

SPIRIT OF INARI 2019

Extending the seasons in practice

Who?

Good afternoon ladies & gentlemen. It is my honour to have a brief speech about extending the seasons in tourism business.

First, I would like to introduce myself briefly, my name is Petri Saastamoinen, I have been in the business for almost 20 years and have not regret a single day, at least not yet.

Since 2017 I have been the director of sales in Visit Inari – Safaris & Accommodation, a family owned private company, providing tourism services year around. Mr. Tapani Lappalainen, our CEO and owner started the business over 30 years ago and has done long term, moderate growth and development.

In the next 10 minutes I will handle the issue under three different titles, Why? How? and then summing up.

Why?

It is in us; our instincts are driving us to be better and develop. We have responsibility to make sure that industry is growing in sustainable way, not only environmentally, but also paying attention to social and economic sustainability. By growing and developing our services and seasons we can make the business more profitable and by better profits we will establish more jobs and also year around jobs, not only seasonal work. Example Visit Inari has succeeded to have 30 employees year around.

Making better business year around means also benefits for the municipality and for the locals. Without flourishing tourism business, we most likely would not have such accessibility by land and air, or two supermarkets in Inari. There is no doubt that tourism is the biggest industry in Inari at the moment and ones we succeed to extend the seasons there is even wider possibilities in the future.

Coin has also the other side. We have responsibility to develop the business and growth in such way, that the support of the local community remains and even deepens. It is our duty to ensure that children going to school don't feel stressed or scared because of the tourists visiting us. Said this, I strongly believe that instead of increasing the amount of beds and volumes by visitors, we must focus on extending the seasons and develop the sales into more efficient and benefiting way.

For example, we have renewal our accommodation capacity so, that we have renovated existing capacity and have removed older capacity from the way of the new capacity. We are committed to play our part in sustainable develop in the area.

Once we have determined the way we want to develop comes the part how?

How?

First, we have to wake our selves up! It is not possible to copy the winter products and services directly into shoulder seasons or to the most potential seasons as Mr. Rauno Posio from Visit Arctic Europe quite often puts it out.

We need to make sure that we are ready for extending the seasons, before we can start to execute the tasks towards year around business.

We need to have the services and products ready for the seasons that we wish to develop. I believe that the best way to start the develop, is to use the recourses one already has. Visit Inari has always had strong competence operating on the Lake Inari and it was quite natural to extend the season for the products done by boat by doing Northern Lights cruises on the autumn time.

One big part in how, is co-operation. One could say that those who are taking part to extend the seasons are like explorers entering to unknown and when this is done in co-operation it is more efficient and sustainable. By co-operation I mean the local companies, areal marketing organization, tour operators, cross border co-operation and last but definitely not least the local inhabitants. This is the only way to make sure that we are able to develop and grow in sustainable way, making sure that we are not ruining the attractiveness of our region.

Once we have the products and services ready, we can start the distribution with our tour operator co-operatives and other marketing and sales channels. By increasing the knowledge of these most potential shoulder seasons the demand will follow and eventually it will lead into better accessibility. I know that it sounds a bit like prophecy, but I strongly believe that this is the way things should be done to benefit locals, visitors and companies.

By developing content for the guests, we can extend the length of stay which leads not only into better profitability, but it also gives better change for the guests to get deeper knowledge about local nature, culture and history. When we succeed to offer genuine services related to Sami culture, it brings better knowledge about the culture and it will start to spread out in positive way.

Summary

We are at the crossroad where we'll have to choose the way we wish to develop our business and industry. I believe that we all agree that sustainability must be the guiding light that defines our actions. Instead of quick profit, we must see the reactions of our actions in future, what it means to our children and grandchildren, what it means to arctic nature and for the indigenous Sami Culture.

Let us choose the sustainable path together in co-operation.

Thank you!