

CROSS-COUNTRY – SKIING WITH FEELING

Cross-country skiing is somewhat of a national sport in Finland. It is suitable for everybody and extremely good for the body and mind, with beautiful winter scenery serving as an inspiring backdrop.

Cross-country skiing is part of Finnish culture, and nearly every Finn learns it right after taking their first steps.

Decades ago, it was an important means of transport in the winter, and skiing across forests and lakes on the way to work or school was commonplace. In smaller communities, kids still ski to school when there's snow on the ground.

EASY ACCESS

Even today, cross-country is accessible all over Finland. All municipalities, from the Helsinki metropolitan area to the remote villages of Nuorgam and Kilpisjärvi in Northern Lapland maintain a network of skiing tracks, many of them lit.



Finland's most comprehensive network of tracks, a staggering 330 kilometres, circles the Ylläs ski resort and is accessible within a couple of minutes' walk from all accommodation. In Helsinki, tracks around the metropolitan area are accessible by local transport.

HIRE GEAR AND GET YOUR SKI ON

Learning cross-country skiing is fairly easy at any age. Basic equipment can be hired from ski resorts, safari companies, sports shops and even hotels.

At first, try walking with your skis strapped on – that'll give you a feel of how to handle your skis. Then move on to gliding short distances. If hesitant, hire an instructor or get an experienced skier to show you the ropes.



A LONG SEASON

In Southern Finland, the skiing season lasts about five months. In Lapland, the season is up to seven or eight months long.

As soon as first snow falls at the end of the year, the most enthusiastic skiers head to tracks to practise their favourite sport. Others ski simply for the joy of being outdoors, and opt to wait for the spring and sunny weather.

Combining a ski tour with a picnic, or even a bit of ice fishing, is commonplace. Hot drink in a thermos bottle is a must, unless skiing on the most popular tracks, where breaks at outdoor cafés are an essential part of the tour.