Sustainable tourism development plan

Company name: Lomatka Travel Company
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- **Introduction**

Lomatka Travel Company is a registered incoming tour operator based in Helsinki, operating under business registration number 3258706-1 since 2022. We specialize in designing and operating sustainable tours across Finland: from the urban highlights of Helsinki to the wilderness of Lapland. We serve around 10,000 tourists annually, and our core services include:

- **Helsinki City Tours:** Guided walking tours under the brand name “Finntastic Tours”. We run two walking tours every day, and each can accommodate up to 25 people. Additionally, we offer private walking tours.
- **Lapland Tours**: FIT b2b tour packages to Lapland, focused on customized holiday trips for couples and families.

Here are the common principles for sustainable Finland travel that we are committed to in cooperation with Visit Finland:

1- We cooperate fairly:
We develop tourism in cooperation with other parties in the industry. Together, we can make a better impact on the future of the society and tourism. We want Finland to be a good place to visit and live in now and in the future, therefore we choose sustainable practices to preserve the tourism resources for the future generations as well. We treat everyone with respect and fairness, and we also trade fairly and honestly.

2- We take care of the nature:
We protect the environment, landscapes and biodiversity of the country. Our sales do not exceed the carrying capacity of the attractions, but contribute to ensuring the opportunities for a good life and the preservation of a clean environment. We also take care of the welfare of the animals and let the travellers interact with them sustainably.

3- We respect cultural heritages:
We cherish the cultural heritage of Finland. Our goal is the genuine and respectful presentation, revitalization, maintenance and strengthening of the Finnish culture. We also understand that cultures have always evolved in interaction and learned from each other.

4- We promote prosperity, human rights and equality
We treat our employees, customers and residents of the local areas equally with respect, regardless of their background. We take people's special needs into accountin our operations. We train, guide and encourage our staff and suppliers to act responsibly.

5- We prefer local:
We support the local service providers in Finland and aim to employ local people. We also prefer the local food made from Finnish ingredients. We try to benefit the local residents and businesses of different destinations in matters that concern them.

6- We invest in safety and quality:
We take care of the safety of local residents, our staff and tourists, and comply with the law and regulations. When we develop the quality of our services and products, we create the conditions for the continuity of our own operations.

7- We take into account the climate impact:
We make good choices for the climate and reduce our carbon footprint. We monitor the impact of tourism on the environment and, through active measurement, aim for more efficient use of energy and resources.

8- We communicate openly:
We boldly communicate in our area about responsible tourism and future plans and visions. We want Finland's sustainable tourism to be known in the world. We talk openly about success, but also about challenges.

9- We are constantly developing our business:
We are ready to renew our services and products so that there will be sufficient demand for them in the future as well. A stable economy and ethical business create the basis for the sustainable development of operations. Also, we actively attend tourism events such as seminars and workshops.

10- We are committed to the principles of sustainable tourism:
We will take an active role in promoting sustainable tourism and implementing these principles of sustainable tourism. We are committed to action and want to learn more in the future.

- **Our sustainability guidelines**

1. Socio-cultural sustainability:

1-1) We know the history, culture, and traditions of the country, so we try to include tangible and intangible cultural points of interest in our tours such as events, historical and cultural attractions, and tours with locals to get the tourists familiar with local lifestyle, costumes, and cuisine.

1-2) We continuously expand our knowledge of Finnish cultural heritage to ensure high-quality experiences. For example, we participate in tourism events and fam trips, courses, exhibitions, seminars, webinars, and workshops.

1-3) We hire authorized local guides who provide accurate, respectful, and informative explanations of Finnish culture, history, and traditions. They encourage meaningful interactions between tourists and locals.

1-4) We aim to understand the cultural background of our customers to tailor our customer service and operations.

1-5) We support the preservation of the local cultural heritage by including it in our tours without over-commercializing it. Our goal is to celebrate culture, not exploit it.

