



Nature Pays Back: How Finland's National Parks Improve Public Health and Save Money

Tiina Hakkarainen, Manager, Corporate
Relations, Parks & Wildlife Finland



Photo: Harri Tarvainen

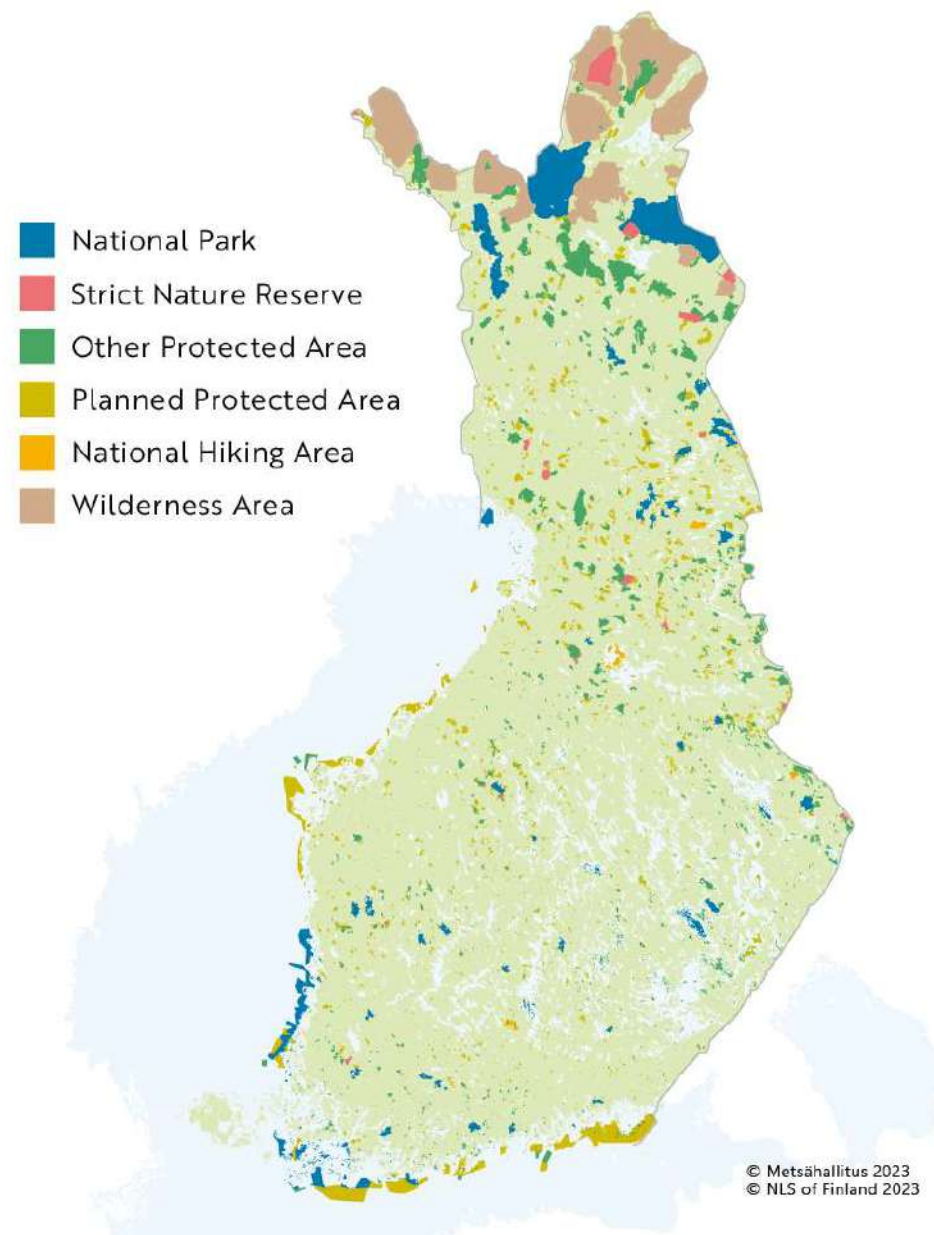
Parks & Wildlife Finland: Manages the Finnish network of protected areas

