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The White Sea Extension

Possible tourism connections between the Bothnian Arc Region and Russian Karelia

by

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Preface

Commissioned by the Interreg IIIB project Bothnian Arc Action, the Centre for Regional and Tourism Research has carried out a review of the state of the art of tourism industry in the Karelian Republic of the Russian Federation. The goal of the review has been to facilitate and promote network activities between the White Sea region and the region of the Bothnian Gulf.

For the Bothnian Arc region around the Gulf of Bothnia, it is vital to have connections both to the Baltic Sea and to the White Sea. The report lays out the ground for improved contacts to the east. The report gives examples of the main attractions in Karelia but also trends in the Karelian tourism industry.

The report also covers a seminar in Kem, at the White Sea coast, where entrepreneurs from the two regions met in August 2004.

Peter Billing
August 2005

Contents

Preface	3
1 Background.....	7
2 Historical review	9
2.1 From the Treaty of Nöteborg in 1323 to the cession of Finland to Russia in 1809	9
2.2 The Russian period to the Revolution 1917.....	9
2.3 The Karelian ASSR 1921-1940	10
2.4 The Karelian ASSR/SSR from 1940 to 1992.....	10
2.5 The Karelian Republic of the Russian Federation from 1992	10
3 Facts about Karelia	11
3.1 The concept of Karelia.....	11
3.2 General information about the Republic of Karelia of the Russian Federation.....	12
3.3 Nature.....	14
3.4 Industry.....	15
4 Tourism	17
4.1 Historical review.....	17
4.2 State of the art.....	17
4.3 Tourism statistics	18
4.4 Tourism attractions.....	20
4.4.1 Attractions in northern Karelia	20
4.4.2 Attractions in central Karelia	23
4.4.3 Attractions around Onega	24
4.4.4 Attractions around Ladoga.....	24
4.5 Forest reservations and nature sanctuaries	25
5 Interviews	26
6 Excursions	31
6.1 Kizhi Island	31
6.2 Kivatch waterfall	31
6.3 Solovetsky Islands	33
7 Tour Operators	35
8 Conclusion.....	37
9 Appendix I	39
9.1 Cupertino between Finland and Karelia within cultural tourism	39
10 Appendix II.....	41
10.1 Facts about Tourism Organisation in Karelia.....	41

Figures

Figure 1.	The northern dimension	7
Figure 2.	Seminar in Kem	8
Figure 3.	The concept of Karelia over time	11
Figure 4.	Map of Karelia.....	13
Figure 5.	GRP of incoming tourism, Karelia (2003 is estimated, 2004 is forecast)	18
Figure 6.	Visitors to Karelia by nationality (2003)	19
Figure 7.	What do the tourists look for? (%)	19
Figure 8.	Assessment of attractions.....	20
Figure 9.	Monastery of Solovets	21
Figure 10.	Kivatch waterfall.....	23
Figure 11.	Unfinished building, Petrozavodsk.....	26
Figure 12.	Environment of Priozelski Hotel	28
Figure 13.	Severnaya Hotel (Pohjois, Norden).....	29
Figure 14.	Kivatch Museum.....	31
Figure 15.	Karelian birch (The three dark trees in the centre)	32
Figure 16.	Solovetsky port.....	33

Tables

Table 1.	Geographical facts.....	12
Table 2.	Demographic figures for Karelia, 2002	12
Table 3.	Inhabitants of Karelia by nationality (2002)	12
Table 4.	Lakes and rivers in Karelia.....	14
Table 5.	Business sectors (2002).....	15
Table 6.	Industrial production in relation to total Russian Federation production (2002)	16
Table 11.	Karelian attractions - a matrix.....	37

1 Background

During a previous Bothnian Arc project (1998-2002), an increase in travel in an east-west direction was forecast, because of the strengthening of the Russian economy. The Russian market was of interest to the Bothnian Arc in several aspects according to the final report.¹ Cooperation in the North Calotte and the Barents region, which has been conducted for several years, has established transboundary contacts and networks which have led to growing business activities and cultural connections. Contacts within the travel industry between Finland and Russia are well developed today and there have always been common traditions and historical connections between the two countries. The improvements in the Russian economy and communication systems will lead to increased demand from the Russian side for package tours and individual travel to the Bothnian Arc.

The present Bothnian Arc Project concentrates on cooperation between the Swedish-Finnish coastal zone and Karelia, with its White Sea coastal area, which will establish conditions and opportunities for building a unique concept in exotic arctic coastal tourism in both regions. Similarities in nature, climate and attractions should be coordinated with dissimilarities in infrastructure, economy and culture. Together, the tourism industry and public organisations would be able to support sustainable tourism development, harmonised with environmental interests and contributing to a strengthening of the northernmost regions.

It is hoped that a concrete outcome of the project will be the development of new products based on the conditions and expertise of the area, on training plans to improve competence in the tourism sector and on close collaboration between the tourism sector, educators and researchers.

Figure 1. The northern dimension



Source: www.bothnianarc.net

In August 2004 Swedish and Finnish entrepreneurs and public officials met their Karelian counterparts in Kem by the White Sea. The meeting revealed, among other things, knowledge gaps between the Russian delegates and the Swedish/Finnish delegation. The gaps were mainly to do with service, entrepreneurship, markets and culture.

1 Turismutveckling - utvecklingsinsatser för turismen runt Bottenviksbågen, p. 6.

This report will try to bridge some of these knowledge gaps by introducing the Karelian tourism sector to the Bothnian Arc project members. In order to this, some background facts about the Republic of Karelia of the Russian federation will be presented.

Figure 2. Seminar in Kem



Photo: Lena Wikström.

2 Historical review

2.1 From the Treaty of Nöteborg in 1323 to the cession of Finland to Russia in 1809

From time immemorial there have been historic connections between Finland and Karelia. The Finnish national epos Kalevala takes place in Karelia and, during the Middle Ages, there were Finnish speaking people around the whole Gulf of Finland. The Treaty of Nöteborg (Pähkinsaari in Finnish, Orokhovetsk in Russian, later on Schlüsselburg and today Petrokrepost, where the Ladoga discharges its waters into the Neva) in 1323 divided the Karelian area between Novgorod and Sweden, with Viborg as a fortress and stronghold against the Russians. The border separated the Karelian tribe from western Finland and it divided eastern and western Finland from each other both with regard to language and ethnology.

The treaty of Stolbova (1617) between Sweden and Russia changed this and both the eastern and western parts of Karelia were united.² During this period, despite the Lutheran Swedish government, the Greek Orthodox monasteries Valamo and Konevits were established at Lake Ladoga. The Stolbova Treaty confirmed the Swedish conquest of Kexholm and Ingermanland. The area was again connected to Savolax and the rest of Finland, even though the area was not officially a part of the Swedish State.³ A lot of Karelians moved to Russian territory, mostly for religious reasons. The migrants settled both in boundary and central districts in Russia. The largest group settled down in the territory of Tverskoy land and gave life to the ethnic group of the so-called Tversky Karelians.⁴

In 1649 the Russians built the fortress of Olonets for protection against the Swedes. Under Peter the First mining plants were established on the territory of Karelia. The mining region was called Olonetsky mining plants (Petrovsky, Povenetsky, Alexeevsky, Konchesersky). These plants played a very important role at the time of the Great Northern War (1700-1721) between Russia and Sweden. They supplied the Russian Army and Navy with cannons, cannon balls, pistols, swords and other armaments. Petrovsky plant gave life to Petrovsky settlement (1703), which then grew into the town of Petrozavodsk.⁵

The treaty of Nystad (Uusikaupunki/ Nishtadtsky) in 1721 changed the course of history. Not only Kexholms Län but also Viborg and Sortavala were ceded to Russia. During the war of 1751-53, Russia conquered most of Karelia. Nyslott (Savonlinna) with its fortress Olofsborg became the Swedish stronghold against the Russians. In 1802 the government of Olonets was established in Russian Karelia with Petrozavodsk as its capital. When Finland became part of Russia (1809), Karelia was reunited again, with Sortavala, Terijoki and Viborg as centres of Karelian culture in Finland.

2.2 The Russian period to the Revolution 1917

During the 19th century, forestry and logging developed rapidly. Sawmills were equipped with steam engines and Karelia became one of the most important suppliers of wood and saw materials for domestic and international markets. A regular shipping route was established between St Petersburg and Petrozavodsk and a new railway was built as far as Murmansk in 1914-1915.

During the Civil War of 1918-1920 Karelia became a battle arena between Red and White troops. By the summer of 1919 white troops had seized the northern shore of Lake Onega but Red troops took the initiative after the victorious battles at Vidlitsa and Lizhma, near Petrozavodsk, and the interveners were defeated in February-March of 1920.

2 Sihvo, Hannes, 1996.

3 Villstrand, NE, 1993, part 2, p. 132.

4 http://www.gov.karelia.ru/gov/Info/history_story3_e.html

5 Ibid.

2.3 The Karelian ASSR 1921-1940

Karelia was given economic independence in April 1921 but peaceful development of the economy was violated by a peasant rebellion in 1921. The rebellion was caused by a lack of food and by resentment at mass labour mobilisation. Finnish troops joined the peasants' rebellion. In February 1922 the rebellion was suppressed by Red Army troops.

Karelia was transformed into an autonomous republic within the Soviet Union (ASSR) on July 25 1923 and the process of rebuilding the Karelian economy was in general completed by 1925. The logging industry developed and sawmills were reconstructed in the course of the industrialisation development of 1920-1930. New branches of industry appeared, like pulp and paper, furniture, mining, and electric power. Pulp and paper mills were built in Kondopoga (1929) and in Segezha (1938).

