



## **Flavours and Traditions of Oulu- Food Tourism Route in the Capital of North Ostrobothnia**

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## Abstract

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<p>The primary objective of this product-type thesis was to craft a cultural food tourism route in the Oulu area tailored for international travelers. This main objective was supported by three sub-objectives: first, identifying destinations capable of inspiring customers with the rich food culture of Oulu; second, establishing an easily navigable "pick and go" food route for international travelers to explore the Oulu region; and third, discovering destinations that invite customers into their world through compelling storytelling of local products.</p> <p>The commissioner for this thesis was the Hungry for Finland, a project through Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences and VisitFinland, aimed at encouraging Finnish cities to showcase their culture and food to a global audience. The objective of this thesis was to demonstrate that these smaller cities throughout have captivating histories to share, aligning with one of the main goals of Hungry for Finland. The core purpose of this thesis was to serve as an illustrative example of a food tourism route that could be further utilized and multiplied.</p> <p>To build the theoretical framework, the author began by researching food tourism and culture in Oulu. International travelers, spanning diverse demographics, seek cultural and learning experiences. The interests of these international travelers, range from authentic interactions, local traditions, and educational opportunities to gain insights into different cultures, histories, and knowledge. Food tourism, encompassing not only food and beverages but also activities intertwined with local culture, emerged as a focal point.</p> <p>Key components from the theoretical portion were identified by the author, who created a criteria form in September 2023. By using non-participant observations using digital media to conduct extensive data research, the author was able to collect a sizable amount of data, which made it possible to analyze the results using an effective content analysis technique. Based on these preliminary findings by November 2023, the author created an engaging list of places that capture the real spirit of Oulu's culture, specifically for travelers from abroad.</p> <p>Canva, an online design developer, was utilized to create the trifold brochure for the route. The result includes a brief summary, links to all the locations, and the related images. The brochure is divided into six sections that correspond to different parts of Oulu. These include places to dine and visits to museums; they also recommend beaches, hiking trails, and accommodation. With the addition of several suggested destinations the users of the trail will feel like they are a part of Oulu.</p> <p>In the thesis's conclusion, development ideas are put forth for Oulu's food tourism. Notable suggestions include broader use of the English language on smaller providers' websites and in research efforts, aiming to attract more people to discover the diverse and interesting places available. Additionally, recommendations are made for enhancing the route's detail and expanding collaborations with new destinations in the Oulu area and surrounding regions.</p>
<b>Key words</b> Oulu, food tourism, food tourism routes, International Travelers, Oulu culture, Oulu2026

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## 1 Introduction

In recent years, the thought of tourism has expanded to include food as a valuable addition to the customary sightseeing and leisure activities. More and more, tourists from all over the world are looking for a culinary experience that let them taste the local cuisine, customs, and culture.

Food tourism is significant to Finland as it helps to strengthen the country's profile as an interesting destination for food. Finland has excellent preconditions for showcasing its food culture, such as the use of ingredients from nature, the purity and healthiness of Finnish food, and the emphasis on Finnish hospitality. Food tourism in Finland includes various experiences such as tasting local restaurant meals, trying home-cooked food, exploring street food, participating in guided cooking of Finnish food, and enjoying meals in natural and cultural environments. By offering high-quality, memorable, and purchasable food tourism experiences, Finland should want to attract more visitors that can create a positive impact on its tourism industry. (Adamsson & Havas, 2020, 6.)

During my academic pursuits, I developed a comprehensive understanding of the "Hungry for Finland" initiative. "Hungry for Finland" represents a collaborative project, undertaken in conjunction with Visit Finland, alongside various stakeholders within the realm of hospitality and tourism. This endeavor, initiated in 2012, has successfully launched two distinct food tourism strategies and presently oversees the coordination of Finland's Food Tourism Strategy for the period spanning 2020 to 2028. A fundamental objective of Finland's Food Tourism Strategy is the establishment of a nationwide food tourism network. Moreover, it endeavors to cultivate food tourism trails and associated products within Finland's four primary tourism regions, namely the Archipelago, Lakeland, Lapland, and the Helsinki area. Given the inherent diversity among these regions, a key aim is to incentivize enterprises and providers to craft diverse combinations of products and culinary itineraries (Adamsson & Havas 2020, 14-15.)

This thesis assumes a product-oriented approach, with its central focus on the domain of food tourism. The core premise revolves around the conception and development of a food tourism trail within the Oulu region. This trail encompasses a selection of culinary destinations, where visitors possess the autonomy to curate their preferred gastronomic experiences.

The main objective of this product-based thesis is:

Build a cultural food route in the region of Oulu.

To refine my primary target audience, I've chosen international travelers, within this group, I'll further narrow my focus to travelers seeking enriching lifestyle and cultural experiences. (Visit Finland 2023 46-48.)

In addition to the main objective, I have three key sub-objectives:

1. Finding destinations that can inspire customers with the food culture of Oulu.
2. Connecting International travelers with an easy “pick and go” food route of destinations to experience Oulu region.
3. Discover destinations that invite customers into their world through storytelling of local products.

To achieve the aforementioned goals, the following questions must be addressed: What should a food trail with a cultural theme contain? How can the "sustainable" topic be highlighted? What distinguishes local specialties in Oulu? Lastly, how might the target group find the trail fascinating?

When deliberating on the choice of a specific region within Finland as the focal point for a food route, I found myself revisiting a conversation held during a research and development course with a peer group held in the autumn of 2022. The aim was to identify an area conducive to concentrating our efforts for a food route, and instinctively, Lapland emerged as the initial consideration. In the group discussion, I emphasized the importance of selecting a region that remained relatively obscure in the eyes of international tourists. It was during this discourse that I proposed the Ostrobothnia region of Finland, an area often overshadowed as an international tourist destination. Northern Ostrobothnia, and more specifically, the stretch of road linking Kokkola and Oulu, ultimately became the focal point for our envisioned food route.

In the subsequent planning stages for this thesis food route, my advisor recommended concentrating my efforts within a single city: Oulu. This strategic decision was intended to attract tourists to the coastal region, an area not as renowned as Lapland but brimming with equally enticing opportunities for exploration and culinary delight.

Nestled in the northern reaches of Finland, Oulu beckons with its alluring blend of culinary excellence and breathtaking nature. This enchanting city, celebrated for its distinctive gastronomic traditions, invites you to savor dishes infused with locally sourced treasures like fish, reindeer, and wild berries. Beyond its delectable cuisine, Oulu reveals a pristine paradise for nature enthusiasts, boasting expansive forests, crystal-clear lakes, and idyllic islands scattered throughout its surroundings. Here, the harmonious marriage of gastronomic delights and unspoiled natural beauty creates an irresistible allure, making Oulu an enchanting haven for travelers in search of an authentic Finnish experience. Through the development of a food route that seamlessly weaves together the region's natural splendor and cultural tapestry, this product-based thesis aspires to elevate the Northern Ostrobothnia region, with Oulu at its heart.

Setting clear limitations for this thesis is of utmost importance from the outset. First and foremost, it is essential to note that the initial part of this study will delve into the broader tourism industry, subsequently narrowing its focus to the niche of food tourism. Secondly, the geographical boundaries define the selected destinations on our trail, with an approximate distance of 60 kilometers from Oulu's center. The third constraint arises from our chosen destinations, which prioritize offering diverse experiences that align with current food trends, emphasizing authenticity, locality, and cultural immersion. Notably, our trail design allows visitors the autonomy to independently select the places they wish to explore, encompassing a total of 24 distinct products and destinations.

This thesis is structured into two core sections: the theoretical and empirical. The theoretical segment initiates by introducing the concepts of food tourism and the broader tourism landscape in Finland, delving into the prevailing trends and challenges within this context. Subsequent chapters illuminate how international travelers actively seek cultural and lifestyle experiences while journeying abroad. It elucidates how the domains of the experience economy and the experience pyramid captivate travelers through the narrative of Finnish culture intertwined with food and lifestyle.

Transitioning to the empirical segment, I provide an in-depth depiction of the trail's development process, introduce the methodologies employed, and unveil the findings derived from the collected data. I present 'Becoming Oulu- Food Tourism Trail' with meticulous descriptions of each featured destination.

The concluding section is reserved for Discussion and conclusions featuring developmental ideas for 'Hungry for Finland,' Oulu's food tourism providers, and Visit Oulu. Furthermore, this section encapsulates my personal learning journey throughout the thesis project. The thesis concludes with a comprehensive list of references and the inclusion of appendices.

## **2 Concept of Food Tourism**

Food tourism, sometimes referred to as culinary tourism or food travel, is the practice of journeying to a particular destination with the specific intention of immersing oneself in the local gastronomic offerings. This immersive experience includes the quest for distinctive and genuine culinary encounters, such as sampling regional delicacies, perusing food markets, engaging in cooking classes, and delving into the food-related cultural heritage of the locale. Food tourism transcends mere consumption and libation, as it involves the exploration of a destination's cultural, historical, and societal dimensions through its food and beverage repertoire. This trend has gained substantial prominence within the tourism industry, with travelers increasingly prioritizing food and drink experiences as their primary motivation for travel. (Stone et al. 2018, 1-2.)

### **2.1 Food Tourism Industry**

Twenty linked industries make up the food tourism business cluster, comprising the food and beverage industry, travel and hospitality, as well as other organizations including the government, the media, and academics. These industries are combined by the World Food Travel Association into a single cluster. As shown in figure 1. There are three key categories that make up this cluster: travel and hospitality, food and drinks (which includes farms, culinary classes, and markets), and others (which includes suppliers, the government, schools, and the media). (Wolf 2021, 8.)



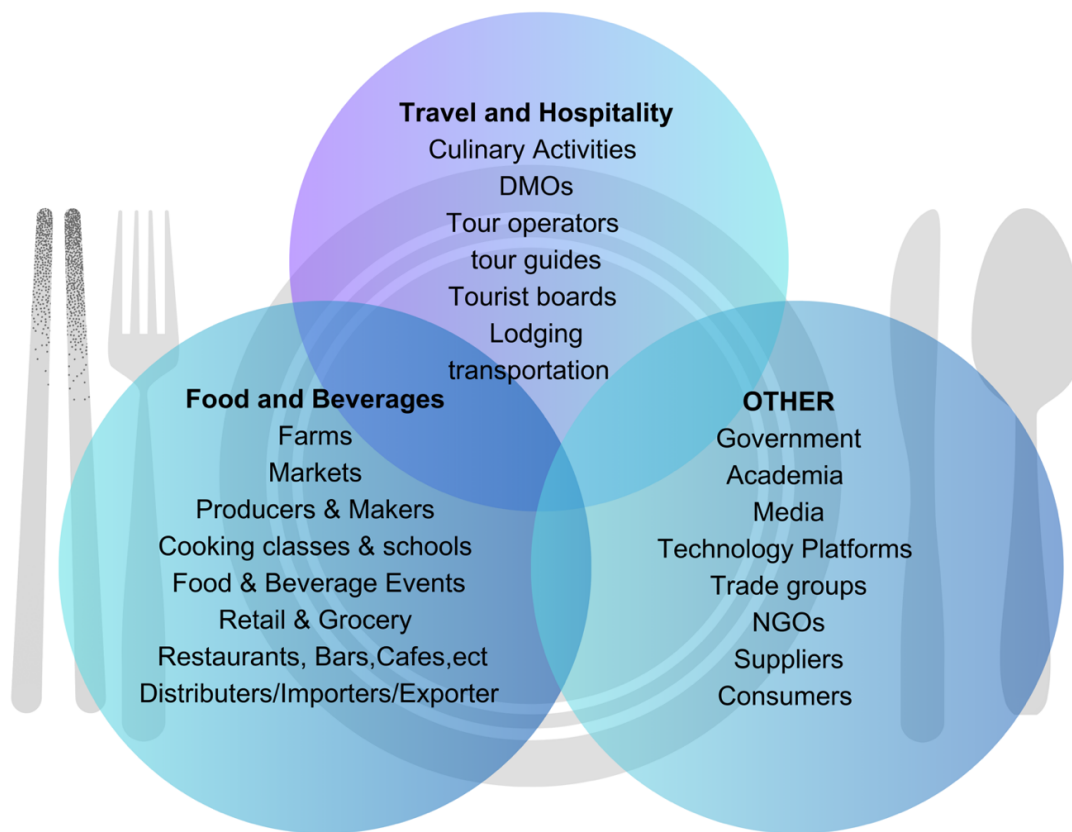


Figure 1. Food Tourism Industry Cluster (adapted Wolf 2021, 8)

A contemporary trend in the travel business that is rising in popularity is food tourism. Travelers today place a high value on original and distinctive culinary experiences as part of their journeys. Globalization, improved connectivity, and the desire for more memorable travel experiences are the main drivers of this trend. Tourists' opinions of a place are substantially influenced by their feelings and food-related recollections (Stone et al.2020.)

To further highlight the significance of food tourism in connecting travelers with the cultural fabric of a place. Food becomes a medium through which travelers can learn about a region's history, traditions, and way of life. This not only enriches the traveler's experience but also contributes to the preservation and promotion of local culinary heritage. (Dixit 2019.)

The case study by Broadway (2017) focusing on West Cork Food highlights the way food can be a conduit for showcasing a destination's unique identity. By "putting place on a plate," destinations can leverage their food culture to attract visitors who are seeking authenticity and a deeper understanding of the local community.

Food tourism holds the power to create lasting memories, foster cultural exchange, and drive economic growth for destinations. As the demand for authentic and unique travel experiences continues to rise, food tourism remains a significant force in shaping the way people explore and engage with different cultures around the world. (Stone et al. 2018, 10.)

## **2.2 Hungry for Finland: Commissioner**

"Hungry for Finland" stands as a collaborative endeavor between Visit Finland and Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, numerous companies within the food and tourism sectors, and other key stakeholders. Over the years, it has introduced and executed two distinct food tourism strategies since 2012. Presently, the initiative spearheads Finland's Food Tourism Strategy for the period 2020-2028. (Adamsson & Havas 2020, 14.)

The overall objective of the Food Tourism Strategy is to establish a comprehensive network for food tourism on a national scale. It concentrates its efforts on the creation of food tourism trails and other immersive culinary experiences across four main geographical domains: the Archipelago, Lakeland, Lapland, and the Helsinki Area. Recognizing the unique characteristics of each area, the strategy promotes the formulation of diverse combinations of products and food routes by encouraging collaboration among companies and tourism providers. These offerings are designed to showcase significant elements of Finnish traditions, feature ingredients sourced directly from nature, foster partnerships, and align with sustainability objectives. (Adamsson & Havas 2020, 14-15.)

The strategy goes further to advocate for food tourism services that remain accessible throughout the year, allowing companies and providers to maintain a consistent workforce and mitigate frequent staffing expenses. Through its central theme of forming partnerships with a wide array of companies and entrepreneurs, the strategy aims to infuse the food tourism sector with possibilities for sustainable growth and continuous renewal. (Adamsson & Havas 2020, 8.)

## **2.3 Hungry for Finland: Themes of Food Experience**

When embarking on a journey to a new destination, travelers yearn for more than just sightseeing; they desire to immerse themselves in the local culture and truly experience the essence of the place. Central to the Food Tourism Strategy 2020-2028 are three key product themes and messages, Taste of place, Pure and natural, cool and creative. These thematic foundations are not only

intended to bolster the marketing efforts of companies and producers but also serve as a means to craft compelling narratives. "Hungry for Finland" underscores the significance of infusing products and services with stories. Such narratives possess the capacity to resonate with visitors, leaving an indelible impression that is likely to be shared and passed on. Figure 2. shows these three compelling marketing themes: Taste of Place, Pure and Natural, and Cool and Creative (Adamsson & Havas 2020, 27.)



Figure 2. Marketing product Themes and core messages. (Adamsson & Havas 2020, 27)

At the core of the "Taste of Place" theme lies the idea of indulging in local products and becoming a part of the community's cultural tapestry. This concept is more than just relishing delectable dishes; it's about embracing the culinary heritage that a destination has to offer. The experience extends beyond the plate, as it invites travelers to witness the fusion of eastern and western influences in places like Finland, thereby showcasing a genuine local way of life. (Adamsson & Havas 2020, 27)

The "Pure and Natural" theme takes a holistic approach to travel, focusing on the consumption of clean, wholesome food that not only delights the taste buds but also nurtures well-being. Ingredients harvested directly from nature are the stars of this theme, aligning perfectly with sustainability principles. This marketing approach resonates with conscious travelers seeking to nourish their bodies and souls while supporting ecologically responsible practices. (Adamsson & Havas 2020, 27.)

"Cool and Creative" encapsulates the idea of turning everyday gastronomic encounters into extraordinary experiences for travelers. This theme invites exploration, encouraging travelers to step

out of their comfort zones and embrace new culinary horizons. By presenting familiar items in innovative and unexpected ways, this marketing concept not only showcases an inventive approach to cuisine but also signals a commitment to sustainability and the courage to experiment with novel ideas. (Adamsson & Havas 2020, 27.)

The themes of "Taste of Place," "Pure and Natural," and "Cool and Creative" tap into these desires, offering travelers the chance to immerse themselves in local culture, relish nature's bounty, and embark on culinary adventures that push the boundaries of creativity. As we journey forth, these themes serve as gateways to discovering the heart and soul of each destination, one flavorful experience at a time. (Adamsson & Havas 2020, 27.)

## **2.4 Food Tourism in Finland**

Food tourism is essential to Finland as it helps to strengthen the country's persona as a curious destination for food (Adamsson & Havas 2020). Tourism in Finland is characterized by its unique blend of natural beauty, cultural experiences, and gastronomic delights. The country's captivating landscapes, which include pristine forests, picturesque lakes, and the Northern Lights, attract travelers from around the world. Additionally, Finland's well-preserved natural areas and commitment to sustainability make it a haven for eco-tourism enthusiasts.

Food tourism is a significant expanding aspect of Finnish tourism. The country's rich culinary heritage draws visitors to savor traditional dishes such as "karjalanpiirakka" (Karelian pastry) and "kalakukko" (fish pie). Finnish food culture is deeply rooted in nature, with ingredients sourced from forests, lakes, and farms. The concept of "picking and cooking" is celebrated, where individuals can forage for berries, mushrooms, and herbs before transforming them into delectable meals. This connection to nature and sustainability resonates with the growing trend of conscious eating and farm-to-table experiences in global tourism. (Ruokavirasto 2020.)

Collaboration plays a pivotal role in advancing food tourism in regions like Pohjois-Pohjanmaa (Northern Ostrobothnia). Initiatives like the one highlighted by Havas, Korhone, and Kuorikoski (2021) emphasize the importance of partnerships to promote food tourism in Northern Ostrobothnia. By working together, local communities, businesses, and organizations can create memorable culinary experiences that showcase the region's distinctive flavors and traditions.

