

Sustainable Tourism Today and Tomorrow – Insights from Both Sides of the Bothnian Bay

Joint keynote by Anu Nylund & Jeppe Klockareson

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Acknowledgement of the Sámi People

With respect and humility, we begin by acknowledging the Sámi people as the Indigenous people of Sweden and the Nordic region. Sápmi — the traditional land of the Sámi — spans parts of Sweden, Norway, Finland, and the Kola Peninsula in Russia. It is a region with deep connections to land, water, animals, and nature, where Sámi culture and ways of life have existed in harmony with nature since time immemorial.

We honour the Sámi people's history, rights, languages, and cultures, and pay respect to Sámi ancestors, Elders, and current generations who carry forward this rich knowledge and tradition. We also acknowledge the colonial history and structural injustices that have affected the Sámi people, and commit to contributing to a future grounded in respect, inclusion, and justice.

Anu Nylund



Finnish (Finland)

Work experience in diverse tourism jobs for over 25 years, 10 years in Spain (Travel Guide, Hotel, Travel Agency, Touroperator, Educational institutions). Specializing in Sustainable Tourism since the 1990s. Mood of Finland company was established in 2018.

Sustainable Travel Finland (STF) training material production 2019, supplements 2020 and destination training package 2024

STF and responsibility coach and mentor at Visit Finland Academy since 2017. Including the complimentary training courses such as Climate Change and Regenerative Tourism.

Mood of Finland company has the Biosphere certificate and the STF label and was the first company in Finland to sign the Glasgow Climate Declaration in 2021.

Member of the international Turismo Regenerativo – a Chilean-based Regenerative Tourism community, where several regenerative tourism training was completed. In Finland, the productization of regenerative tourism courses and workshops.

Jeppe Klockareson



Swedish (Sweden)

GSTC Country Representative Sweden 2018-2020

GSTC Nordic Training Partner since 2018

Swedish Nature and Ecotourism Association 2014-2020

Practical application of the GSTC criteria and GSTC destination program since 2019

EarthCheck™ auditor since 2023 and ISO 14001 auditor since 2024

20+ years experience of sustainable tourism development as a trainer, educator, advisor and auditor

Why Sustainability Matters in Tourism

- A holistic approach to long-term value

- Tourism impacts economy, community, culture and nature.
- Sustainability is a management approach, not a separate activity.
- Strengthens quality, risk management and competitiveness.
- Protects the destination and improves long-term value creation.
- Requires clear standards, goals and follow-up.