The *labour camp sector of the economy* played an important role in Karelia. This was better known as the Gulag prison camps, established by Stalin as a result of his fear of foreign invasions from Western countries. A lot of foreigners, usually innocent people, were kept in these camps in Karelia. The White Sea-Baltic Sea (Belomorsko-Baltisko) Canal was dug 1931-1933 mainly by prison labour. By 1940 the White Sea labour camps were producing more than 50 % of the timber logged in Karelia. The Republic suffered great losses during the repression of 1930. Thousands of people, the brain and soul of the nation, were put to death and tortured in labour camps. The years of collectivisation in Russia (1929-1933), through the brutal reorganisation of the agriculture structure, created negative changes in the conditions for peasants in Karelia and led to agricultural redundancy.⁶

2.4 The Karelian ASSR/SSR from 1940 to 1992

After the Soviet-Finnish war of 1939-1940, the Karelian Autonomic Soviet Socialist Republic was transformed into the Karelian-Finnish Soviet Socialist Republic with wider autonomy on March 31 1940. The status of the union republic was kept until 1956, when Karelia became an autonomous republic in the RSFSR structure.

During World War II Finnish and German troops occupied the majority of the Karelian Republic. More than 100,000 Karelian citizens fought in the Soviet Army and in guerrilla groups. On June 21 1944 the Red Army started an offensive and on June 28 Petrozavodsk was set free.

The war brought much harm to the Karelian economy and culture. Nearly 200 enterprises, schools, and clubs were completely destroyed. By 1950 the economy was rebuilt and achieved pre-war levels of production. Karelian wood supply played an important role in rebuilding destroyed towns and settlements in the European parts of Russia. The logging industry grew until the middle of 1960. Then new branches of industry had to be developed – pulp and paper, mining, machine making, metal processing. New enterprises were built, for example Kostomukshsky GOK, which was built in cooperation with Finnish firms.

2.5 The Karelian Republic of the Russian Federation from 1992

On March 31 1992 Karelia was recognised as a full and equal subject of the independent Russian Federation. In November 1992 the First National Congress of Finns, Karelians and Veps was held. It discussed the current problems of the national-cultural development of the Finno-Ugrian population of Karelia.⁷

6 www.gov.karelia.ru

7 *Ibid.*

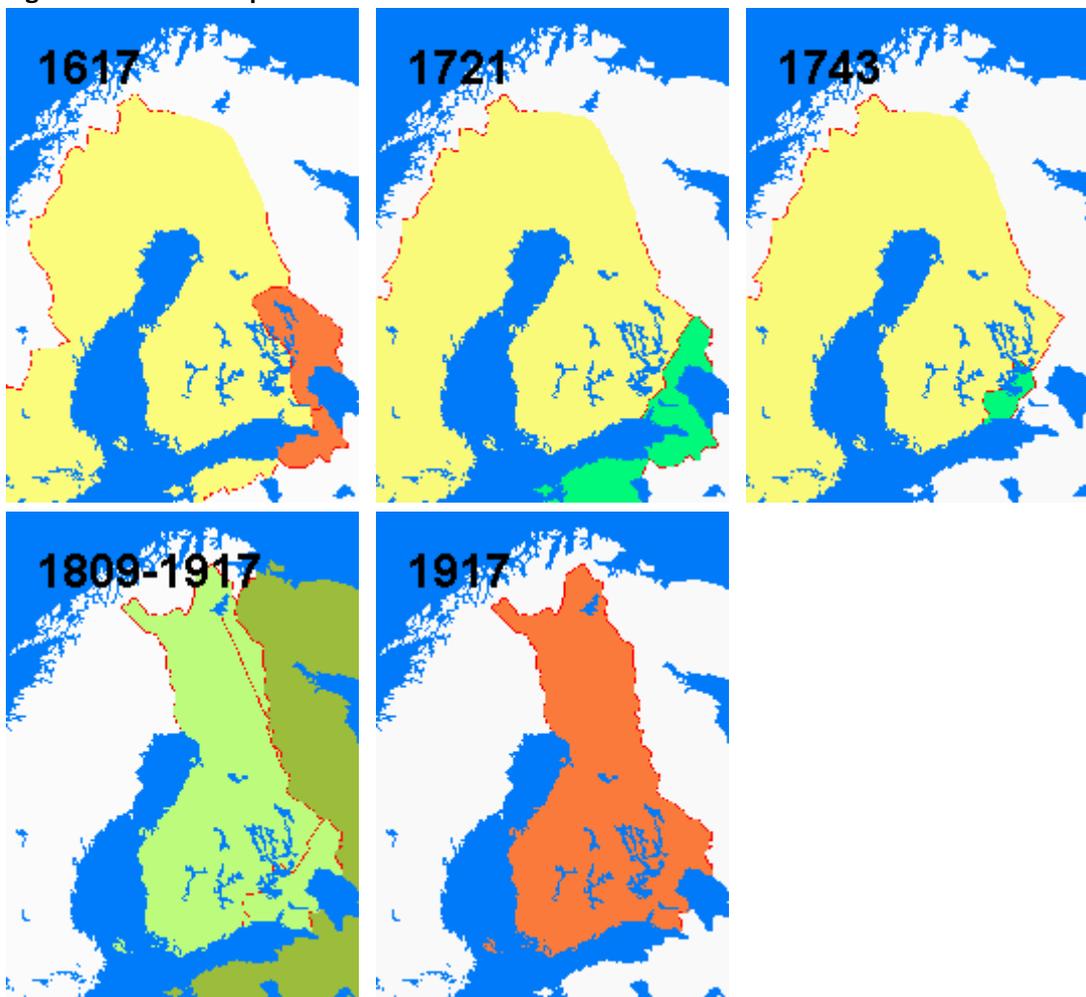
3 Facts about Karelia

3.1 The concept of Karelia

In Finland, Karelia as a concept has become vague and lost a lot of its structure.⁸ Four different *Karelias* can be found today and there is no unanimity of the concepts:

- 1 Finnish South Karelia (Kymmenen Läni), with Villmanstrand (Lapeenranta) as a centre and with a strong feeling of identity and sense of Karelian cultural heritage but with few contacts with real Karelian people.
- 2 Karelian Peninsula (Karjalan Kannas) from where the Karelian people were expelled. The region is still a strong symbol for what is Karelian in the minds of many Finns.
- 3 Finnish Northern Karelia (Pohjois Karjala) with Joensuu as a centre and with perhaps the best connections to the Russian side of Karelia.
- 4 Russian Karelian Republic, which according to many is the *real* Karelia today since it is the only region where the Karelian language is spoken.

Figure 3. The concept of Karelia over time



Source: www.tacitus.nu/historisk-atlas/skandinaviens/finland.htm

⁸ Sihvo Karelia, p. 13.

3.2 General information about the Republic of Karelia of the Russian Federation

Karelia is located between the 60th and the 66th parallels. Compared with Sweden and Finland, this means a location between Gävle/Uusikaupunki in the south and Jokkmokk/Kemijärvi in the north. Kem is on the same parallel as Byske and Oulu while Petrozavodsk is on the same parallel as Hudiksvall and Savonlinna.

Karelia's length from north to south is 660 km. From west to east it is 424 km on the latitude of the town Kem and on the latitude of Petrozavodsk it is double the distance. Karelia borders Finland in the west (723 km), Leningrad oblast in the south, and Murmansk and Archangelsk oblast in the east. In the northwest, the shores of the republic are washed by the White Sea. The Republic of Karelia consists of 19 sovereign territories and 808 populated areas.

Table 1. Geographical facts⁹

Area	Km ²
The whole Karelia	180,500
Lakes	60,000
Rivers	27,000

The population of the republic is divided demographically in the following way:

Table 2. Demographic figures for Karelia, 2002

Total population	716,000	100 %	
Urban	537,000	75 %	In Petrozavodsk 37 %
Rural	179,000	25 %	
Labour force	450,000	63 %	
Over 60	137,000	19 %	
Under 16	129,000	18 %	

Average age of the inhabitants is 37.1 years. The population density of the republic is four people per km².

Table 3. Inhabitants of Karelia by nationality (2002)

Russians	74 %
Karelians	10 %
Belorussians	7 %
Ukrainians	3 %
Vepps	3 %
Finns	2 %
Others	1 %
In total	100 %

The Karelian proportion of the population has decreased since the time when the republic was a Soviet Socialist Republic (1940-1956). In the former Soviet Union a great transfer of people from different parts of the union to others was carried through and Karelia was no exception. The dominant proportion of the inhabitants of the republic today are Russians from many parts of Russia.

The capital of the republic is *Petrozavodsk* and this is also by far the biggest city. *Kondopoga*, 55 km to the north of Petrozavodsk, is the second biggest city with 37,600 inhabitants. It is a prosperous industrial town within the forestry. One of the *big four* attractions of Karelia, the *Kivatch* waterfall, is located about 50 km away from Kondopoga. Just a bit further on is the spa *Martial Waters*. The third biggest city, *Segezha* (37,400 inh.), is located on Lake Vigozero with its sandy beaches. The lake is connected to the Belmorskoje-Baltiskije Kanal (The Stalin Canal).

⁹ All the facts about the republic of Karelia in this chapter are taken from <http://www.gov.karelia.ru>

Kostomuksha (31,800 inh.) is located relatively close to the Finnish border and has become a border business town with many visitors from Finland and with a lot of Finnish capital invested there. This is also the case with *Sortavala* (22,500 inh.), the old cultural centre of previously Finnish Karelia, located on the shores of Lake Ladoga. Sortavala is the natural departure for boat trips to the island of Valaam, home of the Valamo monastery.

Figure 4. Map of Karelia



Source: http://www.karelia.ru/Karelia/Photos/TravelGuide/map5_b.gif

Kem (18,200 inh.) in northern Karelia was previously closed to foreigners and also to many Russians since it was located in a military area with very limited access for outsiders. From Kem it is possible to reach the Solovets island with its huge monastery and memories from the Gulag-archipelago, especially those associated with Solzhenitsyn's book *One day in the life of Ivan Denisevitch*. Belomorsk (17,000 inh.) is also located on the shores of the White Sea and is a transport centre with a good harbour and direct railway connections to both Moscow and St Petersburg. During World War II Finnish and German troops did not capture Belomorsk. Deliveries of war equipment from the convoys from New Foundland via Murmansk could be transported to Moscow from Belomorsk despite the occupation by the enemy of the railway to Leningrad south of Belomorsk.

Olonets is located in the very south of the republic. The fields in Olonets form the largest resting place of wild migrant geese in Europe. A few million geese breed and hatch their posterity on Olonets fields annually at the beginning of May.

