

# Condition Assessment



METSÄHALLITUS



The ASCENT Site

## Hossa National Park Suomussalmi, Finland

**T1.1**

### Research on the Impact of Unregulated Access

by Metsähallitus, Parks and Wildlife Finland



**ASCENT**  
Promoting Sustainable Access  
to Uplands & Natural Environments



Northern Periphery and  
Arctic Programme  
2014–2020



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# Hossa National Park

Hossa National Park is situated in north-eastern Finland, near the Russian border. Established in 2017 to celebrate Finland's 100th year of independence, the National Park is about 12,000 hectares in size. Originally established as a State Recreation Area in 1979, Hossa National Park has a long-standing tradition in recreation activities such as fishing and hiking.



## History

Hossa is an old Sámi hunting ground. The rock paintings at Värrikallio cliffs are at least 3,500 years old and are some of the largest prehistoric paintings in Finland. The oldest dwellings found in the national park are almost 10,000 years old. Water routes have allowed people to travel through the Hossa area: from Lake Ladoga to the Arctic Ocean and from the Gulf of Bothnia to the White Sea.

As people began to settle in the area, they brought meadow agriculture with them. This was practised until the early 1950s. Signs of this livelihood include meadow barns and the bottoms of stacks of hay. Grain brought in from surrounding villages was ground at Puromylly Mill. Tar burning was at its peak at the end of the 19th century. Logging began at the start of the 20th century, however, loggers' cabins in the area are from the 1940s and 1950s. Floating and the equipment needed for it have always been a part of the logging tradition. Reindeer husbandry started as far back as in the 16th century, when the Sámi alone inhabited Hossa.

Hossa has always been a favourite of fishermen. During the 19th century, fish were transported as far as the town of Kajaani, where the Whitefish (*Coregonus lavaretus*) caught from the Lake Iso-Valkeainen was a sought after Christmas dish.



## Nature of Hossa

Hossa National Park is situated on very old bedrock dating from 2,500-3,100 million years ago. The landscape shows signs pre-dating the Ice Age, but most of the visible features are caused by retreating ice. Around half of the area is covered by eskers, however, dozens of lakes and ponds dot the forests of Hossa. Most of the forests in Hossa are pine-dominated and fairly rugged. The number of mires is quite high and many of them are small. Hossa is a meeting point for three waterways, and, as a result, there are a large number of flowing waters in the area. A formation consisting of several eskers runs through the area, including kettle-holes and kettle-hole ponds.

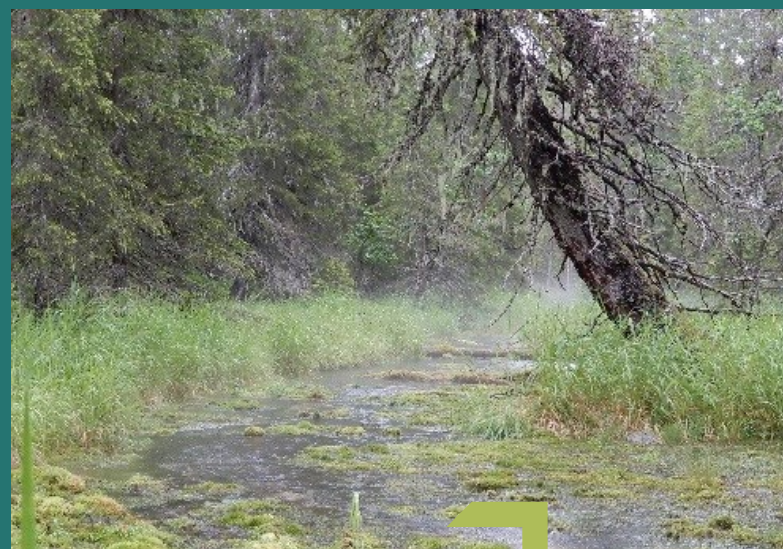
Species living in Hossa National Park are characteristic of the Kainuu region, indicating the northern location. There are features of Lapland in the plant and bird species of Hossa. The elk population is thriving and reindeer are easily spotted as Hossa is situated in the reindeer husbandry area. All large carnivore species have been spotted in the area, but bears are the most permanent dwellers and almost every winter these bears will hibernate somewhere in the national park.

There are 17 Natura 2000 habitat types in Hossa, three of which are priority habitats. The most common is western taiga (9010), followed by a variety of freshwater habitats, such as oligotrophic waters (3110). Coniferous forests on glaciofluvial eskers (9060), bog woodland (91D0) and aapa mires (7310) are also characteristic to the area.