Finland's appeal to different tourist segments is evident from the "Finpro Segmentation Cross Country Summary." It highlights how various traveler personas, ranging from "Cultural Enthusiasts" to "Authentic Experiencers," find something to cherish in Finland's diverse offerings. Whether

exploring the vibrant city life of Helsinki, indulging in a traditional Finnish sauna, or partaking in thrilling outdoor activities, visitors can craft their dream itineraries based on their preferences. (Business Finland 2017.)

## 2.5 Trends and Challenges of Finnish Tourism

Tourism in Finland has witnessed evolving trends and faced unique challenges, which have contributed to shaping its industry landscape. The country's natural beauty, and distinct cultural heritage have positioned it as an enticing destination for food travelers. In recent years, there has been a noticeable shift towards niche forms of tourism, with food tourism emerging as a prominent trend to follow (Adamsson & Havas 2020, 7). The report highlights the value of promoting local and authentic culinary experiences, as travelers increasingly seek immersive interactions with the culture and traditions of the places they visit. A Visit Finland (2023) survey draws attention to the growing importance of Finnish food tourism in attracting visitors as shown in Figure 3.

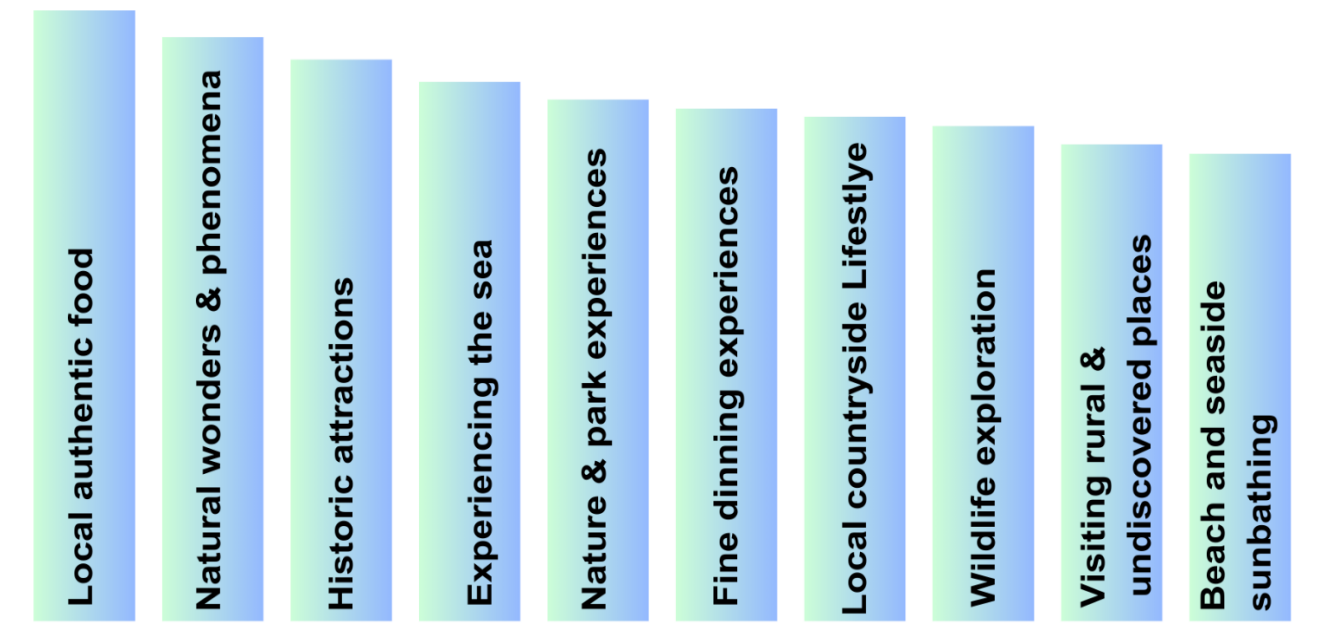


Figure 3. Top Ten activities travelers find most Interesting (adapted from Visit Finland 2023)

Finnish food culture plays a pivotal role in enhancing the tourism experience. The country's emphasis on natural ingredients, sustainable practices, and traditional cooking methods has garnered attention from food enthusiasts worldwide. This has led to collaborations and initiatives, which aim to

propel food tourism in the Northern Ostrobothnia region through local partnerships and awareness. (Havas et al. 2021.)

Food tourism serves as a platform for the emergence of numerous trends. Haaga-Helia University's LAB8 Service Experience Laboratory has compiled a report outlining forthcoming global trends based on forecast data of several trend research houses. Figure 4. is a summary of the upcoming trends as reported by Hungry for Finland (Hungry for Finland 2020).

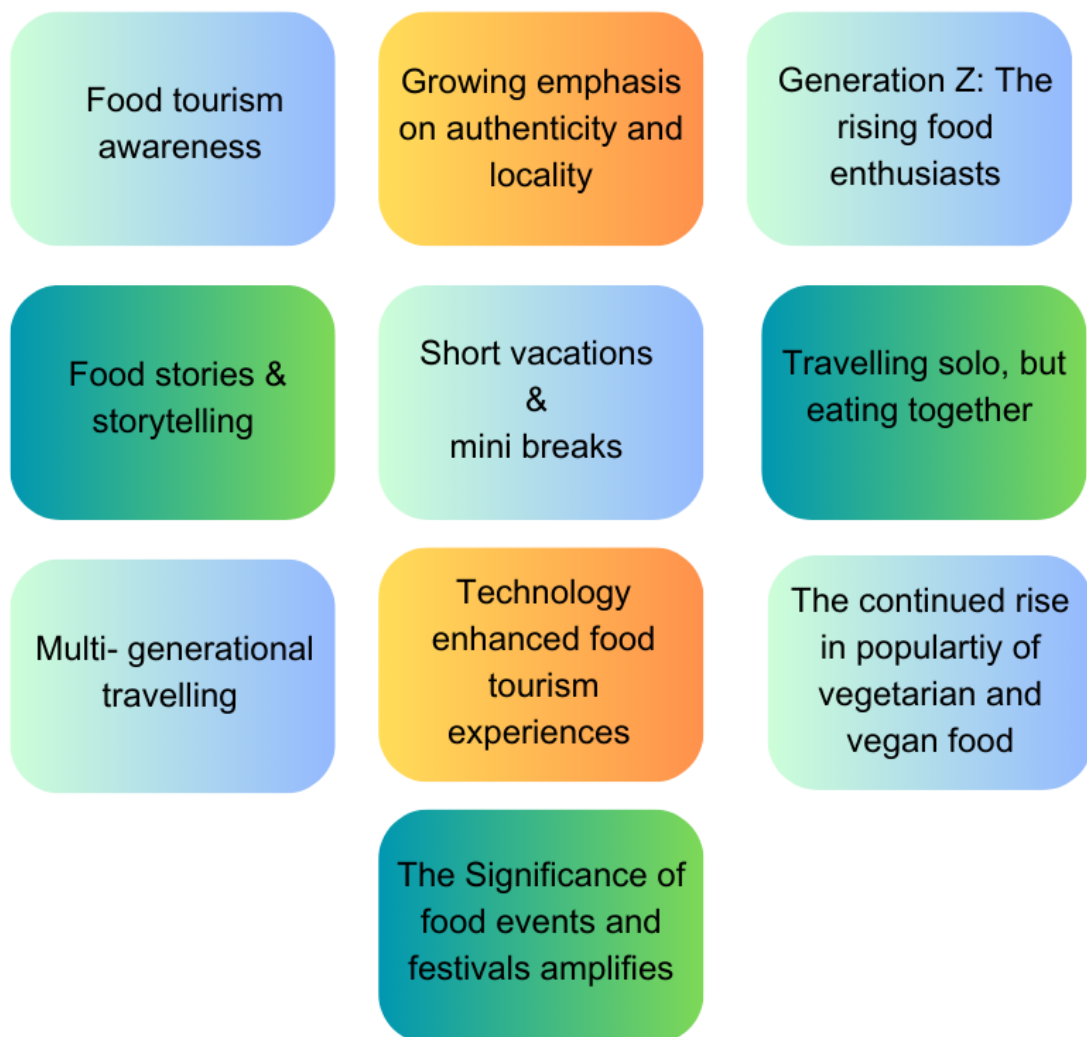


Figure 4. Incoming food tourism trends (adapted from Adamsson & Havas 2020, 9)

However, alongside these positive trends, challenges persist within the Finnish tourism sector. The "Finpro Segmentation Cross Country Summary" sheds light on the fact that the Finnish tourism market has faced issues related to seasonality, with a significant concentration of visitors during the summer months. This seasonality can strain local resources and infrastructure, leading to concerns about the sustainability of the industry and the impact on the environment. (Visit Finland 2017.)

Figure 5. highlights the essential elements of Finnish food tourism that empower businesses and producers to craft distinctive, thoughtfully curated products to address various challenges. Finnish food tourism plays a pivotal role in preserving stories and cultural legacies. Key factors in these products include locality, pristine natural settings, and the use of natural ingredients. These products should narrate a compelling story, offer personalization, and create memorable experiences, with all these components seamlessly intertwined. Equally crucial are motivated and knowledgeable employees who take a keen interest in the products they present (Adamsson & Havas 2020, p. 7).



Figure 5. Corner stones of Food Tourism (adapted from Adamsson & Havas 2020, 7)

## 2.6 The Role of Food Routes in Tourism

Food Routes explores the intricate connection between food and travel, shedding light on how the concept of culinary journeys has evolved over time. Drawing from various sources, this exploration delves into the multifaceted nature of food routes and their significance within the context of contemporary travel trends. (UNTWO s.a a.)

The 2020 State of the Food Travel Industry Report (Stone et al.) offers valuable insights into the concept of food tourism. It stresses the idea that modern travelers are increasingly seeking immersive experiences that transcend conventional sightseeing. Food routes, in this context, refer to carefully curated paths that guide travelers through a destination's culinary landscape. These routes can emphasize not only the diverse flavors and cuisines but also the stories, traditions, and people behind them. By creating food routes, travelers engage in a narrative-rich journey that allows them to discover a location's unique gastronomic identity. (Stone et al. 2020.)

It's imperative for further development and promotion of food routes within the food and beverage tourism industry, driven by several compelling factors:

**Fostering a Distinct Sense of Place:** Food routes play a pivotal role in accentuating a destination's culinary offerings, thus cultivating a profound sense of place. This enriches the overall visitor experience, leaving an indelible mark on the destination's memory. (Wolf et al. 2021.)

**Amplifying Visitor Arrivals:** Food routes or trails possess the potential to magnetize a higher influx of tourists to a destination. Travelers with a penchant for gastronomic adventures are naturally drawn to destinations that boast diverse and distinctive food and beverage options.

**Elevating Destination Brand Equity:** The development and promotion of food routes or trails elevate a destination's brand equity significantly. A destination renowned for its culinary offerings stands apart from competitors and attracts a specific demographic of travelers in search of authentic gastronomic experiences. (Wolf et al. 2021.)

**Stimulating Export Demand:** Food routes or trails also contribute to spurring export demand for a destination's food and beverage products. Favorable experiences with local cuisine inspire visitors to seek out these products upon returning home, thereby boosting demand and potentially benefiting local producers economically. (Wolf et al. 2021.)

In line with this, the study by Stone et al. (2018) examines the elements that contribute to memorable food and culinary tourism experiences. The research highlights that successful food routes intertwine sensory experiences with cultural immersion. These routes often incorporate visits to local



markets, cooking classes, and interactions with passionate chefs and artisans. The combination of taste, smell, touch, and sight elevates the overall journey, creating lasting memories that extend beyond mere consumption. (Stone et al. 2018.)

The development of food routes also has broader implications for destination branding and economic growth. As food tourism gains prominence, destinations are strategically leveraging their food heritage to attract travelers. By showcasing the authentic flavors and culinary traditions unique to their region, destinations can differentiate themselves in a competitive tourism landscape. Moreover, the economic benefits of food routes are notable, as they stimulate local economies by promoting local food producers, restaurants, and other related businesses. (Stone et al. 2020 48.) The paramount importance of cultivating and promoting food routes or trails as a strategic avenue to enrich the economic and cultural impact of food and beverage tourism (Wolf et al. 2021).

## **2.7 Definition and Characteristics of Food Routes**

One defining characteristic is authenticity. Food routes are designed to provide travelers with genuine and unfiltered encounters with a destination's culinary traditions. Authenticity is at the core of these experiences, allowing visitors to engage with local producers, markets, and chefs who are deeply rooted in the region's food culture. This authenticity is not limited to the food itself, but also extends to the stories, traditions, and people behind each dish. (Stone et al. 2018.)

Variety is another prominent feature of food routes. These routes often traverse diverse landscapes, showcasing a wide range of ingredients, dishes, and culinary techniques. This variety caters to different tastes and preferences, ensuring that travelers can explore a multitude of flavors within a single journey. research emphasizes the importance of offering diverse options to satisfy both adventurous and traditional palates. (Stone et al. 2018)

The immersive nature of food routes also sets them apart. Travelers are encouraged to engage with their surroundings, fostering a deeper connection with the destination. Food routes are also a great strategy for rural tourism development (Anderson & Law 2012, 284). Visits to local farms, markets, and food workshops provide hands-on experiences that allow participants to learn about the sourcing, preparation, and cultural significance of the foods they encounter. These hands-on engagements transform passive consumption into active exploration, creating lasting memories. (Stone et al. 2018.)

Food routes can often emphasize sustainability and responsible practices. In line with the growing demand for eco-conscious travel, these routes highlight locally sourced, seasonal ingredients and emphasize minimal environmental impact. This fits in with the broader trend of responsible tourism, in which tourists look for adventures that have a good impact on the environment and local society. (Stone et al. 2018.)

Collaboration and partnerships are integral to the success of food routes. In a 2018 report it emphasizes the role of collaboration among stakeholders, including producers, chefs, hospitality providers, and local communities. These partnerships ensure the authenticity, quality, and diversity of the experiences offered along the route. (Stone et al. 2018.)

The characteristics of food routes underscore their role as immersive, authentic, diverse, and sustainable culinary journeys. These routes offer travelers a unique opportunity to engage with a destination's food culture, learn from local artisans, and create meaningful memories. By drawing insights from various sources, we can appreciate the multifaceted nature of food routes and their significance within the realm of food tourism. (Stone et al. 2018.)

### 3 An Overview of Oulu

Oulu, located on Finland's western coast, (as shown in figure 6) is a dynamic city which blends technology and nature with history. Both locals and visitors are drawn into its arms by its distinctive fusion of old-world charm and modern progressiveness. Oulu, also referred to as the "Capital of Northern Scandinavia," is distinguished by its dedication to technical advancement, vibrant economy, and rich cultural legacy. (Ouka.fi sa.a.)



Figure 6. Illustration map of Oulu (adapted from Visit Finland.)

#### 3.1 Exploring Oulu's Cultural Tapestry: Uncovering Local Traditions and Heritage

Oulu's history dates back centuries, and its strategic location along the Gulf of Bothnia made it an essential trading post in the medieval era. Today, remnants of its past are interwoven with the urban landscape, evident in its historic architecture and cobblestone streets. The city's old market square dates to the 19th century and serves as a testament to its enduring history. While the Oulu Castle ruins harken back to its medieval origins. (Oulu.fi sa.a.)

However, Oulu is far from dwelling solely in its past. It stands as a hub of innovation and technological prowess, the city has nurtured a robust tech ecosystem that has birthed numerous startups, tech companies, and research centers. (Oulu.fi sa.a.)

Nature plays an integral role in Oulu's identity, offering a striking contrast to its technological vibrancy. The Oulu region is a haven for outdoor enthusiasts, with vast forests, serene lakes, and the pristine Gulf of Bothnia coastline, which transforms into an icy wonderland during the winter months. The sea also plays a part in Oulu's identity, shaping its maritime heritage and fostering a love for water-based activities. (Oulu2026 2021.)

Cultural vitality thrives in Oulu, evident in its bustling events calendar and artistic endeavors. Festivals like the Oulu Music Video Festival and the Oulu International Children's and Youth Film Festival infuse the city with creative energy. (Oulu2026 2021.)

### 3.1.1 Oulu Culture Capital 2026

The European Capitals of Culture program, which promotes inclusive development in cultural, social, and economic dimensions, focuses on cities being centers of cultural vibrancy. As the 2026 European Capital of Culture, Oulu has continually ushered in positive developments in urban development, tourism, culture, and partnerships. The program includes initiatives like welcoming foreign guests, motivating the tourism and business sectors, enhancing cultural infrastructure, organizing national and international conferences, encouraging cross-border partnerships, and organizing a variety of cultural events. (Oulu 2026 sa a.)

The Oulu 2026 program, is centered on the theme of "Cultural Climate Change," this comprises of three key program themes: "Brave Hinterland," "Wild City," and "Cool Contrasts." This initiative envisions an inspiring and sustainable future for northern Europe, emphasizing the pivotal role of art and culture in the evolution of cities, villages, and regions, particularly in times of crisis. (Oulu 2026 sa a.)

The program motivates unique experiences and encourages active involvement from businesses that align with three core values: **inspirational**, where culture is a source of unique experiences that engage both participants and creators; **sustainable**, focusing on ecological, social, cultural, and financial responsibility in cultural production; and **European**, championing the richness and diversity of European cultures to foster unity and belonging among European citizens. (Oulu 2026 sa a.)



Figure 7. Oulu 2026 three program themes (adapted from Oulu 2026 sa a.)

The program shown in figure 6 unfolds through three distinct themes: "Wild City" celebrates the co-existence of the city and wilderness, positioning Oulu as a cultural laboratory; "Brave Hinterland" explores the challenges and beauty of Europe's periphery, where nature's extremes define existence; and "Cool Contrasts" embraces Oulu's stark seasonal variations as a source of creativity, connecting disparate elements to forge new perspectives on culture and identity. (Oulu 2026 sa a.)

### 3.1.2 Food Tourism Landscape in Oulu

The culinary tapestry of Northern Ostrobothnia is woven with a rich blend of milk and meat production, a delicious symphony that tantalizes the taste buds. Here, the journey into the local food culture transcends mere dining; it's an immersive experience where tourists forge connections through vibrant restaurants, hands-on food crafting alongside locals, and the embrace of nature's bounty (Havas et al. 2021). The allure of Northern Ostrobothnia is steadily growing, propelled by its thriving agriculture and the allure of its farm-to-table treasures, a manifestation of the region's short supply chain (Korhonen et al. 2017, 710-711). Delve deeper, and you'll discover the Northern Ostrobothnia food culture's evolution, exemplified by projects like The Arctic Food Lab, a facet of the Oulu2026 initiative that seeks to unearth, refine, and amplify the value of raw materials from the Northern Ostrobothnia region (Havas et al. 2021).

Venture into the northern reaches of Northern Ostrobothnia, where fishing, reindeer herding, and the vibrant harvest of wild berries are the anchors of its culinary identity (Havas et al. 2021).

