organised school.



**International guests are particularly interested in certain aspects of education, such as STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics), entrepreneurship and work life skills, or international education**

## General and Vocational Upper Secondary Education as Alternatives after Basic Education

After completing their basic education, young people can choose to continue their educational path either in general upper secondary education (“lukio” in Finnish) or in vocational education and training. Both paths can lead to higher education.

As its name suggests, general upper secondary education provides general education without qualifying the students for any particular occupation. At the end of the general upper secondary education, the students take a national matriculation examination. Those who pass the matriculation examination are eligible to apply for further studies at universities, universities of applied sciences and vocational institutions. International guests are particularly interested in certain aspects of education, such as STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics), entrepreneurship and work life skills, or international education, as well as possibilities for friendship school cooperation.

Students who have gained a vocational upper secondary qualification have the basic vocational skills in a particular field and the required professional competence to begin their practical work life. After gaining a vocational upper secondary qualification, it is possible to study for further and specialist vocational qualifications. Instruction in vocational institutions is very practical and designed to

satisfy the needs of the labour market. On-the-job training at workplaces is an essential part of the studies.

The current reform of the Finnish vocational education system reflects the general features of the Finnish education system, such as the design and implementation of individual study plans for every student. At present, the transformation in society is placing new demands on the skills of the workforce, and this reform is designed to dynamically anticipate and respond to those demands, while acknowledging the need for structural changes throughout the system and at the different levels. This resonates with the thinking of international experts, since the apparent necessity for reform of vocational education unites educational decision-makers all over the world. Furthermore, the management and organisation of the schools is interesting. Therefore, it is important to schedule time for such discussions during the visits, to provide opportunities for the hosts to learn as well and, consequently, the meetings make up a coordinated, interactive whole.

## The Finnish Higher Education System Comprises Universities and Universities of Applied Sciences

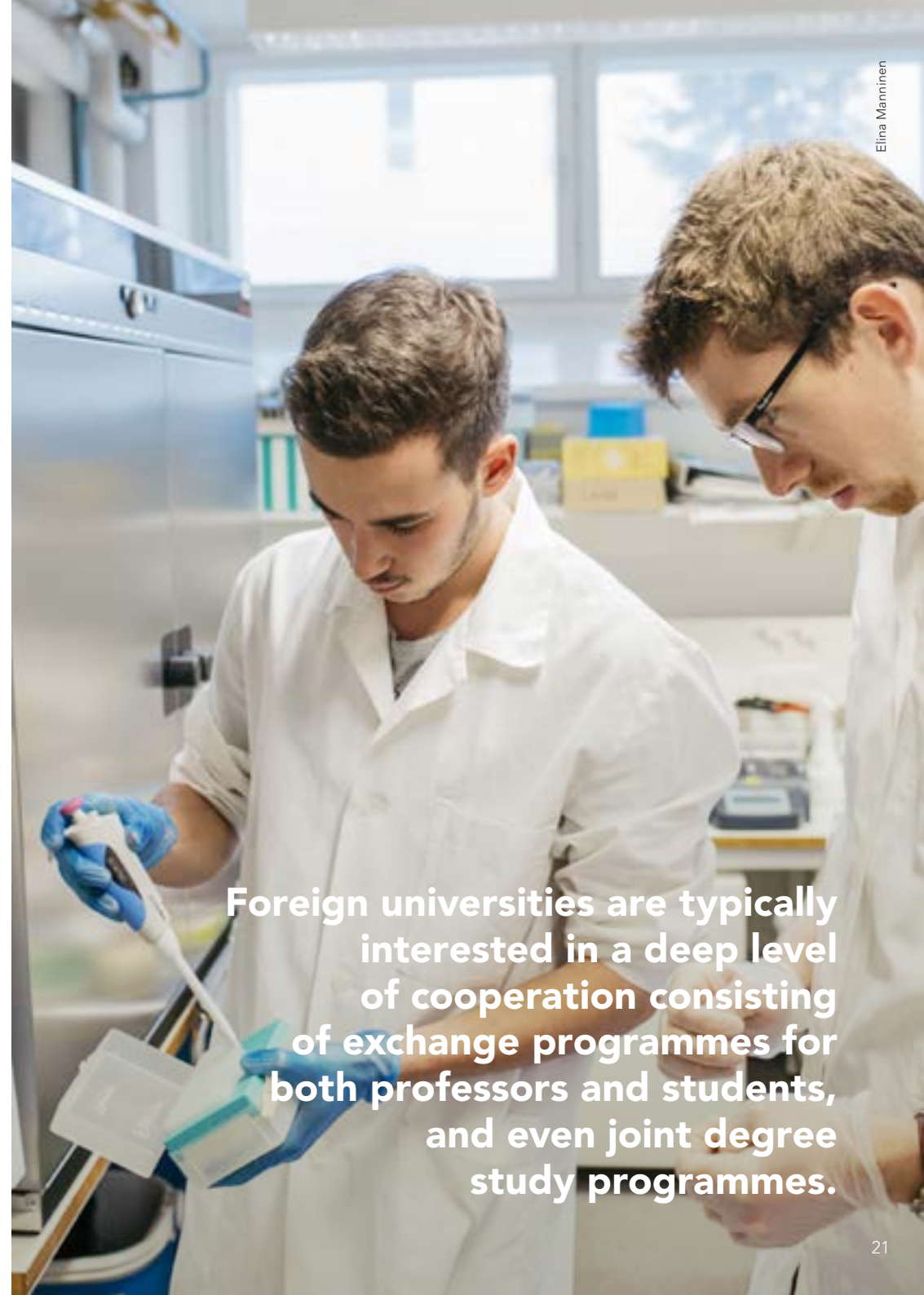
The mission of universities is to conduct scientific research and provide education based on it. Universities of applied sciences (UAS) provide more practical education that aims to respond to the needs of the labour market.

Universities, offering higher scientific and artistic education, award Bachelor's and Master's degrees as well as postgraduate degrees, i.e. licentiate and doctoral degrees. Universities of applied sciences award UAS Bachelor's degrees and UAS Master's degrees.

The target completion time for a Bachelor's degree at a university is three years and for a Master's degree two years on top of that. The completion of a UAS degree usually

takes between 3.5 and 4.5 years. The requirement to study a Master's degree at a university of applied sciences is a UAS Bachelors' degree or another suitable degree and at least three years' work experience since the completion of the previous degree.