The latest habitat survey in Hossa was carried out in 2012. As the national park is formed by two Natura 2000 sites, a habitat assessment is required regularly to assess possible changes in natural habitats. The next one is due in a few years' time. A more detailed presentation of Hossa's natural habitats and of possible threats to them will be given in the management plan, which is due to be finalised in March 2019.



Small crystal clear lakes connected to each other are typical for Hossa.



Springs form a wetland area in a spruce forest.

# Tourism, activities and Everyman's right

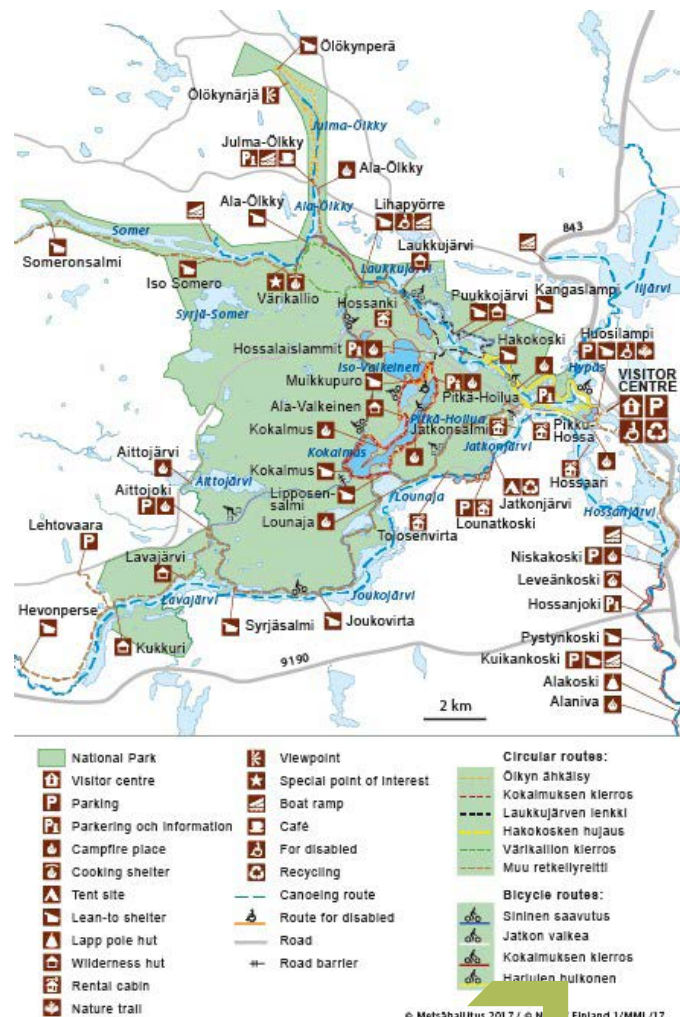
Nature tourism and rapidly growing visitor numbers affect Hossa's natural environments. Therefore, monitoring and channeling access is vital in preserving the favourable conservation status of habitats and species, as well as in keeping paths and structures in good condition. Visitor numbers doubled in 2017 compared to the previous year. After being designated as a national park Hossa received a lot of publicity, both in Finland and abroad. New audiences have "found" Hossa and are flocking to see the new national park. In 2017, some 120,000 people visited the national park.

Hossa differs from the other ASCENT project sites in that it is a large area with a network of paths and many possible activities. Summertime activities include hiking, fishing, hunting, canoeing and cycling. In winter, the most popular activities are dog-sledding, skiing and fishing. Fatbiking is growing fast and, in winter 2017-2018, Hossa was offered the opportunity to facilitate fatbiking in snowy conditions.

Everyman's rights apply in Finland. In short, there is a right, for instance, to walk anywhere, pick berries and mushrooms etc. These rights can be regulated in certain protected areas. More detailed information on Finnish Everyman's rights:

<http://www.nationalparks.fi/en/hikinginfinland/rightsandregulations>

Because of the everyman's rights, access to Finnish national parks and other protected areas, as well as private land, is not regulated. People have the right to walk anywhere they choose, bearing in mind good manners, however, there is no general right to walk through gardens or camp near buildings. Some strict nature reserves are an exception; they have been established for scientific purposes and, as a result, there is no access permitted to some of them.