Berries, a verdant cornerstone of the agricultural landscape, stand shoulder to shoulder with the milk and meat production that characterizes the region. However, despite its vitality, the berry sector yearns for enhanced logistics, rendering it comparatively underdeveloped within the agricultural tapestry (Korhonen et al. 2017, 711). Meanwhile, the heartland of Northern Ostrobothnia brims with potato farms, nurturing this humble tuber that once accounted for a quarter of Finland's potato crop in 2017. It's a heartfelt narrative that resonates through local eateries and markets, both of which champion homegrown potatoes and other delicacies (Hiltunen et al. 2018, 2).

Amid this landscape, food tourism unfurls its wings, guided by a strategy that amplifies the role of food in the journey of exploration. Northern Ostrobothnia's food tourism is a testament to the synergy between suppliers and culinary establishments, a dance that is illuminated by endeavors such as the Arctic Food Lab under the Oulu2026 initiative. Here, the aim is to curate immersive food experiences that showcase local fare against the backdrop of the region's captivating natural setting (Oulu2026 2022). As Havas et al. (2021) outline, the path to evolving food tourism encompasses making local products accessible to diverse tourism enterprises, as well as birthing innovative culinary tourism operators. In the annals of this progression, the Arctic Food and Travel project emerges, spanning from 2015 to 2018, and fostering collaboration between local food artisans and suppliers to catalyze the Finnish food tourism strategy in Northern Ostrobothnia (ProAgria 2019, 1-22). A symphony of cooperation, this project's harmonious chords resonate in the menus of restaurants, where local ingredients meet innovation, and in the burgeoning opportunities for food tourism, as local suppliers intertwine with the tapestry of tourism-linked enterprises (ProAgria 2019, 1-22).

## 4 Customers and Experiences

International travelers seeking cultural and learning experiences represent a diverse group of individuals who share a common desire to explore and immerse themselves in different cultures, history, and knowledge. This target group encompasses people of all ages, backgrounds, and interests, ranging from solo backpackers to families and retirees. These travelers are driven by a curiosity to understand the world better, seeking authentic interactions, local traditions, and educational opportunities during their journeys.

### 4.1 Culture and Learning Seekers: Destination Finland

In a research endeavor conducted by Visit Finland (2023) aimed at comprehending the preferences of their visitors, an extensive assessment encompassing 46 distinct interests related to vacations and travel was undertaken. From this comprehensive analysis, shown in figure 8 are four particular segments of interest emerged as foundational pillars. These discovered interest areas serve as the cornerstone for developing customer-centric segmentation strategies in addition to facilitating a thorough grasp of travelers' individual preferences. (Visit Finland 2023, 2.)



Figure 8. Four main customer segments (adapted from Visit Finland 2023, 48)

When these travelers embark on a trip, they look for destinations that offer rich cultural heritage, historical significance, and opportunities for personal growth. They seek out museums, historical sites, art galleries, local festivals, workshops, and immersive experiences that allow them to

connect with the essence of a place. Authenticity and the chance to interact with locals play a crucial role, as these travelers are often interested in understanding the daily lives and traditions of the people who live in the destination. (Visit Finland 2023, 46-48.)

To attract this target group, destinations should focus on showcasing their unique cultural assets and offering meaningful learning experiences. Marketing efforts should emphasize the authenticity of the local culture and the opportunities for deep engagement. Providing a variety of cultural and educational activities, such as guided tours led by knowledgeable locals, hands-on workshops, language classes, and expert-led talks, can greatly enhance the appeal of a destination. (Visit Finland 2023, 46-48.)

What's most important to these travelers is the ability to gain a genuine understanding of the destination's culture, history, and way of life. They appreciate the chance to step outside their comfort zones and challenge their perspectives, leading to personal growth and a broader worldview. Interactions with locals, the ability to participate in local traditions, and access to in-depth historical information are all significant factors. Additionally, the safety and infrastructure of the destination, as well as its ease of navigation and availability of educational resources, are important considerations for this group. (Visit Finland 2023, 46-48.)

## **4.2 Crafting Food Experiences for International Travelers**

Experience economy revolves around the idea that consumers are seeking memorable and immersive experiences related to food and culinary traditions. This concept, first popularized by Pine and Gilmore in 1999, highlights how food tourism has evolved beyond mere consumption to become a multi-sensory journey. Travelers are now driven by the desire to engage with local cultures, traditions, nature and flavors as shown in figure 9.

In the context of food tourism, the experience economy manifests through various stages. At the core is the idea of staging experiences where visitors are offered more than just meals; they're provided with opportunities to participate in cooking classes, farm-to-table experiences, and guided food tours. These activities allow them to connect with local producers, chefs, and artisans, thus deepening their understanding of the culinary heritage of a region (Pine & Gilmore, 1999).



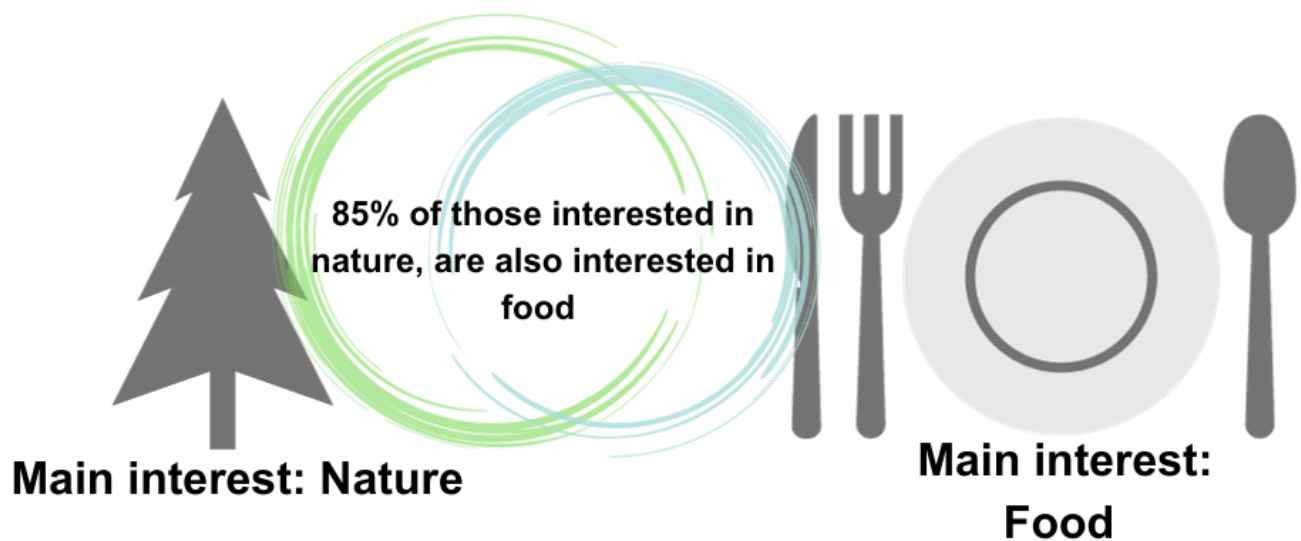


Figure 9. Survey results nature and food interests (Visit Finland 2023, 39)

Furthermore, the emergence of social media has significantly influenced the experience economy in food tourism. Consumers now share their food encounters online, creating a sense of anticipation and a desire (Spence et al. 2015) to partake in these experiences themselves. This has led to the rise of 'Instagrammable' foods and locations, influencing not only what people eat but also where they travel.

#### 4.2.1 Understanding the Realms of Experience

An experience is described as "something that happens to you that affects how you feel" in the Cambridge Dictionary (2016) and as "an event or occurrence that leaves an impression on someone" in the Oxford Dictionary (2016). The enduring impression that memorable and significant experiences have on the participant's heart and mind is what matters most, not retaining every minute detail. Even though there are many products that may be bought, experiences are frequently meaningful, unforgettable, and even possibly life-altering. Pine and Gilmore (2011) argue that an experience is often considered the fourth economic offering, as it is a meticulously staged series of events enriched with sensations designed to engage the participant on a deep personal level.

In the context of food tourism especially food routes, Stone, Soulard, Migacz & Wolf (2018, 1128) emphasize that crafting memorable food and drink experiences frequently requires the fusion of several factors, but in some cases all it takes is one element to leave a lasting impression. In

essence, people tend to associate their memorable food and drink experiences with broader, unforgettable contexts. Pine and Gilmore (2020, 39) suggest that experiences go beyond merely entertaining customers; they entail active engagement. These experiences encompass not only the flavors, beverages, locales, and atmospheres but also the service quality, making service a pivotal aspect of the overall product or business experience (Stone et al. 2018, 1125-1128).

Pine and Gilmore (2020, 39) have outlined the two most significant levels of engagement that may be found inside experiences. The experiences' chosen dimensions are shown in Figure 9. The guest participation is the horizontal dimension, and it has both passive and active ends. When customers aren't involved in or having no influence over how a service or product is delivered, that is the passive end of figure 10. Meaning that visitors are more likely to be observers and listeners. Actors on a stage, for instance, are actively participating in the performance and having their own experiences as they perform. At the same time, those who are not acting might still be active by watching and listening to the play (Pine & Gilmore 2020, 39–40).

The vertical arrow in Figure 10 represents two fundamental dimensions of the experience: "absorb" and "immerse." These dimensions revolve around the physical and emotional connections people establish during experiences. **Absorb:** This dimension characterizes experiences where individuals engage from a distance. It's akin to watching a movie, where one absorbs the content but remains physically detached from the experience. The engagement is primarily cognitive and observational. In contrast, **immersion** involves deep interest and active participation in an experience. An example is to be fully committed to the role they are playing in an escape room. The guest is the character and is trying to get out. They essentially become the experience. (Pine & Gilmore 2020, 39–40).

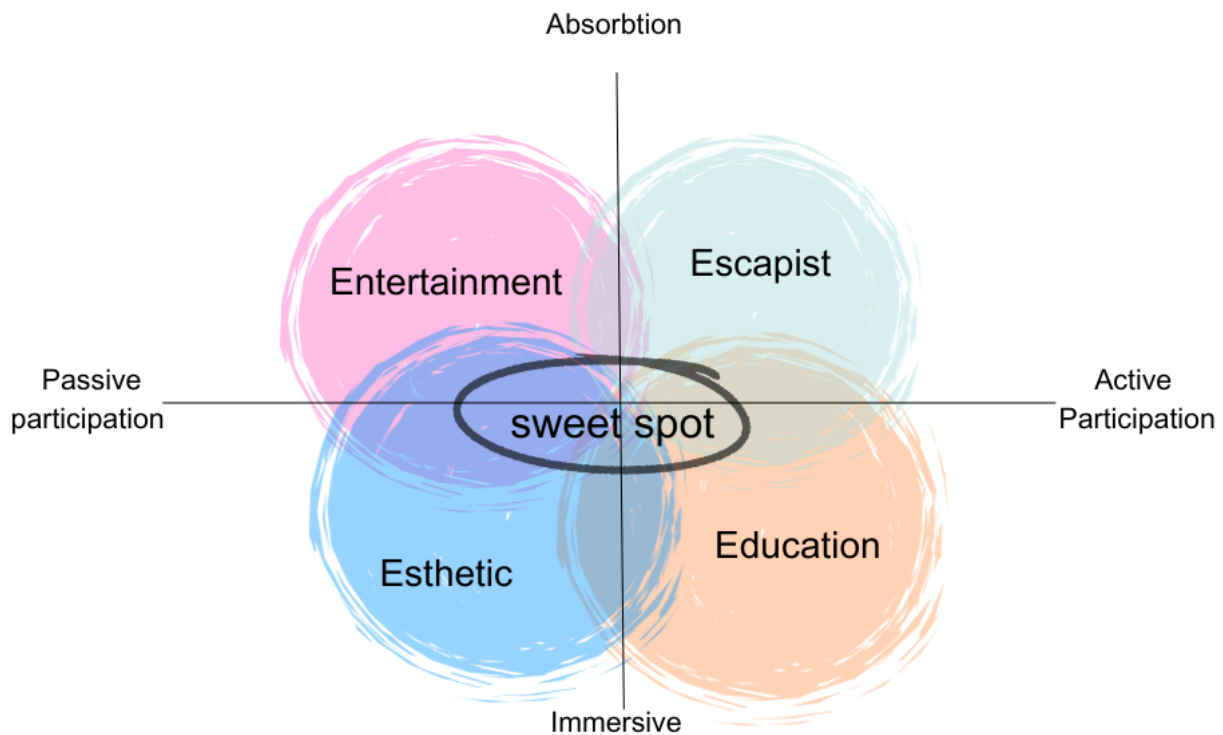


Figure 10. Four of realms of experience (adapted from Pine and Gilmore 1999)

Figure 10. in the context of Pine and Gilmore's framework provides a comprehensive view of the dimensions and realms of experiences. delve deeper into each of these elements for a better understanding.

**Educational Realm:** Within this realm, active participation in the event or performance is the focus. However, individuals are primarily absorbing the experience, not fully immersing themselves. It represents a balance between engagement and detachment.

**Entertainment Realm:** This realm entails passive participation in the event or performance, where individuals are spectators. Nevertheless, they may respond emotionally, such as through laughter or singing. Pine and Gilmore emphasize that entertainment should always be integrated into experiences to enhance engagement.

**Esthetic Realm:** In the esthetic realm, customers are deeply immersed in the moment, appreciating the experience without actively participating in it. An example is watching the Northern Lights in

Lapland, where customers are captivated by the lights but do not actively contribute to their creation.

**Escapist Realm:** The escapist realm places emotions at the forefront of the experience. While all realms involve feelings, the escapist realm takes it a step further. Here, individuals get lost in their thoughts while participating in the event or performance. An example might be hiking in a forest, actively engaging with nature and allowing the mind to clear of all other thoughts.

**"Sweet Spot" of Rich Experiences** The culmination of all these dimensions and realms is illustrated by the "sweet spot" in Figure 10. This represents the point where all four experience realms converge, resulting in the richest and most profound experiences. It is the ultimate goal for those seeking to design and provide memorable and engaging experiences. (Pine & Gilmore 2020, 43.)

#### 4.2.2 Advancing Experience Theory Through the Experience Pyramid

The Experience Realms, by Pine and Gilmore (2011), offer a profound framework for crafting immersive and meaningful experiences. These journeys, akin to a "sweet spot," seamlessly blend elements from the realms of escapism, aesthetics, entertainment, and education. While the potential of these realms is undeniable. The Experience Pyramid model, as envisioned by Tarssanen (2009) explores further in-depth. This model provides intricate guidance on considering various facets of an experience, spanning from pre- to post-experience stages.

Not every food route can claim to be truly meaningful. Yet, the pursuit of creating such experiences should be the ultimate goal for any food route designer. The challenge lies in the subjectivity of what constitutes a meaningful experience, influenced by numerous factors often beyond the designer's control. Nonetheless, there are strategies to shape the guest's culinary journey by orchestrating controllable elements, ensuring every aspect serves the purpose of making it meaningful, memorable, and enjoyable.

The Experience Pyramid model (see Figure 11.) emerges as an invaluable tool for experience designers. It not only elucidates the elusive concept of meaningful experiences but also furnishes a practical checklist for professionals striving to create extraordinary food routes. According to Sanna Tarssanen, the architect of this model, the Experience Pyramid represents a near flawless product that takes all elements and levels of the experiences into account. (Tarssanen 2009.)

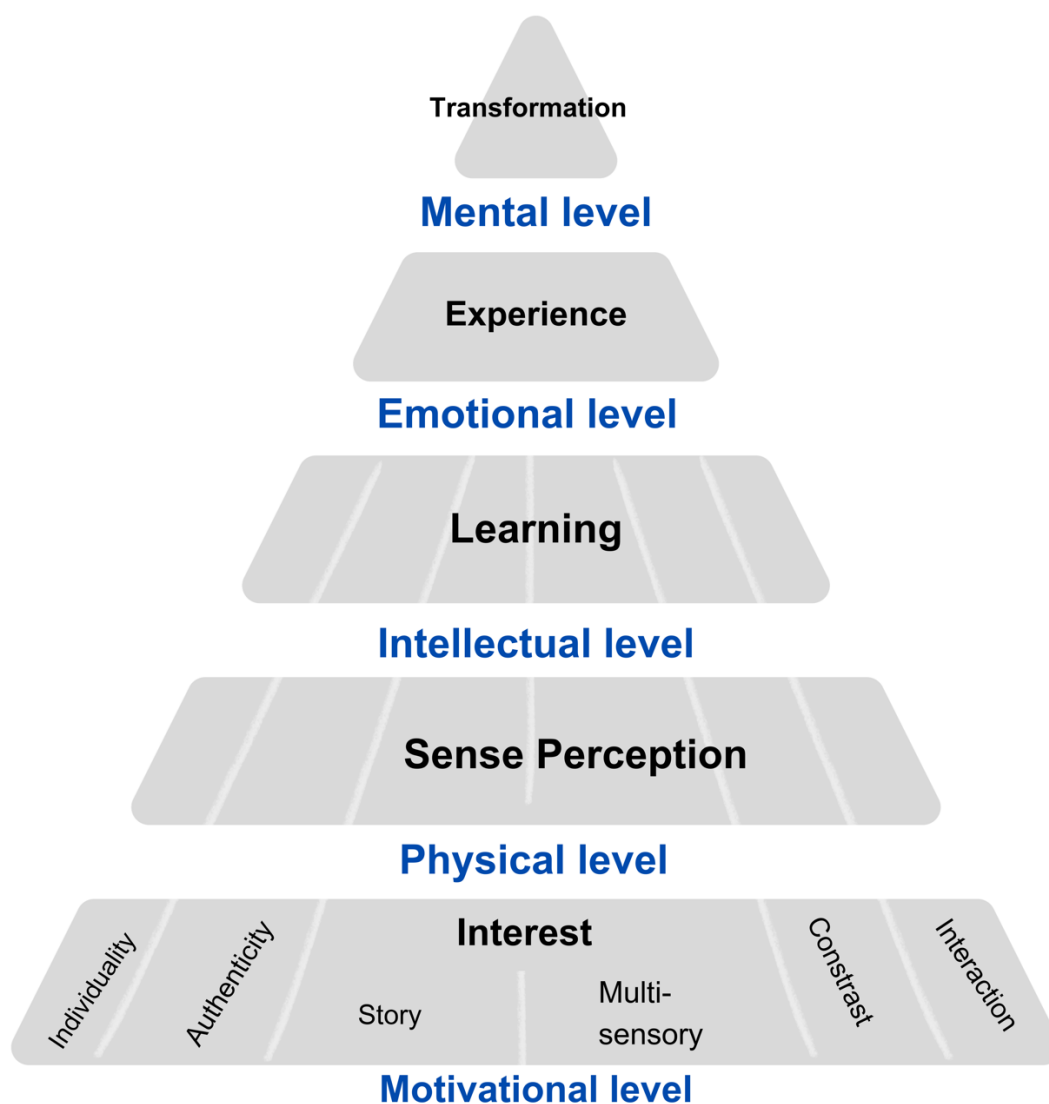


Figure 11. The experience Pyramid Model (Tarssanen 2009, 11)

The model's horizontal axis encapsulates six pivotal elements that influence the guest's experience and can be modulated by the experience provider: individuality, authenticity, story, multisensory perception, contrast, and interaction. These elements should be meticulously considered when crafting and evaluating a culinary journey, ideally permeating each stage of the guest's expedition. Tarssanen categorizes these elements into three groups: the core of the product (individuality, authenticity, and story), the target group (contrast), and the experiencing phase (multisensory perception and interaction). The vertical axis of the Culinary Journey Pyramid Model signifies the levels of experience, mirroring the guest's progression from pre-experience anticipation to post-experience reflection and transformation (Tarssanen 2009).