Parks & Wildlife Finland manages all state-owned nature reserves and hiking areas:

- 41 national parks
- 19 nature parks
- one UNESCO World Heritage Site
- 6 state-owned hiking areas and 1 hiking area established by Metsähallitus
- 12 wilderness areas in Finnish Lapland
- over 3,000 conservation programme areas

Cultural heritage sites:

- nearly 500 protected buildings
- approximately 3,000 ancient monuments

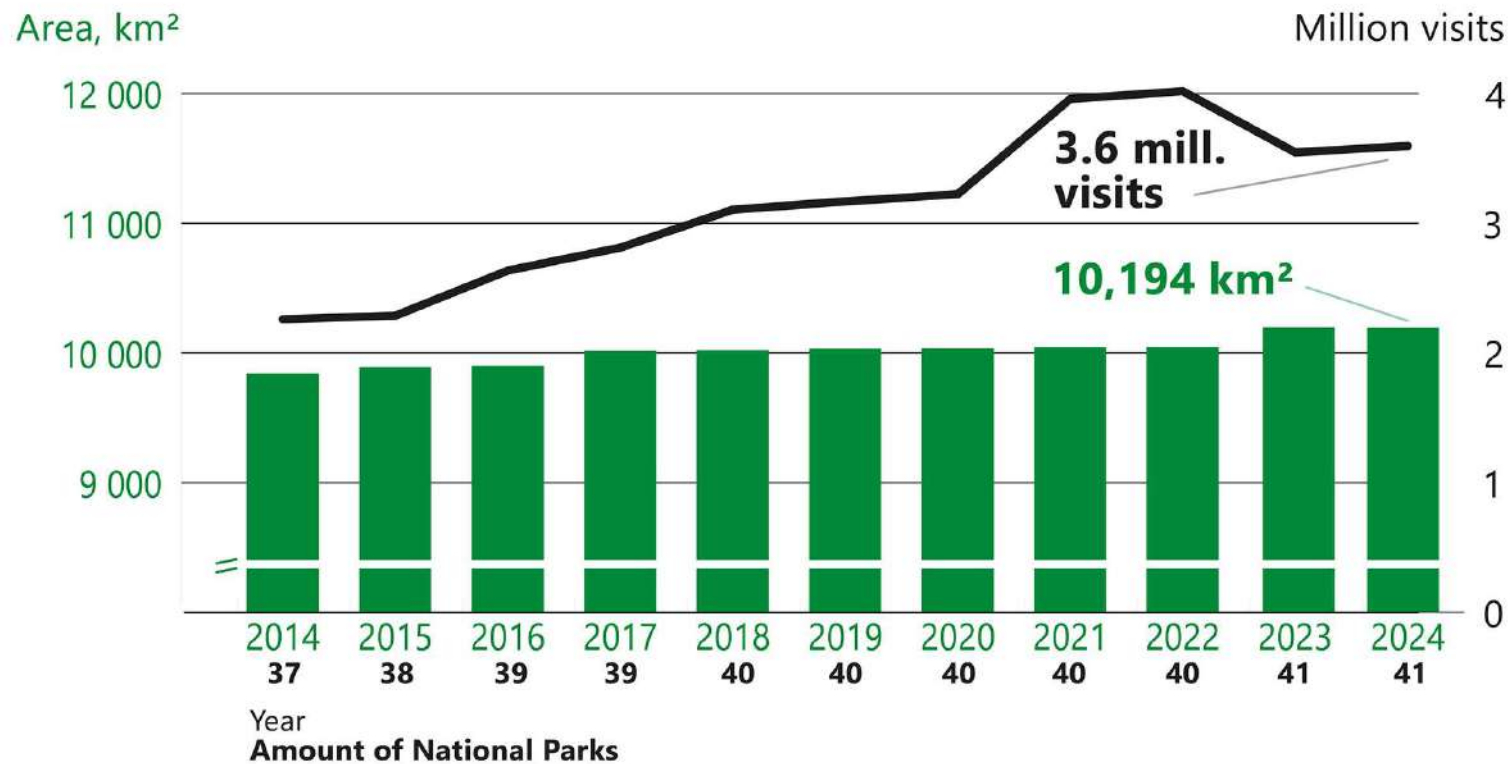




Our national treasure: National parks and Kvarken Archipelago World Heritage Site