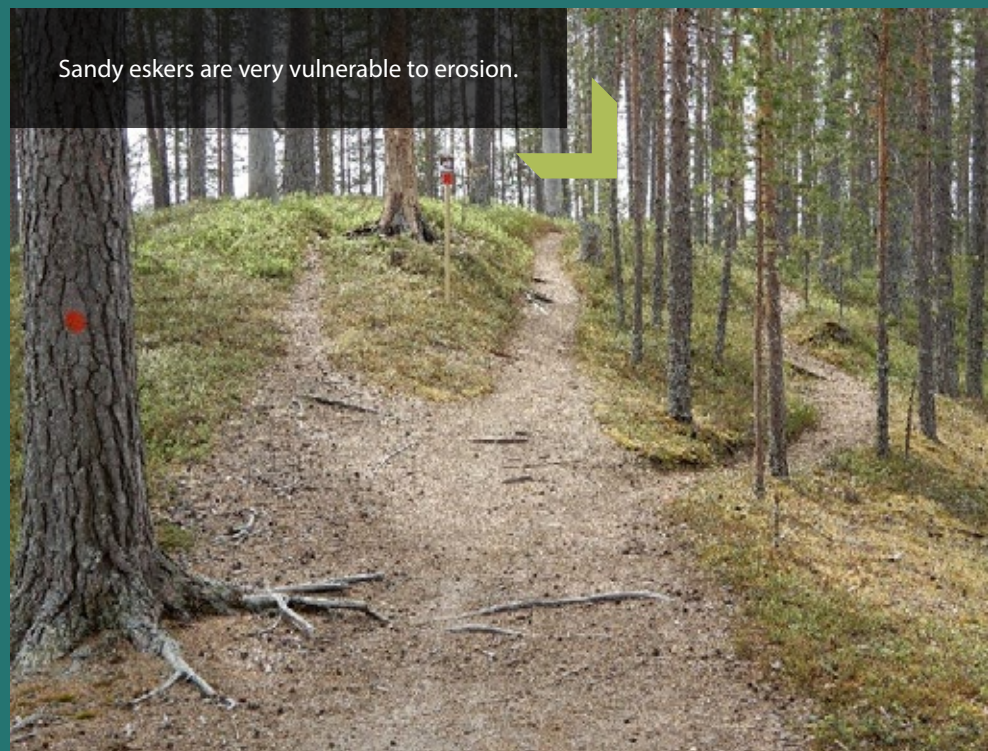
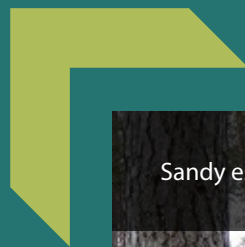


Map of the National Park with paths and essential services, such as cabins and fireplaces.



Access to Hossa National Park is possible from many directions - also straight through the forest or following waterways by boat or canoe. There is no need to follow roads or marked paths. Therefore, "unregulated access" doesn't exist in the same way as in some of the other ASCENT partner countries. There is, of course, a need to direct and guide visitors in order to keep delicate areas safe and to manage visitor flows. Hossa has over 90 km of marked paths, over 50 km of cycling paths, 50 km of skiing tracks and 60 km of canoeing routes. Many visitors stay on these marked or natural routes. It is, however, not prohibited to roam outside paths and tracks and find your own way in the forest. Cycling is the latest craze in Hossa and the rules concerning whether it is permissible to cycle outside marked paths or not, is ongoing and will be solved during the process of compiling the management plan and the code of conduct. Most visitors tend to stay near starting points, especially if they are day visitors. Planning of infrastructure supports this - paths are wider, fireplaces have more seats etc. closer to starting points. The further you go, the narrower paths get and other services are also fewer.

The ethos of not banning, but rather guiding and informing, has worked relatively well, probably in most parts, because Finns are used to roaming freely in the forests and understand what rights and responsibilities come with it. Of course, some people take advantage and don't behave in a desirable way. All structures and other services in Finnish national parks are provided by Metsähallitus, Parks & Wildlife Finland (PWF). Services are therefore covered by tax money and people are very aware of that. Demands are high from the public, as they see national parks (and other state-owned, protected areas) as their property and right for which they have paid through taxes. It is the state's responsibility to offer open access to these areas and to provide good quality services - which is of course the aim in all PWF work.



Sandy eskers are very vulnerable to erosion.