1-6) We value locality and authenticity, so we offer our customers meals made with organic and local ingredients. Also, we provide opportunities to meet and support local craft makers.

1-7) We select suppliers who are committed to sustainable tourism. In addition, we aim to exchange sustainability goals and achievements, strengthen our partnerships, and enhance collaboration.

1-8) We promote local events to deepen the cultural experience for our guests and support local community activities.

1-9) We plan to hold voluntary campaigns during the tours so that if the tourists would like, they can remove the plastic waste, bottles, and cigarettes they see in the nature, and in return we give them badges at the end of the tour.

1-10) We actively cooperate with other tourism operators and networks, such as SMAL (Association of Finnish Tour Operators), Helsinki partners, and HOT (Helsinki Guides) to exchange information about sustainable and responsible tourism.

1-11) We continuously collect feedback from our guides, customers, and service providers to improve our services.

1-12) We treat our suppliers and customers equally and fairly regardless of sexual orientation, religion, culture, language, physical limitations, food diet, and sensory impairments.

1-13) We do not mislead customers with unrealistic expectations. Instead, we rely on transparent marketing, active feedback collection, and quality assurance.

2. Environmental sustainability:

2-1) We follow the common principles of sustainable tourism of Metsähallitus and UNESCO heritages.

2-2) We take care of the animals physical, social, and mental rights. We limit the tourists´ direct interaction with endangered animal species to help the conservation of them.

2-3) We only include sustainable means of transport, offered by responsible carriers. Also, we provide our tourists with an opportunity to ride bikes and scooters within the towns. If possible, we include trains and boats on the tours instead of the coaches and flights with higher emissions. Also, we offer electric car rentals only.

2-4) We do not serve foods and drinks to our tourists in plastic packages and use reusable objects instead. Also, we encourage our customers to use the tap water instead, which in Finland is in high quality.

2-5) In the nature, we try not to leave anything but footprints and take nothing but photos. Accordingly, we try to accommodate our tourists in ecolodges and sustainable accommodation facilities.

2-6) During the itinerary design, sales, and operations, we take a great care that the number of travelers visiting a site does not exceed the carrying capacity of the sites.

2-7) We provide our tourists with practical materials before the tour so that they could be aware of our policy regarding sustainable Finland tours. Moreover, we train our tour guides to give adequate explanations to the tourists on how to visit the sites without leaving any traces.

2-8) We try to reduce the energy use and waste by turning off the unneeded lights, contracting with eco-friendly electricity providers, and using eco-friendly detergents.

2-9) We recycle our waste including paper, bio, plastic, metal, glass, fabrics, electronics, and carton waste. Moreover, we try to reduce the use of bottled water and use the tap water instead. We also encourage our tourists to recycle their waste or return the bottles on the tours.

2-10) We do not make paper prints, issue paper invoices or receipts and try to archive the documents digitally.

2-11) We value the culture and rights of Sámi people and are committed to ensuring our activities do not disturb their way of life. We strictly follow the guidelines issued by the Sámediggi (Sámi Parliament of Finland).

3. Financial sustainability

3-1) We try to attract tourists in the low season as well by creating unique tour packages to be operated in one specific season.

3-2) We attend tourism events to get updated with the most recent sustainable strategies in the market.

3-3) Our team members are provided with the most up to date information regarding sustainability and responsibility in the tourism. Also, they are aware of the company values and visions and act accordingly.

3-4) We take care of our tourists' safety and take preventive measures beforehand. For example, driving in the winter or keeping them safe from vipers and ticks. Some activities such as snowmobile ride require training beforehand, and we provide the safety equipment and insurance as well. We also hold business liability insurance and entrepreneur accident insurance.

3-5) We aim to predict possible issues that may occur on the tours and solve them beforehand. Also, in time of crisis we act in accordance with safety instructions.

3-6) All our tour guides are trained authorized guides who have been trained on how to deal with crisis on the tours including first aid.

