

“Introduce Estonia” sub-strategy of tourism

# INSTRUCTIONS FOR FOCUS TOPIC OF NATURE HOLIDAY



Euroopa Liit  
Euroopa  
Regionaalarengu Fond



Eesti huleviku heaks



The main motivation for nature holidays is a wish to move around and relax in the countryside. Possible solutions here could be both road trips starting from bigger centres, car tourism and hiking, as well as pure country holiday/tourism including accommodation in tourism farms or family centres in the countryside.

The Estonian landscape is rich and diverse – the sea meets mainland, forests alternate with fields and swamps, the view features glacial drifts, islands and islets, ruins of strongholds, ancient farm locations and manor houses. The views and sensations vary by travelling just about 20–30 kilometres. The picture also changes unrecognisably during different times of year.

Estonia has a lot to offer to those capable of seeing. Our nature does not astound with high mountains or deep valleys – even the flowers have small Nordic blooms – but the modest surface hides a great inner diversity. Add to it a generally calm pace of life, vast spaces, opportunity to be, move and think on your own – and atmosphere, predominantly so relaxed and tolerant. This is the content and message of Estonia.

Before listing arguments and symbols we have to pay attention to the fact that for every campaign and commercial the specific target market has to be taken into account. For example our cliff coast will probably not be as special to British and Norwegians, who have a lot of magnificent cliff coasts of their own. Likewise we cannot charm Finnish and Russians with our forests or bears and wolves.







## Arguments:

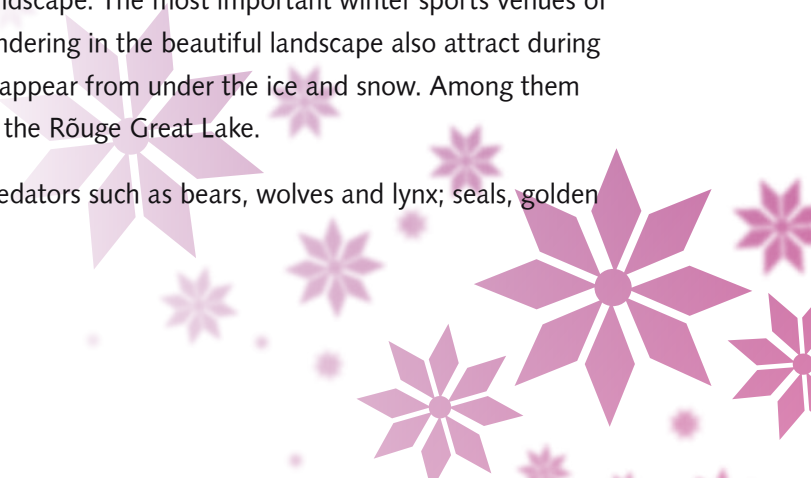
- ✳ GREAT VARIETY IN LANDFORMS, FAUNA, SEASONS, CLIMATE AND MOODS – for its small area Estonian nature is very rich and diverse.
- ✳ RARITIES CAN BE FOUND IN ESTONIAN NATURE – both in natural species (orchids not found anywhere else), or for specific target audiences (e.g. bears and wolves for German tourists).
- ✳ ESTONIA IS ONE OF THE BEST PLACES FOR WATCHING MIGRATORY BIRDS.
- ✳ ESTONIAN NATURE IS EASILY ACCESSIBLE TO THOSE INTERESTED – this is obtained thanks to the small size of the country, good road network, ever developing tourism infrastructure and accessibility of information.
- ✳ ESTONIAN NATURE CAN BE ENJOYED PRIVATELY – low density of settlements leaves enough room for everybody.
- ✳ ESTONIA HAS 4 DISTINCT SEASONS – cold winter with snow, colourful autumn, warm summer with light nights, Nordic crispy spring with high waters.
- ✳ THERE ARE 1,521 ISLANDS AND ISLETS IN ESTONIA – some permanently inhabited, some not. The wilder ones offer a close look at rare water birds and seals.
- ✳ ESTONIA OFFERS CLOSE TO IDEAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTIVE NATURE HOLIDAYS – sports, hunting and fishing.