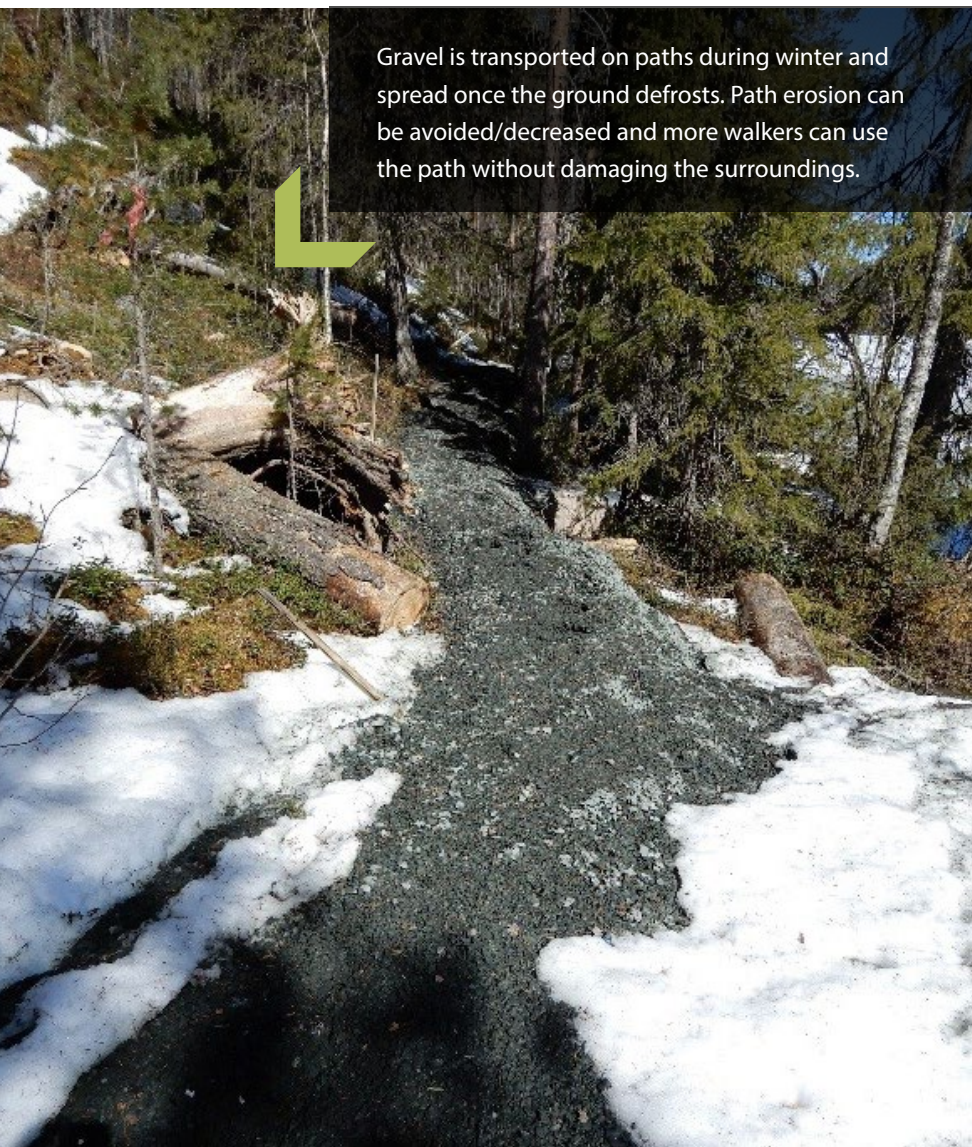


Before Hossa National Park was established, the area was a State Recreational Area. There are a number of particular differences between recreational areas and national parks. Recreational areas are developed for recreational purposes, such as hiking, fishing and hunting. They are not protected areas through Finnish legislation, but all the remaining five areas belong to Natura 2000. Forestry is possible in recreational areas and they often offer the possibility to use motorised vehicles to move around - and therefore a network of roads. National parks, however, are established through the Nature Conservation Act and their primary function is nature conservation. Activities in a national park must not endanger conservation purposes. Forestry and motorised traffic are not allowed. In Hossa, this has meant some changes in rules concerning fishing and hunting. As a result, roads inside the national park may end up being closed - this is an issue that will be discussed and decided on during management planning. Accessibility for the disabled has been taken into consideration for decades in Hossa. Therefore, not all roads can be closed, as some accessible services are in the middle of the park and they need to be reached.

