



# NEST

Northern Environment for Sustainable Tourism  
Tourism@Vatnajökull



## The NEST Project's Business Potential

The NEST project is a multi-national cooperation project sponsored by the European Union under the Interreg IIIB Northern Periphery Programme during the period of 2005 till end of year 2007. At present there are four participating countries, Iceland (Lead Partner), Scotland, Sweden and Finland and, it is expected that Greenland will enter the partnership later this year. The project consists of four main themes and, each country is responsible for one of the themes including organizing a conference and workshop on its theme.

A detailed action plan, including business potential that the NEST project will create in each participating country, is now being undertaken. In general, the NEST project will produce welfare and business opportunities for the participating northern periphery regions in four themes and practical actions under them. The international partners will produce innovations and business models and learn from each others. The international marketing of partner sites will create better demand of the tourism products.

The project is aimed to support employment, enterprises and social welfare by local people and enterprises living or acting on the Northern rural periphery. Project results will impact several hundred thousand tourists in four northern countries. The NEST projects will further strengthen the activities and networks of the potential new type rural developing centres, like visitor and education centres, in or nearby national parks and other protected areas. The project's action plan includes the following four themes supporting business development:

**Theme 1 - Networking** (*Scotland responsible partner*) which will create more visibility, save costs in marketing and give opportunity for cooperation for small scale enterprises. Networking will support the change of innovation between NEST project partner societies. Networking and increased knowledge will in the long run stimulate new jobs and wealth creating opportunities that are of considerable value when focusing on increased interest in the peripheral areas. Collaborative working is moreover increasingly seen not just as desirable but critical for business survival. A key objective for the network theme is to *sustain* the competitiveness of the tourist industry. Hence a successful NEST project, simply will allow tourism businesses in peripheral regions to compete at the same level as more populated and central regions.

**Theme 2 - Business opportunities** (*Finland responsible partner*) which include new innovative ideas for higher business profile in connection with protected areas and visitors and cultural centres. Opportunities for collaborative business to business developments across and between businesses in each participating area, as well as between partner areas will be encouraged during the project and facilitated through the four transnational workshops. Protected areas will create favourable environment for marketing on nature experiments and nature or culture based services to tourists.

*Visitor/cultural centres* will introduce a more business oriented platform for local products and services. New innovative "park and protected nature" related products will be developed as well as new models for organisations for business oriented cooperation between different interest groups that also will be developed, tested and reported.

*Winter Tours Packages* to the area will be developed under the NEST project. The main attraction will be the *Northern Lights* which are extremely beautiful in this area during winters. The Darkness, the Silence, the Cold, the Serenity and the magnificent Glacier will be marketed as unique experience during winter time. Ice skating, reindeer observation, glacier excursions and various other winter - related activities and experience will also be developed in conjunction with the winter tour packages.

***Theme 3 - Sustainable tourism management and quality marketing (Sweden responsible)*** which will provide research results for appraising and planning sustainable tourism. The researches will provide transferable models as well as encourage new tourism activities to be constructed in a sustainable way, such as international educational *geo-trails*. Quality oriented development will produce and test models for resort oriented certification. A feedback from customers will be collected and analysed to better understand the effectiveness and real demand for the quality oriented and environmentally responsible tourism services. The Project will produce a new type development model concerning the cooperation of protected areas and the local society producing more opportunities for local businesses and gaining more social capital.

***Theme 4 - Nature school establishment (Iceland responsible).* Environmental education in connection with nature tourism resort development will increase the supply and demand of nature oriented contents for ecotourism. Nature schools demand considerable supporting services such as accommodation, transportation, guidance and social programs outside the educational program giving business opportunities to locals.**

Hence, to the zenith point the NEST project can not be strictly definitive on the 'business potential' it will directly deliver in all participating countries, but it is certain that it 'creates the conditions' for businesses to improve and increase their business potential.

The partnership of the four participating countries increases the potentiality of having the project product made into a useful transferable model. The additional knowledge will stimulate new potential job opportunities and it would be of considerable value by focusing on how to increase the interest in the area by young people and new families.

The cooperation of these sparse populated areas involves added social capital to each partner. The products of the NEST-project furthermore raise the public awareness towards the Northern Periphery parks and protected areas as interesting and valuable destinations for nature and culture based tourism.

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