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Volunteer Tourism Research

Volunteer Teaching Tourism

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1 Introduction

2 Volunteer Tourism Definition

The growth of tourism as a social phenomenon changed dramatically during the second half of the 20th century. Voluntary activities, however, have their roots in the altruistic and missionary movements of the 19th century. (Callanan, M., & Thomas, S. 2005). Volunteer tourism is also known as “voluntourism”.

Volunteer tourism is an increasingly popular activity in which individuals combine travel with voluntary work. (Raymond, E. M., & Hall, C. M. 2008) In other words, volunteer tourism is when one is travelling and at the same time participating in goodwill activities. Wearing, S. (2001) has defined such volunteer tourist as: Those tourists, who for various reasons, volunteer in an organized way to undertake holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments or research into aspects of society or environment. Wearing, S. (2001) also states that volunteer tourism is an experience that offers an opportunity to study the potential of travel to develop oneself, in the belief that experiences have the potential to have a more lasting affect than the average package holiday.

2.1 Volunteer Tourism in Finland- Maailmanvaihto

Volunteer tourism is not as popular in Finland as it maybe is in many other countries. Even though it is not that popular, it still has opportunities for many interests. For example I came across a non-governmental organization Maailmanvaihto, which receives foreign volunteers to Finland and also sends Finnish people abroad to do voluntary work. In my research I decided to focus on what they are offering, since they did have similar programs which are in the focus of my research.

Regarding to their webpage, they mainly focus on day care centers, schools, civic organizations, foster homes for disabled or elderly, schools and workshops for people with special needs, cultural centers, youth centers and Eco centers.

Maailmanvaihto does cooperation with two organizations, ICYE (International Cultural Youth Exchange) and ESC (European Solidarity Corps). Both of these have

different volunteer countries and funding programs. ICYE program is meant for volunteers coming from ICYE countries outside Europe and ESC volunteering is meant mainly for young Europeans.

2.2 Cost for the Participant

According to Maailmanvaihto website ICYE program volunteers take care of the program costs themselves, whereas ESC is funded by the EU.

ICYE, the program fee comprises of health insurance, Finnish language and cultural training, full board, and the support from Maailmanvaihto during the voluntary work period. the daily travel costs between the place of accommodation and work are covered, and the volunteer workplace provides the volunteer with the monthly pocket money. In 2021–2022 the pocket money is 110 € per month.

ESC, Reasonable travelling expenses (based on travel distance) to Finland and back to the home country are covered for the volunteer from the EU funding. In some cases the volunteer might have to pay a small part of these costs.

Also the following costs are covered for the participant from the EU funding:

- an insurance
- travel costs to work
- support for language learning
- a monthly pocket money of 5 € / day

The accommodation and food are provided by the voluntary workplace and/or Finnish host family. (Maailmanvaihto)

3 Volunteer Tourism in Finland Research

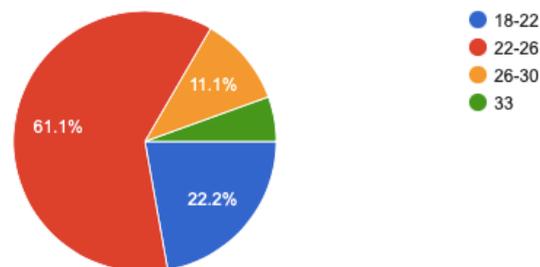
I decided to do a small research regarding volunteer tourism in Finland. The aim of my research was to find out how attractive is Finland in the eyes of foreigners, if people would be interested in coming to Finland as volunteer tourists. If so, which activities would they most be interested in and what are their main fears of coming to Finland has volunteer tourists.

The outcome of the research gave me a better understanding in to which direction Finland should move, while planning volunteer tourism activities and which worries of foreigners should they be addressing. The outcome also helped me to come up with the volunteer tourism activity plan for Finland.