More information on activities, services, nature, history and more can be found aton:

<http://www.nationalparks.fi/en/hossa>

A visitor survey is ongoing and a report will be finalised in June 2018 (see appendix 1 for the questionnaire used for interviews). What is known for the moment - based on first observations from last summer - is that the visitor profile has changed slightly. Most visitors were Finnish; only 5% came from abroad - in winter Hossa is populated by Frenchmen, so that ratio will change from year to year. Top activities were walking/hiking, nature observation, visiting the nature centre, photographing, camping, getting to know the cultural heritage, cycling and fishing. Hossa used to be known as a "fisherman's paradise" and many services were directed to them. After the designation into national park, hikers and cyclists have been coming in higher numbers than before.

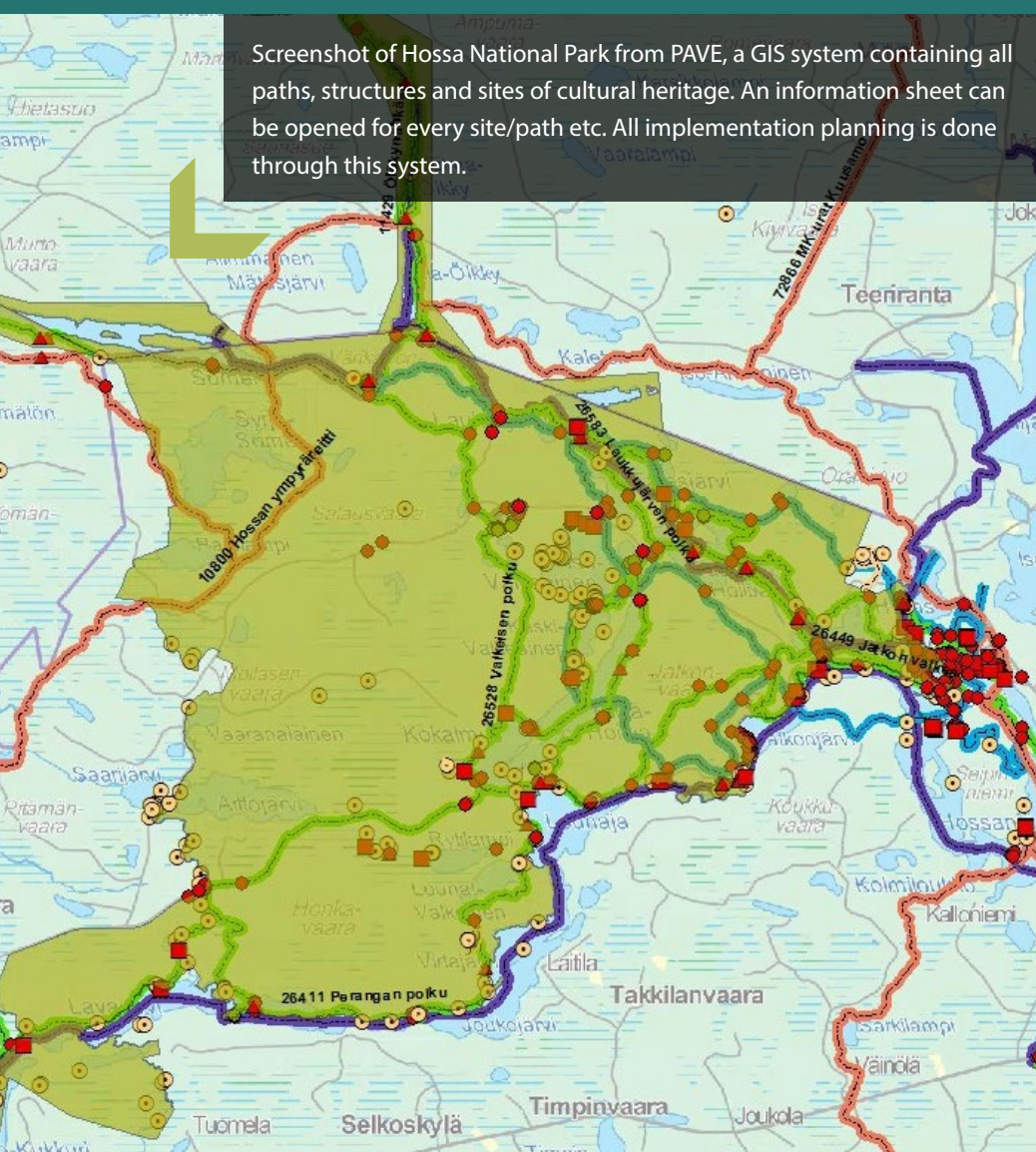


Gravel is transported on paths during winter and spread once the ground defrosts. Path erosion can be avoided/decreased and more walkers can use the path without damaging the surroundings.



