

Finnish Lapland: Santa Claus, Arctic Nature and Snow Are Hits of the North

The biggest Finnish film animation "**Niko - The Way to the Stars**" is a film about a reindeer boy called Niko. Niko believes his father is one of the world famous heroes of the Santa's Flying Forces. **Rovaniemi** has been part of the movie as a city famous for its reindeer and as a hometown of Santa Claus.

Niko the movie, being launched last year and sold to more than 100 countries and has won several prizes internationally, gives all the possibilities to boost tourism to Rovaniemi and Finnish Lapland as a whole. It portrays the most beautiful Lappish scenery, pure nature, shining-white snow and the relationship between the animals represented in the nature.

Annual Reindeer City Race in March shows the speed of the best reindeer champions represented, and it is to be followed by incentive travellers as well as media gathering to the city square of Rovaniemi. The amazing atmosphere of the happening gives space to the reindeer herding as a way of living and reindeer as a symbol of Lapland, especially Rovaniemi.

The logo of Rovaniemi emphasizes the meaning of reindeer husbandry for the city's most well kept secret and a fairytale, the myth on Santa Claus.



The Santa Claus Village, situated right at the Arctic Circle in Rovaniemi, has inspired several documentary and travel film-makers to make their versions of the beloved character. Christmas is the theme also for another recent film that has its setting in Finnish Lapland. **The Christmas Story** is a picturesque fairy tale about Father Christmas - of how Santa became Santa. It is a touching story of a little boy, Nikolas, who loses his family in an accident but finds love and care in the villagers who decide to look after him together.

Once a year - at Christmas - Nikolas moves to a new home. To show his gratitude, Nikolas decides to make toys for the children of the families as good-bye presents. Over the years, Nikolas' former adoptive families become many, and soon almost every house in the village has presents at their

doorstep on Christmas morning. At the age of thirteen Nikolas is sent to live and work with Iisakki, a grumpy old carpenter, who forbids Nikolas to continue making presents for Christmas. Gradually, however, Nikolas and Iisakki become friends and together they begin to look after the Christmas tradition that Nikolas has started. When the aged Iisakki has to leave Nikolas and move away, the tradition of Christmas presents is once again at risk. Thankfully, Nikolas comes up with a solution that brings children joy every Christmas, even continuing today. The sceneries of the film attract tens of thousands of national and international tourists to Finnish Lapland to come and visit the home land of Santa and to experience the magic of the Arctic nature.

“Films such as Niko and The Christmas Story are great to Lapland’s tourism industry, and we take pride to offer as authentic experience as possible to guests who come to visit Lapland following the footsteps of the characters seen in those films”, Ms Katja Eteläinen, Marketing and Communications Manager of the City of Rovaniemi, says. “There is great potential in developing more e.g. experience-based products as well as others that are born from those films”, she continues.

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mission was founded last year to attract more film productions to the area. “It has been such a pleasure to see the enthusiasm of the local travel sector as they have come to realize what a great boost film industry can bring to the local economy” says Johanna Karppinen, Project Manager of the Finnish Lapland Film Commission. “Since the beginning of our activity, we have had two international feature films and several documentaries, tv-series and other productions coming to film in the area and prospects for the end of the year look promising. Our setting, the unique outdoor studio that we have here in Lapland is being much appreciated by filmmakers, and the fact that makes our region even more attractive is the strong infra around it. You can fly direct to an arctic landscape virtually in the middle of nowhere but still find high quality accommodation. This is naturally an aspect appreciated by both film-makers and tourists who come to visit the sceneries of the films”, she continues.

Photo: Finnish Lapland Film Commission, Visit Rovaniemi

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