The intellectual level following is dedicated to encouraging learning and gaining new information. A product shouldn't just be educational; it should also give users the chance to put their newly

learned lessons into practice. The next level above this, the emotional level, characterized by experiences that yield joyful and exhilarating memories. The mental level, which sits at the top of this experience hierarchy, has the ability to help customers change dramatically, perhaps by discovering new hobbies or developing fresh viewpoints on their own lives. According to Tarssanen's (2009, 15–16) assertion, "In an effective and functionally sound experiential product, all the foundational elements of the aforementioned experience levels are concurrently engaged."

## 5 Product Creation: From Idea to Innovation

I am presenting my process of this thesis, outlining the timeline for product creation and observations shown in Figure 12. Non-participant observation form of Qualitative data research was used in an effort to save time and to gather enough data. Content analysis was used to thoroughly analyze the destinations to fit within a Cultural food route. With the guidelines of the theoretical part, I created an observation and criteria table to guide the selection of food tourism destinations.

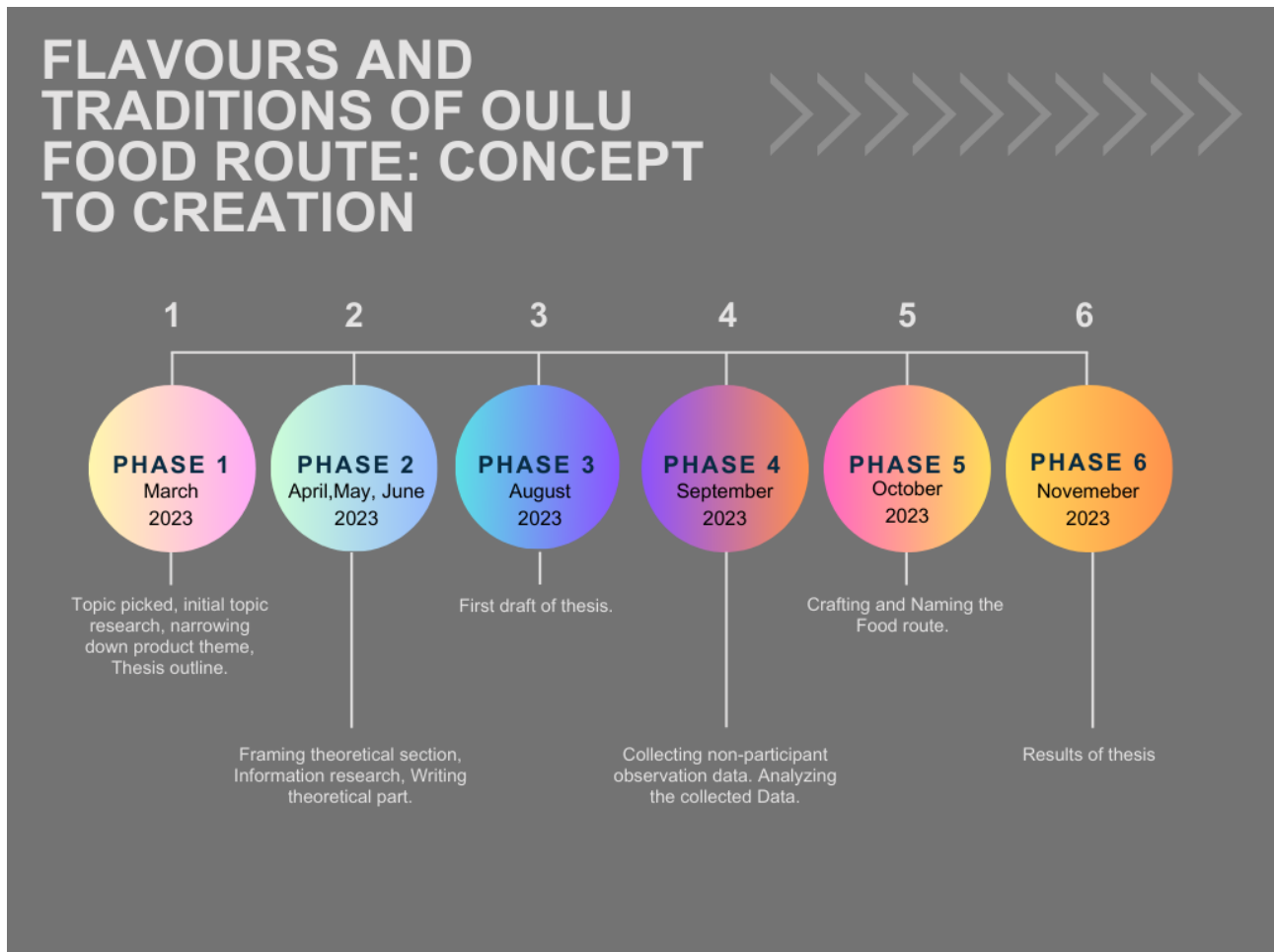


Figure 12. An Overview of the Oulu Area's Food Tourism Trail's Development

### 5.1 Research Design

Figure 12. outlines the sequential milestones in the thesis development process. Initially, I deliberated on the subject matter of my thesis and was presented with the opportunity to craft a food-based product for the Oulu region. Given my prior experience in developing a similar product for a previous course, it was a logical choice. During my studies, I familiarized myself with the "Hungry

for Finland" project and the "Food Tourism Strategy 2020-2028" for Finland, aligning my main focus on food tourism with these initiatives. In March 2023, I definitively decided to center my thesis on Oulu, incorporating food tourism products and destinations.

I commenced constructing the theoretical framework, and during this process, the suggestion arose from "Hungry for Finland" that my thesis could revolve around a food tourism trail in the Oulu area. Extensive research was conducted on tourism and food tourism, both locally and globally. Determining my target audience led me to focus on international travelers seeking cultural and learning experiences, a choice influenced by my status as a foreigner residing in Finland.

In late September 2023, after compiling the theoretical framework, I embarked on non-participant observation through online sources and Google searches. Simultaneously, I began crafting a preliminary version of the food tourism trail using Canva. The months of September and October 2023 marked the intensive phase of my thesis, involving data collection and analysis, with meticulous attention to detail in the final output. Once the trail was perfected, only the presentation and concluding discussions remained.

### **5.1.1 Gathering Data for the Route: Non-Participant Observation**

Qualitative research is a form of inquiry designed to delve into and make sense of social phenomena by relying on non-numerical data. The primary objective is to uncover and interpret the subjective experiences, perspectives, and meanings that individuals or groups attribute to their lived realities. One specific technique within qualitative research is nonparticipant observation. This method involves the researcher observing a social environment or group without actively participating in its activities. (Williams 2008, 561–562).

By adopting a nonparticipant role, the researcher can keenly observe the behaviors, interactions, and dynamics inherent in the observed group or setting. This approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the context, shedding light on the intricacies that might be missed through other research methods. Nonparticipant observation is considered a valuable tool in qualitative research due to its capacity to generate rich and detailed data. (Williams 2008, 561–562).

The insights gathered through nonparticipant observation contribute to a nuanced understanding of social phenomena. Researchers can use the information to identify patterns, analyze social dynamics, and uncover the underlying meanings embedded in the observed interactions. In essence, this method provides a holistic and contextually rich perspective, enabling a more comprehensive



exploration of the complexities inherent in the social fabric under investigation. (Williams 2008, 561–562).

“Nonparticipant observation is a research method that involves observing a situation or behavior without actively participating” (Williams 2008, 561-562). Non-participant observation reduces the dependence on the observers’ own opinions and biases, which enhances the study’s validity. A modern approach for nonparticipant observation is digital media such as social media, which makes it possible to watch events and behaviors in real time without having to be physically present. Thanks to technology, people can now capture aspects of their social lives with their digital devices and post on social media. With the use of this technique, individuals and researchers can collect information about social trends, human behavior, and interactions without actively taking part in the activities being observed. Digital media is a useful instrument for studying behavior because it provides a convenient and distinctive means of observing and recording social activities. (Williams 2008, 561-562.)

Observations for this study were conducted online for 25 hours over the course of a few months, taking advantage of information from company websites, social media platforms such as Instagram, Visit Oulu and Oulu webpages (see appendix 2). This made it possible to collect data in both Finnish and English, which was essential given the demographic of Oulu some of the information was in Finnish and being online made it easier to translate. The choice of non-participant observation as a data collection method, aligns with the practical constraints of limited time and resources for a participant observation and the ability to use screenshots and screen captures (see appendix 2) (Williams 2008, 561-562).

### **5.1.2 Data Analysis Approach**

Content analysis is a robust methodology employed to comprehend and scrutinize various materials with the overarching aim of identifying patterns, both commonalities and distinctions, within the content. This versatile analytical approach can be effectively applied to diverse forms of data, such as written texts, interviews, or visual representations. The fundamental objective of qualitative content analysis is to craft coherent and comprehensive narratives that encapsulate the essence of the researched topic (Stemler, 2015)

I employed two techniques to comprehend the popularity and perception of various locations: textual analysis and visual analysis. Textual analysis looks for recurring themes and viewpoints by examining descriptions, social media posts, and online reviews. In contrast, visual analysis looks at

images such as photos or videos in order to find trends and aesthetic preferences that I used to help with location selection. (Stemler, 2015.)

To facilitate this theory-based analysis, an observation table was crafted and employed as a practical tool (see Appendix 1). This table served as a structured framework for collecting and systematically analyzing the selected data. By employing this observation table, I was able to discern key similarities and differences among various destinations and products relevant to the food tourism route (Luo 2019).

Ultimately, the utilization of content analysis proved invaluable in completing the project, as it enabled the synthesis of a concise and overarching description of the phenomenon under investigation. Through this methodological approach, a deeper comprehension of the intricate dynamics of food tourism and its related products and destinations was achieved (Stemler 2015).

## **5.2 Criteria Influencing Food Route Development**

It is imperative to establish a set of criteria for the selection of food tourism destinations and products from a multitude of options. To this end, a comprehensive criteria table was meticulously constructed to guide the selection process before embarking on the actual observational phase (refer to Figure 13). The principal focus of this research endeavor was the development of a novel food tourism trail intended for international travelers in the Oulu region. The intended route was to encompass food tourism destinations that promote attributes of authenticity, regional distinctiveness, and compelling narrative elements. The criteria table functioned as an indispensable compass for the judicious curation of products and destinations.

# Criteria: Selecting destinations

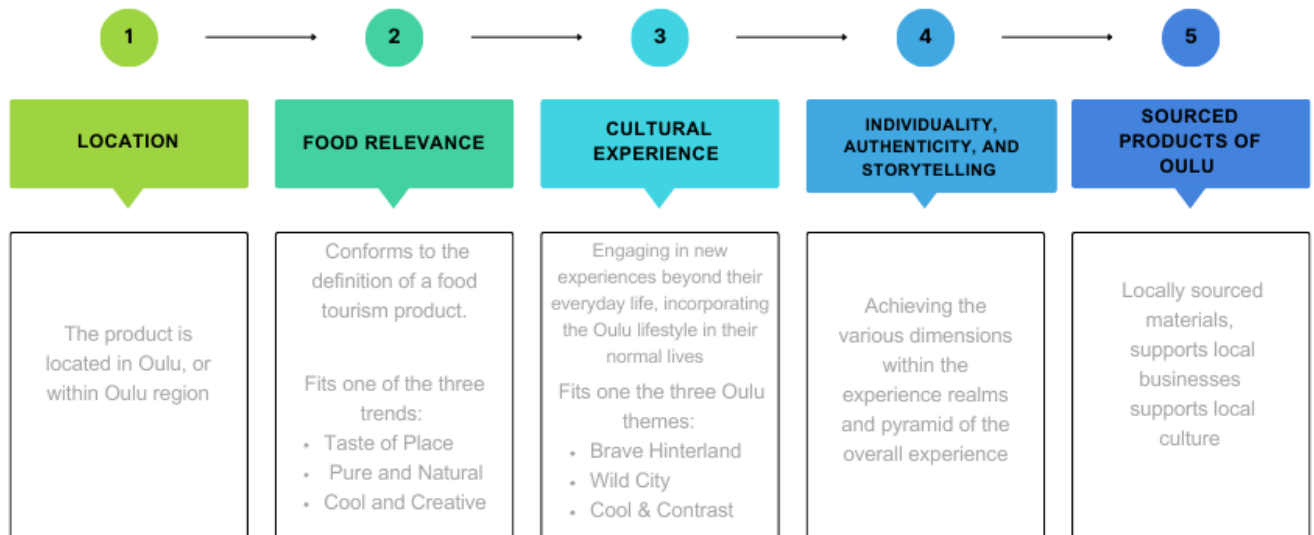


Figure 13. Criteria: Selecting Destinations for Becoming Oulu food route

"Location" emerged as one of the key factors inside the criteria table for food tourism products and destinations, drawing on my prior experience in planning a route for this region, which made me familiar with several sites. In this case, a specified radius of 50 kilometers was established from Oulu's center in either direction. This intentional restriction was made in the benefit of visitor convenience, mindful of the possible difficulties posed by extended travel in a rural environment. Most sites can be accessed through public transportation or a short car ride.

The second criteria indicated that the chosen product or destination must be consistent to the Food tourism concept. Travelling to an area and experiencing it in a way that gives the place an impression of connection is known as food tourism (World Food Travel Association, n.d.). Oulu is home to many outstanding destinations that have been carefully planned to give tourists a comprehensive immersion into the local way of life and food traditions of the Oulu region. I wanted destinations that gave a sense of at least one of the food trends set forth by Hungry for Finland: Taste of place, pure and natural, or cool and creative.

The third criteria, which is represented in Figure 13, was the degree of cultural enrichment provided by the selected destinations. The goal was to give visitors life-changing experiences that would allow them to learn new things beyond what they were used to and give them a chance to bring a bit of Oulu's distinctive way of life back to their regular lives. The aim is to encourage active

engagement with the food tourism products in order to go beyond simply providing entertainment, which was challenging given that experiences are subjective (Tarssanen, 2009, pp. 11–14).

The fourth criterion, as depicted in Figure 13, emphasized the importance of aligning the chosen destinations with the core of food routes hinges on three fundamental elements: individuality, authenticity, and storytelling (Tarssanen 2009). These elements collectively form the essence of the food experience, giving it significance and directing every aspect of its design.

Individuality signifies an expectation that a food route should be as unique and adaptable as possible. Ideally, no two experiences should be identical, and each should be tailored to meet the individual guest's preferences. Pine and Gilmore (2011) advocate mass customization as a strategy to create new value by minimizing the gap between guest expectations and what they settle for with mass-produced goods and services. Achieving this necessitates an in-depth understanding of the target market and individual preferences. Co-creation also proves beneficial, involving guests in the experience's creation to align it with their needs and wants, thereby reduces guest dissatisfaction (Pine & Gilmore 2011).

While searching for destinations, my aim was to identify places that adopted a distinct approach in curating engaging food experiences. These destinations essentially should treat the dining environment as a stage, and their staff play the roles of actors in this culinary theater. This unique approach encourages active guest interaction with the staff, thereby making it an indispensable element of the overall dining experience. By actively engaging with guests in character, often drawing inspiration from the techniques of improvisational theater, this approach has seen success in crafting a truly distinctive and memorable experience for each individual guest (Pine & Gilmore, 2011).

Individuality stands as a paramount element in crafting meaningful food routes, echoing Pine and Gilmore's (2011) assertion that "customizing a good turned into a service, customizing a service turns it into an experience, and customizing an experience turns it into a transformation." Conversely, when a service is intentionally designed to engage, experiences rarely replicate for every guest, as noted by Sundbo and Darmer (2008). Individual past experiences influence interpretations of the culinary journey, making it imperative for designers to exceed expectations and deliver not just customer satisfaction but customer delight.

Authenticity concerns the credibility of the food route, its alignment with the guest's lifestyle, culture, and support for the producer's local identity (Tarssanen 2009). Producers should tread carefully, respecting the original culture without exploitation, offense, or falsification. The chosen theme should harmonize with the country's character.

In the field of food tourism, authenticity acts as a cornerstone, enhancing travelers' experiences with remarkable food interactions. However, the idea of authenticity in this setting is still arbitrary and shaped by personal preferences. Travelers, driven by their distinct interpretations of authenticity, often seek out food experiences that resonate with their personal criteria. The exploration of regional specialties and time-honored recipes, as well as the discovery of unique and culturally influenced foods from diverse countries, may be included in these immersive interactions. Food tourism has inherent value from authenticity, which fosters a strong connection to a destination's native culture, historical background, and long-standing customs. It enables visitors to interact directly with the local population, promoting a greater understanding of the regional cuisine. (Stone et al.2018.)

A credible narrative contextualizes the journey, motivates guests to participate, and justifies their actions (Tarssanen 2009). Pine & Gilmore (2011) emphasize the importance of crafting themes that encompass these factors and maintain coherence throughout the journey. Storytelling holds a pivotal role in elevating the food tourism experience, establishing a profound connection between travelers and their destinations, thereby imbuing culinary adventures with lasting significance. Several key facets exemplify the contributions of storytelling to the realm of food tourism. (Stone et al.2018.)

Storytelling imparts cultural context to the cuisine, furnishing travelers with a richer understanding of local traditions, historical narratives, and customs that support the cuisine. This contextualization fosters a greater awareness for the culinary past, making food more meaningful and culturally significant. (Stone et al. 2018.)

Destinations that use storytelling to evoke emotional connections, stirring nostalgia, intrigue, and curiosity through narratives about dish origins, preparation techniques, and personal anecdotes from the culinary artisans themselves. Such emotional resonance enhances the overall experience, fostering a sense of belonging and excitement. (Stone et al. 2018.)

Moreover, storytelling plays a pivotal role in conveying authenticity, highlighting local ingredients, traditional recipes, and the culinary heritage, making the food encounter appear more genuine and unique to the destination. It serves as a conduit for engagement and interaction, facilitating encounters between travelers and local communities, chefs, and food producers who share their personal narratives and insights. These interactions create a sense of community and connection, enriching the overall experience. (Stone et al. 2018.)

Stories have a lasting impact, transforming food experiences into memorable moments etched in travelers' memories. These narratives become integral to travelers' own stories and are often

shared with others, thus further promoting the destination's culinary offerings, perpetuating its allure in the world of food tourism. (Stone et al.2018.)

The fifth and final criterion underscored the selection of places that actively supported the local community and its cultural heritage. Notably, nine out of ten industry professionals concur that food tourism establishments possess the potential to inspire visitors and travelers toward a more sustainable way of life (WFTA 2020, 36-38). Embracing locally sourced ingredients, prepared in harmony with seasonal variations, is not only conducive to regional sustainability but also augments the local economy (Potter 2020).