The growth in visitor numbers was, of course, foreseen and many building and path works were carried out before the opening of the national park. However, many works are still ongoing. The aim is to be prepared for high visitor numbers through path works, compiling a management plan and carrying out the visitor survey. All actions aim to support a sustainable use of the national park, ecologically and socially, as well as economically. Growing visitor numbers in Hossa require regular monitoring to maintain sustainability. Introducing the LAC (Limits of Acceptable Change) methodology in Hossa next summer will support this aim.

The condition of paths and other structures is monitored constantly by rangers and all data is uploaded into a GIS-based system. This system provides a main source of information and is used to prioritise and plan works on the field.



# Appendix 1

## Visitor survey questionnaire used in Hossa in 2017-2018.

The interviewer will fill in this field

number	location	visitor	interviewer	post	initials	date	time



## Visitor Survey 2017-2018 Hossa National Park

### How to fill in this questionnaire:

The information collected by this Visitor Survey will be used in the management and planning of Hossa National Park. We hope that you answer all the questions. Please, note the following instructions:

1. Read the questions with care.
2. Answer the questions **personally** by ticking the appropriate circle (○). In multiple choice responses, tick all relevant boxes (□). In some questions, you will need to write your responses in the boxes.
3. The questions are about **your current visit** to Hossa National Park. Some of the questions are about the vicinity of the site (see map 1).
4. Please return the completed form to the interviewer, or to the place mentioned in the instructions.

For more information, please contact Anu Hjelt, +358 40 596 1876, [anu.hjelt@metso.fi](mailto:anu.hjelt@metso.fi)

**THANK YOU IN ADVANCE!**

<p><b>1. When did you arrive to Hossa National Park (see map 1)?</b></p> <p>date _____ and time _____</p> <hr/> <p><b>2. How long did you stay or are planning to stay during this visit...</b></p> <p><b>a. in Hossa National Park (see map 1)?</b> approx. _____ days or _____ hours</p> <p><b>b. in Hossa National Park AND in its vicinity in total (see map 2)?</b> approx. _____ days or _____ hours</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I live nearby and stay at home → please proceed to question 4</p> <hr/> <p><b>If your answer to the previous question (2b) was <u>more than 1 day</u>, how many times have you visited or will visit Hossa National Park during this trip?</b></p> <p>_____ times</p>	<p><b>3. If you stayed overnight or will stay overnight...</b> (if not applicable, please proceed to question 4)</p> <p><b>a. in Hossa National Park, how many nights did you spend or will you spend in... ?</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> an open wilderness hut _____ nights</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a rental hut _____ nights</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> your own accommodation (tent etc.) _____ nights</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a Lapp pole tent or lean-to-shelter _____ nights</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> somewhere else, where? _____ nights</p> <p><b>b. in the vicinity of Hossa National Park, how many nights did you spend or will you spend in... ?</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a hotel _____ nights</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a rental cottage _____ nights</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> an own cottage _____ nights</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a campervan or caravan _____ nights</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a Lapp pole tent or lean-to-shelter _____ nights</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> with a friend or relative _____ nights</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a camping site _____ nights</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> somewhere else, where? _____ nights</p>
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**4. Which of the areas of Hossa National Park have you visited or are planning to visit during this trip?**

- ☐ Julma-Ölkky Lake  
☐ Värnkallio rock paintings  
☐ Lihapyörre accessible fire place  
☐ Umpi-Valkeainen Lake  
☐ Muikkupuro accessible fire place  
☐ Moilasenvaara area  
☐ Lavajärvi  
☐ Kukkuri  
☐ Huosilampi Lake  
☐ Hossa Nature Centre  
☐ somewhere else, where? \_\_\_\_\_

**5a. Which means of transport did you use to travel from your home to Hossa National Park?**  
 (please select all means of transport you used)

- ☐ car  
☐ campervan, caravan  
☐ public transport (bus)  
☐ charter coach (tour group)  
☐ train  
☐ plane  
☐ canoe, kayak or boat  
☐ muscle power (walking, cycling, skiing)  
☐ other, please specify? \_\_\_\_\_

**5b. From the list above, which was the last means of transport you used?** \_\_\_\_\_

**6. What kind of group are you visiting Hossa National Park with during this visit?**

I'm traveling alone ☐ → please proceed to question 8.