In general, many Finnish universities are perceived to be of a higher quality than their official international ranking suggests. Foreign universities are typically interested in a deep level of cooperation consisting of exchange programmes for both professors and students, and even joint degree study programmes.



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## Adult Education and Training in the Spirit of Lifelong Learning

Adult education and training encompasses education leading to a qualification, degree studies, training preparing for competence-based qualifications, apprenticeship training, further and continuing education, updating and extending professional skills, studies in subjects relating to citizenship skills, working life skills and society, and studies in different crafts as well as subjects with a recreational basis.

Education and training is provided by educational institutions, which mainly provide education for young people, as well as by educational institutions providing only adult education, and even private companies,

and workplaces (staff-development).

This multifaceted quality of adult education and the idea of lifelong learning also resonate with an international audience. Moreover, they continue to echo the thinking at the heart of the Finnish education system, which suggests that the fast-paced transformation in society constantly shifts the demands of working life so rapidly that education and training obtained at a young age may not equip a person with all the skills and competencies demanded of them during the entire length of their working life. Awareness of this is becoming more and more common around the globe.

## The Role and Education of Teachers

During the past few years, the Finnish education system has become known for teachers placing the students, or, to use a more current word, the learners, into the centre of their work. The key role of teachers and other teaching personnel in helping Finland achieve top-class international learning results had already been acknowledged previously.

In Finland, teacher training has been part of academic university studies since the 1970's. The high level of training is seen as necessary because teachers assume a highly autonomous

professional status within the frame of the national curriculum. During their education, future teachers are encouraged to develop their own professional identity by observing the work of their colleagues, and by testing out and applying different methods. Likewise, they are inspired to encounter every pupil with an open mind, and show respect to his or her individual humanity, still under development. After all, in spite of the distinction in their social definition, both the teacher and the pupil are lifelong learners.

One of the operating principles of



Finnish schools is that the quality of teaching is defined within the interaction between teachers, pupils, and the parents. The key supporting value is trust: trust between teachers and the principal, among teachers, and between teachers, children, and their parents.

Teachers have the main responsibility for monitoring the personal growth of the pupils as part of their everyday work. The municipalities, for their part, observe the operational quality of their schools against standards that meet with local objectives. Finally, the

teachers have responsibility for their own professional and lifelong learning.

International guests are often interested in observing how the so called reverse learning happens in practice. They might also try to observe how well trust is realised between different members of the school staff. The guests are often amazed by the autonomy of both the teachers and the pupils.

# Physical, Virtual, Social and Mental Learning Environments

The learning environment provides a framework setting for the interaction between teachers and pupils, and amongst pupils. Additionally, the outdoor environment can influence the design of interior learning environments. Two recent trends in the Finnish education system, the move towards individualism in learning on the one hand, and the proactive role of teachers in their own in-service development on the other, are reflected in the fresh approach to learning environments.

Age or education level aside, competence development has become one of the central objectives of the Finnish education system. Within learning environment design, this is taken into account by considering which competences are supposed to be developed, how the subsequent development can be evaluated, and how the learning experience or environment can be enriched.

The elements of a learning environment consist of the available resources, such as the physical space and the possibilities offered by virtual learning environments, along with the teacher's professional ability to take advantage of them. Additionally, mental factors and social relationships of both pupils and teachers are contemplated as part of the design process when creating an entity for studying and learning. At its best, phenomenon-based learning combines various learning contents

into broader themes, providing the opportunity to perceive the relationship between the parts and the whole, and the interconnectedness between the different parts. In an open learning environment, the learner has significant autonomy and responsibility for his or her own learning, and both studying and learning are self-motivated. Recently, there has been increased emphasis on acquiring a new skill set, "the 21st century skills", which include critical thinking, problem solving skills, communication and social skills, and information reading skills, which are considered a significant part of learning. International guests are interested in visiting the new learning environments designed for the new curricula at schools and universities, but also, to see how Finns apply nature as a learning environment. The versatility of Finnish nature provides an array of endless opportunities from an international perspective, thanks to the four seasons, waterways, forests, and Arctic conditions. Furthermore, the proximity of nature in urban environments, along with agriculture and forestry provide rich experiences for educational tourists, as well.

The all-time favourite among international visitors is the Finnish school meal, which is provided free of charge for pupils right from when they start day care through to upper secondary school level. The school canteen is an experience to relish!





## Finland as an Educational Travel Destination

An International  
Perspective



## Wanted: Finnish Sister Schools for Chinese Schools

In China, development targets for the education system have been expanded: Parents want their children to learn not only academic skills but also skills needed for their future work life. Furthermore, understanding of the global business environment is being emphasized.

“The State Council, the Chinese Ministry of Education, and the Chinese tourism office have indicated the importance of educational travel; it is considered an important way of improving the abilities and skills of children and adults”, says **Danye Liu**, Visit Finland/Business Finland Representative for Beijing and Chongqing.

Teachers travel out of professional interest, and as part of their in-service education. “Finland is a preferred country for educator visits, thanks to the many Finnish delegations that have attended educational forums in China. As a result of this – and governmental collaboration agreements – Finland is considered a favourable destination country,” Danye Liu explains.

The educator trips are typically arranged as part of the cooperation between friendship cities, sister schools, universities, or teachers’ associations. Travel agencies usually arrange the practicalities, but the content of the trip is often managed directly. Currently, the reform of vocational education is topical in China, and Finland is considered an interesting source of perspectives on this subject. The lack of work life skills is one motivation for parents to reconsider how well the traditional academic education is preparing their children for the future.

International education travel is still a rather young industry in China. For example, school camp groups have been travelling abroad since outbound travel started to boom; first to English speaking countries to have the benefit of learning the lan-

guage. The Nordic countries are a new, interesting destination for children. Due to the high growth of this business, an increasing number of travel agencies have set up educational travel departments. However, the most successful companies are those who focus only on educational travel, with either a regional or thematic focus. Moreover, Chinese operators need to have a formal authorization to be able to arrange trips for the children travelling without their parents.

“Thus far, educational travel represents only a small fraction of Chinese outbound travel,” reminds **David Wu**, Director of *Business Finland/Visit Finland China* based in Shanghai. “However, children’s camps have very high potential, since nowadays the second child policy also increases the market.” Sister school programmes, for their part, make return visits and cultural exchanges possible.

“There is a significant demand for sister schools in China,” says **Yan Dong**, Director of *Education Services at AuroraXplorer*, a destination management company that also arranges school camps for Chinese children. “In addition to visiting the sister school, Chinese children would like to enjoy other travel destinations both within the school’s own region, and elsewhere in Finland, and possibly even in other Nordic countries.”