In order to find viable possibilities for food tourism items that are in line with the main goals of my thesis, I applied my criteria Figure 13 to build an observation table (Appendix 1). By organizing and picking the essential components for the observation table, I was able to thoroughly evaluate each significant aspect of the product or destination in accordance with my criteria.

The primary objective of this thesis can be summarized as follows:

- To establish a cultural food route in the Oulu region.

This primary objective is further substantiated by the following sub-objectives:

1. Finding destinations that can inspire customers with the food culture of Oulu.
2. Connecting International travelers with an easy “pick and go” food route of destinations to experience Oulu region.
3. Discover destinations that invite customers into their world through storytelling of local products.

These primary and sub-objectives served as a guiding framework for my search for suitable places and destinations.

Appendix 1 is structured as follows: The **first column** contains essential information, such as the product name, description, price, and duration. The **second column** focused on measuring the location's proximity to the center of Oulu, with a specific target of staying within a 60-kilometer radius. During my research, I ensured that the locations adhered to this guideline.

The **third column** in the observation table was designated for the target group, with an emphasis on international travelers who tend to plan their itineraries and embrace unique tourism products and experiences.

My vision for this food route was to encompass the elements of the experience pyramid. The **next three columns** were dedicated to assessing whether the product or destination offered authenticity, individuality, and storytelling. In addition, I included a **sixth column** to evaluate whether the destination or product could provide an authentic Oulu/Finnish experience, as I aimed to offer people new and memorable experiences within food tourism. As stated by Stone et al. (2018, 1128), a single element can suffice to create a lasting memory, often associated with food, beverages, locations, and the ambiance of places. Pine and Gilmore (2020, 39) argue that experiences go beyond mere entertainment; they are about engaging the customers deeply. The **seventh column** of the observation table was dedicated to assessing whether the products or destinations supported the local economy and culture, with an emphasis on sourcing locally.

The **final column** was reserved for providing links to social media, websites, and screenshots for further reference and information.

### 5.3 Mapping the Oulu Food Route: Navigating the Search for Products and Destinations

My search began in the timeframe spanning March 2023 to September 2023, during which I conducted observations for approximately 20 hours. I employed various tools such as Google search, Google Maps, Instagram, and Facebook to aid in my research. Primarily, I focused on following Instagram and Facebook posts and reels (see appendix 2). Upon identifying relevant posts, I delved deeper into the subject matter. For a more comprehensive understanding of the places, I also explored their official websites and utilized Google. In figure 14, I have compiled the keywords I utilized in my search for food tourism products and destinations.

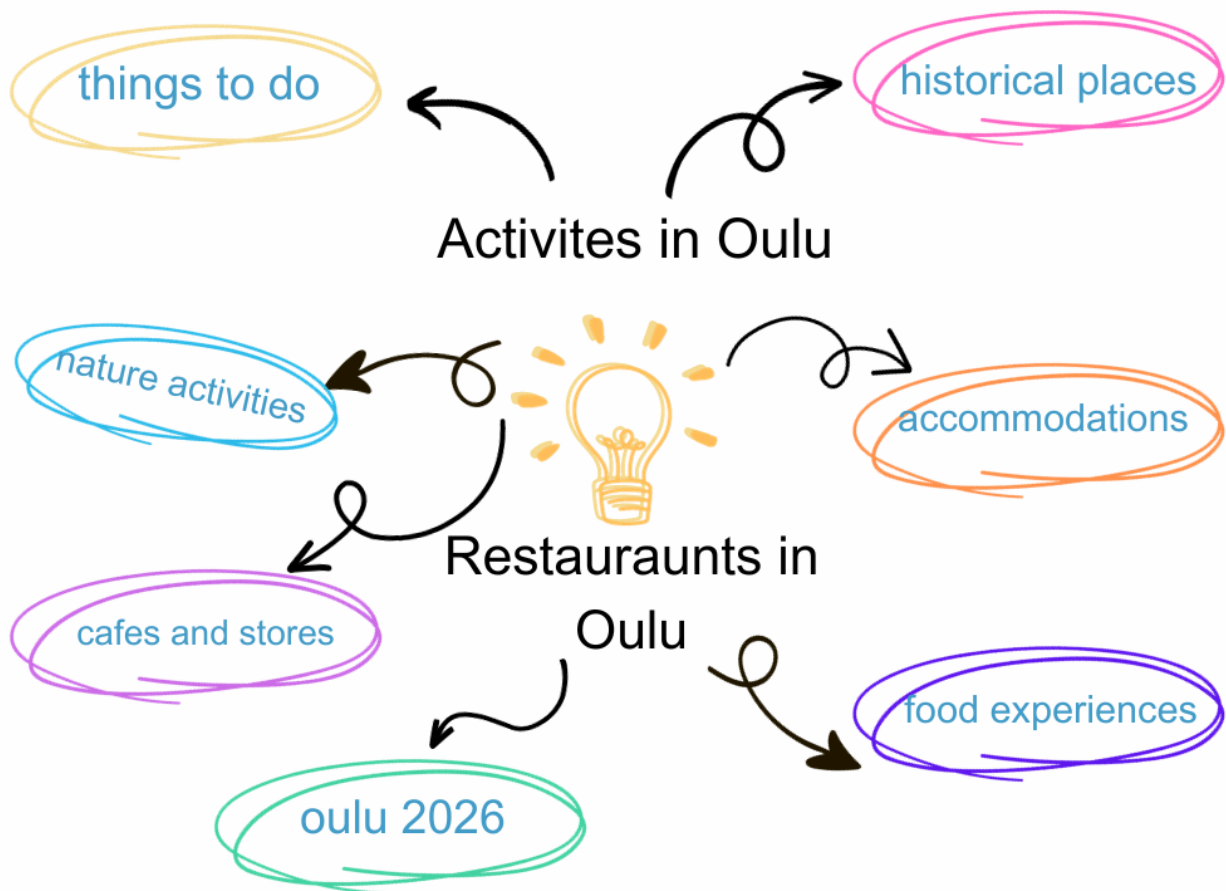


Figure 14: An Overview of google searches for food tourism route development.

Getting the ball rolling with the exploration, I began by focusing on the most accessible and readily identifiable aspect of our tour: food establishments. This involved scouting for restaurants and cafes that would offer an authentic taste of Oulu's culinary scene.

For this initial phase, I turned to popular social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook. In particular, the profiles of Visit Oulu and Oulu2026 proved to be valuable resources. These accounts consistently featured a diverse array of places, both well-known and hidden gems, providing a well-rounded view of the city's dining landscape. Notably, they showcased not just the urban and easily discoverable dining spots but also ventured into the rural and less frequented areas.

With a collection of intriguing food places at my fingertips, I proceeded to validate and expand my findings using Google. This step revealed a thriving dining scene in Oulu, with a proliferation of new and well-regarded restaurants. What was particularly convenient was that a significant number



of these culinary destinations were situated in close proximity to the city center or on easily accessible islands.

The clustering of restaurants in such areas not only promised a practical and efficient food tour experience but also hinted at a dynamic and vibrant dining scene. This concentration of options made it feasible for me to craft a food tour that would be both convenient and diverse, catering to a range of preferences and palates.

I recognize the importance of including restaurants on our list for a food tour, but I aspired to create something more profound – a cultural food tour that went beyond the culinary aspect. My vision was to offer an experience that not only delighted the taste buds but also provided a deeper understanding of the origins and evolution of the local cuisine.

Oulu, being a coastal town, has a rich history intertwined with its reliance on fish and farming as primary staples. To truly appreciate the local food, I felt it was essential to provide activities that unveiled the backstory behind the dishes. My journey led me to various resources on Facebook, where I discovered a plethora of options that perfectly aligned with my vision. One of the first gems I uncovered were open-air museums, which promised to be immersive experiences. These outdoor museums not only showcased the historical aspects of Oulu but also allowed visitors to step into the past, offering an invaluable context to why the local food traditions had developed the way they had.

Additionally, I was keen on enabling visitors to explore the islands around Oulu, as these islands played a pivotal role in the town's history and culture. I envisioned boat tours or other water-based activities that would allow guests to get a genuine feel for the area, appreciating the lifeblood of the community - the sea. To cater to more adventurous visitors, I was determined to include options like water sports or bike rentals. These activities would not only add an element of excitement to the tour but also provide a unique way to explore Oulu's beautiful surroundings, offering a well-rounded experience for all kinds of travelers.

#### **5.4 Tools for Creation and Brief Results of the Search**

During my exploration, I gathered information on approximately 34 destinations to analyze, that resulted in 21 destinations and discovered about 10 valuable "good to know" suggestions. Notably, two museums offered insights into the historical lifestyle of the area's inhabitants, shedding light on the potential influence of the region's culinary culture. This historical context provides visitors with a deeper understanding of the roots and evolution of local dishes.

Within the "good to know" recommendations, I highlighted three accommodations, each offering unique food experiences. Additionally, I identified six nature destinations, some featuring suggestions for preparing food over an open fire. The remainder comprised food tourism products or services, enhancing the overall culinary experience. To complement the information gathered, I compiled a list in Appendix 2, which includes the websites and Instagram accounts visited during my observation.

For the presentation, I choose to utilize Canva, an online tool that I've found consistently user-friendly and feature-rich in previous projects. After selecting from a plethora of premade templates, I settled on one that resonated with my vision. The main font and headings were standardized using "Poppins," and I personalized the color scheme while incorporating additional images. In enhancing the visual appeal, I included a suggestion box and dedicated sections for "good to know" topics, providing a comprehensive and engaging overview for the audience.

I opted for a strategic approach to illustrate the route by breaking it down into concentrated areas. This segmentation allows visitors to make the most of their time on the island of Pikisaari, providing them with curated places to discover and savor. Similarly, for those spending an afternoon in the city center, the route is designed to highlight the most intriguing and engaging points of interest, ensuring a fulfilling and tailored experience. This thoughtful organization caters to different preferences and time constraints, enhancing the overall enjoyment of the journey.

My mission was to curate a part of the food tour that went beyond just the flavors on the plate, incorporating activities and experiences that delved into the very essence of Oulu's culture and history, leaving visitors with a comprehensive understanding and appreciation of this coastal town and its culinary traditions.

## 6 Oulu Food Route

In this chapter, I describe in detail the thoroughly designed food experience created specifically for foreign guests in the charming Oulu region, which I have entitled "Flavours and Traditions of Oulu- Food tourism Route in the Capital of North Ostrobothnia " (see Appendix 3 for more information). The entire trail is strategically written in English, ensuring accessibility and participation for a diverse global audience.

Sub- objectives for the trail were:

1. Finding destinations that can inspire customers with the food culture of Oulu.
2. Connecting International travelers with an easy "pick and go" food route of destinations to experience in Oulu region.
3. Discover destinations that invite customers into their world through storytelling of local products.

The Pure and Natural and Taste of Place concepts, which are drawn from the Hungry for Finland's primary marketing themes and a guide for creating food tourism products found in the Food Tourism Strategy of Finland 2020–2028 (Adamsson & Havas 2020, 14), are followed by this food tourism route. every business and destination along the path were picked with consideration. Numerous businesses are also adhering to the Oulu2026 program's concepts, which include cool and contrast, wild city, and brave hinterland. They all give a story about Oulu's past, present, and future, and the lives of its inhabitants. They take great effort to choose items from local suppliers because they aim to provide their guests with unique and authentic food tourism experiences. (Oulu 2026 sa a.)

### 6.1 Route Description

The tri-fold brochure titled "Flavours and Traditions of Oulu- Food Tourism Route in the Capital of North Ostrobothnia"(see appendix 3) opens with a vibrant display of the route's name, setting the tone for a captivating journey into the heart of Oulu's untamed charm. The introductory section warmly welcomes visitors, offering a vivid description of what to expect along the route and emphasizing the desired emotional experience.

In maintaining a cohesive visual identity, the brochure's color scheme aligns seamlessly with the assumed established branding of Visit Oulu (visitoulu sa.a). This intentional choice aims to create a

unified and recognizable aesthetic, providing a visual connection between the brochure and the broader promotional materials associated with Oulu's tourism.

The brochure's design philosophy leans towards simplicity, a deliberate decision aimed at ensuring that visitors are not overwhelmed by information. By adopting a straightforward format, the brochure prioritizes clarity, allowing visitors to easily navigate through the content and absorb the essence of the "Flavours and Traditions of Oulu- Food Tourism Route in the Capital of North Ostrobothnia" experience.

To enhance accessibility and encourage further exploration, each point of interest featured in the brochure is systematically linked to its corresponding website or Instagram account. This strategic integration ensures that curious visitors can effortlessly investigate further into the offerings of each location, fostering a seamless transition from the brochure to a more in-depth online experience.

The organization of the brochure concentrates information in specific areas throughout Oulu Pikisaaari, Nallikari, Linnansaari, Hupisaari, the Market square and the city center. This design caters to the needs of visitors based on their location, enabling them to swiftly identify nearby attractions and plan their activities accordingly. Whether in a particular district or exploring multiple areas, the brochure serves as a valuable tool for both spontaneous adventures and planned schedules.

## 6.2 Introducing the Destinations

Starting the brochure with **Pikisaari** a historical island in Oulu, Finland, is a blend of maritime heritage and modern conveniences. Accessible via a picturesque bridge, it features cobblestone streets and well-preserved wooden houses. Visitors can explore the city's industrial past through museums and exhibits. Pikisaari's waterfront offers serene contemplation with the Baltic Sea's gentle waves. The island's artisanal shops, cafes, and local eateries showcase its distinctive character, showcasing Oulu's ability to blend its rich heritage with contemporary vitality. (visitoulu sa.a.)

**Merimiehen Kotimuseo/ Sailor's home** is a fascinating homage to the area's marine heritage is the Sailor's Museum. Situated in the heart of Oulu's nautical heritage, the museum is a treasure trove of artifacts and displays detailing the lives and experiences of sailors throughout the years. This real sailor's houses have been expertly reconstructed to immerse guests in the traditions and daily activities of life at sea. Displays of personal belongings, nautical gear, and navigational aids provide a realistic picture of the struggles and victories experienced by sailors. I chose Sailor's

Museum as it invites visitors to engage with the marine legacy that has created the city's character and cuisine. it is an exciting voyage into Oulu's nautical soul. (visitoulu sa.a.)

**Mallassauna brewery** the name "Mallassauna" pays homage to the malt house's rich history, dating back to its origin as part of Pikisaari's brewery and distillery in 1869. Hailuoto is an Organic Brewery, Finland's first organic brewery, nestled in the heart of Hailuoto an island off Oulu. This restaurant gives a cool & contrast vibe from the Oulu themes because it specializes in German-style beers but are crafted from locally grown and malted organic barley. The rustic charm of Mallassauna invites patrons to enjoy live events and explore a small boutique for unique souvenirs. Today, this historic space stands as a testament to the area's brewing heritage, offering a blend of tradition and innovation to a visitor's experience. (visitoulu sa.a.)

**Sokeri-Jussin Kievari-** The "taste of place" (Adamsson & Havas 2020, 27) meal experience is provided by Sokeri-Jussi Tavern, which offers a special fusion of coziness and happiness that leaves a lasting impression. Situated in a beautifully carved log building with historical connections to shipbuilding, the restaurant epitomizes authenticity and profound respect for Finnish heritage. The tavern's legendary past includes its role in Johan Grunström's (known as Sokeri-Jussi) adventures, stemming from a shipbuilding legacy and a steamboat that never sailed the seas. After 20 years of operation, the restaurant is happy to preserve Oulu's culinary heritage by focusing on using local ingredients and keeping traditional recipes in its meals. This is a representation of Oulu's rich culinary history and draws tourists who value the authenticity and tradition reflected in each dish. (visitoulu sa.a.)

I chose to add a few suggested places that could help visitors get more familiar with the area, a cute little **Gazebo Pikisaari huvimaja** that's perfect taking pictures and taking in the beautiful scenery. There is also **The Pateniemi sawmill museum**, situated in an authentic shipyard storage building from the 1850s, offers an intriguing experience into Oulu's industrial history. The museum traces the change from a town known for producing wooden warships to a thriving sawmill community. With the addition of a steam sawmill in 1873, the shipyard, had previously served the Russian army, later changed to accommodate the need for commerce ships. Nearly 120 years of sawmill industry history are captured in the museum, emphasizing the sawmill's importance as an essential core for the local economy and community. (visitoulu sa.a.)

The next area of focus is **Nallikari** area. A coastal haven offering a diverse range of recreational activities and natural beauty. The expansive beachfront area offers leisurely walks, sunbathing, and family picnics. The area also features playgrounds, volleyball courts, and barbecue spots, providing a vibrant atmosphere for relaxation and active pursuits. Sports enthusiasts can enjoy

beach volleyball and frisbee, while walking and cycling paths offer stunning coastal scenery. Nallikari hosts events and festivals, making it a popular destination for nature lovers and visitors. (nallikari sa.a.)

I selected **Ravintola Nallikari** restaurant for its alignment with the "Pure and Natural" theme inspired by Hungry for Finland (Adamsson & Havas 2020, 27). Nestled on the picturesque Nallikari beach, this high-quality Nordic restaurant boasts breathtaking views. Under the culinary guidance of Chef Antti Lindholm, the menus showcase a diverse array of lunch and à la carte options crafted from seasonal cuisine and locally sourced ingredients. Committed to environmental sustainability, the restaurant employs biodegradable products, ensuring a dining experience that not only delights the palate but also aligns with eco-conscious values. **Nallikari bakery and bistro** operated under the same team in Oulu features a bakery and café offering daily breakfast, lunch, and casual bistro dishes, including baked goods and smörrebröds. (nallikari sa.a.)

Built in 1988 above the northern shore, the **Nallikari Observation Tower**, also called the **Nallikari Lighthouse**, is a prominent representation of Oulu's unique character. The tower, designed by NVØ, is a well-known landmark and a popular place to see spectacular sunsets, frozen sea panoramas, stars, and aurora displays. It gives a panoramic view of the sea. The lighthouse is now a year-round attraction that is free to enter and captures the beauty of each season. Nallikari Lighthouse, which is well-known for its stunning landscape, has gained fame around the globe and will even be included as a lockscreen image in Microsoft Windows 10 in 2020. The Nallikari Lighthouse is one of the most photographed spots in Finland. (nallikari sa.a.)

I chose the **Winter Village** for its perfect alignment with the Brave Hinterland theme (Oulu 2026 sa a). Given the northern location, many inhabitants opt to reside in areas where daylight is a scarce commodity during the harsh winter months. Despite the prevailing cold and darkness, the resilient Finnish people embrace the season, engaging in various activities. The Winter Village, a lively and family-friendly destination, offers an array of captivating experiences from February to April. Beyond its vibrant atmosphere, the village provides opportunities to marvel at snow and ice structures, and one can even enjoy a memorable stroll on the frozen Bothnian Sea. the Nallikari Snow Fest and the children's skiing competition are among the highlights at the Nallikari Winter Village, adding excitement to the seasonal festivities. Visitors can partake in complimentary attractions like the hoijakka-sledge, tube carousel, and labyrinth. The onsite café complements the experience by serving a variety of savory foods, along with hot beverages, sausages, waffles, and donuts. (nallikari sa.a.)