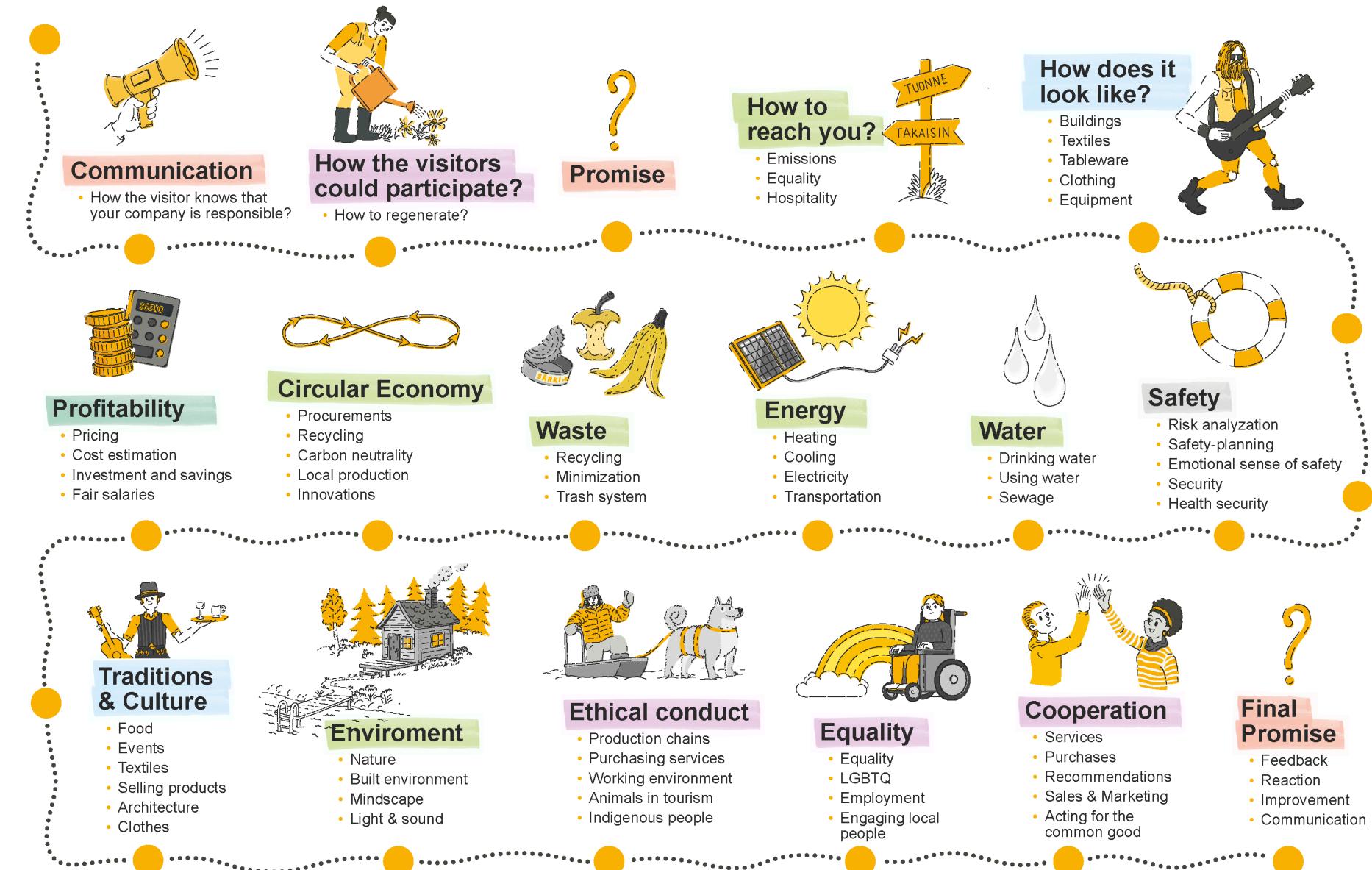


What sustainable tourism really means

- A license to operate

- Establish a shared understanding of sustainable tourism: economic, social, cultural and environmental dimensions.
- Highlight why sustainability is not a separate activity, but a way of managing quality, risk and long-term value.





The Global Context

- Tourism's transformation in a post-pandemic world

- Travel volumes have surpassed pre-pandemic levels.
- Increasing pressure on destinations and ecosystems.
- The GSTC Standard sets the global baseline for credible sustainability practice.
- Shift from “promoting tourism” to managing places.
- Sustainability ≠ making tourism better – it is making places better to live, which becomes better places to visit.



The European Transition

- From voluntary action to structured transformation

- The European Green Deal positions tourism in climate and circular transitions.
- The Tourism Transition Pathway outlines 27 priority actions.
- EU funding increasingly tied to sustainability, verification and measurable results.
- Expectation for destination governance, strategy and integrated planning.
- Movement from voluntary activities to structured, accountable processes.



Transition Pathway for Tourism

– 5 Priority Areas

- **1. Governance & Strategy**

Clear leadership, better data, updated strategies, easier access to funding.

- **2. Green Transition**

Circularity, climate adaptation, sustainable mobility, environmental footprint.

- **3. Digital Transition**

Data-driven services, digital tools, tourism data space.

- **4. Mobility & Connectivity**

Smarter, seamless, multimodal and cross-border travel.

- **5. Skills & Capacity**

Upskilling for green and digital change; peer learning; SME support.

Where we stand

- The state of sustainable tourism, Global and European developments in brief

- Differences and similarities between Sweden and Finland (policy frameworks, support structures, business maturity).
- How the transition is influenced by economy, behavior and politics.



The Consumer Shift

- Expectations, transparency and authenticity

- Travellers seek authentic, local, responsible experiences.
- Growing demand for transparency and evidence behind sustainability claims.
- Changing behaviour: reduced short-haul travel in the North Sea region.
- Higher expectations for real action and responsible communication.
- Intention–behaviour gap still a challenge.



Responsible Tourism Trends 2025

1. Empowering Communities and Driving Positive Change. Community-led is the new 'community-based'
2. The Overtourism Tipping Point. Seeking out alternatives to the hotspots.
3. The Rise of Deeper Travel. Goodbye FOMO (fear of missing out) Hello JOMO (joy of missing out)
4. The Impact of AI. Optimisation for more sustainable operations
5. More Diverse Target Groups Embracing Flexible Work. Creating opportunities for deeper connections between visitors and local communities.
6. Balancing Luxury Tourism with Sustainability. Fewer Towels, More Meaningful Experiences.
7. Coolcations: Respite from Baking Temperatures. Fleeing from the Heat, but at What Cost?
8. The EU Green Claims Directive Shakes Things Up. Greenwashing is so last year...
9. The Rise of Holistic and Meaningful Experiences. A desire to feel better and be better.
10. Ecosystem Services: The Future Focus of Sustainable Tourism. Protecting and restoring nature.