3.3 Nature

Karelia is often called *stony lake-forest land*, highlighting the leading elements of its landscape, beautiful combinations created by countless lakes and rivers and the land in-between, covered with forest. More than 49 % of the republic is covered by forest (the main species are pine and fir tree).

Karelia is associated with the territory of blue lakes. Indeed, there are a lot of lakes - over 61,000. Karelian lakes are very different in size, varying from small *lampi* lakes,¹⁰ closed and anonymous, up to the largest lakes in Europe like Ladoga and Onega. The area covered by lakes in Karelia amounts to 11.4 % of its entire territory, which is distinctly more than in neighbouring Finland, and almost twice as much as in the Murmansk oblast.

Table 4. Lakes and rivers in Karelia

Lakes	Area km ²	Depth	Rivers	Length km
Ladoga	17,700	260	Vodla	400
Onega	9,900	126	Vyg	
Syamozero		97	Kovda	
Topozero		56	Kem	
			Suna	
			Shuya	

The giant lakes contrast with the tiny and typically tectonic lakes like *Paanajarvi* and *Ondozero*. Paanajarvi is 1.5 km broad and 24 km long and is situated among the hills of northwest Karelia. With a depth of 131 m, it is a mini Lake Baikal in Karelia. Ondozero in the middle of Karelia is quite small and has a depth which does not exceed 10 m.

The banks of the Karelian lakes are often picturesque. They are normally covered with boulders and rocks. These rocks can either be high and steep, or ironed flat by glaciers and with the characteristic name of *mut-ton foreheads*. Sometimes these coastal rocks are interspersed by golden strips of sandy beaches or dark-brown bogs. The normal waterfronts are, however, framed by displays of flowers at the forest skirts, rich berry and mushroom grounds.

The larger lakes are connected by many channels, small and big rivers. The length of the majority of them does not exceed 10 km. A characteristic feature of the Karelian rivers is that they are often a mix of rivers or lakes. The share of lakes in a river can be none or up to 90 %, but it varies normally from 6 % to 50 %. These lake-river systems are typical for Karelia but absolutely not endemic for other parts of Russia.

The rather short length of the rivers of Karelia in combination with the significant difference in heights between sources and estuaries causes their large inclination. On the average it is about 1 m per 1 km and on the rapids up to 3-5 m per 1 km. The rivers contain numerous natural obstacles like currents, rifts, cavities, and falls between the calm and peaceful lakes.

The *River Kem* is the northernmost river and several power stations and dams are constructed along its currents and falls. The *River Shuya* and *River Suna* are regarded as twin rivers in the Petrozavodsk area and a lot of stories are told about them. The *River Suna* produces one of the *big four* attractions, the *Kivatch* waterfall.

The variety of obstacles in rivers in combination with the rich water system makes the Karelian rivers a dream for water tourists. It is easy to choose a route of any category of complexity. Some of the obstacles in the rivers are not possible even when the water is high. It is necessary to pass them on the shores and therefore a preliminary acquaintance with the route or consultation with local residents is always required.

¹⁰ *Tjärn* in Swedish, *tarn* in English.

The most famous *waterfalls* are:

- Kivatch with its height of 10.7 m is the most visited even if it is not the highest
- Kivakka (12 m) is on the river Olanga
- Kumi (13.6 m) is on the Voinitsa
- Bolshoj Padun (18 m) is on the Vincha
- Beloe Mosty (19 m) is on the Kulismajoki.

The *hydrographic picture* of Karelia is supplemented by the White Sea - the unique internal sea in Russia. It has its own appeal through its fauna, especially *belugas*¹¹ and unique islands with their rich history. The world famous Solovki islands are located here and the Kuzovetsky archipelago, with its mysterious labyrinths and numerous *seids* on the tops of the mountains, is still unexploited by tourism.

3.4 Industry¹²

The Republic of Karelia has a favourable economic-geographic location. It is situated near the highly industrially developed central and western Russian regions. It has a developed water transportation system and significant natural resources. Karelia has a premier position within the Russian industrial complex for industry based on local natural resources like forestry, wood-processing, pulp and paper, ferrous metallurgy, and construction. It is also a major player within industries using imported raw materials, like machinery making and non-ferrous metallurgy, thanks to its close access to the Atlantic port of Murmansk.

At the beginning of 2003 measures were undertaken by the government to reverse the negative economic development tendencies of the republic. It is estimated that in 2003 the total regional product has increased 2 % in comparison with 2002. The volume of industrial output has grown by 15 % in established prices in comparison with 2002. The index of physical volume of industrial output was 100.8 % of the level of 2002.

A check on the inflationary processes was maintained during 2003. The annual inflation rate was 12.9 % (compared with 15.3 % in 2002). Growth of consumer prices was caused by a rise in prices on paid services rather than by a rise in the price of goods. The real available monetary income of the population increased by 3.3 %. The average wage as a whole across all branches of republic's economy in 2003 was 5,608.3 roubles, a rise of 21.3 % compared with 2002. The level of officially registered unemployment was 2.6-3 % of the labour force.

More than 50 types of minerals, located in more than 400 deposits, have been discovered in Karelia. The minerals are: iron ore, vanadium, molybdenum, rare metals, mica (glimmer) and diamonds. Construction materials are e.g. rocks like granite, marble, and diabase. There have also been discoveries of clay, apatite-carbonate ore, and asbestos.

Table 5. Business sectors (2002)

Industry	34.5 %
Education and culture	11.4 %
Transportation	11.0 %
Trade	8.9 %
Construction	8.1 %
Agriculture and forestry	7.0 %
Health care and social service	6.8 %
Others	12.3 %
Total	100.0 %

Table 5 shows clearly that Karelia is (and has been) a developed industrial district with a rather low agricultural sector.

11 *Vitval* in Swedish. For further information, see WDCS: The Best Whale Watching in Europe (2003).

12 All information about the economy of Karelia during 2003 has been taken from www.gov.karelia.ru

Karelia's position between the route to the all-year-open Atlantic coast, with the port of Murmansk, and St Petersburg has also made the transportation sector important. The transport infrastructure has been heavily developed. Over 30 km of highways with 6 bridges totalling 239 running metres were constructed in Karelia in 2003 and over 68 km of the federal road to Murmansk have been constructed and reconstructed. Construction of the gas pipeline from Petrozavodsk to Kondopoga has proceeded. A reconstruction of the White Sea-Baltic Sea channel, the important transport artery, has also proceeded. The large State University of Petrozavodsk and the developed educational system dating to the Soviet era are also an important part of the industrial society of Karelia.

Favourable market conditions for timber and paper products and a high exchange value of the euro allowed growth of the foreign trade turnover in the republic in 2003. The volume counted for \$ 870.3 million, an increase of 18.1 % compared with 2002. Positive dynamics are observed for both exports and imports.

Table 6. Industrial production in relation to total Russian Federation production (2002)

Paper bags	60 %
Paper	23 %
iron ore	10 %
Pulp	9 %
Industrial wood	7.3 %
Saw logs	4 %

During 2003 there have been repeated problems with electricity supply because consumers have not been paying their electricity bills. Consumer debt for power resources in 2003 has increased by almost 100 million roubles. Because of these non-payments, *Karelenergo Open Society* introduced restrictions to defaulters of up to 15-20 megawatts per week, and in some cases they were also disconnected from certain circuits, which had a negative effect on businesses' financial and economic work parameters.

In 2003 the physical volume of manufacture index in light industry reached 102 %. The manufacture of jackets increased by 21.2 % and trouser manufacture has grown by 33 %. The manufacture of bedclothes and dresses has decreased. Sales of footwear were reduced by 11% and the sale of knitted garments decreased by 22 %. Not all production in this branch has found a customer. Only 78 % of issued production was shipped. It is the lowest parameter among the republic's industries.

With morally and physically out-of-date equipment within light industry, it is impossible to achieve competitive production. In order to modernise manufacturing significantly, it is necessary to invest in facilities which even quite successful companies do not have. There is a lack of a system of demand exploration, difficulty in establishing economic relations, lack of skill in advancing goods in the market, and limited demand in the home market for the products. This has resulted in franchise production for almost every big enterprise in the branch. They produce as sub-contractors to big Russian firms or foreign customers.

4 Tourism

4.1 Historical review

On November 3 1815, the first officially known Russian ship (owned, however, by the Scot Charles Berd) started to ply the waters of the Neva and the Gulf of Finland and on July 2 1843 it was possible to start a commercial steamship business on the Volga. The year 1843 saw the creation of the joint-stock passenger and freight-carrying steamship company *Po Volge (Along the Volga)* which operated up to 1918. The company ran its ships along the Volga, Kama and other rivers of the Volga basin. Shortly afterwards another industrial steamship company, Mercury, was established. In February 1918, in accordance with Lenin's decree, all ships owned by private shipping companies were nationalised. This put an end to the existence of *Samolet, Po Volge, Caucasus* and Mercury and many other shipping companies, though for many years afterwards their ships continued to run along the Volga.¹³

After the revolution, tourism developed a social character with an educational task. Trade unions organised vacations and travel for Russians in order to form the *Homo Sovieticus*, a good and loyal cog in the Soviet machinery. This was especially promoted by Mrs Krupskaya, Lenin's wife. In order to organise and control tourism for broader sections of society, Intourist was established in 1929 with the explicit objective of conducting *social tourism*. This was a concept favoured in many Western countries after World War I among pacifist or/and communist groups: people should meet each other within their own sector of life – bakers should meet bakers and so on. Before World War II only a few thousand tourists came to the Soviet Union, predominantly media people or different delegations.¹⁴

During the Soviet era the largest state-owned shipping company was created - Incorporated Volga Shipping Company with its central office in Nizhny Novgorod (formerly Gorky). After the collapse of the USSR it was reorganised into an open joint-stock company. Presently the company operates more than 50 passenger ships capable of transporting at least 200,000 passengers during the period of navigation (from May to October). It provides a high level of service to tourists cruising along the Volga, Don and Kama, the Moscow and Volga-Don canals, the Volga-Baltic waterway, the north-west rivers, and Lake Ladoga and Lake Onega.¹⁵

Following the tourism explosion during the 1950s and 1960s in the West, the Soviet Union realised that there is money and propaganda in tourism. In the 1970s more than three million travellers from the Eastern bloc visited the Soviet Union each year but just a few hundred thousand came from the West, mostly from Finland and Germany. Typical of the *Intourist*-controlled tourism in the Soviet Union was the system of guides and planned routes. The guides were educated to be *ideological frontline soldiers*. They were well educated and were supposed to present every attraction as a genuine Soviet product. The planned itineraries meant that tourists could not go to the Soviet Union on their own. They had to stick to a group or have an accepted individual plan.¹⁶

4.2 State of the art¹⁷

In the programme *Development of Tourism in the Republic of Karelia in 2003-2006* it is noted that the tourism sector of Karelia suffers from backwardness, especially regarding hotel facilities. Some of these problems were solved in 2003, basically thanks to the attraction of private investments.

