



BEST and PROMISING PRACTISES

Principles: 4 - Respects and Involves Local Community

Practices:

- Collection of local culture and environment information
- Cooperation and communication with local peoples and authorities
- Delivery of authentic sustainable product

Company: Lapplandsafari **Web-Site:** www.lapplandsafari.se

Region: Ammarnas / Vasterbotten / Sweden

Operation: Traditional Sami cultural camp and conference facilities

General Summary:

Provides a first hand testimonial on the success that excellent research, cooperation and communication play in the development of an authentic Sami cultural product. This business operates within a Protected Area and demonstrates the long term benefits of implementing sustainable tourism practices.

Operator's Testimonial / General Details:

Lapplandsafari is run by the Vinka family, who has recreated a Sàmi mountain camp, *Geunja*. It's located in the middle of one of the largest preservation of nature areas in Europe, Vindelfjallen in the province Vasterbotten. The camp has a Sàmi cone shaped peat hut in the yard and a sauna just by the lake. This is how a lot of Sàmi lived during the 19th century. A life in accord with nature, a life the Viknas want to share with others.

Anki Vinka about the investment in building the *Geunja* and what meaning it has had to the area:

Background

After many years of working as a traditional activity operator, we wanted to work in a more sustainable way and with more focus on our Sàmi culture. We wanted to do this by building a Sàmi mountain camp using traditional methods and materials - this would be our principle for arrangements and conferences. We presented the idea to some of our major regular customers and asked if they were interested in helping us to save the Sàmi culture by continuing to engage us as an organizer and by buying our new product - *Geunja*. We received positive responds and some customers even helped us with technical design and project descriptions.

Collecting information

Then we went collecting useful information in the area. Such as measuring old edifices, taking photographs, visiting museums and talking to old people and relatives to obtain as much information and knowledge as possible. It was also important to find somewhere where the camp could fit into the nature and with right conditions - a spring, fishing grounds and hunting grounds - exactly as Sami were thinking 100 years ago. The perfect place was located in a nature reserve. We thought it would be a bit tricky because of all the strict rules about construction work and commercial business in protected areas. But we had no problem with that, thanks to all the excellent information we had found. We had, without knowing it, taken into account all the aspects that are required for a sustainable tourism project - the ecological, the social/cultural and the economical effects and benefits. The authorities considered the project favourable to the nature reserve.

Close co-operation and communication

A project must be dealt with thoroughly to be successful. It's important to communicate with all parties concerned during the procedure - with the guests, the experts, the museums in the province, the local politicians, the authorities and other contractors in the area. But above all, the older locals who have so much knowledge and experiences to share, you have to care about the details. We were striving for doing something very luxurious, yet very simple. We found it is actually possible to combine them.

Once the mountain camp was finished, we invited the whole village to show everybody what we had done, so everybody would feel that they were participating in the project. The whole village came, including the holiday cottage owners, and they were all very impressed. Today everybody in the village has only good things to say about Geunja and it has also spread to other areas through the holiday cottage owners.

Real social history

We have inspired others enterprises to do similar things and today many people call us to get hints or help in different ways. It's fun to be able to be a source of inspiration and see that many people have adapted our way of thinking and therefore are making better products. Here in the village, it's very obvious that we are going for sustainable tourism. Now there are three other enterprises operating in the village, who are also approved by Nature's Best. There is also a change of attitudes in the whole province. The authorities are talking about Eco-tourism/Sustainable tourism and see Geunja as an excellent example. Our success relies on real social-natural history. It's very important that everything is authentic to be trustworthy. We are also working in small groups, partly because we don't want to wear the area down too much. But it is mostly because we want to be good hosts who are looking forward to every single meeting with the guests and still are taking great pleasure in storytelling.