Size of the group \_\_\_\_\_ persons

(including yourself)

of which under 15 years of age \_\_\_\_\_ persons

Birth years of the persons under 15 years old (give the most common year of birth if they are close in age) \_\_\_\_\_

Physically disabled? \_\_\_\_\_ persons

**7. During this visit to Hossa National Park your group mainly consists of...**

(please choose the most appropriate alternative)

- ☐ members of own family      ☐ other relatives  
☐ friends      ☐ co-workers  
☐ school class      ☐ kindergarten group  
☐ student group      ☐ senior citizens  
☐ clients of an enterprise offering organised activities  
☐ club, association etc.  
☐ other, please specify? \_\_\_\_\_

**8. During this visit to Hossa National Park how important to you is or was...?**

(please respond to each alternative)

5 = very important, 4 = fairly important, 3 = neither, 2 = of little importance, 1 = not important at all

	very important	not important at all
nature experiences	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1	
sceneries	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1	
being by yourself	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1	
mental well-being	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1	
away from noise and pollution	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1	
relaxing	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1	
getting to know new people	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1	
being together with your group	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1	
previous memories	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1	
getting to know the area	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1	
learning about nature	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1	
developing skills	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1	
exercise	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1	
experiencing excitement	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1	
getting to know cultural heritage of the area	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1	

**9a. What did you do in Hossa National Park during this visit? (please select all that apply)**

1 <input type="checkbox"/> walking	12 <input type="checkbox"/> plant identification	32 <input type="checkbox"/> sled dog safari
3 <input type="checkbox"/> jogging	13 <input type="checkbox"/> visits connected to education	36 <input type="checkbox"/> hunting
4 <input type="checkbox"/> hiking	14 <input type="checkbox"/> visit to the nature centre	64 <input type="checkbox"/> canoeing or kayaking
5 <input type="checkbox"/> nature watching	15 <input type="checkbox"/> nature photography	88 <input type="checkbox"/> getting to know cultural heritage
6 <input type="checkbox"/> picnic	16 <input type="checkbox"/> scout camp	110 <input type="checkbox"/> skiing/nordic walking
7 <input type="checkbox"/> cycling	17 <input type="checkbox"/> school camp	134 <input type="checkbox"/> accessible recreation
8 <input type="checkbox"/> fishing	18 <input type="checkbox"/> walking a dog	999 <input type="checkbox"/> other, please specify? _____
9 <input type="checkbox"/> bird watching	19 <input type="checkbox"/> orienteering	
10 <input type="checkbox"/> picking berries	20 <input type="checkbox"/> camping	
11 <input type="checkbox"/> picking mushrooms	27 <input type="checkbox"/> snow shoe walking	

**9b. Which of the alternatives that you selected was or is the most important to you during this visit?**

Write the number → \_\_\_\_\_



<b>10a. What did you think of the quality of the services, facilities and environment during your current visit to Hossa National Park ?</b> (please answer each question. If you did not use the service or facility, please cross the alternative "did not use"). 5 = very good, 4 = fairly good, 3 = neither, 2 = fairly poor, 1 = very poor				<b>11. Did this visit to Hossa National Park meet your expectations with regards to the following?</b> 5 = very well, 4 = fairly well, 3 = neither, 2 = fairly poorly, 1 = very poorly			
	very good	very poor	did not use		very well	very poorly	
parking places	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1		○	natural environment	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1		
roads	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1		○	recreational possibilities	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1		
interpretation panels	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1		○	trails and infrastructure	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1		
trail network	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1		○	cultural heritage	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1		
signposts at the trails	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1		○	visit to the nature centre	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1		
camp fire places and lean-to-shelters	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1		○	services provided by entrepreneurs	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1		
firewood in cabins and fire places	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1		○	<b>12. On this trip, is Hossa National Park...</b>  <input type="radio"/> your trip's only or the most important destination? <input type="radio"/> one among other intended destinations? Other destinations are: _____  <input type="radio"/> a non-planned destination along your route? Main destination(s) is/are: _____			
public latrines	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1		○	<b>13. Have you spent or will you spend money on these activities in Hossa National Park or its vicinity while on this trip (see map 2)?</b>  <input type="radio"/> Yes (→ please answer the following questions) <input type="radio"/> No (→ please proceed to question 14)			
realization and guidance of waste disposal	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1		○	Please tick the box that indicates whether you are estimating <input type="radio"/> your personal expenses and your share of your group's joint expenses <b>OR</b> <input type="radio"/> the total expenses of your family or group.			
paying attention to special needs (accessibility of routes, safety, information signs etc.)	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1		○	<input type="checkbox"/> This is a group trip organised by a travel agency or other travel operator, costing _____ € → In addition, please indicate any of your <u>other</u> expenses in Hossa National Park or its vicinity.			
open wilderness huts	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1		○	Indicate below (points A–G) your total expenses for this trip <u>in Hossa National Park and its vicinity</u> . (Mark "0" if you have not spent any money on the activity in question)			
rental huts	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1		○	<b>A fuel or other purchases from a service station</b> _____ €			
Metsähallitus web sites (metsa.fi, nationalparks.fi, excursionmap.fi)	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1		○	<b>B costs for local transportation</b> (e.g. local bus or taxi) _____ €			
services at the Nature Centre	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1		○	<b>C food and other retail shopping</b> _____ €			
berthing sites	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1		○	<b>D café and restaurant purchases</b> _____ €			
Metsähallitus services in social media (Facebook, Instagram, Youtube)	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1		○	<b>E accommodation</b> _____ €			
service providers (coffee shops, activities etc.)	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1		○	<b>F organised programme and recreational services</b> (e.g. entries to guided tours, exhibitions) _____ €			
safety of structures and trails	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1		○	<b>G other expenses</b> _____ €			
general safety	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1		○				
general tidyness	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1		○				
cultural heritage							
accessibility services	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1		○				
other, please specify							
<b>10b. How satisfied are you with the quantity of services and facilities in Hossa National Park as a whole?</b>  <div style="text-align: center;">             5      4      3      2      1              very satisfied ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ very unsatisfied           </div>							