For the spa centre *Martial Waters*, an enlargement is planned for a capacity of 114 visitors. The tourist complex *Guargarica* on the coast of Lake Janisjarvi is able to accommodate for 35 visitors. The construction of the *Kuzova* hotel complex in Kem for 80 visitors is completed. The tourist complex *Prichal* has been expanded by 120 beds. A tourist complex of the *Vika* Open Company on the banks of Lake Panajarvi is under construction.

13 Information from website www.volgabalt.ru sept 2004.

14 Auvo Kostiainen, *The Soviet Tourist Industry*, University of Turku, 2002.

15 www.volgabalt.ru sept 2004.

16 Kostiainen, *The Soviet Tourist Industry*.

17 Information for *state of the art* is taken from the governmental website www.gov.karelia.ru 17/9 2004.

Through the TACIS (Technical Aid to the Commonwealth of Independent States) international programme a number of projects was completed in 2003. They include: *Natural Tourism as the Tool of Development of Muezersky District and Protection of Nature*, *Development of Rural Tourism on the Basis of the Use of Natural and Cultural Resources* and *The Project on Development of Products and Marketing of Cultural and Natural Tourism "Four Seasons in Kalevala"*.

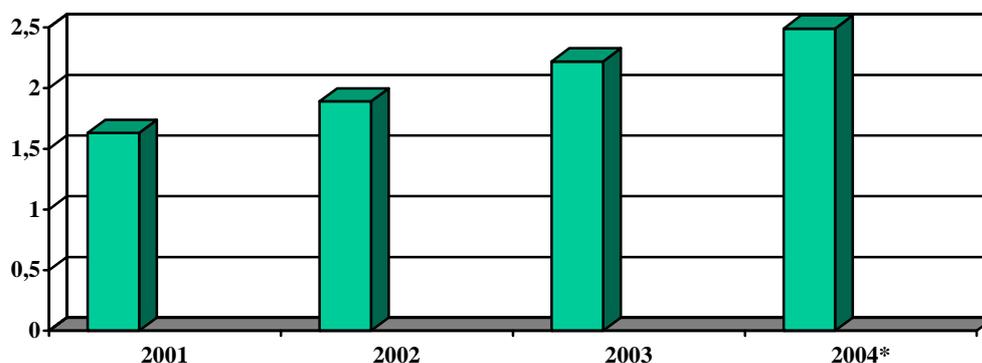
Creation of a positive tourist image of the republic has been promoted by participation in international exhibitions. In 2003 the republic had a stand at the following exhibitions: MITT (Moscow), MITF (Moscow), IN-WETEX (Saint Petersburg), WTM (London).

In September 2003 the first devoted exhibition to *hunting and fishing* was held in Petrozavodsk.

4.3 Tourism statistics¹⁸

The estimated inflow of tourists to all basic tourist sites in the republic increased during 2003. The annual contribution to the gross regional product (GRP) of Karelia has increased every year since 2001. The total amount of tourist and excursion services rendered was estimated at 114 million roubles in 2003 (18.6% more than in 2002).

Figure 5. GRP of incoming tourism, Karelia (2003 is estimated, 2004 is forecast)

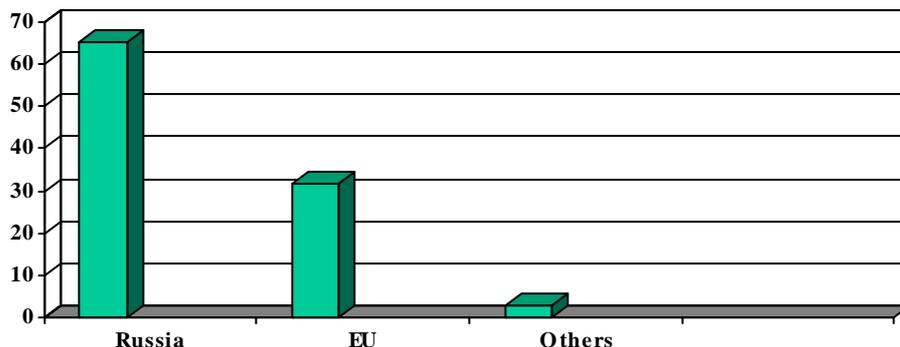


During 2003 the tourist organisations were supposed to transfer about 13 million roubles in taxes to public budgets at all levels. The volume of hotel services has grown 19 % and is estimated at 118 million roubles. Tourism represents a little more than 5 % of the total GRP of Karelia.

According to the estimated data the general number of visitors to the Republic of Karelia in 2003 will have been more than 1.4 million people, exceeding 5 % by the level of 2002. Of There, 320,000 are served by tour agencies from the republic (21.7 % of the total number of visitors).

¹⁸ This information is based upon Tourism in Karelia. Official data and facts 2000-2003.

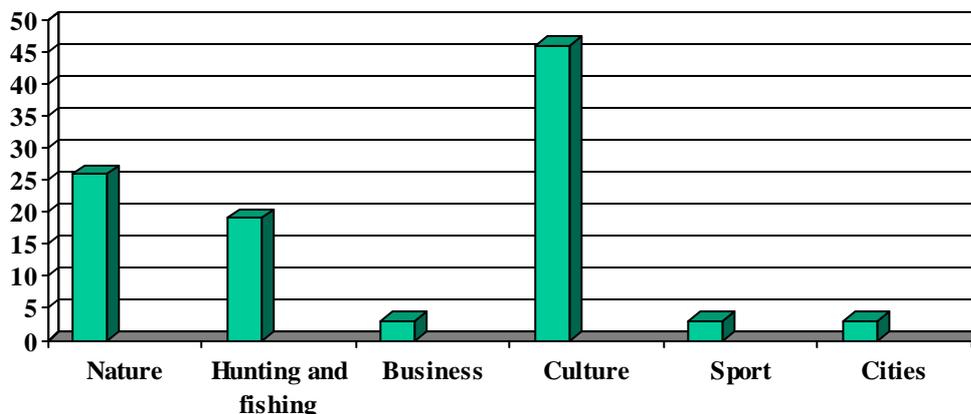
Figure 6. Visitors to Karelia by nationality (2003)



The number of businessmen and organisations which have received licenses as tourist operators or tourist agencies has increased to 108 (compared with 77 in 2002) and 75 of them are developing incoming tourism as a priority.

Kizhi museum reserve has received and served 170,000 visitors (147,000 people in 2002). The flow of tourists to the islands of the Valaamsky archipelago increased in 2003 by up to 90,000 and tourists and pilgrims (81,000 in 2002). The number of tourists who have visited the *Vodlozersky* and *Panajarvi* national parks has also increased.

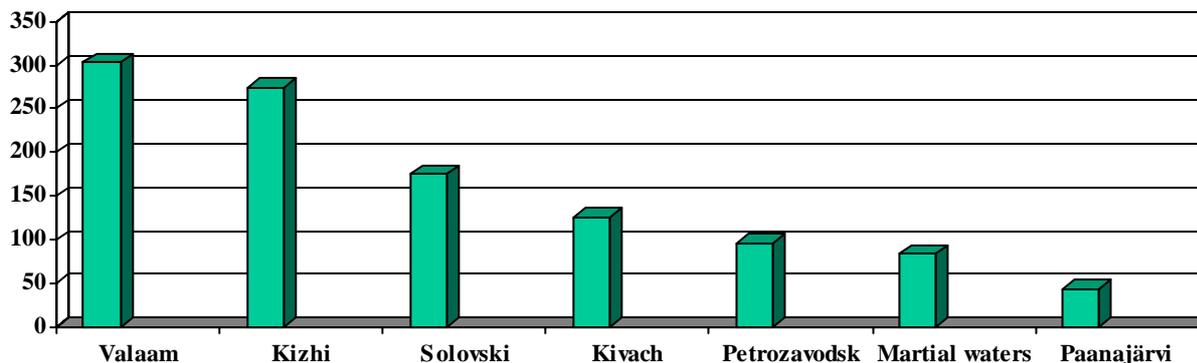
Figure 7. What do the tourists look for? (%)



According to these figures from the Tourist Committee, cultural tourism is the most popular activity for tourists in Karelia. The figures for culture encompass *historical events* (5 %), *archaeological monuments* (2 %) and *architectural monuments* (35 %). The figures for nature encompass *nature* (23 %) and *natural monuments* (3 %). The figure for architectural attractions is somewhat astonishing since there are not so many of them in Karelia compared with St Petersburg. Nature is on the other hand an abundant resource in Karelia. Business tourism figures are low but if they are split into domestic and international travellers booked into hotels, almost 70 % of the Russians are business tourists while only 20 % of international tourists are in Karelia for business reasons.

The number of Finnish-Russian border crossings jumped from 895 person crossings in 1998 to 1,300 in 1999. Since then there has been a gentle increase of about 80 persons for 2000 and 2001. In 2002, however, there was an increase of just 3 people to make 1,475 in total that year.

Figure 8. Assessment of attractions



The assessment is based upon *level of fame and importance to tourists*. How that is figured out is not shown in the material but it at least gives a picture of how the Committee looks upon the attractiveness of Karelia.