A school does not need to be located in a traditional travel destination in order to become a sister school. Furthermore, the sister school cooperation can attract visitors to parts of Finland less frequently visited

by international tourists. In China, public schools cooperate with private education agencies to arrange visits to the sister schools, because Chinese schools do not always have the resources to take care of the many details required for such a trip. This can be confusing for Finnish municipalities considering how to integrate private and public sector participants for the best possible outcome.

“Managing the increasing demand is the key to success,” emphasizes David Wu. “The demand is growing, but the quality of the services should continue to improve, as well. What Finland could and should offer is a set of mature service packages with clear price tags for teacher training, camp programmes, and classroom experiences, among others. We should be serious about how to manage expectations from partners and help potential business partners to grow.”

During the past few years, some concerns have been emerging regarding the competitive level of the education model in many Asian countries. Schools aiming for academic success measurable by exams are becoming curious about the reasons why Finland has gained an international reputation for high-quality education without a focus on tests and homework.

“The Hong Kong education professionals are wondering how the Finnish children can learn so fast. School starts at a later age, but still the learning results are good. This is a very interesting question for the highly competitive Asian countries,” declares **Aster Lai**, *Business*

*Finland Visit Finland Representative* for Hong Kong and South China. “In addition, the increased media coverage of the topic has raised interest among teachers and principals about visiting Finland to better understand the reasons behind this success, and to return to Hong Kong with more insight.”

Increased attention amongst opinion leaders and education professionals has also generated interest towards sending children to school camps in Finland. Tuition fees for private schools can be very high in Asian countries, and so all means are used to get the most out of the investment in education, both in and outside school. Camp programmes with STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) themes are particularly appreciated.

“School in China is extremely competitive. The parents and the schools want to send children abroad to learn as well,” Aster Lai elaborates. The children of wealthy parents attend school camps from the age of seven. At first, the children mostly travel within China, and later children from 10-13 years mainly travel within Asia, but by secondary school, at the latest, children attend camps all over the world. “The early self-confidence and independence of the Finnish children is highly appreciated. Due to the previous one child policy in China, the life of a child is well catered for, and they don’t always learn to do domestic chores, and through these, independent behaviour.”

“Finland is also considered a good destination because it is considered

very safe. Finns are surrounded by nature and there are ample opportunities for learning in the fresh, clean air outdoors. Finns are also appreciated because of their language skills; students and teachers speak good English, which is not the case in Germany or France, for example. The image of Finland in Asian countries is very positive at the moment, and the country is easily accessible from the key Asian countries. Finland has novelty value, as well, since other countries like New Zealand and the UK have already been offering camps for a long time.”

Finland has many places that Asians are keen to visit. “There is a genuine interest in visiting local schools, anywhere in the country. For the student groups, spending a couple of days joining a Finnish class is ideal. This way, the visits offer a great chance for Finns to meet Chinese children, get insight into each other’s culture, and do projects together. Contacts can continue after the actual camp is over, creating even lifelong friendships”, says Aster Lai.

## Topical in the People’s Republic of China and in Hong Kong:

Reform of vocational education

—

Competitiveness of the educational system

—

Work life skills

—

Sister school cooperation

—

Children’s school camps

**Chinese operators need to have a formal authorization to be able to arrange trips for the children travelling without their parents.**



# Creativity and Digitalization Generate Interest in South Korea



**The South Korean government is driving reforms within primary education: The aim is to increase creativity, proactive thinking, and participation of students in the learning process. Education is currently undergoing digitalisation, and programming will be a compulsory school subject in every school as of 2018. Furthermore, the reform of vocational education is one of the spearhead projects of the South Korean government.**

Educational travel from Korea has expanded to several levels. "The most popular type of educational travel entails school camps that focus on English language education, such as summer schools for both children and adults," describes **Jani Toivanen**, Food and travel coordinator at *Business Finland* South Korea elaborates: "Korean primary and secondary school teachers, pupils, principals, and other school personnel are also keen to travel to learn about the Finnish education system. Thematic educational travel is also popu-

lar. We have had inquiries for teacher education, and for school management and development. Interesting themes include coding, and STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics)."

The Finnish education system is widely recognized in Korea as the best in the world. It has gained generous media coverage, and therefore, generated interest amongst influencers. Several local education organisations are supporting the travel initiatives. For example, the Sungshin Women's University is sending a group of students

to Finland every year. Also, the Korea Foundation for the Advancement of Science & Creativity and the Korean Educational Development Institute, and other government-funded organisations, have indicated their interest towards these kind of trips.

Currently, the primary organisers of education travel are Korean tour operators. "It would be important to intentionally include Finnish parties, such as the receiving schools or institutions, and incoming operators or DMC's into the planning and execution of these trips. This way the trips would be as beneficial as possible for both parties - the guests and the hosts. Additionally, the availability of up-to-date presentation material in Korean would be very valuable," Toivanen emphasizes.

## Key words in South Korea

Digitalisation

—

Programming

—

Creativity

—

STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics)

—

Primary school reform

—

Vocational school reform

—

School management

—

Children's language trips

**Interesting themes include coding, and STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics).**



# Japan is Waking up to School Camps

Japanese tourists are a common sight in Finland, but in the field of educational travel the cooperation is only just beginning. "School camp programmes are a new phenomenon. However, the business is likely to grow in the near future, especially during the summer holiday season, as Japanese parents start to look for opportunities to give their children international experiences," says Shigeyoshi Noto, Representative of *Business Finland/Visit Finland Japan*.

School excursions are already popular in Japan, though. "These are official school events, where students of the same grade travel to one or more destinations. Excursion groups can include

up to 400 participants!"

There is a growing demand in Japan for higher education and long-term study programmes, such as MBA courses, and at postdoctoral levels.

"In addition, all kinds of trips designed for student groups are becoming increasingly popular, such as those related to language study, student exchange programmes, or thematic study trips." Moreover, many Japanese teachers would like to visit Finland and experience the Finnish education system for themselves. "These could either be individual travellers or small groups of teachers organised by Japanese local government or education organisations."

Successful initiatives from Finland have already reached Japan, says **Shigeyoshi Noto**. "At the moment, the Attractive Oulu Region project, which started in June 2016, is actively promoting educational tourism in the Japanese market. The main products in this project are Educational Tourism, Industrial Tourism, and Nature Tourism.