- 41 national parks, www.luontoon.fi/en
- Area: one million hectares (10,000 km²).
- Main purpose: nature conservation as well as sights open to all, for which we provide free basic services.
- International brand, cornerstone of tourism.
- 3.6 million visits to national parks in 2024.
- **The Kvarken Archipelago World Heritage Site** is the only UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site of Finland's UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Development of national park visits and national park network 2014–2024





Benefits for people

Photo: Antti Keskitalo

Well-being for individuals and society

- At our sites, everyone can enjoy Finland's most magnificent nature - we have also invested a great deal in accessibility.
- Study by the UKK Institute and Metsähallitus: Physical activity in national parks and hiking areas reduced the costs of public health care by €164 million per year.
- 86% of visitors feel that spending time at the sites has fairly significant or very significant impacts on health and well-being.
- The importance of spending time at the sites in children's well-being and values is emphasised: understanding nature values, physical and mental health.



Photo: Harri Tarvainen

Vitality in nature tourism, the economy and employment

- National parks are an international brand and the cornerstone of tourism.
- Our sites provide jobs for tourism companies and contractors who maintain and build our services.
- There were 3.6 million visits to national parks in 2024. The impact of visitor spending on neighbouring areas was EUR 286 million in 2024.
- The impact of visitor spending at all sites managed by us is EUR 412 million.




Photo: Katri Lehtola

Finland's most magnificent sites belong to everyone

- We maintain thousands of kilometres of trails: for summer, winter and boat trips.
- Nearly 1,000 campfire sites, over 500 lean-to shelters, nearly 3,000 dry toilets, etc.
- The offering of accessible trails and other accessible services is constantly increasing. This also benefits inexperienced nature visitors and tourism companies.
- Our sites can be found on the Nationalparks.fi service and Excursionmap.fi service.