4.4 Tourism attractions¹⁹

Karelia is a new actor in the international tourism arena. Before 1992 a substantial part of the republic was closed to foreigners. Now Karelia has, together with the Balearic Islands, won a prize as *region of the year* in Europe and its borders are open to visitors²⁰. Karelia has, however, always been open for domestic tourism and there are attractions which have been visited since the 18th century by tourists, mostly from Moscow and St Petersburg. Nature in particular has been of great interest to inhabitants of metropolitan areas.

It is no wonder then that there is a fixed array of supposed attractions even for foreigners. What Karelia promotes today is what it always has promoted and the expectations of the tourism industry are the same for international visitors as for domestic ones. This is probably a mistake and it will be detected in due time when international visitors are no longer caught by exotism they can find everywhere and which excuses a lot of less attractive traits in a product.

Below are the attractions that Karelia supposes are of great interest to visitors. In most cases this is true but perhaps not always in the way the promoters imagine.

4.4.1 Attractions in northern Karelia

Petroglyphs

Petroglyphs - the rock drawings made by primitive people more than 5,000 years ago - have survived until today in Karelia. They are symbols which represent one of the first examples of ancient writing and culture. The petroglyphs of the White Sea are located at the mouth of the river Vyg, 6-8 km from the town of Belomorsk. They are known by the name *Demon's Footsteps* and *Zalavruga*. The total number is about 1,000 pictures.²¹

Kalevala

The cultural uniqueness of Karelia is also defined by the cultural heritage of the three native peoples that historically settled in this region: Karelians, Vepps and Russians. Karelia is the birthplace of the Finnish-Karelian epic poem *Kalevala*, the home of runa singers and storytellers.

19 Material for this chapter has been found on websites but also in brochures and pamphlets.

20 Newsletter from the Administration of the Governor of the Republic of Karelia

21 For more information on petroglyphs, see <http://www.physics.helsinki.fi/whale/comics/poika/onegast.html>

Seids (seite)

There are Saami seids (holy stones or places used for religious rites among Saami people in heathen times) on the Kusovy Islands in the White Sea. These are monuments of the ancient culture of the Saami nation, located 20 km from Kem in the direction of the Solovetsky islands.

Uspensky Cathedral in Kem

This cathedral (18th century) is regarded as the *the encyclopaedia* of the northern wooden folk architecture. In Kem there are also a number of other cultural-historical objects and a pomorsky culture museum.²² There is also an Uspensky Church in the town of Kondopoga (1774), which is striking thanks to its height (42m) and graphically distinct silhouette. It is considered to be the most perfect among Russian octahedron buildings. It is located on a peninsula in Lake Onega.

Solovetsky Islands

The Solovetsky Islands do not belong to the republic of Karelia but to the oblast of Archangelsk. They are, however, historically bound to Karelia and situated near its northern administrative borders in the White Sea. In the 15th century a Solovetsky orthodox monastery was founded here, which played an outstanding role in the development of the Russian North and became one of the largest spiritual and cultural centres in Russia. The islands include unique archaeological complexes of the pre-Christian period. There is a gorgeous Kremlin, a powerful fortress built of undressed boulders and white stone churches. A network of man-made canals links the island lakes. There is also an old botanical garden.

Figure 9. Monastery of Solovets



Photo: Lena Wikström.

²² *Pomor* is a Russian word for people living on the coast, especially the coast of the White Sea and along the Kola peninsula.

The national park *Paanajarvi*

The park is located in northwest Karelia with part of the Maanselkja mountain ridge within its area. The park was founded in 1992 and its landscape is extremely picturesque. Mountain peaks are here cut by deep gorges, numerous lakes, various bogs, and rough rivers with noisy rapids and falls. The slopes of mountains and valleys of the rivers are covered with virgin, almost untouched forests. A magnificent carpet of bilberries extends together with bush and grass. Fir trees branches are covered with *bearded lichen*, which is an indicator of clean air. In the mountains, beyond 400-500 m, fir groves are replaced by single fir trees and light birch forests turn into crooked birch woods and tundra. Pine forests grow on the banks of the rivers and lakes and on sites with sandy soil. Reindeer moss, the favourite forage of northern deer, is common.

The pearl of the park is Lake Paanajarvi, stretching from the west to the east like a blue ribbon, and framed by mountain peaks. There is a plateau between the lake and the mountains, where Finnish families settled in the remote past. The microclimatic conditions are favourable not only to animal husbandry, but also to cultivation of some agricultural crops, including barley and rye. However, as a whole, the influence of local residents' economic activities on nature is insignificant. Traits of human settlements appear as small glades covered in motley meadow grasses and thickets of raspberry, creating an attractive visual contrast to the gloomy taiga landscape.

The lake is very deep (131 m) with very clean water and a significant variety of fauna that is explained by ancient connections to the White Sea. The Oulanka river, originating in Finland, flows into the lake from the west, and departs in the east into Lake Pyaozero, one of the largest lakes in Karelia. This water system used to serve as an ancient trade route between Swedish Bothnia and the Russian White Sea regions. In those times the Russian-Swedish border roughly divided Lake Paanajarvi in two. A boundary cairn is now a tourist sight. There are four beautiful waterfalls, and one of them, Kivakka, is one of the largest in Karelia, with high mountains in background (499 m). On top of this mountain, it is possible to see *seids*, sacred stones of the ancient Saamis. Karelia's highest mountain, Nuorunen (577 m.), is also located in the park. A rough track, not difficult to climb, leads to the top, and on to Kivakka.

The waters of the park are rich in fish. Salmon trout can reach 5-7 kg in weight. It is possible to fish for them, as well as umber, whitefish, and bull-trout, if a licence is obtained. In the park there are foot, ski, motorised sledge and water routes. There are over 10 small lodges, which can take up to 60 tourists. There are also campsites. The park office is situated in the village of Pyaozersky. Roads lead to Paanajarvi from the border, from the regional centre of Louhi and from southern Karelia.

The Kostomuksha nature reserve

This was formed in 1983 on an area of 47,500 hectares and is located 25 km to the west of the city of Kostomuksha, adjacent to the Finnish border. It is characterised by significant raggedness: rocky files and drift clay ridges alternate with lowlands, occupied by lake hollows, stream-filled valleys, and bogs.

There are about 250 lakes in the reserve. The largest one is Kamennoye, distinguished by the cleanliness of its water and its picturesqueness. There are 98 islands, capes, and gulfs. The lake is 26 m deep. Previous settlements of Karelians have left their mark in fields and meadows close to the banks.

The River Stone, short (25 km) but very beautiful and rough, carries its water through the system of lakes and rivers to the White Sea. The majestic Tsar-rapid impresses the most. In the reservoirs, there are 16 kinds of fish, among which the kamennoozersky salmon form a local family. Other valuable fish in the reserve are whitefish, umber, numerous pikes, perch, and small fry.

The landscape in the reserve is typical of the northern taiga. Pinewoods prevail (about 70 %) with fir groves primarily in the bottom of the valleys. There are small sites of deciduous plantings. The woods have a virgin character and are up to 200-300 years old. The fauna, typical for the taiga, consist of northern deer, Canadian beaver, golden eagle, sea eagle, fish hawk, falcon sapsan, and also goose and swan. In total, about 350 species of vascular plants, more than 100 species of mosses and lichens, 32 species of mammal, 182 species of birds, 2 species of reptiles, and 3 species of amphibians, have been noted in the reserve.

In order for people to explore the reserve, tourist routes have been arranged over its territory. In summer there are organised treks on foot in green tracks and on canoes along Lake Kamennoye and River Kamennoye. In winter, there are ski tours in wooded glades and over the frozen lakes. There are small houses for lodging and saunas on the routes.

4.4.2 Attractions in central Karelia

Kivatch Waterfall

Kivatch Waterfall is located on the river Suna in central of Karelia. The height of the falls is 10.7 meters. The harnessing of the waterfall for Kondopozhskaya hydroelectric power station in the 1930s destroyed its former wildness and the waterfall has become quiet. Only during spring do high waters wake it up again in its magnificence but even in its normal appearance today it is beautiful. The waters of the River Suna, compressed by basalt rocks, fall downwards in a heavy stream and form a powerful whirlpool in the foam patches with an impressive noise. A couple of decades ago, it was possible to see Onega salmon under the falls but now perch and pike like to swim by its steep walls.

The falls are situated in the centre of the Kivatch reserve, 60 km from Petrozavodsk. A beautiful forest road leads to the falls and annually brings up to 30,000-40,000 tourists. The most well-known visitor to the falls was the emperor Alexander II. On the occasion of his arrival (1868) a road was constructed to Kivatch, with a pavilion on one side and a house for the night on the other. The bridge over the Suna was built below the falls. In those days Kivatch was visited by no more than 200 people per year.

Kivatch nature reserve was the first territory in Karelia to be protected. It was formed in 1931 and encompasses today 10.6 thousand hectares. It is located in the Kondopozhsky area. Kivatch is a typical forest reserve, in which the natural complexes of the taiga are protected. It is a rather small territory but represents almost all forms of Karelian vegetation, with 200-year-old pine forests on sandy plains, narrow, sandy, steep ridges, and rocky ridges. There are firs of various ages occupying flat sites on loam and slopes of drift clay ridges. There are also deciduous plantings and small bogs.

Figure 10. Kivatch waterfall



Foto: Lena Wikström.

The Kivatch flora include over 600 kinds of vascular plants. The fauna include 48 species of mammals, 202 species of birds, 3 species of reptiles, 4 species of amphibians, 20 species of fish and thousands of species of invertebrates. All - both plants and animals - are typical of the taiga.

From northwest to southeast the reserve is crossed by the large river Suna, numbering over 50 thresholds and falls, the most well-known among them being the Kivatch falls.

The Spa *Martial Waters*

The first Russian Spa, *Martial waters*, and the sanatorium bearing the same name are located in the ferriferous mineral water valley 50 km from Petrozavodsk. The climate of the resort area is influenced by warm air from the Atlantic Ocean and Lake Onego. Summer is moderately warm here, and in the winter there is a steady snow cover for 4 to 5 months.

The martial springs were discovered in 1714 by the hammer worker Riaboev. The spa was opened to the public in 1716. The structure of the Martial waters was examined on behalf of Peter the Great in 1717-1719. He recognised that the water was useful in the treatment of some diseases. In 1718-1724 Peter the Great visited *Martial waters* himself and was treated there. Palaces for the tsar, members of his family and confidants were constructed. However, after Peter's death the resort was closed.