**14. How often have you visited Hossa Recreational Area/ National Park before this visit?**

This is my first visit ☐ → please proceed to question 15.

During the past five years \_\_\_\_\_ times

When was your first visit? In \_\_\_\_\_ (year)

When was your last visit? In \_\_\_\_\_ (year)

**15. Did any of the following disturb you during your current visit to Hossa National Park?**

5 = not at all, 4 = fairly little, 3 = neither, 2 = fairly much, 1 = very much

	not at all	very much
erosion of the ground	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1	
littering	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1	
too many visitors	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1	
behaviour of other visitors	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1	
other, please specify? _____	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1	

**16. How did this visit to Hossa National Park influence the state of your health and well-being in the following sectors?**

5 = totally agree, 4 = somewhat agree, 3 = neither, 2 = somewhat disagree, 1 = totally disagree

<b>Increased social welfare</b> (e.g. strengthened social relations, improved working capacity, enjoyed doing things alone or together)	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1
<b>Increased mental welfare</b> (e.g. satisfaction with life, improved mood, recovery from mental stress, learned something new)	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1
<b>Increased physical welfare</b> (e.g. enjoyed cultural and natural heritage, maintained fitness, learned new skills, physical well-being)	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1

**17. What kind of monetary value would you give to the influence of visiting Hossa National Park ?**

You can compare with the value of commercial welfare services and products (gym 5 €, visit to spa for 2,5 hours 20 €, massage for one hour 50 €, treat in spa with different kinds of cures 200 €), cultural services (cinema 12 €, concert 100 €) or travelling costs (domestic holiday 500 €, holiday abroad 3000 €).

\_\_\_\_\_ €

**18. How long a distance did you travel or are going to travel by following means during this visit to Hossa National Park? (please, answer all that apply)**

- ☐ walking \_\_\_\_\_ km
- ☐ cycling \_\_\_\_\_ km
- ☐ canoeing \_\_\_\_\_ km
- ☐ skiing \_\_\_\_\_ km
- ☐ snowshoeing \_\_\_\_\_ km

**23. Would any of these services be of importance to you in Hossa National Park?**

	very important	not at all important
mobile app for interpretation on site	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1	
berching sites	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1	
more services provided by entrepreneurs	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1	
more information on history and cultural heritage	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1	
sales of local products and food	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1	
rental of equipment	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1	
restaurants and cafés	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1	
grocery stores	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1	
accommodation services	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1	
other _____	5 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ 1	

**19. Country of residence \_\_\_\_\_**

If you reside in Finland, please specify your postal code [ \_\_\_\_\_ ]

**20. Gender**

☐ female

☐ male

**21. Year of birth**

[ \_\_\_\_\_ ]

**22. Education** (please indicate your highest level of education)

- ☐ vocational training
- ☐ college-level degree
- ☐ university bachelor's degree
- ☐ university master's degree

**THANK YOU FOR ANSWERING!**

If there is anything else you would like to tell us, please use the space below.

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**For Further Information on the ASCENT Project, contact:**

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**Facebook:** ASCENTProjectNPA

**Twitter:** ASCENTProjectEU