I've also added a few gems in the Nallikari area that I'd highly recommend. The picturesque renowned **Nallikari Beach**, boasting one of the most stunning shorelines. To enhance the experience, there's a charming **campsite and rental villas** available, providing a perfect blend of comfort and nature. (nallikari sa.a.)

For those traveling with kids, the **Vauhtipuisto** amusement park adds an extra layer of excitement, ensuring the little ones have a memorable time. Additionally, **Nature trails** weave through the landscape, offering a serene escape and a chance to connect with the natural beauty of the surroundings. This suggested spot in the Nallikari area promises a well-rounded experience, combining beachside tranquility, family-friendly fun, and the allure of scenic nature trails. (visitoulu sa.a.)

Travel from Torinranta across the bridges across the riverbank to bustling, park-like **Linnansaari**, an island on the outskirts of the central city. The Raati Sports Centre and Kuusisaari Event Park are accessible via the island. On the island are the remnants of Oulu Castle and the Tähtitorn summer café. There is a pergola area in the park as well for relaxing. (visitoulu sa.a.)

The **Oulu Castle**, initially constructed in 1590 on the island of Linnansaari, served as a strategic base for King John III's campaign against Russian Karelia. The Linnansaari Star Tower is close to the market and center and welcomes guests to discover history while sipping coffee in the ambiance. After the tower was refinished in 1875, it served as both a summer café and a maritime school that produced more than 200 sea captains. The castle's basement offers an exhibition about its history, and visitors can search for the secret passage leading from Linnansaari to the city center, which has been searched for centuries. The star tower also offers a glimpse into the history of Pikisaari. (visitoulu sa.a.)

**Tähtitornin Kahvila** a summer cultural café, Tähtitorni coffee and summer book shop hosts spiritual sports competitions and other events. It serves as an art gallery as well, with varying shows. The café serves delicious food and coffee, and it is open from May Day until September. Local beers are also offered. The café is dog-friendly and makes its own dog ice cream. The year-round ice cream shop specializes in handmade ice cream. (visitoulu sa.a.)

For anyone who wished to hire bikes or water activities while taking in the scenery, **Lappis Rentals** was suggested.

**Hupisaarten** Visitors are invited to see a winter wonderland blanketed in snow and a summer sanctuary of greenery at Hupisaarten Park. The park offers fun, adventure, and picnics, making it a favorite location for outdoor enthusiasts, culture seekers, and romantics. The "Fun Islands" mobile game sheds light on the legends surrounding the park. Fish that migrate may be seen at the park's

northernmost section, which has Finland's longest fish ladder. Here is the **Oulu sign** perfect for taking pictures for social media and remembering their time in Oulu. I selected The **Hupisaaret fountains** as a destination because one cherished activity among Finnish people is to gather in parks, appreciating the beauty of nature while enjoying a picnic or drinks with friends and family. The goal is to provide foreign visitors with the opportunity to immerse themselves in the relaxing atmosphere and communal spirit of nature. The patio and greenhouses of Ainola Park's **Café Kiikku** provide a relaxing ambiance. For families, the nearby Hupisaari Central Play Park is a great summertime excursion. Kiikku serves a variety of delectable pastries, unique coffees, refreshing beverages, and snacks every day. **Kesäteatteri or summer theater** is a stunning 300-seat wooden structure in the center of nature, the distinctive architecture is based on Janne Lauka, Aino Aras, and Tuomas Niemelä's Arborea. It debuted in 2019 and is the ideal place to enjoy summertime cultural activities and delicious local meals from the restaurant. (visitoulu sa.a.)

**The market square** in Torinranta, with its market hall, historic shed houses, and the Toripolliisi statue, is clearly the living room of the residents of Oulu. Visitors and locals congregate at the market square, where they purchase food from vendors. With quaint cafés and restaurants as well as unique craft, apparel, and interior design stores housed in the former warehouses. (visitoulu sa.a.)

**The Market Hall** is a structure of cultural significance that dates back to 1901. Today, it houses vendors offering a variety of gifts, souvenirs, handicrafts, clothes, and high-quality local food produce. For breakfast, the market hall is a terrific place to be salmon soup is a popular option. Oulu's markets offer a blend of traditional and contemporary products, showcasing the region's rich cultural and culinary heritage. **Outside Market vendors** sell a variety of local dishes, including traditional Finnish fish dishes, and souvenirs related to Finnish culture and craftsmanship. Popular dishes include grilled salmon and potatoes, kalakukko, fish soup, and smoked fish. Souvenirs include handcrafted textiles, wooden items, lappish handicrafts, Finnish design products, and local artwork. These items showcase Finland's woodworking heritage, showcasing the country's rich history. The markets also feature hand-carved wooden items, Sámi handicrafts, modern and minimalist design products, and local artwork, providing a glimpse into Finnish artistic expression. Overall, Oulu's markets provide a unique experience for visitors to appreciate the region's rich cultural heritage. The existence of **Market Square police officers**, who were stationed in Oulu from 1934 until 1979, is a noteworthy feature of the city's police history. An artist named Kaarlo Mikkonen produced a bronze memorial to the officer as a result of citizen funding. A popular setting for pictures, the 2-meter-tall policeman wearing a cap and a Sam Browne belt has come to symbolize Oulu. (visitoulu sa.a.)



I selected **Ravintola Uleåborg** for its commitment to the pure and natural theme (Adamsson & Havas 2020, 27). This exceptional dining establishment seamlessly blends the robust flavors of local Finnish ingredients with a heartfelt passion for French cuisine. It serves as a testament to the Finnish people's embrace of diverse cultures, expertly refining them with a distinctive Finnish flair.

The conclusion of the journey brings you to the heart of Oulu, where **the city center** unfolds with a captivating charm. With its vibrant atmosphere and cultural appeal, the city center, which is filled with life, offers a feast for the senses as well as the taste buds. It's a destination that seamlessly blends gastronomic enjoyment with the vibrant spirit of Oulu's urban life. I decided on **Alfred Kitchen and Bar**, a recently launched restaurant by a Michelin-starred chef from Oulu, driven by its profound commitment to storytelling. Each dish is presented as a narrative, unfolding through the eyes of Alfred. Through a tale spanning the years of Alfred's experiences, the restaurant breathes life into Alfred and brings back to Oulu the valuable lessons he has gathered along the way. **Magnolia Coffee & Bakery** provides delectable sweet and savory goods free of gluten in the lively Pekurin Patio café setting. They use premium local ingredients in the creation of their goods, eliminating white sugar and wheat flour to offer a fulfilling and healthy experience. **ChocoSomina** Features exquisite handmade chocolates that you may enjoy in the café and bring them home to cherish and share your time spent in Oulu.

**Oula Kitchen & Bar** is a Nordic restaurant that embodies its northern heritage by using fresh ingredients like game, reindeer, mushrooms, and wild berries. The restaurant's focus is on high-quality food, a relaxed atmosphere, and hospitable service, reflecting the harmonious atmosphere of the north.

And the last stop, **The Taito Pohjois- Pohjamaa** Shop in Oulu provides high-quality local design, local handicraft products, and materials for enthusiasts, with half of the selection made by Oulu region entrepreneurs. The shop sells the largest assortment of Oulu-themed goods and souvenirs in the city, and all proceeds support Finnish workmanship by encouraging entrepreneurship and craft culture.

I added a "**Good to know page**" at the end. While the following destinations may not have made it onto the primary list, they are nonetheless gems that warrant consideration, I wanted to add if visitors had some extra time or a desire to embark on a scenic drive, or if they were in search of unique accommodations. These destinations offer distinctive charm and the potential for memorable experiences.

**Kierikkikeskus** is a stone age village and archaeological display that provides tourists with a look into the history of the North. It is situated near the Iijoki river and showcases the study of Stone Age villages since the 1960s. (visitoulu sa.a.)

**De Gamals Hem** is a recently restored historic boutique hotel near to Oulu's center, has a rich history. De Gamlas Hem means "Home for the Elderly" in Swedish. Enjoy lunch on the lovely terrace, and at 5 o'clock there is a tea party with a variety of teas and delicious sweet and savory foods! (visitoulu sa.a.)

**Koitelin tunnelmatupa** The area's beauty includes riverbeds, rapids, small islands, shores, and nature. A café serves up refreshments, such as delicious beverages and invigorating pastries like their renowned pancakes made in-house. Additional treats, little salty bites, and ice cream are offered, taking particular diets into account. In addition, self-service roasting food like sausages are offered to anyone who wants to keep warm while sitting in front of the fireplaces. (koitelintunnelmatupa sa.a). **Lomakoti onnela** is a quaint countryside hotel in Haukipudas about 15-minute drive from Oulu (visitoulu sa.a.).

**The Turkansaari Open Air Museum** offers an interactive journey into the past, sustaining Finland's historical countryside setting and stunning natural environment. The museum is preserving a 1694 wooden church. In keeping with the Northern Ostrobothnian tradition, the museum also holds summer work demonstrations, such as tar pit burning, during Midsummer Week.

Every August, worldwide talents gather in Oulu for a passionate competition known as **the Air Guitar World Championships**. Since 1996, the tournament has been a quirky celebration of love and peace. The festival, which has over ten participating nations, not only selects the very best air guitarists in the world but also thrills both returning and new fans with a unique performance and themed festivities. (visitoulu sa.a.)

**Pitojen Helmi Villa Helmi** nestled in the picturesque town of Liminka, the Pietilä estate boasts roots tracing back to the 18th century. In its earlier days, the farm housed a Kestikievari, extending hospitality to passing horsemen with nourishing meals and a shelter for the night. Today, the estate is tended by the seventh generation of the Pietilä family, embodying a rich legacy. Since 1991, the Pietilä farm has seamlessly combined farm tourism and food service operations, inviting visitors to immerse themselves in a tradition that spans generations. (pitojenhelmi sa.a.)

## 7 Conclusions and Discussions

In this chapter, I investigate the intricate process of product creation, conducting a thorough assessment while reflecting on my personal learning journey. Additionally, I present helpful suggestions for enhancing food tourism practices in the future. The last part provides a comprehensive analysis of my developing comprehension and discoveries during the thesis process.

### 7.1 Thesis Process and Product Assessment

The initial phase of my thesis project involved selecting a topic, and I recognize myself as fortunate that my advisor suggested exploring the realm of food routes. Given my longstanding interest in both food and travel, this recommendation resonated with me. The concept of food routes initially caught my attention when I created one during a previous course. As I researched the subject, I realized its seamless alignment with my studies in tourism. My happiness with my chosen topic only grew as I progressed, building a greater enthusiasm for the niche of food tourism and its related routes. I was very excited about the potential of designing a food route for my thesis because I had already created one for a prior course.

The most challenging aspect of the entire thesis process proved to be crafting the theoretical framework. It should be noted that food tourism is still a relatively new idea in Finland, and the majority of the information I used came from *Hungry for Finland* for research in Finland tourism. As I navigated through the project, I unearthed books and online resources, supplementing my understanding with valuable information. It became evident that while food tourism has well-established roots and extensive histories in other countries, obtaining recent theoretical articles specific to Oulu presented a language barrier, as some of the research was conducted in Finnish. Overcoming this obstacle involved utilizing translation assistance.

In constructing the theoretical foundation, I conscientiously incorporated crucial topics. However, in reflection, I acknowledge that a more thorough exploration and better integration of theory with the proposed route could have enhanced the overall depth of my work. The identification of international travelers as a key customer segment resonated with me personally, given my status as a foreigner in Finland. Similarly, connecting with culture enthusiasts and learning seekers (Visit Finland 2023, 2) was a seamless process. Leveraging Visit Finland's recent research on the most popular tourist groups in the country facilitated this alignment, as they had consolidated various segments for clarity (Visit Finland 2023, 2). Writing in English, I recognized, was a strategic choice, not only

for the sake of clarity but also to cater to the international visitors I aimed to engage through my thesis.

I placed a particular emphasis on authenticity, locality, storytelling and culture. To further emphasize authenticity and locality (Tarssanen 2009), I ensured that the majority of the establishments included in the product were locally owned. The restaurant descriptions aimed to vividly portray the diverse array of seasonal and local ingredients, reinforcing the commitment to these values.

Even so, I realized that evaluating authenticity presented difficulties because it was difficult to define in an online context and challenging to measure without actually visiting the chosen location. In my opinion, authenticity is the feeling a tourist gets when they are physically there in the location (Tarssanen 2009).

Managing storytelling and the cultural dimension presented its own set of difficulties. While many companies successfully crafted narratives on their websites, as proved during my non-participant observations, determining the actualization of these stories on the site proved elusive. In response, I made an effort to incorporate cultural aspects and narrative into the itinerary, including stops at museums and other places of nature. The idea was to provide guests a real link to Oulu's rich cultural heritage by giving them a peek of the real Oulu way of life. (Tarssanen 2009).

Utilizing the data collection and analysis methods proved to be a smooth process in my thesis journey. Initially, my plan involved conducting participant observation in Oulu; however, time constraints prompted a shift to non-participant observation using online platforms and social media. Despite the initial intention to save time, the abundance of options in Oulu presented a different challenge—it became a task to choose from the numerous options. The selection process involved sifting through multiple locations, resulting in a sense of the ideal combination for the trail.

I started working on my thesis in late March 2023, and it took me about a month to create the outline. During this time, I also did a thorough study of theory to ensure that I understood the material well. After the thesis outline was approved in the first part of April, the next month was devoted to gathering all the relevant theoretical foundations. By May, I had transitioned to the writing phase, searching for the intricacies of the theory.

The summer pause stretched the last two weeks of June and July, providing a quick break. When work on the route was resumed in September, non-participant observation became the main focus. The months of October and November were devoted to finishing the product and writing. It was a laborious process, and as it was coming to a close, I kept finding new locations and improving the work until it was finished.

The objectives were:

1. Finding destinations that can inspire customers with the food culture of Oulu.
2. Connecting International travelers with an easy “pick and go” food route of destinations to experience Oulu region.
3. Discover destinations that invite customers into their world through storytelling of local products.

By the end, I had managed to put together a list of 21 locations that provided a thorough look into Oulu's rich cultural diversity. Using the online design tool Canva, I dedicated a week to crafting the product (see appendix 3) —an aspect of the process that resonated deeply with my creative traits. I remained committed to the thesis project the entire time I worked on it. But as a mother, I hadn't budgeted for the unpredictable nature of kids becoming sick, which added an unexpected difficulty to the mix. Despite these obstacles, I was able to work through the difficulties and finish the project before the deadline.

My happiness with the food tourism route product is rooted in its achievement of reaching the goals within the constraints of a condensed timeline. The main objective of the thesis was to create a cultural food tourism route in the Oulu area, specifically tailored for international visitors, with a keen focus on culture and learning seekers. I view the route as targeting the international traveler as its primary customer segment. I achieved finding destinations that incorporate and inspire customers with the food culture. The easy-to-use pick-and-go list makes it easier for travelers to independently explore locations and activities was also achieved. I believe I achieved the last sub-objectives as well. I discovered wonderful destinations and products that use storytelling for customers to embrace and cherish the Oulu culture.

Given more time, I envisioned transforming the route into a captivating story, complete with characters and a compelling storyline. However, I am proud of the path I have created within the limitations.

Upon completion of my thesis presentation and following assessment by the thesis coordinator, my goal is to submit this product to Visit Oulu. My hope is that they find it valuable, serving as both a practical resource and an inspiration to develop similar trails in the Oulu area.

## 7.2 Improvements for the Future

During my observation of the product creation process, I identified areas where improvements could enhance the food tourism industry. To address these opportunities, I'd like to propose some development ideas.

Firstly, while many companies have done an admirable job providing English translations on their websites, there's a noticeable gap on social media platforms, where content predominantly remains in Finnish. Given the significant role social media plays in marketing, especially in an international city like Oulu, it would be strategic to incorporate English posts. With a considerable number of visitors during the winter season being from abroad, adopting this approach can leverage social media as a powerful marketing tool. While not everything needs to be in English, diversifying content can encourage greater engagement from international visitors.

Noteworthy examples such as Visit Oulu ([visitoulu.fi](http://visitoulu.fi) s.a.a) and Arctic Food Lab (Oulu 2026, 2022) have excelled in organizing and promoting authentic storytelling within the industry. Storytelling proves to be a memorable means of introducing products, as demonstrated by Alfred Kitchen & Bar and Sokeri- Jussin Kievari ([visitoulu sa.a](http://visitoulu.sa.a)), which have successfully crafted narratives behind their restaurant concepts. These stories, ranging from exclusive to simple descriptions of product origins and ingredient choices, effectively communicate flavors and sustainability aspects. (Pine & Gilmore, 2011.)

Furthermore, active customer participation should be prioritized over merely providing a service. This engagement fosters stronger memories, encouraging visitors to share their experiences when they return home. Offering cooking courses in English or providing authentic handicrafts for tourists to take home adds value and interest, particularly for international visitors. While traditional activities like roasting sausages have their charm, showcasing a broader spectrum of Finnish cooking traditions can enhance the overall experience. (Pine & Gilmore, 2011.)

Organizations like Hungry for Finland have played a crucial role in supporting and motivating companies and areas to enhance food tourism. However, to broaden their impact, providing materials in English would aid foreigners studying in Finland, fostering their integration into the tourism industry. This approach could also facilitate collaboration with travel agencies abroad, helping to market Finnish food tourism more effectively.

Reflecting on the trail I've outlined; I recommend Hungry for Finland consider its potential benefits. Oulu boasts a diverse array of small entrepreneurs and local companies that could be emphasized in future food tourism trails. Encouraging small villages with tourism products to establish an online

presence, especially on social media, could significantly contribute to their visibility. Including hidden treasures along this route, known to only a few, would add an element of discovery for visitors.

I hope Visit Oulu embraces the concept of food tourism trails and explores possibilities for their implementation. Engaging with locals to gather insights and potential trail locations, including smaller villages and nearby cities like Kalajoki and Kuusamo, could enrich the overall experience. While my focus has been on the Oulu region due to distance limitations, expanding the trail to encompass smaller villages and neighboring cities could amplify its impact.

In addition to trails, Oulu could benefit from hosting more food-related events, such as seasonal markets or specialized culinary events. Although I found some events related to food tourism on the Visit Oulu site, further integration of these offerings could attract a broader audience, both domestically and internationally. Including diverse attractions on the Visit Oulu website and leveraging social media for marketing not only benefits individual companies but also leads to industry-wide improvements.