Green Claims, CSRD & Empowerment of Consumers

- A new accountability landscape

Green Claims Directive

- Green Claims Directive is on hold, not cancelled.

Empowerment of Consumers Directive

- Becomes law March 2026, applies September 2026.
- Regulates sustainability communication and “future environmental claims”.

Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive

- CSRD affects large companies, but influences entire supply chains.
- Higher need for data, traceability and external verification.

The Directive on empowering consumers for the green transition

- The talk of the town

- Environmental claims will be forbidden, meaning that companies will no longer be able to declare that they are 'green' or 'environmentally friendly' if they cannot demonstrate that they are.
- It will also be forbidden to display unreliable voluntary sustainability logos.
- There is a **separate Directive on Empowering Consumers for the Green Transition** and then the **Green Claims Directive**, which is still in the process of being formed.

Ympäristö

Nyt loppuvat löysät puheet ympäristöystävällisyydestä – näin iskee uusi viherpesudirektiivi

Ympäristöväitteiden käytööä kiristävä EU:n viherpesudirektiivi toi paljon lisätyötä Pyhäjunturin hiihtokeskukselle. Muilla urakka on vielä edessä.



Pyhäjunturin hiihtokeskuksen esittelystä poistuvat sanat [hiilineutraali](#) ja [puhdas](#). Siinä velvoittaa EU:n viherpesudirektiivi, joka tulee Suomen lainsäädäntöön vuoden 2026 syyskuuhun mennessä.

Breaking news from Finland in February 2025

climate

Lapland tourism marketing under scrutiny as EU tightens greenwashing rules

Lapland tourism campaigns will be forced to abandon exaggerated sustainability claims with a new EU greenwashing directive coming into effect.



Image: Antti Mikkola / Yle

YLE NEWS

The Directive on empowering consumers for the green transition & EU Green Claims Directive

 The Directive on empowering consumers for the green transition: a company cannot claim to be carbon neutral if neutrality has been achieved by offsetting emissions.

However, this does not mean that emissions cannot be calculated, and the results of the calculation cannot be published.

Green Claims Directive focuses on the verification of environmental claims: in future, companies will have to verify their claims by an accredited third party before using them.

 According to current information, the Green Claims Directive would not apply to micro-enterprises, i.e. companies with fewer than 10 employees and a turnover of less than EUR 2 million, but of course, companies of all sizes should consider transparent communication.

In Finland, the Consumer Ombudsman, who operates under the Finnish Competition and Consumer Authority (KKV), is responsible for supervising the Green Transition Consumer Protection Directive.

Certification & Credibility

- Verification as the foundation of trust

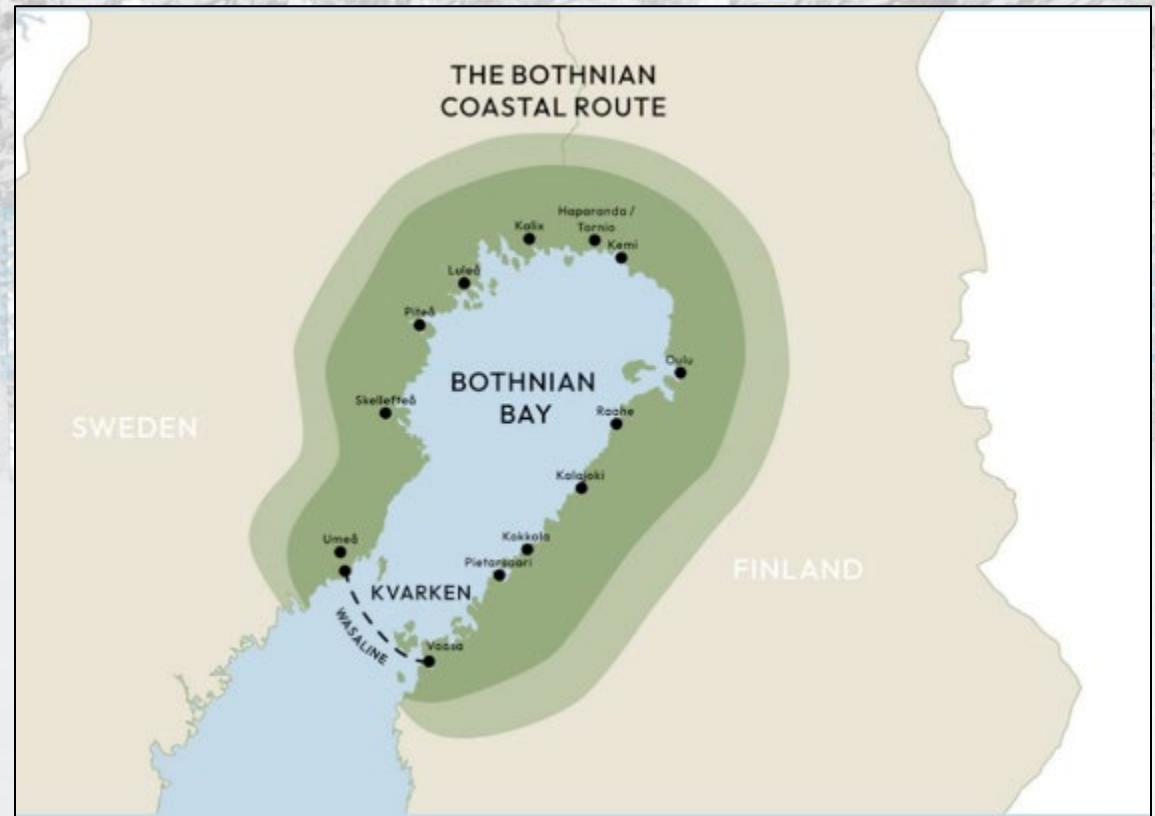
- The GSTC Standard is the global baseline for credible systems.
- Certification is valuable when part of a continuous process, not a badge.
- Distinguish roles: Standard → Certification Body → Accreditation Body.
- Sustainable Travel Finland (STF) is a national framework, not a certification, but is based on other certifications.
- Responsible Tourism Program (RTP) is a regional framework, not a certification, gaining national interest.