**This project has successfully laid a foundation for cooperation and commitment between public and private sector participants, and through that, created a solid offering for the international market."**

Finland is well-known in Japan, and the very same reasons why the Japanese enjoy Finland in general apply also to educational travel. Major travel agencies have educational travel departments able to serve the growing demand. "Finland is the closest European destination to Japan, and is

served by an extensive flight network through Finnair and Japan Airlines. The Japanese people consider Finns to be friendly, and the country is known to have four rich seasons, with no need to worry about natural disasters. When you add to this the excellent reputation of Finnish education, there clearly seems to be a good basis for potential growth."

## Key topics in Japan

School camps are only just beginning to interest the Japanese

—

School excursions are already very common

—

Safety ranks highly, and should be capitalised on as a key selling point

—

The existing demand for higher education

—

Opportunities for children to gain international experiences



# Indians Seek Cultural Enrichment and Adventurous Methods

Also in India, Finland is known for having one of the best education systems in the world, where every child is receiving the same quality of education. This equality is an interesting theme in India, since in Finland everyone attends a public school, regardless of their family background and income.

In India, educational travel is a well-established industry with professional tour operators. Already, some educational groups have visited Finland. Even Mr. **Manish Sisodia**, the *Delhi Deputy Chief Minister* and his delegation have already visited Finland twice to better understand the Finnish education system, and to consider how India can adopt a similar learning culture in their public school system. Thus, the dialogue is opening up at a political level, too.

"Travel programmes, which include significant insights into the Finnish educational system, are in great demand in India," says **Gurpreet Kalsi**, Office Manager of *Business Finland Delhi*. "This demand focuses on training programmes with faculty and school visits, and deepening the understanding of the education system. We believe that the Finnish system, which is considered to be state of the art, will provide new perspectives for developing the education system in India."

"Based on our experiences thus far, those visits, which include meetings and experience-sharing sessions, or provide contacts and insights, are true eye-openers for the participants," explains Gurpreet Kalsi. "The participants wish to apply their learning in schools and universities back home in India."

Education is an important instrument in developing a country such as India. "Most of the current inquiries are generated from tier two and three cities, which focus on educational travel and programmes," Gurpreet Kalsi elaborates. "New

themes to explore include nature, adventure, well-being, and exposure to new learning technologies. In India, EduTech and EduGaming stand out as the key selling products, as well as apprenticeship experience, skills development, and knowledge exchange."

## In demand in India:

Deep understanding of the education system

—

Apprenticeship learning

—

Skills development

—

Knowledge exchange

—

EduTech

—

EduGaming



# Innovations in Focus in the Gulf Region

Every country in the Gulf region has created its own national vision, all sharing a common aim towards an innovation society. Education has been assigned a key instrumental role in this development process. Consequently, even the decision-makers in the Gulf countries have turned their eyes to Finland: the country has a strong reputation as an innovation society, with its famous education structure as the foundation.

"Innovation has become the key theme within education travel in the Gulf region. There is a desire to learn how the Finnish innovation platforms are built and how they work. The education expertise and education environments are also attractive topics here," says Mr. **Jukka Hahlanterä**, Head of *Middle East/Business Finland*. "We receive requests from both the public and the private sectors: the departments of the Ministry of

Education and the Ministry of Finance, as well as from public schools and private education companies."

In the United Arab Emirates, there are separate schools for Arab children, for Indian children, and international schools, all of which have shown an interest in educator visits. "In the private international schools the children of the expatriates are joined by children of high-ranking local parents," explains Ms. **Tuija Sulkinoja**,

CEO of a Finnish incoming agency *Arctic Travel Boutique*. "Camp groups from such schools set special requirements for the camp destinations, as some of the children may have their personal bodyguard with them. They need joint accommodation, while the presence of the security guards should not disturb the camp activities," Sulkinoja elaborates. "Furthermore, we need to arrange suitable times and locations for the prayer times, and consider up to six different diets in one group, and whether the ski teachers should be male or female or will we need both."

Personal relationships are extremely important in the Arab Emirates and elsewhere in the Gulf region, and relationships are at the heart of education travel, too: One main purpose of the visits is to develop and strengthen the relationships. "A well-planned trip, with educational content that meets expectations, also benefits these relationships and make the cooperation smoother in the future. Poor preparation and undesirable experiences during the visit can be harmful to the relationships and, in the worst-case scenario, even break the relationship."

"Finnish primary education, innovative learning environments, and teacher education are interesting themes in the Gulf region. To improve and speed up the process of education export, Finland should have an even greater ability to host guests in more destinations," Hahlanterä suggests. "Another key issue is to develop better collaborati-

on between the different parties, to create a holistic offering instead of one-off efforts. Hosting such visits provides an opportunity to understand the needs, the ways of doing education business, and the landscape of higher education within the Gulf region. Consequently, the business relationships, which are the key for successful business over here, can be strengthened."

## Interest within the Gulf region:

Innovation platforms

—

Teaching skills

—

Learning environments

—

School camps

**One main purpose of the visits is to develop and strengthen the relationships.**



## Example Case Studies of Successful Educational Trips



# Pupils from Lohja Found New Friends from Beijing

Tytyri school in Lohja started collaboration with Chaoyang Experimental Primary School attached to Capital Normal University in Beijing in 2016. This collaboration was initiated from China.

A partner of the Chaoyang school had joined a familiarization trip to Finland, and had indicated that the school principal was in search of a sister school in Finland. *AuroraXplorer* CEO **Kirsi Mantua-Kommonen** contacted **Mika Sivula**, the Mayor of *the City of Lohja*, and the Director of Education, **Katri Kalske**. It was Ms. Kalske who suggested that Tytyri school might be keen on seizing this opportunity.

"We were especially interested in the collaboration in art education, as it is a key focus of our school. We also wanted the collaboration to be beneficial for us, and sharing experiences with the Chinese school within the theme of art felt suitable", says **Erna Huhtala**, principal of *Tytyri school*. The principal of the Beijing school visited Tytyri in November 2016, and the schools signed an official sister school agreement. Mika Sivula and Katri Kalske from the City of

Lohja also participated in the festive ceremony.

"The collaboration that began quickly has met most expectations, but it has also brought some surprises," Erna Huhtala says. "There are many new and interesting things to learn. In addition to the new cultural features, the deep commitment of our Chinese partner has been a surprise to us. In January 2017, we were practicing traditional Chinese painting in an art workshop at our school with our new friends. Our guests had brought with them the full set of calligraphy essentials, including top quality artist brushes made of camel hair. A professional Chinese artist was instructing the children. This has been one of the most meaningful experiences within this collaboration, and during my entire career."