### **7.3 The Learning Assessment of the Author**

Before actively diving into writing my thesis, I took the time to create a plan that would better align with my writing process. Historically, I haven't been a strong planner, so establishing due dates provided a helpful framework to keep me on track. The plan, which involved breaking down the thesis process into manageable parts, facilitated a smoother flow during the writing stages. However, at the outset, my initial December due date allowed for a more leisurely summer break. Come August, the due date was unexpectedly moved up by a month, prompting a rush to meet the new deadline. I had overestimated my skills and time, overlooking potential life circumstances that could impact the plan. Despite these challenges, facing them head-on motivated me to rearrange my actions and work towards the new deadline.

Overall, the process went smoothly, particularly when I collaborated with Hungry for Finland since I had a close relationship with them and I paid attention to their suggestions and demands, which really aided in my ability to receive support. Consistent communication and sharing up-to-date information were crucial elements in this collaboration. Nevertheless, I encountered challenges in managing my time wisely, especially as I ventured into starting a business towards the end of the process. Juggling increased responsibilities made the thesis process somewhat stressful. However, by acknowledging these challenges, being transparent with my supervisor, and leveraging my strengths, I successfully reached my goals.

While reflecting on the process, there are areas that could have been improved. Writing the theoretical part posed challenges in finding information about food tourism in Finland in English, leading to difficulties in sourcing qualitative and useful information. I recognize that better proficiency in Finnish could have facilitated a more in-depth exploration of theories and details.

Regarding the data collection method of non-participant observation, I acknowledge that it could have been complemented by another method, such as participant observations. This additional approach would have provided a more immersive experience and a better understanding of the destinations' quality and reliability. Physical visits could offer more information, insights, and a feel for each place, contributing to enhanced product descriptions. Moreover, being on-site allows for the capture of visuals, including photos and videos.

In assessing the final product, I am content with the outcome. However, I believe there is potential for further development and more entertaining marketing strategies. The food tourism route offers diverse options to explore local food and culture, though I desired to include more small businesses, some of which lacked an online presence, posing a challenge. Despite this limitation, I see the product as a beneficial example for the Hungry for Finland project, serving as a starting point for creating more products in Oulu and the North Ostrobothnia area.



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## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Observation Table



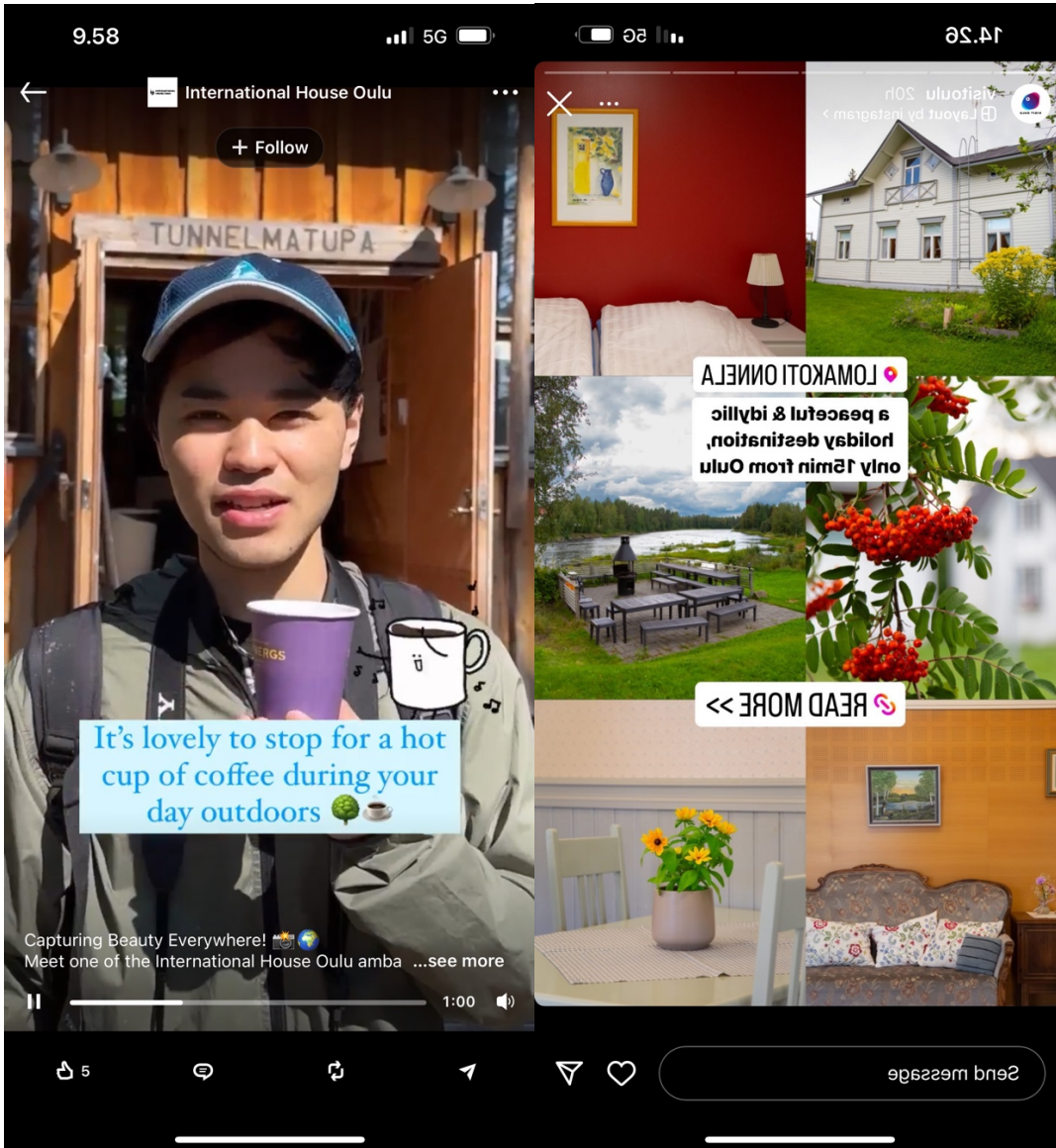
# Flavours and Traditions of Oulu

RESTAURANTS /FOOD PRODUCTS	LOCATION	TARGET GROUP/RELEVANCE	STORYTELLING	INDIVIDUALITY	FINNISH/OULU EXPERIENCE	LOCAL SOURCED	LINKS
Sokeri- Jussin							
Merimeihenkoti museo							
Kierikki stone age center							
Oulun Kauppahalli							
Ravintola uleåborg							
Ravintola Alfred							
Tahtitorninkahvila							
Chocosomnia							
Magnolia bakery							
Pitojen Helmi							
Lomakoti onnela							
TunnelMatupa							
Nallikari							

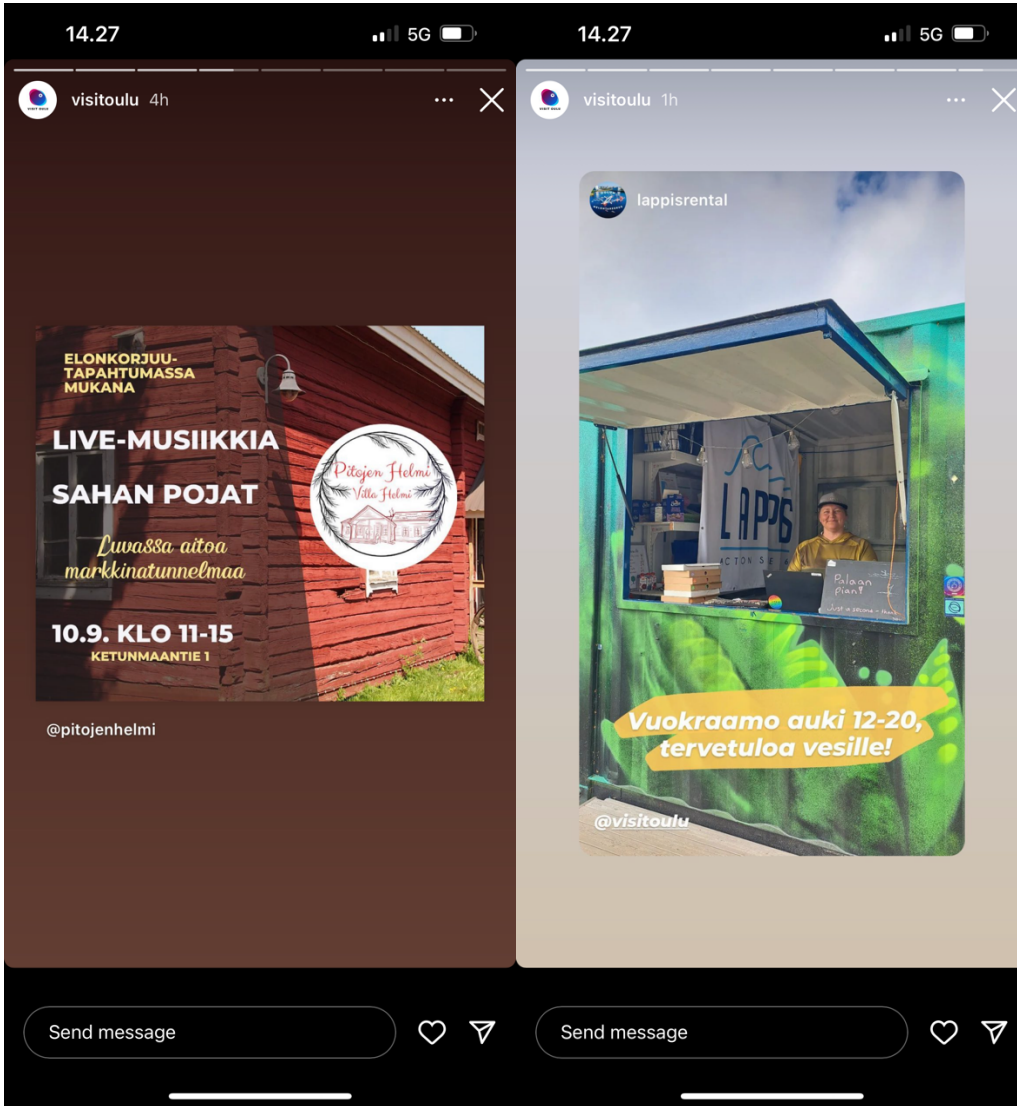
Appendix 2. Screenshots of Non-Participant Observations



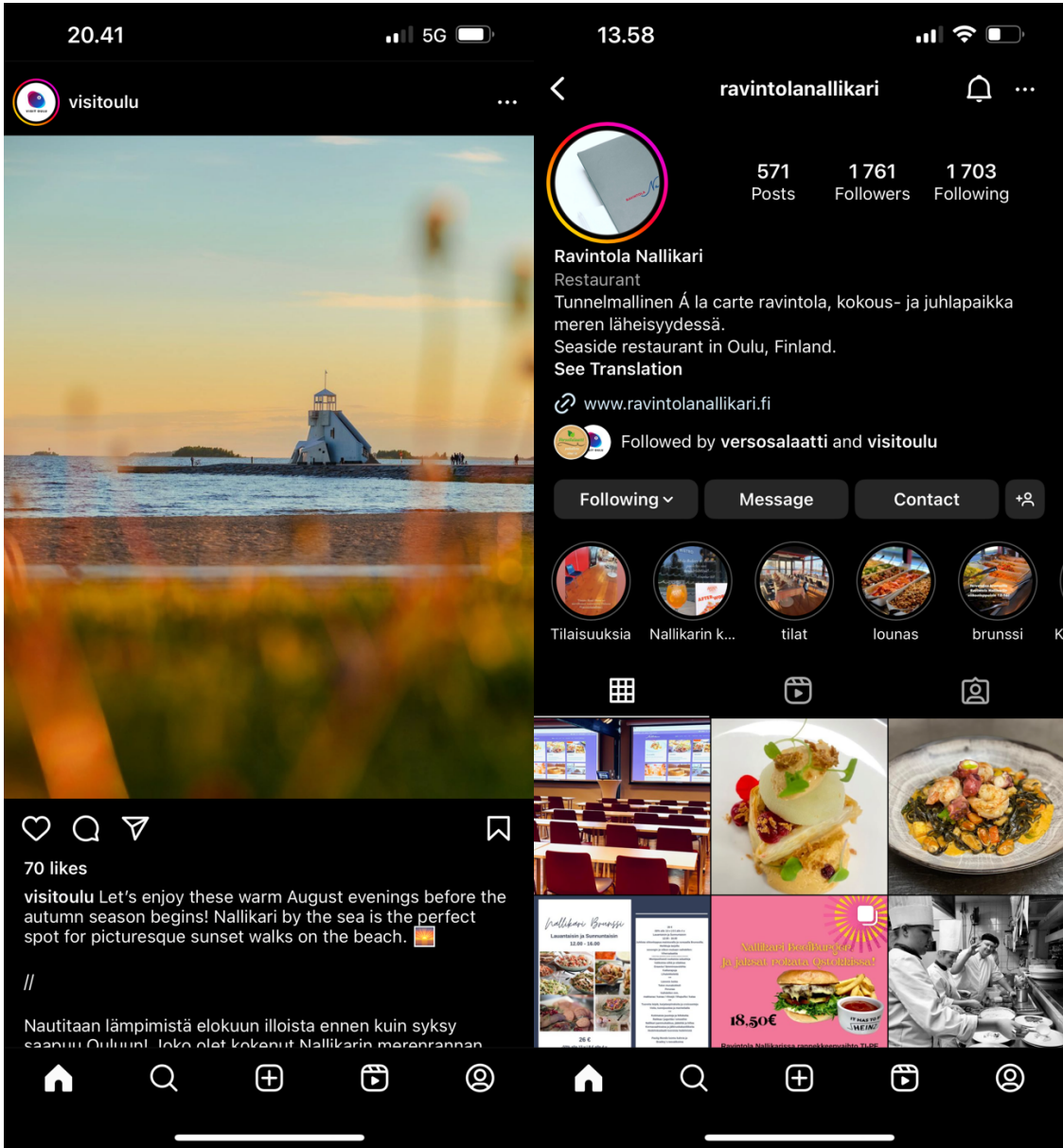
Instagram screenshot from VisitOulu page



Instagram screenshots from visitOulu instagram of Lomktionnела, and tunnelMatpua



Instagram screenshots from visitOulu instagram of Pitojenhelmi, and Lappisrental

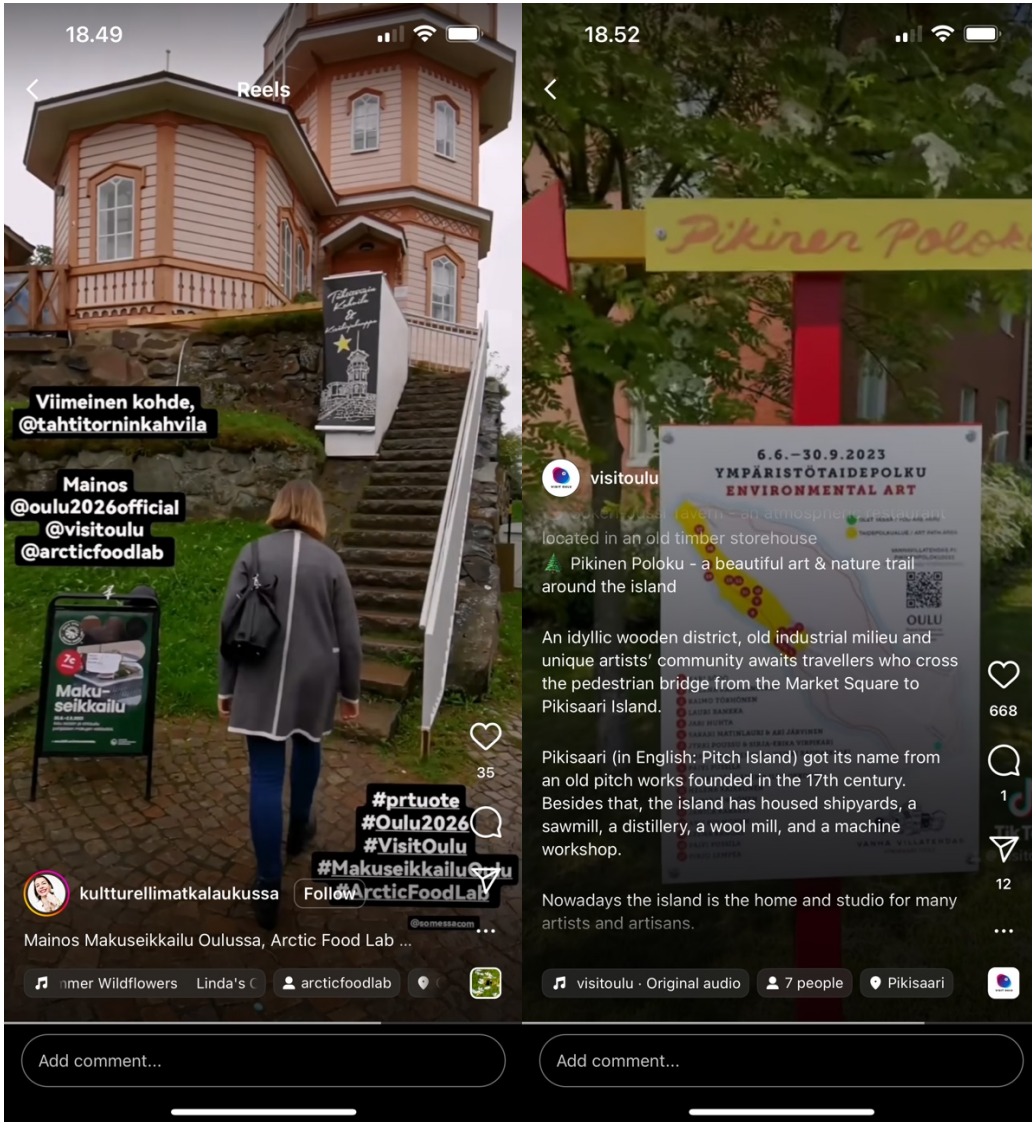


Instagram screenshots from visitOulu instagram of Nallikari lighthouse and Nallikari restaurant