3.1 Questions, Replies in Charts

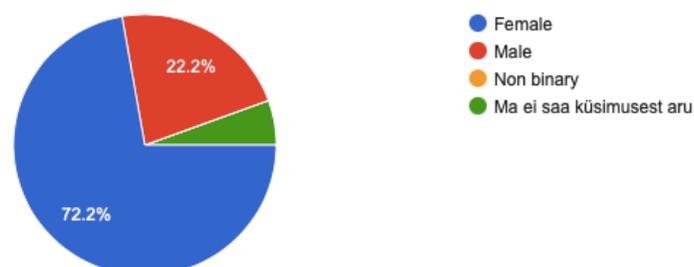
Your age

18 responses



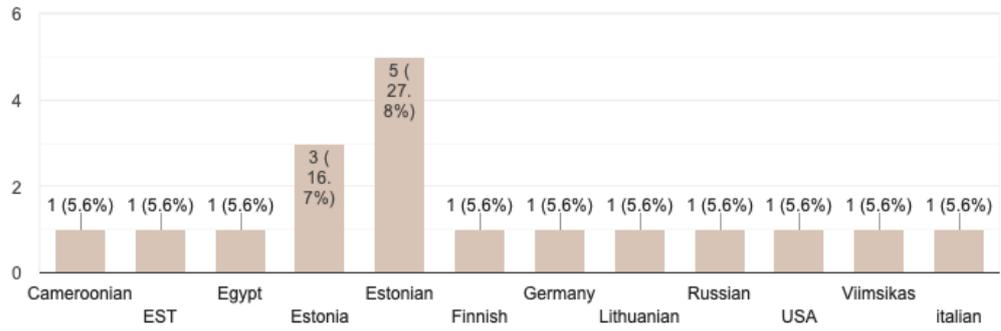
Which gender identity do you identify the most?

18 responses



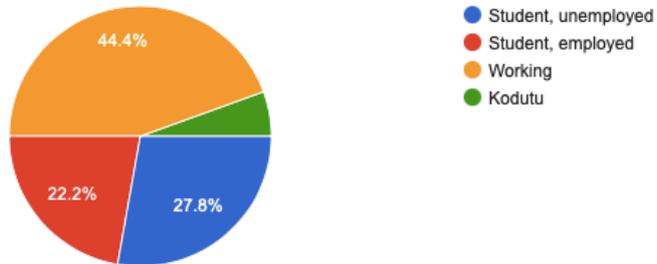
Your nationality

18 responses



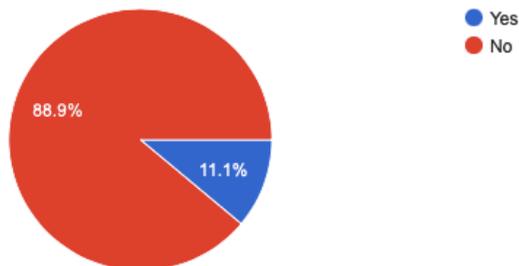
Your status

18 responses



Have you ever been a volunteer tourist?

18 responses



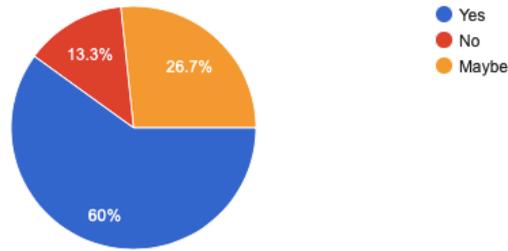
If you answered "yes", please tell about your experience/experiences a bit more specifically.

1 response

Not sure if that counts but I was a volunteer in another state for 2 weeks. The project was about planting trees and cleaning the nature in that area.