Despite the decline of the resort, local residents continued to use the mineral water. Scientific interest in the water grew periodically and its high iron oxide content was recommended as a medical application.

In the 1930 study of Karelia's resort resources became more active in many respects thanks to the activity of doctor S.A. Vishnevsky. Expeditions to study the martial waters and medical mud were organised and in 1940 the Government of Karelia decided to restore the resort. This was, however, postponed by the war and the rebirth of the resort only took place in 1964. The first head physician of the resort was doctor F.G. Kozitsyna

4.4.3 Attractions around Onega

The State Historical-Architectural and Ethnographic Museum at Kizhi

On Kizhi Island in Lake Onega, 65 km from Petrozavodsk, sits the largest wooden architectural ensemble in Russia – a masterpiece of architecture. The architectural complex includes 70 monuments of wooden folk architecture of the 15th to the 20th century. The gem of the complex is the Kizhsky pogost ensemble. It consists of the Transfiguration Church (1714), Pokrovskaya Church (1764) and a bell-tower (1874).

Today, Kizhi is not only an open-air museum of people's architecture. Folk traditions are also being revived - arts and crafts, folklore festivals, customs and games. Bells ring again on Kizhi bell-towers and there are services in ancient churches.

In 1990 the monuments of Kizhsky Pogost and the surrounding buildings were included on UNESCO's list of World Heritage Sites.

4.4.4 Attractions around Ladoga

Valaam (Valamo)

The Valaam archipelago consists of 50 islands and is located in the northern part of Lake Ladoga. The national park is located 40 km from Sortavala. The area is insignificant - only 3600 hectares, of which 2800 hectares are on the main island, which has given its name to the archipelago and to the monastery located there. The monastery originates from the 14th century. Valaam is also famous for various cultural natural objects: gardens, parks, and avenues.

Mighty pines and fir trees grow here right on the rocks, which are raised by tens of meters above the water, and this is why the coast sometimes looks like an unapproachable fortress. In other places, on the contrary, the rocks rise gently from the water and have been so *ironed down* by ice that they look like *mutton foreheads*. Fine sandy beaches are, however, also found. On many islands the usual sight of pines, fir, and birch is unexpectedly supplemented by groves and avenues of oaks, firs, larches, cedar, and many other breeds brought by the monks from different areas of the country. These plantings are a decent age - up to 100-150 years - and

this creates an impression of a botanical oasis on severe northern rocks. The picture is completed by the gardens created by the monks, which are especially fine in spring and summer.

The history of the monastery is eventful and chequered. It suffered from Swedish attacks and sometimes had to be abandoned but it was inevitably re-inhabited and restored on an even grander scale. The last tough period for the monastery was the second half of the 20th century. Only in 1989 did the monks return again to Valaam and open the next page of its history. The all-male monastery of the Transfiguration of the Saviour located on the island of Valaam started to function again and it is now under the personal patronage of His Holiness Patriarch Alexy II of Moscow and All Russia. During the next few years the monastery experienced difficult revival, but the beginning of its new spiritual and economic rise is already visible. In 1992 Valaam was declared the national property of Russia by decree of the President of the Russian Federation.

4.5 Forest reservations and nature sanctuaries

These specially *protected natural territories* and objects are created by governmental decisions of the Russian Federation for a term of up to 10 years and their status requires periodic confirmation. Depending on the value and features of the territory the forest reservations are subdivided into complex (landscape), botanical and wood, marsh, hunting, zoological, and hydrological areas.

Tourist routes are found in the forest reservations at

- White Sea: Soroksky, Kuzov's Islands, Polar circle
- Suojärvisky Area: Tolvojärvi
- Medvezhiegorsky Area: Skeres of Kizhi
- Botanical Karelian birch reservations Kakkorovo and Tsarevitchi.

Among the *nature sanctuaries* one should mention the

- Tri Ivana (Three Ivans)
- Tsaritsyn Kluch (Tsarina's spring)
- Solyanaya Yama (Salt hole).

Other *sanctuaries* are

- Shungsky open-cast mine in Zaonezhie
- Girvassky open-cast mine in the canyon of the river Suna in Kondopozhsky area
- Uksinskaya pink chine in Pitkjarantsky area
- Individual outstanding trees in the town plantings of Sortavala and Petrozavodsk.

5 Interviews

Elena Gnetova is the director of Euroforum, a company running exhibitions and conferences. She has organised tourism conferences in Petrozavodsk since 2000.

The first (*Karelia the tourist - 2000*) meant that for the first time Karelia was present the tourist potential of the majority of its regions. It was organised by Euroforum in cooperation with the State Committee of the Republic of Karelia on Physical Culture, Sport and Tourism. The second (*Karelia tourist-2001*) presented the following organisations: Karelian tourist firms, regional and international organisations, insurance agencies, Karelian enterprises - manufacturers of consumer goods, mass media and theatres in Petrozavodsk - public organisations, and publishing houses. About 150 visitors from Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Murmansk, Archangelsk, the Crimea, Estonia, Finland, Sweden, Norway, and Ireland visited the exhibition. In total there were 90 stands.

In 2003 the specialised exhibition *Karelia Turistskaya - 2003* was held, and gathered 254 participants. As part of the exhibition an international seminar, *Theory and Practice of Development of Tourism in Northwest Russia*, was held. Elena thinks that activity tourism is what tourists want today. What Karelia can offer is fishing, boat trips (in *plots*, small river boats), and hiking. It is mostly domestic tourists from Moscow and St Petersburg who prefer these activities. International tourists want to see Kizhi, Valaam, Kivatj and the Solovetsky islands.

Albina Glishonkova, manager of public relations at the hotel Priozelski or Best Eastern in Petrozavodsk, says that they normally have business tourists from Moscow and St Petersburg as hotel guests. They try to make the hotel clean, friendly and *westernised*. The hotel has no problems with seasonality since there are guests all year round.

Figure 11. Unfinished building, Petrozavodsk



Photo: Lena Wikström.

The hotel has replaced an older hotel and is situated close to Lake Onega (which is the meaning of the hotel name). It has a poor environment and is surrounded by ramshackle old houses and old wooden houses in very bad shape. A big, half-built building is nearby (Figure 7). This was meant to be a marina but because of land-use disputes, building stopped halfway. It has been standing for more than three years and is constantly guarded by its owner.

Albina Glishonkova says that the municipality has plans for a recreational area close to her hotel. If that happens, the wooden houses around will be torn down. She looks forward to having more organised surroundings.

Nikolaj Toivonen is professor and director of the Centre for International Relations at the State University of Petrozavodsk. As a teenager he lived in the heart of Karelia since his father was active in forestry administration. He says that there are not many of his comrades left in his home village. Most of them have died, often by accident, alcohol or suicide. The generation aged between 40 and 60 has had serious accommodation problems since 1992. Many of those who live in the sparsely populated countryside have no jobs and have lost faith in the future.

Toivonen is, however, optimistic for Karelia in general as an agent on the global scene. His department has many connections to neighbouring countries and regions and it is a partner in many international projects. Toivonen is in favour of the new direction of development in Russia. It allows space for individuality and creativity for those who want to make a career, he claims.

Toivonen's secretary, a young PhD student, talked about her trip to the Solovetski Islands during 2003. It was very cold and she and her fellow students stayed in a tent when the outdoor temperature was +5 degrees. During the boat tour to islands, she had to stay on deck because the tourists, she said, sat indoors. She did not look upon herself as a tourist. She demonstrated a slightly negative attitude to the tourists. They caused her inconvenience.

Vladimir Chehonin, chairman of the Committee for Sport, Health and Tourism, says that tourists come mostly in summer. The Committee members are appointed by the Karelian government and they want to extend the peak season from 4 months to 6 months. In the future there will be a tourism organisation in the economy department rather than the health department. That could make tourism weaker but, on the other hand, it will be possible to focus better on specific questions.

He is in favour of the development of a leisure area close to the Hotel Prioneshki but says that many decisions will have to be taken before the implementation of these plans.

Chehonin thinks that the future perspectives are good for tourism development. He concludes that Finnish tourists are not so interested in activities. Many Finns visit the border towns Sortavala and Kostamuksha in order to buy vodka but also to look for prostitutes. He is not totally happy with that. On the other hand, there are a lot of Finnish tourists in Paanajärvi National Park and some of them are among the 300 people who visit the republic for hunting. In Lake Onega, salmon fishing is banned for two years because of a decrease in the stock. He looks upon this as a mistake. There is no shortage of salmon, he says.

Figure 12. Environment of Priozelski Hotel



Photo: Lena Wikström.

Chehonin is quite interested in the Blue Road (road between Mo i Rana in Norway through Sweden and Finland to Petrozavodsk in Karelia) and he has good contacts with Umeå, the twin town of Petrozavodsk in Sweden. He likes the idea of a Scandinavian Ring where you can make a round trip from Mo i Rana in Norway along the Blue Road and the Stalin Canal up to the White Sea and then back in one or other direction.

Winter tourism is being prioritised with the establishment of winter tourist camps. Olonets, is being presented as the home of the real Santa Claus lives but his name is not Santa Claus, it is that of his son: Young Maros-jets.

Plaxina Olesia, marketing director at Severnaya Hotel in Petrozavodsk, is trying to modernise this old and distinguished hotel. It has been owned by the municipality but is now a joint venture, with the municipality as one of the shareholders. The policy of the municipality is to keep the hotel open as accommodation for people from all layers of society. The hotel has 180 rooms and some are very cheap (150 rouble/night) while some are quite expensive, especially the suites (3,500 roubles/night). The price for a normal room is about 700-800 roubles/night.

In order to bridge the seasonal gaps when the occupancy rate is low, the hotel has started to use the restaurant for various entertainments. They offer karaoke, romantic evenings, shows and so on. The hotel moves out to the beach in summer with cafés, kiosks, and entertainment. The occupancy rate is 68 %, which is quite satisfactory for a big hotel.

Figure 13. Severnaya Hotel (Pohjois, Norden)



Photo: Lena Wikström.