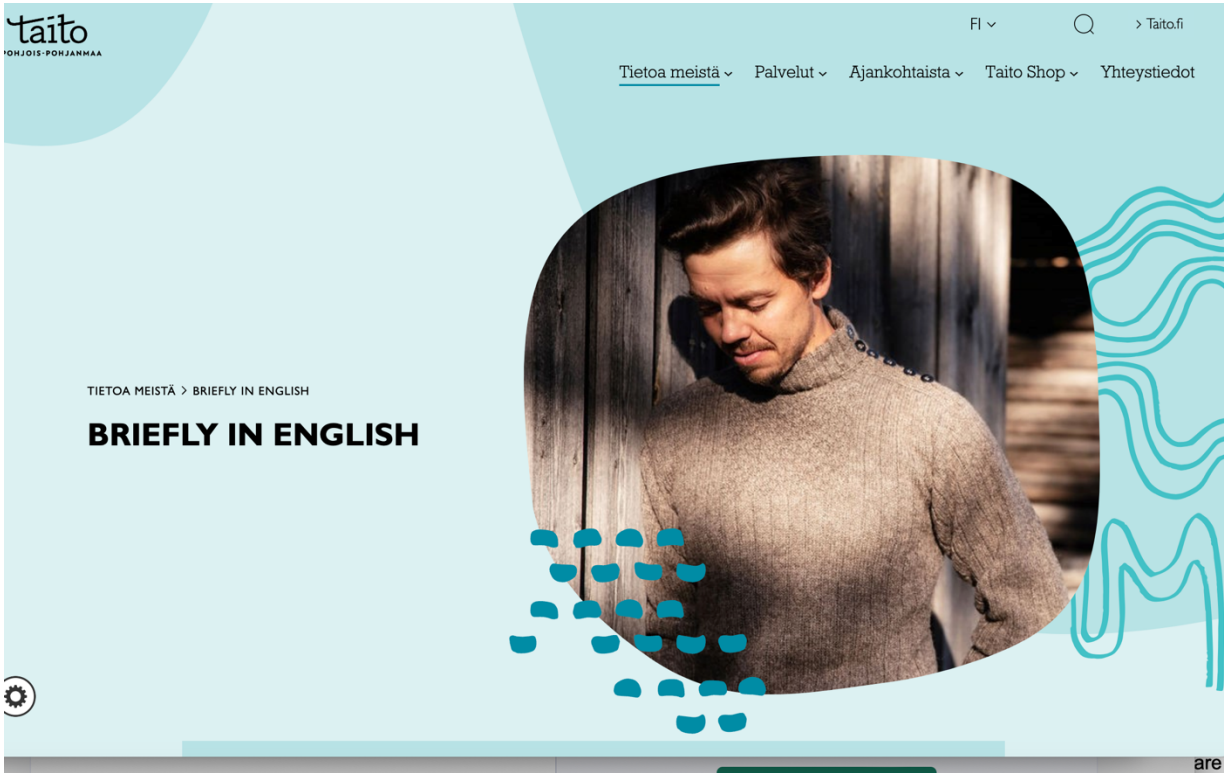




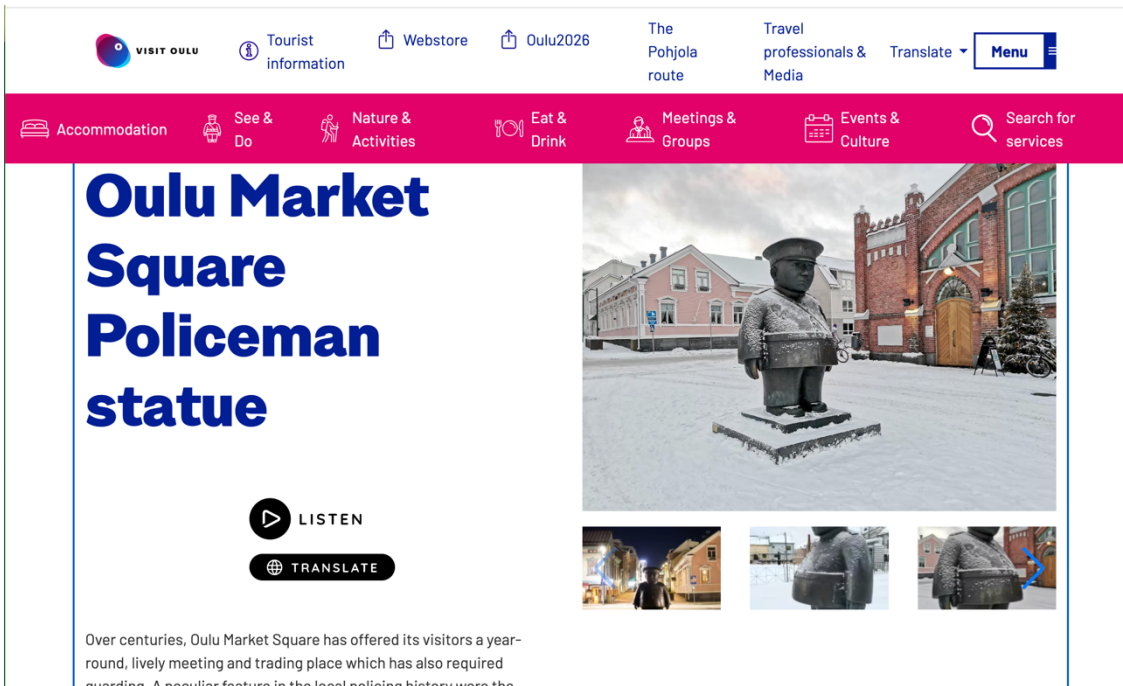
Instagram screenshots from visitOulu instagram of chocosomina and magnolia bakery



Instagram screenshots from visitOulu instagram of Tahitornin Kahvila and Pikisaari.

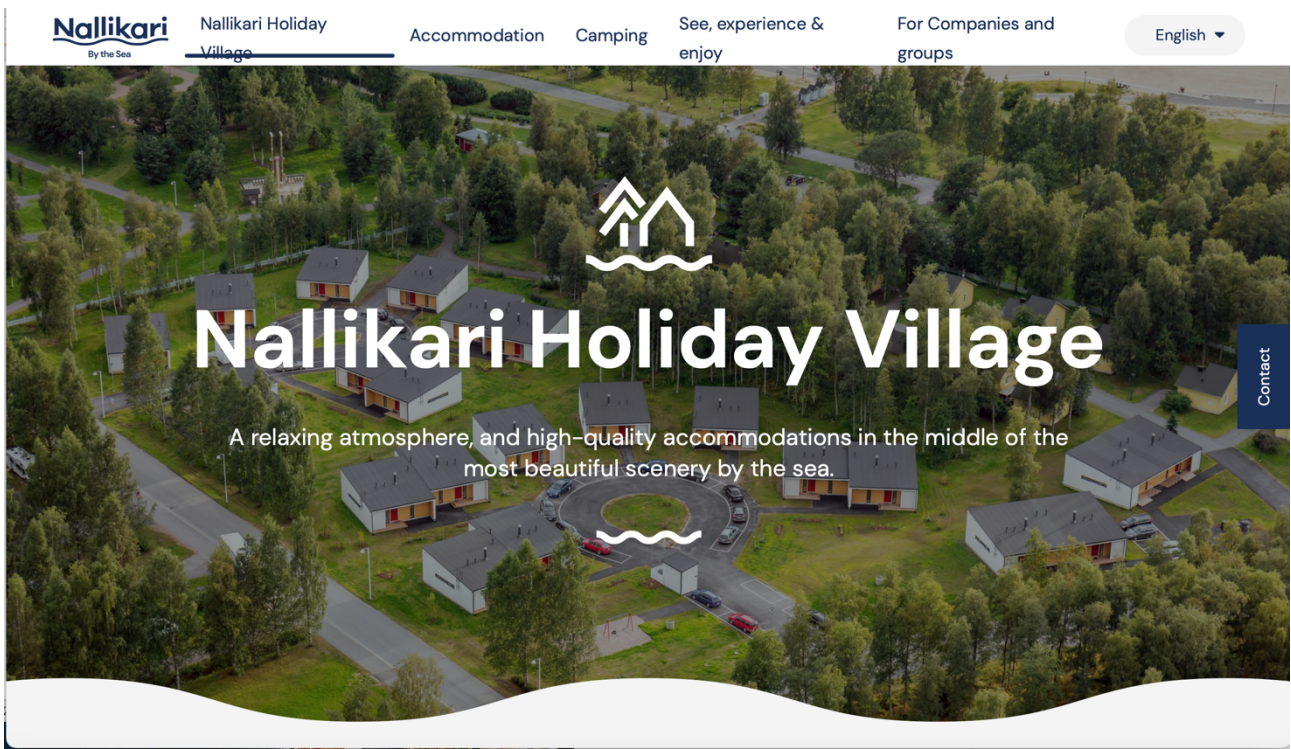


Website screenshot from Taito.fi



Website screenshot from Visitoulu.fi torin police

Website screenshot on Nallikari.fi

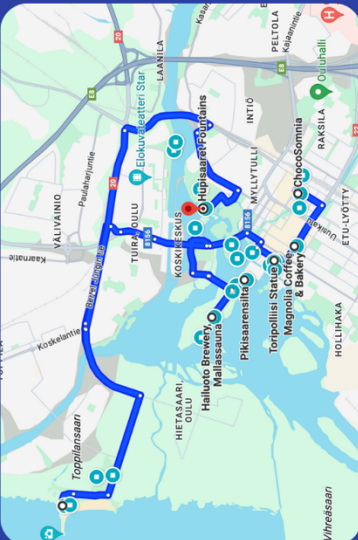


**Appendix 3. Flavours and Traditions of Oulu- Food Tourism Route in the Capital of North Ostrobothnia Brochure**

[https://www.canva.com/design/DAFz558iF5g/NZ48PoFadk99Q-0fOC4Bwg/view?utm\\_content=DAFz558iF5g&utm\\_campaign=designshare&utm\\_medium=link&utm\\_source=editor](https://www.canva.com/design/DAFz558iF5g/NZ48PoFadk99Q-0fOC4Bwg/view?utm_content=DAFz558iF5g&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=editor)

Welcome to Oulu's inviting Food Route! Embark on a gastronomic adventure that transcends borders and invites you to savor the authentic flavors of the city. This carefully created food tourism route invites you to explore Oulu's rich cultural tapestry through its diverse culinary offerings. Each bite tells a story, revealing the vibrant history and innovative spirit of our community. From the charming streets of Pikisaari to the bustling city center, immerse yourself in the fusion of tradition and modernity that defines Oulu. The selected destinations, inspired by themes of Pure and Natural, Taste of Place, and the unique Oulu2026 program, promise an unforgettable exploration of the local cuisine. Join them in celebrating the essence of Oulu through the universal language of food.

**Welcome to Oulu,  
where every dish is  
a chapter in their  
captivating story!"**




**Taryn Maunumäki**  
Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences  
Hungry For Finland  
Product-based Thesis

**FLAVOURS &  
TRADITIONS  
of  
OULU**

**Food route in  
the Capital of  
North  
Ostrobothnia**

**A STEP INTO THE  
WILD**



## Mallasauha Brewery

Mallasauha, a 1869 malt house, the downstairs bar houses 14 taps offering organic beers from Halluuton Brewery and specialties from Oulu breweries. The restaurant has versatile options for meat and vegetarians, complemented by carefully constructed portions to enhance the taste experiences of Halluuton Panimo's beers.

The Sailor's Home Museum, one of the oldest surviving residential buildings offers a glimpse into the life of a typical sailor's family during the early 20th century.

## Merimiehen kotimuseo

# PIKISAARI

Pikisaari, a historical island in Oulu, Finland, is a blend of maritime heritage and modern conveniences. Accessible via a picturesque bridge, it features cobblestone streets and well-preserved wooden houses. Visitors can explore the city's industrial past through museums and exhibits. Pikisaari's waterfront offers serene contemplation with the Baltic Sea's gentle waves. The island's artisanal shops, cafes, and local eateries showcase its distinctive character, showcasing Oulu's ability to blend its rich heritage with contemporary vitality.

## Sokeri-Jussi

Sokeri-Jussi specializes in local food, using fresh, local ingredients and seasonal foods to create a cozy atmosphere. The building's history is also rather intriguing.

## Suggestions:

- Huvimarja- Gazebo
- Pateniemen Sahan Museo- Steam powered saw mill museum

## Winter Village

The Winter Village, a lively and family-friendly destination, offers an array of captivating experiences from February to April. Beyond its vibrant atmosphere, the village provides opportunities to marvel at snow and ice structures, and one can even enjoy a memorable stroll on the frozen Bothnian Sea.

The Nallikari Observation Tower, often called the Nallikari Lighthouse, is a well-known beachside landmark in Oulu that was created by NVØ to represent the distinctive character of the city. It provides a breathtaking view of the ocean, complete with stunning sunsets, the glistening frozen water, and stargazing in the winter months.

## Nallikari Lighthouse

# Nallikari

A coastal haven offering a diverse range of recreational activities and natural beauty. The expansive beachfront area offers leisurely walks, sunbathing, and family picnics. The area also features playgrounds, volleyball courts, and barbecue spots, providing a vibrant atmosphere for relaxation and active pursuits. Sports enthusiasts can enjoy beach volleyball and frisbee, while walking and cycling paths offer stunning coastal scenery. Nallikari hosts events and festivals, making it a popular destination for nature lovers and visitors.

## Ravintola Nallikari

High-quality Nordic restaurant Ravintola Nallikari is located on Nallikari beach. Chef Antti Lindholm's menus include a range of lunch and à la carte options made from seasonal cuisine, and locally sourced ingredients. Nallikari in Oulu features a bakery and café offering daily breakfast, lunch, and casual bistro dishes, including baked goods and smörrebräds.

## Nallikari Bakery & Bistro

## Suggestions:

- Vauhtipuisto
- Nallikari beach
- Nature trails
- Camping accommodations

The Linnansaari Star Tower is close to the market and centre, welcomes guests to discover history while sipping coffee in the ambiance. After the tower was finished in 1875, it served as both a summer café and a maritime school that produced more than 200 sea captains. The castle's basement offers an exhibition about its history, and visitors can search for the secret passage leading from Linnansaari to the city center, which has been searched for centuries. The star tower also offers a glimpse into the history of Pikisaari.

## Oulu castle



## Linnansaari

Travel from Torinranta across the bridges across the river bank to bustling, park-like Linnansaari, an island on the outskirts of the central city. The Raati Sports Centre and Kuusisaari Event Park are accessible via the island. On the island are the remnants of Oulu Castle and the Tähtitorn summer café. There is a pergola area in the park as well for relaxing.



## Tähtitornin kahvila



A summer cultural café, Tähtitorni coffee and summer book shop hosts spiritual sports competitions and other events. It serves as an art gallery as well, with varying shows. The café serves delicious food and coffee, and it is open from May Day until September. Local beers are also offered. The café is dog-friendly and makes its own well-baked dog ice cream. The all-weather ice cream shop specialises in handmade ice cream.

## Suggestions:

- Lappis Rental







Remember to take a picture with the Oulu sign!

Oulu sign

A stunning 300-seat wooden structure in the center of nature, the distinctive architecture is based on Janne Lauka, Aino Aras, and Tuomas Niemelä's Arborea. It debuted in 2019 and is the ideal place to enjoy summertime cultural activities and delicious local meals from the restaurant.

Summer theater



## Huppisaarten

Visitors are invited to see a winter wonderland blanketed in snow and a summer sanctuary of greenery at Huppisaarten Park. The park offers fun, adventure, and picnics, making it a favorite location for outdoor enthusiasts, culture seekers, and romantics. The "Fun Islands" mobile game sheds light on the legends surrounding the park. Fish that migrate may be seen at the park's northernmost section, which has Finland's longest fish ladder.



The fountains

To enjoy the fountains like a Finn, pick up some fruit or pack a picnic lunch from the market square and join your friends and family in the park to relax.

The patio and greenhouses of Ainola Park's Café Kiikku provide a relaxing ambiance. For families, the nearby Hupisaari Central Play Park is a great summertime excursion. Kiikku serves a variety of delectable pastries, unique coffees, refreshing beverages, and snacks every day.



Kahvila Kiikku

**Ravintola Uleåborg**

Exquisite dining experience combining the strength of Finnish ingredients with a passion for French cuisine

The Market Hall in Oulu, is a structure of cultural significance that dates back to 1901. Today, it houses vendors offering a variety of gifts, souvenirs, handicrafts, clothes, and high-quality local food produce. For breakfast, the market hall is a terrific place to be; salmon soup is a popular option.

**Market Hall**



# Market Square

The market square in Torinranta, with its market hall, historic shed houses, and the Toripolliisi statue, is clearly the living room of the residents of Oulu. Visitors and locals congregate at the market square, where they purchase food from vendors. With quaint cafés and restaurants as well as unique craft, apparel, and interior design stores housed in the former warehouses.



**Market vendors**

You can find a variety of local dishes, including traditional Finnish fish dishes, and souvenirs related to Finnish culture and craftsmanship. Popular dishes include grilled salmon and potatoes, kalakukko, fish soup, and smoked fish.

Take a selfie or didn't come to Oulu !!

Torni police statue was modled after real patrol officers during the middle 1900s

**Toripolliisi**





**Magnolia Coffee & Bakery**

Oulu's Magnolia Coffee & Bakery provides delectable sweet and savoury goods free of gluten in the lively Pekurin Patio café setting. They use premium ingredients in the creation of their goods, eliminating white sugar and wheat flour to offer a fulfilling and healthy experience.

**ChocoSomina Features exquisite handmade chocolates that you may enjoy in the café and bring them home to cherish and share your time spent in Oulu.**



**ChocoSomina**

## City Center

The Taito Shop in Oulu provides high-quality local design, local handcraft products, and materials for enthusiasts, with half of the selection made by Oulu region entrepreneurs. The shop sells the largest assortment of Oulu-themed goods and souvenirs in the city, and all proceeds support Finnish workmanship by encouraging entrepreneurship and craft culture.



**Taito Pohois-Pohjanmaa**



A Michelin-starred chef from Oulu opens a new restaurant. In a tale narrated throughout the years that Alfred has lived, he restores Alfred to life and returns to Oulu with the lessons he has learnt.

**Alfred Kitchen & Bar**

Oula Kitchen & Bar is a Nordic restaurant that embodies its northern heritage by using fresh ingredients like game, reindeer, mushrooms, and wild berries. The restaurant's focus is on high-quality food, a relaxed atmosphere, and hospitable service, reflecting the harmonious atmosphere of the north.

**Oula Kitchen & Bar**



### Lomakoti Onnela

A quaint hotel in Haukipudas about 15 minutes drive from Oulu

The area's beauty includes riverbeds, rapids, small islands, shores, and nature. A café serves up refreshments, such as delicious beverages and invigorating pastries like their renowned pancakes made in-house. Additional treats, little salty bites, and ice cream are offered, taking particular diets into account. In addition, self-cooking foods are offered to anyone who wants to keep warm while sitting in front of the fireplaces.



### tunnelmatupa

## Good to know places

While the following destinations may not have made it onto the primary list, they are nonetheless gems that warrant consideration, especially if you find yourself with some extra time on your hands, a desire to embark on a scenic drive, or if you're in search of unique accommodations. These locations might not be the most widely recognized, but they offer distinctive charm and the potential for memorable experiences. So, if you're open to extending your journey and delving deeper into the allure of small towns, these places are well worth exploring.

### Even more:

- Air guitar championship
- Turkansaari open air museo
- Pitojen Helmi Villa Helmi
- Kesan sauna
- Vihiluodon torppa

### Stone Age Museum

Kierikkikeskus is a stone age village and archaeological display that provides tourists with a look into the history of the North. It is situated near the Iijoki river and showcases the study of Stone Age villages since the 1960s.

A recently restored historic boutique hotel near to Oulu's center, has a rich history. De Gamlas Hem means "Home for the Elderly" in Swedish. Enjoy lunch on the lovely terrace, and at 5 o'clock there is a tea party with a variety of teas and delicious sweet and savory foods!



### Dem Gamlas Hem