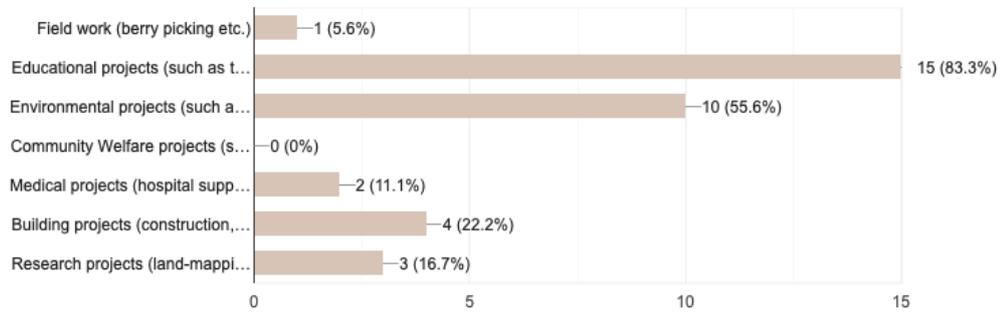
If you answered "no", would you be interested in participating in a volunteer tourism project?

15 responses



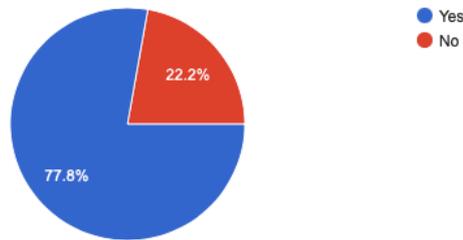
Which volunteer tourism projects interest you the most? (Choose max 2)

18 responses



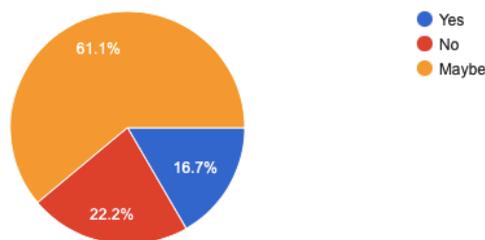
Have you ever been to Finland?

18 responses



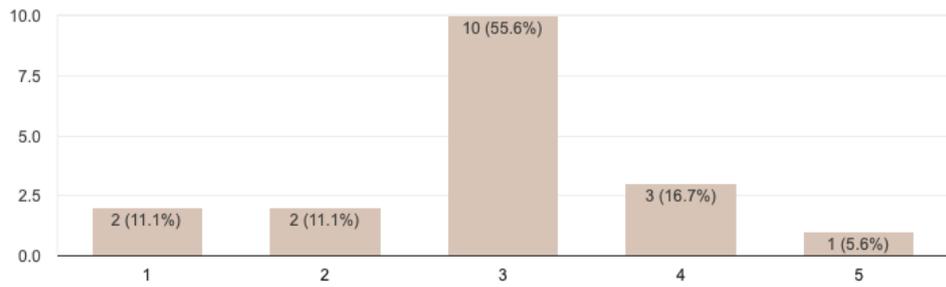
I would consider to come to Finland as a volunteer tourist.

18 responses



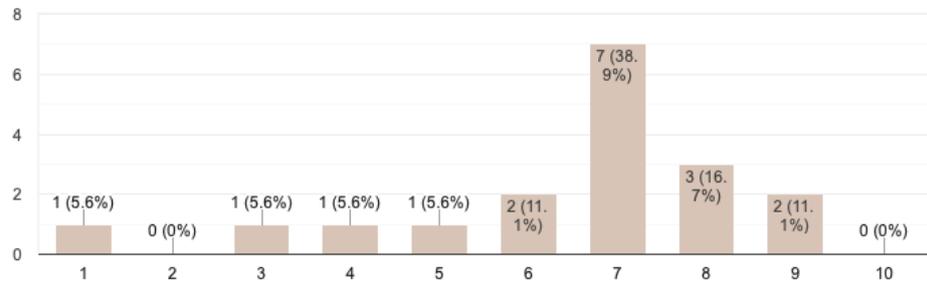
I consider Finland to be a good volunteer tourism destination