## Symbols

- 1 **ISLANDS** – Saaremaa, Hiiumaa, Kihnu, Ruhnu, Vormsi, Vilsandi, Prangli and countless small islands and islets.
- 2 **CLIFF COAST AND WATERFALLS** – Ontika, Saka, Panga or Mustjala cliffs, and Keilajoa, Valaste and Jägala waterfalls.
- 3 **NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE PRESERVES** – Lahemaa, Matsalu, Vilsandi, Endla, Nigula, Soomaa, Viidumäe, Karula etc. Most of them are equipped with hiking trails, watch towers and other necessary objects.
- 4 **GLACIAL DRIFTS** – the greatest of them is Ehalkivi nearby Kunda, in Cape Letipea; larger amounts visible in Lahemaa National Park.
- 5 **JUNIPER** – a tough tree growing slowly, widespread in Western Estonia and on islands.
- 6 **SOUTHERN ESTONIAN LANDSCAPE** – the highest peak of the Baltic States, the Big Egg Hill, located in Haanja, and the enchanting view from its watch tower are far from being the only showpieces of the Southern Estonian landscape. The most important winter sports venues of Estonia are also located here. Ski tracks meandering in the beautiful landscape also attract during summer, when numerous breathtaking lakes appear from under the ice and snow. Among them there is the deepest lake of the Baltic States, the Rõuge Great Lake.
- 7 **ANIMALS AND BIRDS** – big predators such as bears, wolves and lynx; seals, golden eagles, black and grey storks, etc.





- 8 **LIGHT NIGHTS** – a summer's day on this latitude lasts as long as 19 hours.
- 9 **METEORITE CRATERS** – the biggest and influential of them being Kaali crater in Saaremaa. In addition Kuradihaud, Tondihaud and Põrguhaud in Southern Estonia.
- 10 **GOLF COURSES** – golf is definitely not just sports. A witticism about golf says “a good walk spoiled”. Beautiful walks in the country near Tallinn are offered in Niitvälja, Suuresta and Estonian Golf & Country Club in Jõelähtme. In Western Estonia golf can be played in Haapsalu, Saaremaa, Pärnu and Audru. The only, yet especially spectacular golf course in Southern Estonia is located in Otepää.
- 11 **RMK** (State forest management centre) **HIKING TRAILS AND CAMPING SITES** – free camping sites (grounds for tents, forest cabins and houses) for informed nature tourists can be found in the most unbelievable places, near the most well kept secrets of Estonian nature.
- 12 **MARSHES** – Estonia is rich in picturesque marsh and swamp landscapes. Some of the bigger and more well-known marshes included in a landscape protection area or national park can be discovered walking on comfortable plank trails. There are also plenty of marshes, completely wild and untouched, that more adventurous tourists can observe closer more privately.
- 13 **PINE** – the prevailing tree species of Estonia that as a rule grows in light mossy and sandy heaths, so typical of the region.







## Interesting facts about Estonian nature

- \* **ESTONIAN WOODED MEADOWS ARE AMONG THE RICHEST BIOMES IN THE WORLD** – one square metre has more than 70 species. This figure at times exceeds the diversity in the tropics.
- \* Taking into account the farthest points and islands of Europe, the **CENTRAL POINT OF EUROPE IS IN SAAREMAA**, Mõnnuste village.
- \* **HIIUMAA AS NORDIC BORA BORA** – on an area of a thousand square kilometres and barely 10,000 inhabitants each visitor can easily find a paradise beach of his own not packed with tourists. For example, the beaches of Luidja or Tahkuna.
- \* **KAALI METEORITE CRATER** – the last giant meteorite in the world that fell into a high density area. The power of the blast was comparable to that of a nuclear bomb, leaving clear evidence to influence the tales of the local nations.
- \* **ESTONIANS BELIEVE IN TREES** – for example the Tülivere oak tree near Kuusalu helped reconcile married couples. For that the couple had to spend a night standing inside the cavity of the tree.
- \* Fertility and eroticism-related beliefs are related to the **THICKEST TREE OF ESTONIA**, the Sipa lime tree.
- \* According to legends the burial place of the **MAIN GOD OF ANCIENT SCANDINAVIANS, ODIN, IS LOCATED ON OSMUSSAARE**. Also the Swedish name of the island, Odinsholm (Odin's Island), refers to it.
- \* On the hillsides and forests of **KÄÄRIKU SKIING CENTRE** meanders a skiing and hiking trail named after the Finnish president Urho Kaleva Kekkonen.