About 25 % of the guests are international. A typical week for these consists of one day in Petrozavodsk, one day on Kizhi Island, one day for an excursion to Valaam. The rest of the time is normally used for boat tours or jeep trips.

Olga Gokoeva is an inbound operator to Karelia with a base in Finland. She discussed developments during the past decade in Karelia. Ten years ago it was almost impossible to buy petrol in a petrol station. It had to be bought from local residents. Infrastructure has developed remarkably. But still there are problems, e.g. with e-mail and fax. Many hotels do not have e-mail and, if you send a fax, you must confirm by phone make and sometimes be sure even close before departure that your booking not has been cancelled.

It is difficult to start as an entrepreneur but not impossible. It is a matter of ambition, good connections, available information and capital. A normal way to start a tourist company is to work within an existing company and then leave it and start a company of one's own, based on one's experiences.

6 Excursions

6.1 Kizhi Island

The author has undertaken two excursions to Kizhi Island, one tour in 1997 and one in 2003. Both excursions had the same content: start from Petrozavodsk at nine o'clock, one and a half hours in a fast boat, three hours at the island and then one and a half hours back to Petrozavodsk. The sea tour is nice and refreshing. Kizhi Island is located in an archipelago at the north end of Lake Onega with bays and river mouths. It is very spectacular and the boat passes close to small dwellings on each side, dwellings reminding of the 19th century.

The welcome centre is poor and rather dilapidated. There is a café and a souvenir shop in fairly good shape and a two-storey house of concrete material for official purposes but also including shops and some sort of common area. There are no western-style toilets, just dry lavatories some way away.

The tour around the island is very spectacular and well worthwhile even a second time.

6.2 Kivatch waterfall

The tour to Kivatch was undertaken in August 2004. We were transported from Petrozavodsk by car with hired driver and guide. The drive was somewhat uncomfortable because of the bad road, the speed and the traffic patterns. After one and half an hour, we reached the waterfall area.

Figure 14. Kivatch Museum



Photo: Lena Wikström.

The welcome centre is even poorer than on Kizhi Island. It is possible to buy some fast food and snacks in a small café. There are also opportunities to have a barbecue outside the café. The lavatory is even more disgusting than on Kizhi Island. There is an interesting museum in an old house, which looks rather ramshackle.

The museum is, however, very interesting and professionally laid out. The service is not very professional but we had a guide who could introduce us to what we saw and interpret it.

The waterfall is nice and quite intimate with a romantic touch. But it is neither high, nor imposing. It is just an ordinary sight you can find almost everywhere in Northern Europe. It is, however, probably not very common in European Russia. The assertion, pointed out by brochures and by the guide, that it is the second highest waterfall in Europe, does not seem very likely.

Figure 15. Karelian birch (The three dark trees in the centre)



Photo: Lena Wikström.

Actually, the *Karelian birch* was of greater interest to us. It is a very special type of birch growing in this area and much in demand among artisans. Its value is too high for furniture construction. It is sold in the form of handicraft items.

6.3 Solovetsky Islands

A tour to the Solovetsky Islands was undertaken in August 2004 from the mouth of the River Kem, about 20 km east of the city of Kem. The boat tour took three hours each way and it offered sights of the beluga whale a couple of times.

Figure 16. Solovetsky port



Photo: Lena Wikström.

A visit to the island is an experience out of the ordinary. As usual, the welcome facilities were not very professional. The bus was a miracle and the roads were almost non-existent. The accommodation and the catering were acceptable. We stayed one night. A market place for local handicraft products enjoyed the favour of the tourists.

The attractions, especially the monastery, were first class. There is lots to see and experience and one day is too short to get a full idea what the islands can offer.

7 Tour Operators

It is possible to find all the tourist companies active in Karelia on the website www.kareliatour.ru. Here just some of them are presented. The overall information is in Russian and there are just a few with a translation in English. This means that they either have a domestic market or operate together with international agents. Only a very few are outbound.

Lukomorie (www.lukomorie.ru, with English translation)

Lukomorie is located in Petrozavodsk. The company arranges tours to the Barents region, Canal tours, Kizhi Island and the Valaam Archipelago. They also organise tours to Kinermäki Kolatselkä. Lukomorje is also an outbound tour operator.

Together with Kon-Tiki Tours of Helsinki, Lukomorje arranges summer trips to the Solovetsky Islands to see beluga whales. These trips are open to the public and cost € 640 per person. The trips offer lectures by a marine biologist. Hydrophones and binoculars are regularly on hand during these sessions, and films and guidebooks are available.

TEMMAX

TEMMAX is located in Petrozavodsk and offers camp sites, guest houses, productive leisure, excursions in Karelia and Russia and beach vacations abroad and in Russia. Examples of guest houses are Sjandeba by Lake Ladoga, Tambitsy by Lake Onega and houses by Lake Orozero and Lake Lososinnoe, not far from Petrozavodsk.

The company has three employees and has existed for four years (2004). The homepage (temmax.onego.ru) is not available. The e-mail address is temmax@onego.ru and the director is Olga Nikitenko.

Saaristo

Saaristo is located in Petrozavodsk. The homepage is in Russian.

Russian River Tours (<http://www.russiana.co.uk>)

This is a UK-based cruise company specialising in river cruising in Russia. The company has two boats, *Surkov* and *Kirov*, and they regularly sail the route Moscow - St Petersburg with an extension to the Kizhi Islands. The vessels can take 200 passengers each and have a length of 120 m and width of 15 m each. (<http://www.russiana.co.uk>).

White Sea and Onega Shipping Co (<http://www.ceebd.co.uk>)

This is a joint venture based in Petrozavodsk. Their business is shipping, charters and providing technical assistance to the shipping business. From May to October they offer passenger transportation to the Solovetsky Islands (with the vessels *Belomorye* and *Moskovsky-23*) and the Kizhi Islands (with the vessel *Kometa*).

Volga Flot Tour

A limited company, *Volga Flot Tour* was set up in 1999 as a fully established daughter enterprise of the Joint Stock Volga Shipping, the biggest ship owner in Russia. The high expertise and outstanding work of its experienced staff enabled it to enter the market with a competitive tourist product that quickly gained popularity with Russian and foreign customers.

The tours include transportation, onboard accommodation in comfortable cabins (different categories available), full board, shore excursions and an entertainment programme. And all this is in combination with service of the highest quality and an opportunity to visit Russia's most scenic and historically interesting places. The company is based in Nizhny Novgorod, and has branches in Moscow, St.Petersburg and Samara. It is a member of the Russian Association of Travel Agencies (RATA) and Moscow Association of Travel Agencies (MATA).

The tour starts from Moscow and follows the River Moscow with a stop at Khvoiny Bor. After that, the tour follows the River Volga to Rybinsk Reservoir with a stop at Sosenki. From Rybinsk the ship departs to Lake Beloye with a stop at Irma. On Lake Onega Kizhi is visited and then the tour goes on through Svir to Ladoga with stops at Mandrogi and Svirsroy. The tour ends in St Petersburg.

The ship *Maxim Gorkij* has modern navigational devices and can reach a speed of up to 22 km per hour. Its length is 110 meters, width 14.5 meters, and immersion 2.2 meters. The boat can accommodate 160 passengers.

8 Conclusion

Karelia is a new actor on the international tourism scene. A large part of the republic was previously not open to foreigners. Therefore, the tourism industry has had a lot of initial problems to overcome. Some of them have to do with investments and some are related to mentality and culture.

Investment can be solved in four ways: public money (including EU funding), foreign investments (often joint-venture), clean domestic private money and lastly *mafia money*. It is of course impossible to guess at the internal relations between these forms of raising capital for investments and for the tourist; it probably doesn't matter. For the authorities of the republic, however, it should matter. Anyway, establishments are being built and enlarged and there is an obvious development of the sector.

The mentality is at first sight a bigger problem but in the long run probably no problem at all. In all cultures ordinary people are looked upon as inferior to private or public administrators. They are often regarded as costs or problems. A kind and service-minded administrator is often told by colleagues, that he/she is *too* kind and gives *too much* service. If the customers get used to this service, they will also expect it from others and these will have more to do. In the Soviet system, being a state official bequeathed power and they often used their position to subdue ordinary people. There is also a belief among Russians that there is no reason to expect kindness from people who are just doing their job.

All this creates a climate between entrepreneur and guest which is radically different from the western type of situation where the customer is regarded and treated as a king, albeit this is often not accurate. The lack of friendliness and smiles is appalling for tourists from the West and this is difficult for Russians to understand. For them, this western friendliness is false and more like servility. An understanding of the demand for a western-style climate is, however, spreading in the Russian tourism industry.

The Karelian attractions can be split into at least five categories. The *big four* (Valaam, Kizhi, Kivatch and Solovetsky), activity tourism, river tourism, business tourism and border tourism. A matrix shows the characteristics of these five categories:

Table 7. Karelian attractions - a matrix

	River cruise	The big four	Activities	Business	Border
Nationality	Europe and USA	Domestic, Scandinavian, Others	Domestic, Scandinavian	Domestic	Finland
Economy of the tourist	Good	Average and low	Average and low	Average	Average
Access	All-inclusive	Good	Good	Good	Very easy
Service	Excellent	Low	Good	Good	Pleasing
Exposure	Transparent	Very good	Familiar	Well-known	Word-of-mouth
Marketing	Professional	Professional	Good	Well-known	Low

River cruise tourism is not promoted by the Karelian government. This is probably the result of two factors. First, cruise tourism requires a very high standard of facilities and also access to a market of these demanding tourists. This has no tradition in Russia except for what the *nomenklatura* organised in the former Soviet Union. Western cruise activity has a special history,²³ which the Soviet Union was not able to take part in. Second, lack of investment capital has made it impossible for Karelia to enlarge the Stalin Canal. The potential for river tourism between St Petersburg and the White Sea, with extensions to Murmansk and Norway is enormous. But the canal and the vessels are not suitable for the moment at such a development.