The partnership has been fruitful in many ways from the Tytyri school teachers' and pupils' perspective:



AuroraXplorer/Janne Kommonen

"It has been interesting to compare the cultural differences, but at the same time, to find that people from different parts of the world are fundamentally very similar. It is lovely to see how easily the children communicate with each other; although English is a foreign language for both parties, it quickly became a common language for the children." The pupils have been open-minded and excited about the collaboration: "Clearly the children are interested in getting to know the Chinese children, learn about their lives, and also in introducing their own everyday life here in Finland."

Erna Huhtala encourages teachers to seize the opportunities for international school collaboration. "Teachers are keen on welcoming the guests, but at the same time they acknowledge the extra work it brings with it. Based on our experience, however, we have realized that the more we

give of ourselves, the greater the reward, as well."

One example of the enthusiasm from the Tytyri teachers' side was, that they had prepared for the visit so well. The classes had learned about China beforehand, and China-themed works and drawings had been hung on the walls. "Our guests said that they felt very welcome when seeing those."

"The atmosphere was full of excitement and festivity at the closing gala, where both Finnish and Chinese groups performed," Tytyri principal, Erna Huhtala, says. "It is great to have international education in such a concrete and practical way in our school! I believe this gives the children plenty of opportunities to understand better, what the concept of a global world really means."

## Q CASE

# Chinese Families Camping with Local Scouts

Having school camp groups is nothing new to Vuokatti Sport Resort in Sotkamo. However, recently, Vuokatti has also begun to market its school camp offering to an international audience. The first pilot groups have already visited the resort.

Vuokatti Sport Resort hosted its first Chinese family group in Summer 2016, organised by the agency, *Costa Nord*. The group consisted of families with approximately 20 adults and children in total. The pedagogical school camp programme was planned in collaboration with teachers. The week consisted of lessons such as biology and geography, with content tailor-made for international students. As Vuokatti is also a school, their own teaching staff took care of the educational execution of the lessons. Vuokatti wanted to offer the group the experience of meeting local children as well, but as the local schools were on summer vacation, the local scouts were contacted.

"We canoed with the kids to a nearby island to the scouts' camping site, where we spent a night in tents without any running water" says

**Kristi Loukusa**, responsible for the international school camp offering at Vuokatti. "We were quite a colourful group; about half adults and half children (between 6 and 15 years of age), with nearly equal numbers of Chinese and scouts. Together we went fishing, cooked food over an open fire and slept in tents. The adults would maybe have preferred to sleep indoors, but the children took to the outdoors immediately. The camp created a forum for the adults to connect as well and share thoughts on parenthood. The Chinese adults were surprised how much freedom Finnish adults give to children to do things by themselves. This was something completely new to the Chinese adults, but they appreciated it and were encouraged to give their own children a bit more autonomy as well." In the camp environment, the children learned new



skills and the 'learning by doing' philosophy of scouts fitted the school camp well.

Kristi Loukusa emphasises the collaboration between the parties. "In Sotkamo, the municipality officials and Vuokatti Sport Resort have shared goals; we all aim for educational excellence, growth in tourism, as well as in education export. I felt that our first pilot groups have created excitement here; the education sector, scouts and us here at Vuokatti worked well together to make the trips happen. The teachers involved have already signed up to continue with new groups." There were also many takeaways from the experience. "The importance of instructing well cannot be overemphasized. We will maybe make an educational video and hold a welcome event, where we can explain all the rules, security

issues and other practicalities thoroughly to the visitors when they arrive. That will help create a sense of security and make life easier for both sides", Kristi says.

## Q CASE

# Chinese Children Exploring the Arctic Nature

One of the most attractive features of a school camp in Finland is the chance to explore the Arctic nature. A group of Chinese children recently enjoyed this possibility in the land of four national parks, Kuusamo.

*Oivanki Outdoor Education Centre* is located in Kuusamo, in North-Eastern Finland, in peaceful surroundings by a small lake. Close by is the *Oulanka National Park*, with the legendary Karhunkierros Trail; also known as the Bear's Trail. Oivanki is perfectly situated for all Arctic activities, and that is why the founder of *IDEAS Trip* selected Oivanki as the site for their Finland camp, when she visited the centre as part of a familiarization trip hosted by *AuroraXplorer*.

"Oivanki offers very safe and attractive facilities for our children's groups," says founder Ms. **Lily Zhao**

from *IDEAS Trip*. "The children can learn many things about the Arctic lifestyle and nature, and also improve their team working skills. Personally, I also enjoyed Oivanki's sauna by the frozen lake."

Oivanki has had children's groups from many Western countries, and the CEO of *Oivanki Outdoor Education Centre*, Ms. **Riitta Laulajainen**, enjoys the cultural challenges of this new cooperation: "We learn something new every day with our Chinese guests. We are happy that we have the *AuroraXplorer* team as a cultural and language interpreter, since



sometimes it is difficult for us to be exactly sure what the feedback from the participants, for example regarding food, actually means."

The young age of the children also presents special requirements: "The youngest children need to be put to bed in the evening and woken up in the morning," explains Riitta Laulajainen. "We need to communicate clearly who is responsible for what, and to continually develop our own operations as well as the communication and cooperation with the partners."

Having solid experience in arranging children's activities pays off, and the happy faces of the children are the best thanks the organisers can get.

"Our hope is that the children go back home with lovely memories and useful experiences that they will treasure for life," says Riitta Laulajainen. "Then we will have succeeded in our task."



## Q CASE

# Exchange of Ideas with Visitors from India

More than twenty education experts from India joined a six-day innovation camp in Helsinki in May 2017. The seminar was organised by a Finnish education export company, *KOULU Group*, in collaboration with their Indian partner, *The Learners Confluence*. The participating visitors consisted of education professionals, such as academic coordinators, principals, and teachers.

During the six-day camp the guests got to know the Finnish education system: school culture, school management, teacher training, and the curriculum, amongst other things. As part of the programme, the guests visited several schools; one Finnish pre-school, a primary school, a secondary school, and a high school. Some time was also set aside to enjoy the main tourist sights in *Helsinki*, such as the island of *Suomenlinna*, which is a *UNESCO* world heritage site.