18 responses



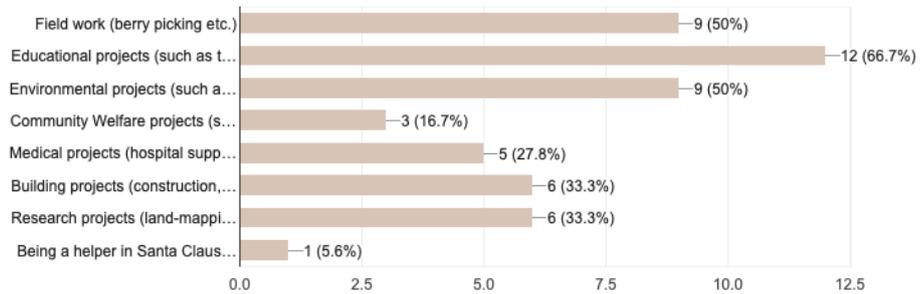
In my opinion, Finland has the potential to be more popular among volunteer tourists.

18 responses



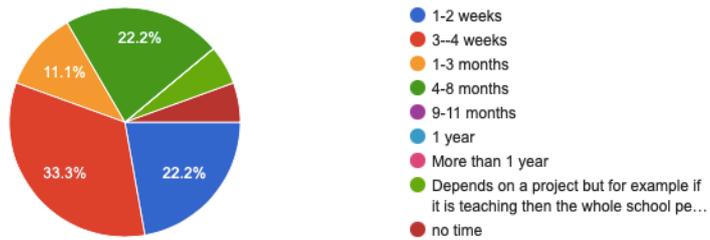
Which volunteer tourism projects in Finland do you think would catch the most interest in foreigners? (Choose max 3)

18 responses



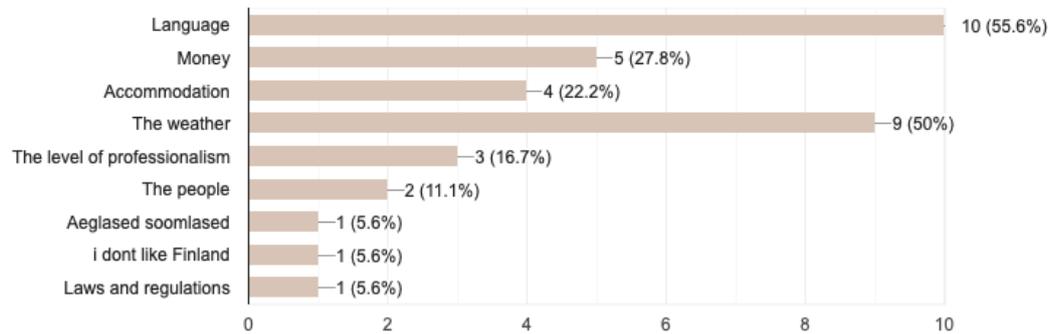
For how long would you want to be in Finland as a volunteer?

18 responses



What makes you worried about coming to Finland as a volunteer tourist?

18 responses



3.2 Discussion of the Survey Replies

In total there was 18 people who answered my survey. Naturally I was hoping for more replies, but since I did not have too much time, I am happy with the result.

Firstly I wanted to ask questions that help me profile people a bit more specifically. Hence I asked questions helping to define their age, gender, nationality and current status.

In total there was 9 different nationalities, which is a good wide spectrum regarding that there was only 18 responses. The most replies came from people who are from Estonia. Total of 10 people. The age of the respondents stays between the gap of 18-33. Out of 18 replies 13 were female and 4 were men. One respondent did not understand the question due to language barrier. They got in contact with me and now I know that this person defines their gender as "male". Meaning total of 5 men replied. Regarding the current status of people, more than half of them, 66,6%, are employed and some of the employed people, 22.2%, are students. 27.8% of people were students and one person did not answer the question properly.

