

# Principles of seal-friendly tourism in Saimaa area

As a Saimaa ringed seal tourism operator, we hereby pledge to observe good practices during our seal watching excursions and other activities. We understand that the deliberate disturbance of all protected animals is prohibited by law.

## CUSTOMER ORIENTATION

We will increase our customers' knowledge and understanding of the Saimaa ringed seal and foster a positive attitude towards protection of the species:

- We will demonstrate and explain the seal-friendly tourism principles presented here.
- We will provide basic information on the ecology of the Saimaa ringed seal by season.
- We will explain why the Saimaa ringed seal is an endangered species, how it is protected and how the customer can support this protection through their own actions.





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### ACTIVITIES DURING THE OPEN WATER PERIOD

- The goal for moulting season is to enable seals to remain on rocks and not feel any pressure to escape into the water.
- If a seal is in the water, we will observe it with binoculars and let it go about its own business without disturbing it.
- We will always maintain a sufficient distance from the seals and use binoculars when observing them.
- We will go over the ethical principles of seal watching and image sharing together with our customers. The exact locations where seals are observed must not be described in social media, among others.
- We will take the seal into account and be able to respond to its behaviour. We will never approach a seal basking on a rock directly - we will instead go around it so that the seal will not feel threatened by the approaching boat. We will not make any unnecessary stops or leave a wake in order to ensure that the seal will not dive into the water. When a seal lifts its head, this means that it has noticed the approach and is observing the situation. If it dips its head and whiskers in the water, this means that it feels threatened and is preparing to dive into the water. If this happens, we will immediately and calmly leave the area.
- We will only make seal watching excursions under the direction of an educated and experienced guide. We will familiarise ourselves with the behaviour of the Saimaa ringed seal and compliance with these principles.
- We only use seal-safe fishing methods in our tourism service activities.

### ACTIVITIES DURING BREEDING SEASON, EARLY SPRING

- We will avoid moving about on island shorelines and near the tips of peninsulas and on islets where snowdrifts have formed, going as far around the drifts as possible.
- We will keep dogs on a leash and we will not let them dig in shoreline snowdrifts.
- If we see a Saimaa ringed seal on the ice, we will observe it from a distance and we will not frighten it, forcing it to dive into the water.

### CO-OPERATION WITH METSÄHALLITUS AND CENTRE FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TRANSPORT AND THE ENVIRONMENT (ELY-CENTRE)

- We will notify Metsähallitus, Parks & Wildlife Finland, of any dead seals and seals in poor condition that we find.
- We will inform our customers of any fishing and moving restrictions and comply with them.
- We will provide our customers with information on the Saimaa ringed seal, its behaviour and protection methods.
- We will not inform any third party of any known seal resting or breeding sites without the permission of the authorities.

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