The group was active and asked questions throughout the visit, says **Antti Kaskinen**, the CEO of *KOULU Group*. "The guests were especially interested in local lesson planning, and changes to the curriculum. They were astonished by the fact that Finnish children only learn

the alphabet while in kindergarten, but do not learn to read and write until later. Guests were taken by the fact that giving children autonomy and responsibility makes them self-driven even at a very early age. Also, the strong mutual trust between teachers and pupils, as well as between teachers and school principals, were topics that emerged in many of our conversations."

"A key takeaway for the Indian teachers was the idea of providing skills and education for life", Antti Kaskinen recounts. "They found the idea of the Finnish education system offering both academic and practical skills that carry the student throughout their lifetime very significant. In contrast, the question of why Finns only use Finnish for learning was remarkable for us Finns. Obviously, we



do know the cultural and historical reasons for that, but taking up this question underlines the true reason why we organise these visits: to challenge the perceptions and practices of both parties. By challenging the status quo, we can improve and make progress."

Making the innovation camp happen was the result of collaboration between many parties. The travel programme, the content, and the practicalities were organised by *KOULU Group*, with several other partners along the way. "The visits to the kindergarten and schools were agreed upon with the respective schools. For our workshops, we had an expert from *the University of Helsinki* joining us. The whole trip also required arrangements with various travel and accommodation companies. For the

evenings, we did not organise any activities. The days were extensive, and travelling takes its toll, so a good rest is welcome. Of course, we always offered tips to anyone who was keen on seeing *Helsinki* on their own", Antti Kaskinen explains.

*KOULU group* offers expert services regarding Finnish Education for the global market. The company has already gained experience in hosting international educational guests in Finland. "It is important to organise the visit based on the specific areas of interest of the participating guests, which means a lot of variation in content. Our guests hope to find practical solutions, which they can implement in their daily work. This is why we put special focus on having time for practical level discussions with Finnish teachers and students."

## Q CASE

# Teachers' Visit from the United Arab Emirates

A group of teachers from a local school in the United Arab Emirates want to receive a broad and comprehensive understanding of the Finnish education system. The main goal of the upcoming visit is to open their eyes to different perspectives regarding teaching in schools.

The trip is set in the Finnish historical context by including a city sightseeing tour of Tampere, and by visiting the Serlachius Museums in the art town of Mänttä, which showcase the industrialization period of Finnish history. To help the teachers to understand the Finnish mentality, history, architecture, art, local culinary pleasures, and, in particular, the cultural heritage of Finland, the tour includes a visit to the iconic *Serlachius Museums*. The trip also includes visits to the *Finnish Glass Museum* and to the *littala Glass Factory* and glassblowing studio.

Accommodation is organized at the *Wilderness Boutique Manor Rapukartano*. Teachers get to meet the owner, the farmer's son, who developed this premium lakeside hotel and restaurant step-by-step by,

for example, farming crayfish. The art town of *Mänttä* is full of stories.

Educational visits are organized in co-operation with Serlachius, to *Autere-opisto*, which provides adult education, and *Mänttä* high school. There the teachers are also given the opportunity to observe teaching in classroom lessons, and to sample Finnish school meals, which is interesting for guests to experience, not least because these are provided free for Finnish pupils.





Visit Finland/Nina Jääs

## The Benefits and Risks of Educational Travel

Educational travel differs from other types of tourism, as well as from other educational products. It is big business internationally, and operators offering Finland as an educational travel destination have also started to enjoy the benefits. What are the key benefits and main risks related to this field? The experts interviewed for this guidebook share their views.

# The Benefits of Educational Travel

## For the Public Sector

- Increased value of education export
- Increased awareness
- Increased education export experience
- Increased international collaboration and networking
- Knock-on effect on resources

## For Society

- Increased income from export
- Increased awareness
- Knock-on effect on domestic tourism
- Strengthening Finland's position as a forerunner in education
- Cross-fertilization, better collaboration
- Increased country brand value of Finland
- Economic well-being, growth of tourism and related revenue
- New professional and work possibilities

## For Travel Companies and Business

- Enhanced service sector, that also supports domestic demand
- Increased turnover
- Development of skills and experience
- Increased international awareness, contacts and growth
- Increased profitability





**"If children enjoy the Finnish camp experience, they will keep coming back, even as adults."**

Danye Liu

### Significant Economic and Image Benefits

Well-planned educational trips increase awareness and build a positive image of Finland, from both an educational and travel perspective. When international customers consider the trip as an opportunity to access valuable learning experiences, they are very willing to pay for the package. "Educational travel provides big opportunities. For example, Korean teacher groups spend significant amounts of money on educational travel abroad," says **Jani Toivanen**, Food and travel coordinator at *Business Finland* South Korea.

Director of *Business Finland/Visit Finland China*, **David Wu** agrees on the opportunities within the fast-growing educational travel sector: "Educational travel is still a small share of the whole outbound travel market in China, but it has huge potential. For example, sister school programmes bring longer-term economic benefits due to the school groups making return trips to Finland. Furthermore, the groups stay longer in the same region. Consequently, the money spent on accommodation, various activities, and shopping, also bring increased benefit to the local communities."

"With parents in India having more financial means, they are willing to make an investment in a school camp educational trip," says **Gurpreet Kalsi**, office manager of *Business Finland Delhi*. "They believe it is a good investment, since it provides early international exposure, and insights

to planning their career." More and more Indian schools are arranging such travel abroad, and appreciation of such trips is growing at a societal level, as well.

### Educational Trips Encourage Chinese Guests to Stay Longer

One major difference between leisure travel and an educational camp is the length of stay at the destination. "Whereas Chinese leisure travellers typically spend no more than one or two nights in any one location, school camp groups can travel up to two weeks in Finland and stay longer in one region," says David Wu, Director of *Business Finland/Visit Finland China* based in Shanghai. "Educational travel also extends the periods of travel to include times outside the normal holiday seasons, while Chinese holidays do not coincide with Finnish peak weeks, either."

It is possible to create an emotional bond with the destination. "Chinese people enjoy travelling, and they are willing to spend money on it. If children enjoy the Finnish camp experience, they will keep coming back, even as adults," says **Danye Liu**, *Visit Finland/Business Finland* Representative for Beijing and Chongqing.

## Educational Travel May Open Doors for Other Education Export

The Education Finland export promotion project by The Finnish National Agency for Education considers educational travel as a part of education export, that may open up opportunities for other types of educational export, as well.