Next I wanted to find out what are the relations of those people regarding volunteer tourism.

Only 2 people had been volunteer tourists before and one of them specified that they had been a volunteer in another state for 2 weeks working on an environmental project.

From those, who had not been a part of a volunteer tourism project yet, only 2 people in total were not interested in participating in a volunteer tourism project and the rest either said yes or maybe.

When it comes to which projects people were interested in, the most popular answers were educational and environmental projects.

For the last part of my survey I wanted to find out whether Finland is seen as a good volunteer tourism destination and more specifically which projects people are interested in. I also wanted to find out that what are the greatest fears for people and why they might not want to come to Finland for a volunteer tourism project.

Out of 18 respondents 14 had visited Finland, and would consider visiting Finland also as a volunteer tourist. For the question, if people consider Finland as a good volunteer tourism destination, I let people express their opinion on a scale from 1 to 5. "1" meaning that they do not agree and "5" meaning they agree. Most people were replying with a number "3", meaning that they are somewhere in between and not sure if Finland is a good volunteer tourism destination or not. 4 people did not consider Finland as a good volunteer tourism destination and 4 people did. So the answers were really half and half. When I asked people to evaluate on a 1-10 point scale, if they see Finland having the potential to be more popular, the respondents are rather positive and think that Finland has a great potential to be more popular. In total 14 people replied in the range of "6-10" meaning that they agree with the statement that Finland has the potential to be more popular.

As for the question that what do people think are the most attractive projects for Finland for volunteer tourists, again the educational and environmental projects got the most points. People would be willing to spend in Finland from 1 week to up to even a full year. Some respondents replied that they would not want to come to Finland at all. The most popular range was 3-4 weeks.

For the question that what seems to worry people the most about coming to Finland, the most popular came out to be the language barrier issue. Second the weather and third the money. Three people also replied that they do not like Finland or Finnish people in general and one person also expressed their concern in the laws and regulations.

3.3 Analysis of the Research Results

Overall I can say that the survey was a success. And what I mean by success is that the survey did bring some insight to the asked question and the problem. Replies regarding Finland being more popular as a volunteer tourism destination were positive

and people seem to believe that Finland can be more attractive. Based on the survey results, Finland should focus more on educational projects and also environmental projects since those were the most popular among different ages, genders and nationalities. Finland should also overlook the issues and fears that people are having about coming to Finland as a volunteer. Those fears being language, weather and money. Would there be a possibility to arrange the projects during more calmer seasons like Spring/Summer, could there be some insurance about language barriers- like letting the foreigners know that there is someone who speaks English with them throughout the project, are there funding's available for volunteer tourists- if so is there a way to communicate it louder or if funding is not available could there be something else done about that?

Regarding the volunteer tourism research project for the destination management and based on the research results, I will be focusing on volunteer teaching tourism. Educational projects being the most popular survey answer and also the popularity of Finnish education system made it to be an easy choice.

4 Finnish Education System

Finland is not only known for its cold weather and beautiful nature, which makes it a perfect tourism destination, but also for its great education system. Finnish education system has been said to be one of the best in the world. Even though Finnish students are not ranking top in PISA, they are one of the only students that's life satisfaction is as high as their test results. According to professor of education, Pasi Sahlberg, Finnish education system's success comes from multiple factors. By rejecting standardized testing and concomitant school and teacher accountability measures, Finland has instead charted its own path by focusing on equity, professionalism, and collaboration. (Pasi Sahlberg, 2012).

Equality and equity, in my eyes, is one of the key strengths Finnish education system has to offer. Finnish education system has made it possible for everyone to have the chance of getting an education. Since education in Finland is free, starting with pre-primary school to higher education (The Finnish Education System 2020), it does not

matter what is your economic or social background. Equitable education system helps every student to develop knowledge and skills specially regarding their needs.