The big four are the main target for promotion by the Karelian government. This is understandable from the point of view that these sites have always been major attractions in Karelia. They really have the potential to become *flagship attractions*. In fact, they are already *flagships* except for Kivatch waterfall, which for a for-

²³ See for instance Per Åke Nilsson Cruise Tourism in the Baltic and Bothnian Seas, Bornholm: CRT.

eigner is actually a minor attraction and should not belong to the *big four*. The reason why they not are *real* flagships is the surrounding shortcomings. Promotion is professional; access is good even if ticket sales and transport are experienced as not very friendly. Ticket sellers look upon the tourists as problems and they are not flexible at all. Transport staff show very clearly that this is a job for them, not a social *mingling* with tourists. This happens also at accepted *flagship attractions* and can be coped with without greater problems. The real shortcoming is the standard of the facilities around the attractions. Shops, cafés and restaurants are not very attractive and the lavatories are disgusting. For the moment, the exotic and unexpected experience of the attractions makes western tourists accept the poor standards but this cannot last forever.

Activities seem to be more heavily promoted by the individual tour operators than by the government. Networks, personal connections and a knowledge-seeking market are obviously important ingredients in the development process of this sector. This has the advantage that the product is controlled by the supplier and accepted by the consumer. The consumer is often very satisfied with this and the supplier knows what he sells and is confident with that. He is, however, probably not confident with the amount of tourists received. In order to expand the market, the supplier has to attract a new market, which has to be exposed to the product. That market segment is probably not as familiar with the conditions as the tourists of today are. The product will certainly undergo changes in order to accommodate the expectations of these new groups. If the government takes a greater part in the marketing of Karelia as the *land of nature activities*, the situation will probably change for the entrepreneurs, both for good and ill. The potential lies in the very nature of Karelia: this is what should naturally be the image of Karelia abroad.

Business tourism is a domestic activity for people from St Petersburg and Moscow. The growing relations between Finland in particular but also the rest of Scandinavia and Europe will force the accommodation industry to adapt more to western standards, not only materially but also mentally. Service quality and service management must be necessary elements of a developed business tourism sector. The potential is considerable.

Border tourism lives its own life without marketing. Sortavala and Kostamuksha are both targets for this type of tourism. Border tourism is natural at borders between countries or regions with different standards for some or many commodities. In this case, liquor is much cheaper in Karelia than in Finland and that is part of the Finnish interest but this does not differ from the situation at other borders: between Finland and Estonia, between Norway and Sweden, between Sweden and Denmark and between Denmark and Germany. What makes the situation in Sortavala and Kostamuksha different is the alleged *trafficking*, i.e. sex tourism. This has to do with the unequal possibilities of achieving a good living standard. Tourism does not usually erase such inequalities.

To sum up: Karelia has long traditions within tourism and a many attractions to offer. Karelia is also a country of great natural abundance. It is easy to forecast a bright future for Karelian tourism. The road to such progress is paved with lack of capital for investment, lack of acceptance of western-style service management and perhaps lack of a consistent political and administrative structure. The last thing is perhaps the easiest to overcome since political and administrative structures have existed in Russia for centuries but the structure has to undergo some changes.

What the Bothnian Arc project expects from Karelia are two things. First, inbound tourism to the Bothnian Arc region from Karelia and, second, collaboration between the two regions for the benefit of both sides.

9 Appendix I

9.1 Cupertino between Finland and Karelia within cultural tourism ²⁴

Background

A joint Cupertino project on cultural tourism was initiated with a seminar in Petrozavodsk in May 2000. It was anchored at the ministerial level and financed by Interreg and Tacis money. The aim of the project was to support tourism projects, traditional ways of living and cultural heritage. It should be based upon the originality of a tourist attraction and its unique nature. The benefit of tourism should also go to the local residents.

The seminar in Petrozavodsk involved four groups: Cultural tourism, Eco tourism, Youth tourism and The Blue Road. After having decided what sustainable tourism should mean and also implementing it among the partners from Karelia and Finland, a seminar in Kuhmo 2001 decided to continue with concrete projects. Two such projects were decided upon: education in order to form the *skills* of a business and mapping all the attractions along tourist routes.

The results of the Kuhmo seminar were, in Finland, not to establish an educational organisation for entrepreneurship but to follow already existing projects and new initiatives. A decision was made to collect information on all ongoing and planned projects and a standard form for this was elaborated by the Ministry of Education in Finland. These forms were presented in Finnish and Russian on the Internet as a meeting place. In Karelia the Kuhmo seminar was followed up by a concentration on network creation of professionals within the sphere of tourism. The collection of material on projects was also established on the website of the Karelian Republic.

At a new seminar in Helsinki in 2002 project description was introduced to the seminar participants and applications for EU funding were discussed. For the Finnish partners, the focus of the meeting was the creation of applications to the EU. The Karelian partners stressed the importance of getting to know each other. Concrete steps after the seminar in Helsinki resulted in a seminar in Joensuu where entrepreneurs and partners were gathered together. Theme groups were established: Rural tourism, Eco tourism, Youth tourism, War history tourism.

In Finland an action plan was elaborated after the Joensuu meeting on selected projects. These included: whale watching, youth handicraft workshops, archaeological projects and tourist routes, bird watching in Olonets, war history.

Projects

- Whale-watch tourist trips project

The aim of the project is to organise whale-watch tourist trips to the White Sea. It is conducted in Cupertino with the preservation of Solovetsky Islands, labyrinths of Zayachy Island and the herbarium of Andrejevskij Island as a priority. In summer 2001, the project started with observation of Belugas.

- Bird-watching tourist trips project

In May 2001 a conference of ornithologists was held in Olonets, tours of tourist field trips accompanied by scientists were organised, exhibitions of photos of wild geese and children's drawings were submitted. A mass be-in festival and celebratory events, of which the central event was a goose race, were organised in the main square at Olonets. The purpose of the festival is to attract attention of the public to the problem of protection and preservation of the population of wild geese, development of cultural and natural tourism in Olonetsky district and familiarising children and teenagers with nature. Contact person: Natalya Shishkina

Fax/Telephone: (+7-81436) 21107 E-mail: olon_soveto@onego.ru

²⁴ This is taken from Cultural and tourism development – Results of the cooperation of the state authorities of Finland and the Republic of Karelia on cross-border territories Ministry of Education, Finland 2003.

- **Archaeological objects and cultural routes**

This project cooperates with the Kierikki Stone Age Centre in Finland. The development of museums in the Karelian Republic is one of its priorities. The basic purpose of the project is development of marketing skills for professionals in the Republic of Karelia working in the sphere of culture, with a view to support cultural tourism in the region and establish long-term cultural relations between Karelia and Northern Scandinavia.

Goals of the project:

extending knowledge in the sphere of marketing among experts in culture,
perfection of skills to distinguish marketing opportunities for the organisation in which the project participant works

perfection of skills to use and increase the efficiency of marketing opportunities in the organisation in which the project participant works

perfection of skills to cooperate with organisations working in tourism and cultural tourism

perfection of skills to develop a relationship with sponsors

perfection of skills to increase financial opportunities through the use of marketing as a tool

development of cultural tourism in Karelia

The project's target group is - museum professionals, organisers of festivals, representatives of cultural associations, institutions and organisations and representatives of travel companies. Contact person: Elena S.Sologub Telephone: (8142) 78-38-04, Fax (8142) 78-35-96 E-mail: solel@museums.karelia.ru

- **War history tourism**

Introductory actions of the project include: the international scientific practical conference held on August 17 in the town of Pitkäranta and the military historical festival *Karelian boundaries* held the next day on August 18 in the village of Pogrankondushi, Pitkarantsky district.

About 100 people took part in a conference on *The History of frontier relations of Russia, Sweden, and Finland in the XVII-XX centuries*. They came from Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Petrozavodsk, as well as from Finland and Sweden. They were regional specialists, teachers, museum workers, writers and journalists, and representatives of the mass media. At the conference 15 reports on actual incidents in the history of frontier relations between Russia, Sweden, and Finland in the XVII-XX centuries were presented.

During the conference museums of local lore, history and economy of the towns of Pitkaranta, Olonets, Sor-tavala and Joensuu held presentations. Karelian experts received information on funds, exhibitions and exhibition activity, and heard about the innovatory work of their Finnish colleagues.

More than 1,000 people gathered on August 18 2003 in the historic village of Pogrankondushi, which is located on the international route *The Blue Road*. Pogrankondushi has a rich military and historical heritage in relation to Russia, Sweden and Finland in different periods, as shown on the boundary stones designating the border between Sweden and Russia in 1618 and the border between the USSR and Finland in 1917-1940. Concrete defensive installations were shown, dating back to the late 1930s. A memorial to Soviet soldiers who were lost in World War II was also visited.

A reconstruction of two battles took place: Karelian and Novgorod soldiers against the Swedish Vikings (XIII century), and units of the *Workers-and-Peasants* Red Army against the Finnish army (1941). The battles were performed by military history fans from Petrozavodsk and Saint Petersburg. Magnificent knights' armour, original uniforms and weapons, pyrotechnic effects and impressive battle stages ensured that the historical interpretations closely approached reality.

Visitors to the festival could take part in the excursion, *Pogrankondushi. Historical marks*, organised by employees of the museum of the town of Pitkaranta and visiting the famous Varashev stone, a monument of the XVIIth century, on the shores of Lake Ladoga.

10 Appendix II

10.1 Facts about Tourism Organisation in Karelia²⁵

Committee Chairman <i>Eugeniy Kotkin</i> tel: 78-41-66	First Deputy Chairman <i>Yuri Karatayev</i> physical training and sports tel: 76-33-84	Deputy Chairman <i>Vladimir Chekhonin</i> Tourism in Karelia tel: 78-36-20
Secretary <i>Irina Bruy</i> tel: 78-41-66 e-mail: goscomsport@karelia.ru	Lord High Fixer <i>Georgy Ivanov</i> legal matters and personnel, licensing in gambling industry	Department of physical training and sports <i>Valery Postoyanov</i> tel: 76-63-68
Head of department of tourism <i>Vladimir Gromov</i> international and inter-regional projects, development of sea tourism, economic research in the field of tourism, development of infrastructure of tourism tel: 78-38-70 tel: 78-38-82		

²⁵ Taken from www.gov.karelia.ru September 2004.

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