“Staying longer also means getting to know and appreciate the local culture at a deeper level,” says **Yan Dong**, Director of Education Services at *AuroraXplorer*, a destination management company which also arranges school camps for Chinese children. “Developing an emotional connection with the local culture is beneficial from the perspective of future education and business collaboration. Some children from the school camps have already begun to plan university studies in Finland as a result of their trip, while parents of some children selected this destination due to the fame of *Nokia*.”

Furthermore, even the school camp, which may appear to be a simple tourism product, can have a long-term impact on education export. “As Chinese companies and education authorities learn more about Finland, the value of a Finnish academic degree will eventually be ranked higher, even alongside internationally renowned universities like Stanford,” claims **Yan Dong**, who believes that the official ranking of the top Finnish universities is lower than their actual proficiency.

“Moreover, educator trips can also generate revenue for Finnish education companies through further export business contacts” **David Wu** says. The Chinese guests are typically very well networked back home in China, and meetings can lead to remarkable opportunities.

“Strong commitment and extensive cooperation between local government and the private sector are essential for promoting educational tourism”, says **Shigeyoshi Noto**, representative of *Business Finland/Visit Finland Japan*. “The Oulu region has already overcome this hurdle, and a cooperation eco-system has already been established there. The Oulu region is thus ready to compete with other countries in the field of educational tourism”

“Educational travel can be instrumental for learning how to build education export to the Gulf Region,” says **Jukka Hahlanterä**, Head of Middle East at *Business Finland*. “It is important to gain experience and build personal relationships even with partners within education.”



“Moreover, educator trips can also generate revenue for Finnish education companies through further export business contacts”

David Wu



**"These trips can even initiate long-term projects, which can be maintained online after the visit."**

Yan Dong

### Educational Content Encourages Visitors to Explore Non-tourist Regions

School camps are beneficial to the Finnish travel industry nationwide, as they attract children to areas that are less well-known among international travellers. "Leisure travellers are usually attracted by the famous sights, but school camps and educator trips are driven by educational content. And there are many, less obvious towns and regions in Finland, that have great pedagogical programs for children and interesting places to experience from an educational point-of-view," **Yan Dong** elaborates.

Even the more traditional tourist destinations can be experienced in a more profound way with the help of an educator. For example, the ice-breaker cruise in *Kemi*, which is very popular among Asian tourists, gets a very different twist when it is seen in the context of the arctic way of life and the requisite support for maritime transportation.

### Cultural Exchange and New Ideas for Both Guests and Hosts

Welcoming foreign guests and hosting school visits of foreign children of a similar age can benefit Finnish schools. "It is an amazing opportunity to be able to receive such practical education about global citizenship right here in our own school," enthuses **Erna Huhtala**, Principal of *Tytyri School* in Lohja. "I believe that this sister school cooperation gives the children plenty of opportunities

to understand what the term 'global' really means."

Just as visiting a new destination can initiate an emotional bond, visiting a local school can inspire long-term friendships, both between schools, and among students. "Noticing and beginning to understand cultural differences while still a child and making new friends is very valuable," agrees **Aster Lai**, *Business Finland Visit Finland* Representative for Hong Kong and South China. "These trips can even initiate long-term projects, which can be maintained online after the visit."

"Meeting local children is a highlight for all camp groups, and that is why it is so valuable to also have good collaboration with local schools and youth associations", says **Yan Dong**. "It is important to include a visit to meet Santa Claus and other tourist visits, as well, to ensure that guests are both happy and benefit from the more traditional leisure activities on offer."

**Shigeyoshi Noto** sees educational travel as important for the host country. "Student exchange programmes provide an ideal opportunity as the first step towards globalization. Half of the population in the world resides in Asian countries, and it is very important for people in the West to become accustomed to Asian cultures."

## The Exchange of Ideas Valuable for Professional Educators

“Education professionals from India are very keen to learn about best practices, and are very open to new ideas, technologies, and pedagogical methods,” says **Gurpreet Kalsi**. **Yan Dong** sees a very interesting future for Finland connected to educational travel. “If we manage the growth of educational travel well, it can create new kinds of opportunities for education professionals and students, such as international counselling, nature school teaching, and pedagogical tour guiding.”

## Risks Arise from Poor Preparation

All experts point out that meticulous preparation is the key to avoiding risks when it comes to educational travel.

For expert groups, the risks can relate to long term business objectives: “If the trip programme is poorly planned, with a lack of valuable content, vague processes, and deficient documentation, the resulting unsatisfactory experience may completely block future business with the visitors and their network,” warns **Jukka Hahlanterä**. Capacity is also a concern in Japan, **Shigeyoshi Noto** says: “There is the risk of insufficient capacity in Finnish schools to receive visiting groups, because a student exchange programme is virtually considered a “must” in Japan. If there are limits to the size and number of

school groups that can be received, this should be taken into consideration right from the beginning. It is very important to be realistic.”

For children’s groups, the importance of safety cannot be overemphasized. “Safety, security, comfort, and appropriate food for the children are the main factors that education organizations consider when selecting a travel destination,” points out **Gurpreet Kalsi**. “It is crucial for partners in Finland to also have proper insurance for the children,” emphasises **Danye Liu**. The rapid growth of the industry worries **Aster Lai**: “We should develop quality monitoring systems and transparency between the different actors. Young children require special care and attention, and we should have standards and guidelines in place to ensure that even new companies entering the business keep up the high quality.”

“In the schools, teachers are eager to welcome foreign children, but at the same time they do realize, that such cooperation demands a lot of extra effort,” says Erna Huhtala. “But in our experience, the more we give of ourselves, the greater the rewards of the cooperation, as well.”