Finnish teachers are true professionals of their field. Studying to become a teacher in Finland is favored by many, already because of long history line of teachers in families. To become a teacher in Finland you need to have a university degree, which is received during a five year studying process. Finnish teachers get a wide range of pedagogical skills and also knowledge of curricular subjects (Salla Korpela, 2012). Which teaching method the teacher chooses to use in the classroom, they can choose freely. To support teachers and students, it is crucial to have high-quality material available. Finland makes sure their school books and other materials are available in their official languages both physically and online.

Collaboration can be understood in many different ways and implemented in various of fields in education. When it comes to Finnish education system, collaboration is a daily practice. Collaboration between parents and students, students with other students, students and teachers, teachers and school and most importantly the Finnish government with all of them, is what makes the system so great. By collaborating the students learning and achievement increases. Results come when everyone works together for a greater cause. In the future, collaborative knowledge creation activities will become increasingly commonplace when teaching relying on monologues decreases. (Kristi Lonka, 2018).

The greatness of Finnish education system lies in different qualities. Equity and equal opportunities for everyone provide a fair opportunity for kids from all backgrounds. Professionalism in teaching and materials make sure the quality of education is on point and collaboration between everyone keeps the system running. With these fundamentals and basic pillars to guide the development of the Finnish education system, Finland can be sure to keep delivering the healthiest professionals of the future.

5 Volunteer Teaching Tourism in Finland-Maailmanvaihto

There are many programs on MaaIlmanvaihto that include teaching or working in an educational institution environment.

According to MaaIlmanvaihto, In the Finnish elementary school there are 9 grades (with the possibility for the extra 10th grade) and the children are aged from six to sixteen. Most of the schools in Finland are run by the government. Some schools are interested in hosting volunteers in order to create for the pupils a possibility for intercultural learning and practicing a foreign language.

On MaaIlmanvaihto webpage I found many projects in regular schools but also schools that have students with special needs.

The roles for the volunteer were mainly about supporting students with special needs, assisting helping students (for example helping them study after hours), supporting teachers with different classes, organizing free time activities for the students.

6 Volunteer Teaching Tourism Project Idea for Finland

Based on the research and knowledge gathered, I came up with a unique solution for Finland to promote volunteer tourism on education field projects.

Finland is well-known for its education system and should not focus on traditional volunteer teaching. Finland should be using their strengths and instead of accepting volunteers to "help Finland", Finland should accept volunteers to "be helped by Finland". Meaning, volunteers coming to Finland would be coming to Finland to learn about Finnish education system and methods. The goal for the volunteers is not to "give", but to "get". This method would be very useful for future teachers or even current teachers from African or Asian countries. Countries, where people are usually going to be volunteer teachers because of the locations lack of professionals. This would be a great opportunity to create more education professionals all over the world through a volunteer program.

This volunteer teaching tourism program would not only be beneficial by the before-mentioned ways, but also help Finland contribute to the United Nations Agenda 2030. The Agenda includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that aim of the agenda is for worldwide cooperation to achieve global sustainable development economically, environmentally, and socially. From the 17 SDGs goal 4. Quality Education

relates to the suggested volunteer tourism project. The aim of goal 4 is to ensure quality education for all the boys and girls all over the world. Education is what supports our growth towards socioeconomic mobility and will help the world deal with poverty issues. In 2018 about 260 million children were still not going to school and more than half of all children worldwide are not meeting the minimum proficiency standards in regards to reading and mathematics. The situation has had its hit also now during the global pandemic of COVID-19. This shows that the project is more important than we think and literally relates to achieving all the other goals in the Agenda 2030.

The volunteer teaching program should be financially supported since the target participants would be from less fortunate countries. The program should be in English and participants should also have an English or their native language speaking guide with them the whole process to ensure their well-being in a foreign country. Accommodation should also be covered or at least there should be some solution made.

This program could also be something that universities do for exchange students for example to get their practical training credits.

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