# Family holiday in Estonian nature

When promoting family holidays oriented to discovering Estonian nature, it is possible to bring out some extra values and opportunities that change the holiday from exhausting hiking into something much better, especially for families with small children.

For example accommodation options in authentic environments. Be it resorts offering some topic-related family holiday programmes, or tourism farms allowing you to combine discovering nature by foot with bike trips and canoeing. In case of further interest one can try out milking a cow, clipping a sheep and feeding ostriches.





## Business tourism in Estonian nature

For business tourists a relevant extra value could be the opportunities offered by Estonia as an innovative e-country, possessing a good mobile and Internet network that enables one to work in forests and at beaches, or even in the middle of a primeval marsh.

Thanks to the fact that a genuine beach or blueberry forest could be reached within a 30–45-minute ride from Tallinn city centre, the natural environment as a source of relaxation becomes an offer to be seriously considered by business tourists.







KEY SYMBOL

# LIMESTONE GLINT

The most important symbol of Estonian nature is limestone glint in its natural forms as cliff coasts and limestone outcrops. For a country so rich in nature it is not easy to bring out just one representative element. Limestone has a special meaning because of the fact that a major part of Tallinn Old Town and historic buildings of Northern Estonia and the islands are built of it. Thus it is not surprising, that limestone has the title of Estonian national stone.

The most well-known limestone versions in Estonia are calcareous stone and dolomite. The latter is even used to make dishes. Cliff coastline is mostly an attraction in Northern Estonia, although it shows impressively also in Saaremaa. A natural wonder stretching out more than a thousand kilometres from the Island of Öland in Sweden to the area of Lake Ladoga in Russia, it is one of the candidates to be added to the UNESCO World Heritage List. In Öland the cliff is only 10 metres high. It reaches its highest peak of 56 metres in Ontika, on the Northern Estonian coast. Magnificent views over the Gulf of Finland open from that high shore. While elsewhere the cliff coastline is broken by fierce rivers flowing in the old valleys, in North-Eastern Estonia the cliff continues without interruptions for 20 km. In Valaste the highest waterfall in Estonia breaks through. You can there see the picturesque cross-section of the rock – the cliff is like an open window to the ancient history of the Earth.

The cliff coastline is also impressive on Pakri peninsula, west of Tallinn, having an imposing lighthouse on it. The highest cliff in Saaremaa is the Panga or Mustjala cliff rising above the sea 21 metres at its highest point and stretching out for 2.5 km. In addition to offering incredible views to the sea, it is also a source of exciting findings for curious minds, opening the early history of both vertebrates and invertebrates and showing their fossils. A lot of these can be found on Ohessaare cliff.



# Photos of nature holidays

Photos of nature holidays vary according to the topic: active nature holiday or simply enjoying nature – spending quiet time in nature. In the case of an active nature holiday the unique Estonian nature panorama should be complemented by someone doing sports / hiking / fishing, etc. This brings the necessary dynamics and life to the visual – it is unreasonable to promote active holidays through quietude. Photos aimed at people interested in enjoying nature passively should rather be concentrated on clean and aesthetic shots of nature. The photo has to involve a feeling, that nature here is clean, Nordic crisp and most importantly – there is room for people to be alone.





## Ideas for souvenirs

- \* Wild berry jam
- \* Dolomite dishes
- \* Small wolves and bears
- \* Miniature juniper in a pot





## Experts, organisations and sources of information on the area

Ministry of Environment of Estonia [www.envir.ee/](http://www.envir.ee/)

Estonian Fund for Nature [www.elfond.ee/](http://www.elfond.ee/)

Estonian Society for Nature Conservation [www.elks.ee/](http://www.elks.ee/)

State forest management centre (RMK) [www.rmk.ee/](http://www.rmk.ee/)

Estonian Rural Tourism [www.maaturism.ee/](http://www.maaturism.ee/)

Estonian Ecotourism Association [www.ecotourism.ee/](http://www.ecotourism.ee/)

Estonian Ramblers' Association [www.matkaliit.ee](http://www.matkaliit.ee)

Nature's Motor Bus [www.looduseomnibuss.ee/](http://www.looduseomnibuss.ee/)





[www.visitestonia.com](http://www.visitestonia.com)