3-7) We aim to collaborate with family run businesses for example accommodation in ecolodges run by Sami families.

3-8) We have no discrimination policy when hiring new members or service providers. Also, there is a no harassment policy within the company.

3-9) We take care of our employees' mental well-being by providing adequate leave days, incentive trips, and group gatherings.

3-10) We do not overwhelm our employees by workload, and we hire new members as the company grows.

3-11) We have no gap between men and women in the company, and women can work in the leading positions.

3-12) We offer tours to all type of people with different sexual orientations, religions, physical disabilities, ethnicity groups, and food diet e.g. vegans or LGTB.

3-13) We plan to donate to charity programs and raise fund for environmental campaigns.

Core Group and Roles

Currently, there is no formal core team or full-time staff. However, a small group of tour guides who work regularly with the company are actively engaged in supporting and delivering sustainable practices. This informal group consists of:

- The Owner – responsible for strategic planning, marketing, operations, partner selection, sustainability audits, finances, and guest communication.
- Tour Guides – involved in delivering sustainable travel practices during tours and educating guests about Finnish nature, culture, and responsible behaviour.

Although guides are not employed full-time, they play a crucial role in front-line sustainability delivery.

Current State Analysis of Sustainable Development

1. Competence Development in Sustainable Tourism

We prioritize the development of sustainability knowledge for both the company owner and guides. Our approach includes:

- Personal development of the company owner through participation in:
  - Webinars and workshops focused on sustainable tourism
  - Tourism events, fairs, and exhibitions in Finland and Europe
  - courses, publications, and industry news
- Tour guide engagement, where we:
  - Share sustainability guidelines and expectations at the start of each season
  - Encourage guides to learn about cultural, environmental, and safety topics
  - Invite guides to attend relevant local training opportunities when available

Although our guides are not full-time employees, we aim to build a shared sustainability mindset through clear communication, guidance, and selection of like-minded professionals.

2. Current Level of Sustainable Tourism in the Company

We consider our company to be at an intermediate level of sustainable tourism development. While we have taken meaningful and practical steps, there is still room for structured improvement in areas such as:

1. **Monitoring and Reporting Impact**
   We will begin regularly monitoring and reporting our environmental and socio-cultural impact, allowing us to track progress, identify areas for improvement, and communicate transparently with partners and guests.

2. **Carbon Footprint Calculation and Reduction**
   We plan to calculate our operational carbon footprint and take steps to reduce it through smarter planning.

3. **Customer Involvement in Environmental Action**
   We will offer our customers the option to support the protection of the Baltic Sea through small voluntary donations that go to trusted environmental organizations.

4. **International Engagement**
   We aim to become a member of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) to align our practices with international sustainability standards and participate in a global network of responsible tourism professionals.

5. **Quarterly Sustainability Meetings**
   We will initiate quarterly sustainability meetings with other tour guides to:

   - Share updates and knowledge
   - Review feedback and best practices
   - Strengthen alignment with our sustainability goals

This would be the first one of its kind in Finland.

6. **Education and Outreach**
   We plan to share our knowledge of sustainable tourism by contributing to the education of guiding students through workshops, guest lectures, and field collaboration.

7. **Promote tours to other parts of Finland and other seasons**
   We plan to promote other parts of Finland such as Turku Archipelago and Lake land in Eastern Finland. In addition, we aim to sell more Lapland tours in autumn and summer.

Despite being a small operator, sustainability is already a core value, not just a trend. It is embedded in how we design tours, select partners, and communicate with customers.