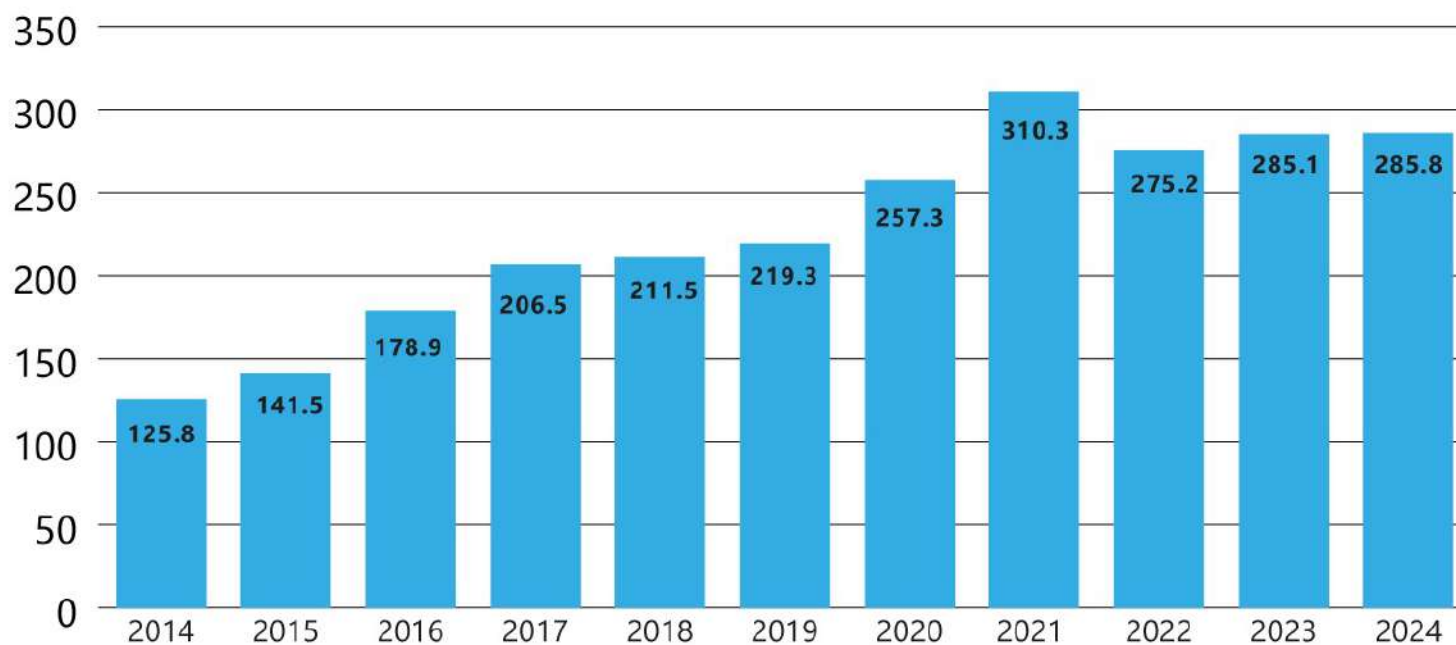
Photo: Jonna Kalliomäki



The accessible route in the Liesjärvi National Park benefits those who need accessible services as well as nature tourism.

Local economic effects of national park visitor spending in Finland 2014–2024

EUR million

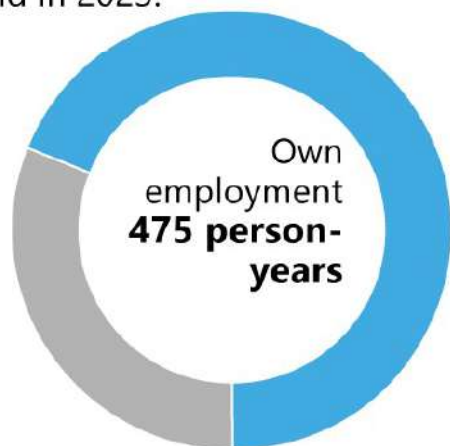


Social well-being from nature

Examples of the economic impact of Parks & Wildlife Finland 2023

708 person-years

Employment impacts from the basic and separate funding of Parks & Wildlife Finland in 2023.



Employment impacts of outsourcing
233 person-years

EUR 164 million

in experienced national health impacts in 2023 (UKK institute).



The value of the health and well-being impacts from one visit is estimated to be **EUR 100** on average.

EUR 413 million

in the impact of visitor spending in areas surrounding nature sites in 2023.



Ca. **1,300** tourism partner businesses throughout Finland.



Photo: Saara Lavi

Report: Outdoor activities in Finnish national parks saved society EUR 164 million in 2022

- Metsähallitus and the UKK Institute calculated the benefits of outdoor activities for the Finnish economy.
- The calculation has been done once.
- Savings from:
 - Reduced chronic disease costs
 - Improved work ability and productivity
- Potential €1.6 billion savings over 10 years if visit levels remain stable



Photo: Merja Paakkanen

Methodology

- Based on:
 - Physical activity recommendations for adults
 - Compliance rates and health outcomes
 - Productivity costs (e.g. sick leave, disability pensions, premature deaths)
- Data from Metsähallitus-managed sites



Photo: Saara Lavi

The Cost of Inactivity

- Sedentary lifestyles cost Finland €3.2 billion annually
- Outdoor activity is a cost-effective countermeasure
- Nature sites offer accessible, family-friendly exercise opportunities



Photo: Ulla Keituri

Policy Implications

- Investing in nature infrastructure supports public health
- Cuts to Parks & Wildlife Finland funding threaten long-term savings
- EU and state funding are critical for maintaining services



Photo: Saara Lavi

Broader Impact

- Supports sustainable tourism and local economies
- Encourages healthy lifestyles across all age groups
- Finland as a model for integrating nature into health policy
- National parks are a public health investment
- We are currently developing a lighter method that would allow us to estimate both the spending of national park visitors and the health benefits



Kuva: Saara Lavi

Further information:

- https://www.europarc.org/news/2024/10/report-outdoor-activities-in-finnish-national-parks-saved-society-eur-164-million-in-2022/?utm_source=ep&utm_medium=search&utm_campaign=linktrack&utm_content=results
- <https://researchportal.tuni.fi/en/publications/economic-burden-of-low-physical-activity-and-high-sedentary-behav>



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