# EDUCATIONAL TRAVEL OPERATORS AND VALUE CHAIN





# Ingredients of a Successful School Camp

## Safety above everything else



- The requirement to provide a safe experience cannot be overemphasized
- Children from different countries have different skills at the same age; do not assume they know something or can do something
- Avoid dangerous activities
- Double check that the instructions were understood by asking the child to repeat them
- Remember to double check that the children and the campsites have valid and appropriate insurance

## Design content to meet expectations and needs.

- Each group is different, children of different ages have different needs
- Understanding the children's own culture is key to the success of the trip, for both the participants and the organisers
- The programme should lean on Finnish values and education, while respecting the target culture

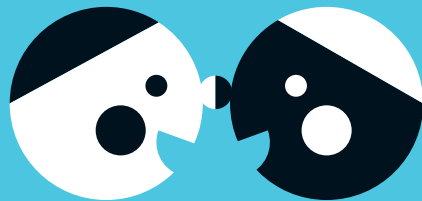


## Plan the programme carefully, ensuring the following



- The pedagogical needs and expectations of the group are understood
- The programme includes the possibility to meet Finnish peers
- The group's own culture is taken into account when planning the level of the activities
- The programme includes learning by doing

## Flexibility



- Be prepared for surprises due to cultural differences
- Be open to changes in the agenda, as and when necessary

## Make sure suitable counselors and interpreters are available

- It is important that the counselors and guides have an understanding of pedagogy and also cultural differences
- Having a familiar and safe counselor and guide increases the feeling of safety and trust
- Having a guide who speaks the language of the group helps in overcoming language barriers
- It is important to be aware of the special features of the group's own culture with regard to medical treatment

## Ensure accommodation and food meets expectations



- The Finnish way of providing very basic accommodation (such as sleeping on the floor) is not suitable for most other cultures
- Accommodate no more than 2-4 children in the same room
- Provide safe food and double check that special dietary requirements can be met

# Ingredients of a Successful Educators' Trip

## Plan and execute the programme meticulously



- Introduce the agenda to the visitors early enough, and be prepared for proposed changes or wishes from the visitors
- Promise only what you can deliver
- Double-check with the visitors the need for interpreting, translation, and the sharing of material during or after the trip
- Share the programme content in advance with all the hosts in Finland to avoid repetition or missing information
- Note that the materials can also be distributed afterwards

## Know your group

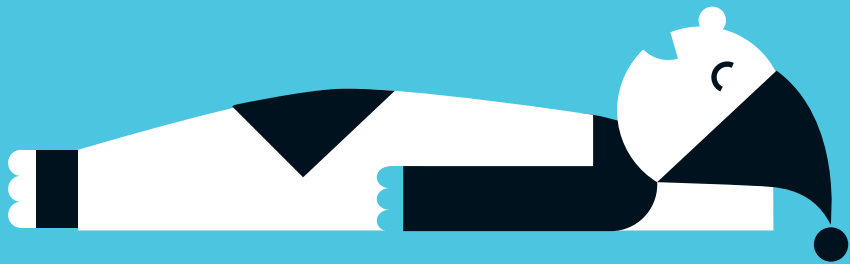
- Understanding the background of the group (both cultural and contextual) helps to plan content in a way that meets expectations
- Each group is unique



## Have one host/guide/interpreter throughout the whole journey

- Getting to know your guests strengthens the relationship
- The language skills of both the hosts and the guests may require the help of professional interpreters
- Having a host makes it easier to react to surprises along the way
- Having the same host also helps avoid needless repetition in the programme
-

## Ensure that accommodation and meals meet the guests' expectations



- Meeting the different expectations arising from culture and position communicates your respect of the guests
- Know your guests: for many cultures, having Finnish meals throughout the visit might be too much for the guests' digestion

## Be flexible

- Be understanding with regard to changes and delays in the schedule, but do not cause them yourself
- Allowing time for discussion or documentation might be more beneficial than being punctual

## Allow time for the guests to enjoy the visit outside the meeting rooms as well



- The visit to Finland might be a unique experience of Finland for the guest.
- If the agenda allows, do include the opportunity to experience Finnish teaching methods, or other Finnish activities



# Let's Share the Passion for Learning

The vision of the Finnish education system is to direct every individual's natural passion for learning so that everyone can reach his/her own full potential. Through educational travel, we can share this vision with our guests, along with the understanding that every child is unique.

In Finland, education is seen as a force for good in the public interest; the opportunity for education is available to everyone, equally. Education is provided free of charge at almost all levels, and the principle of lifelong learning is considered very important, as we are living in a time of transformation concerning the skills required in a person's working life.

Key developments in most recent curricula follow these three principles: Developing schools as learning communities; emphasising the joy of learning and encouraging a collaborative atmosphere; and promoting student autonomy in studying and school life in general. Furthermore, collaborative skills are practised as part of multidisciplinary, phenomenon and project-based studies. Additionally, technology is integrated in all subject matters.

Along the path towards reaching one's full potential, seven universal or generic competences have been identified: thinking and learning to learn; cultural competence, interaction and self expression; learning to take care of oneself and managing daily life; multiliteracy; ICT competence; working life competence and entrepreneurship; and finally, skills of participation, involvement, and the ability to lead a sustainable lifestyle. These competences are an integral part of the learning across school subjects.

These seven competences should also be objectives for the different participants in the educational travel industry, for both organisational and individual development. We our-

selves can continue to learn, and develop our own cultural competence through interaction with the guests we welcome to Finland. We can further improve our management of educational travel from the perspectives of both travel and educational content, in cooperation with our foreign and local partners. Actively practicing and promoting multiliteracy and ICT competence provide ways forward. Developing skills in, and understanding of, entrepreneurship is useful for public sector participants, as well. And finally, participating in the local communities, schools and education institutions, and becoming even more deeply involved in their work, will enable us to offer our guests educational travel programmes that will help everyone reach their own objectives.

In this way, educational travel can contribute to building a more sustainable future through providing meaningful learning experiences to both the hosts and guests from all over the world.

Educational travel to Finland offers significant opportunities to everyone interested in the field. Let us work together instead of competing against each other; the global competition is fierce enough. We can do this in cooperation to further build the reputation of Finland as an educational haven; to increase the interest in our key markets, and to extend the visits to more and more areas of Finland. This way educational travel will benefit both the fields of education and travel nationwide.



# FAM? STEAM?

## Education travel related terms

### **DMC**

Destination Management Company

### **ECEC**

Early Childhood Education and Care

### **ETA**

Estimated Time of Arrival

### **ETD**

Estimated Time of Departure

### **FAM(iliarization) TRIP**

Familiarization trip, a visit to see the destination beforehand

### **INBOUND**

Familiarization trip, a visit to see the destination beforehand

### **MOOC**

Massive Open Online Course

### **OUTBOUND**

Travelling out from a country or location

### **PAX**

Number of people

### **RECCE**

Another word for a familiarization trip, a 'reconnaissance' visit to see the destination first-hand

### **TECHNICAL VISIT**

A trip where experts and professionals travel to meet peers, often includes visits to companies etc.

### **SPECIAL INTEREST TOURISM**

Tailor-made travel product to meet the needs of companies or groups with special interests

### **STEAM**

Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Mathematics

### **STEM**

Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics







**Visit Finland**