3. Actions Taken So Far

♻️ **Environmental Actions:**

- Have designed walking tours with minimal transportation impact (walking tours in Helsinki). We serve around 10,000 tourists a year on our Helsinki walking tours.
- Have actively promoted sustainable practices such as reaching the meeting point by public transportation, recycling bottles and cans, and using tap water instead of buying bottled water In our pre-tour follow-up messages, sent to all participants.
- Have established collaborations with accommodation and transportation providers that share our commitment to sustainability
- Encouraged digital communication and paperless operations
- Have achieved a sustainability label by Visit Finland

🧭**Socio-Cultural Actions**

- Have practiced non-discriminatory hiring by including local Helsinki-based guides with immigrant backgrounds to support inclusive employment in Finland. To date, we have welcomed tourists from over 95different nationalities, reflecting our commitment to diversity and intercultural understanding
- Have Incorporated Finnish cultural experiences into tours
- Have worked only with local service providers
- Have promoted local food, craft products, and businesses
- Have educated tourists on local customs and respectful behavior
- Have promoted unique activities in Lapland other than the usual activities that tourists usually do such as meeting Sami families in Lemmonjoki national park near Inari

🤝**Operational & Ethical Actions**

- Have treated all tour guides and suppliers fairly and equally
- Have active collected feedback from our customers after the tours to improve the quality
- Have participated in industry networks (SMAL, Helsinki Partners, HOT) to exchange best practices
- Have built a culture of honesty, transparency, and quality
- Have achieved the highest rating amongst all tours in Helsinki on tripadvisor
- Have trademarked the brand name and logo

Current State Analysis of Sustainable Development

1. Communication with B2C and B2B Customers We actively communicate our sustainability efforts to both B2C (individual travelers) and B2B (tour operators, agents) customers through:

- Our website's dedicated "Sustainability" section
- Tour descriptions emphasizing sustainable elements such as recycling cans, using public transportation to reach the meeting point, and using tap water
- Pre-arrival emails including responsible travel tips

2. On-site Responsibility Communication During the tours, our guides:

- Explain our sustainability goals and eco-friendly practices
- Explain regulations such as traffic rules
- Practicing safety especially in the winters by taking distance from buildings due to risk of icicles
- Encourage low-impact behavior (e.g., staying on paths, no littering)
- Highlight local culture, traditions, and respect for nature and people

3. Encouraging Responsible Customer Behavior We:

- Promote recycling, using tap water, and respecting cultural norms
- Explain local customes and rules
- Plan to encourage participation in voluntary clean-up actions (e.g. removing litter)
- Plan to offer the option to donate to Baltic Sea protection initiatives

4. Public Transportation Guidance We encourage arriving at meeting points via public transport in:

- Pre-tour emails with transport instructions
- Tour pages including maps and suggested routes

Sustainable Tourism Development

1. Operational Environment Lomatka Travel operates in urban (Helsinki) and rural/natural (Lapland) environments. Our tours utilize public urban spaces, city centers, national parks, and local roads.

2. Impacts of Operations

- **Positive:** Promoting cultural understanding, supporting local businesses, educating tourists on sustainability, employing local guides (including with immigrant backgrounds)
- **Negative:** Potential carbon emissions from transportation, risk of crowding in sensitive areas if not managed

3. Use of Infrastructure

- We use public infrastructure (e.g., streets, trails, lean-tos, rest stops)
- We respect access rules, follow landowner permissions, and encourage guests to follow the "Leave No Trace" principles

4. Climate Change Adaptation & Mitigation

- **Risks:** Shorter winter season, reduced snow reliability, extreme weather may affect Lapland tours
- **Adaptation:** Flexible tour planning, offering off-season and year-round options
- **Mitigation:** Promoting walking tours, public transport, paperless systems, carbon offset programs, and selecting local suppliers
- **Biodiversity:** Supporting eco-certified partners, limiting group sizes in nature, no wildlife disturbance

5. Animal Welfare Animals are not part of our direct services. If we include animal-based activities via partners (e.g. reindeer farms), we:

- Check that animals have space, rest, and ability to behave naturally
- Work only with responsible, welfare-committed providers

6. Visitor Experience Development

- We collect feedback after each tour via email or verbal comments
- Measure satisfaction via reviews (Google, TripAdvisor)
- Adjust tours and services based on recurring feedback trends