What the BCR Project Has Shown

- Insights from a cross-border initiative

- Businesses show strong interest but varying readiness.
- Need for clearer processes, support and continuity.
- **Structural issue:** destination governance is weak or missing.
- Linked to **GSTC-D A1:** need for a destination authority with mandate and multi-stakeholder inclusion.
- Tourism not consistently integrated into wider government planning.



The Finnish insight

- A method that supports responsibility work.

- In Finland, it has been customary to hold a one-day training/training/workshop that includes instructions on how to apply for the STF program, log in to the STF Hub, and complete the seven-step content.
- Most often, companies are left to their own devices after the introductory meeting. Sometimes, sparring is offered with project financing.
- The goal of the BCR project is to lower the threshold for companies to engage in sustainability work.
- The jointly produced report can be used as a development report for the STF program.



Learnings and observations from the Swedish way of doing the responsibility work.

- We can learn from the Swedish way of working together and offering onsite support.
- The challenge may be that there are no resources for such support when project funding ends, but we expect that results from the implementation of this method encourages to continue.
- The common goal and objective is that companies become enthusiastic about sustainability work and feel that the work is worth the time invested in it and brings added value to the company's business.
- It is also important to highlight the added economic value of sustainability work.



Company Challenges & Opportunities

- What SMEs tell us

Challenges

- SMEs lack time, knowledge and financial capacity.
- "Where do we start?"
- Need simple, structured tools and ongoing support.

Opportunities

- The will is there!
- Builds relations, trust and cooperation.
- Business benefits appear quickly with structured sustainability work.
- Opportunity for the region to lead in **responsible Nordic tourism**.

From Project to Process

- A clear sequence for long-term destination sustainability



“Start in the right place. Governance and vision first; projects and company support after.

When the foundation is strong, every project becomes more effective.”

Joint Recommendations

- A shared path forward

- Build destinations that are great for residents first – visitors will follow.
- Strengthen governance and long-term planning.
- Use shared baselines like the GSTC Standard.
- Provide continuous support for SMEs: tools, training, follow-up.
- Align regional/national programmes with common methods.
- “Collaboration is our competitive advantage.”



*“Sustainable tourism is not the goal – it is the method.
The goal is thriving places where people want to live, work and visit.”*

Contact me

Fair Travel

Jeppe Klockareson

Enbärsvägen 8

SE-193 34 Sigtuna, Sweden

Phone:

+ 46 709 707919

E-mail:

jeppe@fair-travel.se

Web:

www.fair-travel.se

LinkedIn:

[linkedin.com/jeppe-klockareson](https://www.linkedin.com/jeppe-klockareson)



“If you think you are too small to make a difference, you’ve never been in bed with a mosquito.”





Anu Nylund

Mood of Finland

E-mail: anu.nylund@moodoffinland.fi

Phone: + 358 40 9622006

Web: www.moodoffinland.com

LinkedIn: [Anu Nylund](#)

Instagram: [Mood_of_Finland](#)

Facebook: [Mood of Finland](#)

Blog: [Forestexperience](#)