7. Local Community Engagement

- Use and promote local food, crafts, and services
- Plan visits around local events and festivals
- Interact with local craftspeople, encourage guest purchases of locally made products
- Offer cultural explanations and briefings to guests to avoid disturbance

8. Inclusive Tourism & Equality

- Hire diverse guides, including those with immigrant backgrounds
- Welcome guests of all religions, abilities, and backgrounds
- Ensure non-discrimination in recruitment
- Website content is readable and mobile-friendly; we are working on further accessibility improvements
- Marketing shows diverse audiences

9. Safety

- Covered by business liability insurance and entrepreneur accident insurance
- Safety plans in place; guides trained in first aid and emergency response
- We brief all guides on risks, emergency procedures, and responsibilities before seasons

10. Economic Viability & Regional Impact

- Support local economy via partnerships and local purchases
- Recommend and book local services for customers
- Develop sustainable tour products: walking tours, nature experiences, low-emission cabin stays
- Educate customers on sustainable choices pre- and post-booking
- Preference for partners with environmental certifications or STF label

11. Procurement & Value Chain

- Prioritize reusable, recyclable, and local products
- Avoid unnecessary print material; use digital communication
- Partner only with suppliers who align with sustainability standards

12. Financial and Human Resources

- All tour guides work as freelancers; we offer seasonal contracts with fair compensation suggested by SMAL
- The company ensures financial stability by maintaining a balanced budget and reinvesting in quality and sustainability improvements

Action table

Go through the development plan and self-assessment and record the areas to be developed in the action table. The action plan can be a spreadsheet or any other format that works for your company. Actions should be set for at least the duration of the validity of the certificate (step 3), as the validity of the STF label is always linked to the certificate.

The action plan can be, for example, a table or another format that serves your company. The most important thing is that you can follow the actions with the help of the plan.

The actions should cover all dimensions of sustainability: ecological, sociocultural and economic sustainability.

What is essential in the action is the goal: how do you intend to achieve your aspirations?

Actions can also be small and local.

Action	**Goal**	**Schedule**	**Responsible person**	**Budget**	**Reporting and measurement**
Join GSTC	Align with global sustainable tourism standards and gain visibility	Q1 2026	Owner	€300	Membership confirmation, inclusion in communication materials
Save the Baltic Sea	Encourage tourists to support marine conservation	Q2 2026	Owner	0€	Total donations collected, customer participation rate
Carbon footprint	Calculate and reduce company's CO_2 emissions annually	Q2 2026	Owner	200€	Annual emission report and offset certificates
sustainability meetings with guides every 3 months	Engage tour guides in sustainability practices and gather feedback	Q1 2026	Owner	0€	Meeting minutes and action points
Teach sustainable tourism	Raise awareness and build future guide competence in responsible tourism	Q3 2026	Owner	€0	Session feedback, number of students reached
Voluntary litter collection on tours	Encourage guests to protect nature and raise awareness	Ongoing (starting Q3 2026)	Guides	€300	Number of participants, amount of waste collected, guest feedback

Purchase radio headsets for group tours	Minimize noise disturbance to locals and improve tour quality	Q4 2026	Owner	3000€	Reduction in public complaints, improved guest feedback
Join an international sustainability organization	Strengthen collaboration, stay updated on best practices, and build network	Q1 2026	Owner	500 €	Membership certificate, participation in events or forums
Update company website to reflect sustainability values	Communicate sustainability commitment transparently to all visitors	Q2 2026	Owner	1000€	Updated website pages, visitor engagement and feedback
Complete ICRT course	Strengthen professional knowledge and apply international best practices	Q3 2026	Owner	500€	Course certificate, integration of learnings into business operations
Trademark brand colour	Strengthen brand identity and ensure legal protection	Q3 2026	Owner	900€	Trademark registration confirmation
Apply for YEL grant for sustainability initiatives	Secure funding for sustainability investments and training	Q1 2026	Owner	€0	Grant approval, fund utilization repor