



EKKERØY HOLIDAYHOUSE: PROVIDING GUESTS WITH A GPS SELF-GUIDING SYSTEM TO TRACK BIRDS

The Norwegian tourism business Ekkerøy Holidayhouse rents a GPS navigator that allows its guests to find points of interest and discover natural habitats.

The Company

Ekkerøy Holidayhouse is an eco-tourism business located in the Varanger area, close to the arctic zone, in eastern Finnmark, Norway. The guesthouse has been open since 2001 and is composed of two flats and a house that can accommodate up to 16 people. It is run mainly by its owner, the journalist and writer Ingjerd Tjelle. The location is excellent for bird watching, since Ekkerøy has the richest diversity of birds in Norway.

The Challenge

Tourists hoping to have the chance to observe birds in their natural habitat are often disappointed by the difficulty of identifying the fauna in an unknown region. Varanger has a large variety of bird species but little information is available on the species themselves and the places and periods in which they are most likely to be seen. Moreover, tourists going around the territory to find birds run the risk of getting lost in unfamiliar environments or damaging the natural habitats in which such animals live.

The Satellite Solution

Inspired by the experience of another firm organising nature trips in Norway, which mapped Norwegian fauna on the territory, Ekkerøy Holidayhouse decided to experiment a GPS self-guiding system allowing the tracking of birds in the area surrounding the

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guesthouse. The system consists of a GPS navigator with pre-programmed points of interest, each of them accompanied by an information folder/book describing in detail the birds that are likely to be found there and the best strategies to spot and observe them. The points of interest are rated according to the number of species and their quantity, for the users to decide how to plan their stay in Ekkerøy. The system was first offered to the guesthouse customers for free, so as to test its accuracy and usefulness and since the beginning of 2011 it is rented to the guesthouse customers who wish to use it during excursions.

The Results

Ekkerøy Holidayhouse is offering a unique service, thus attracting more and more birdwatchers. The system is considered easy to use and allows birdwatchers to make the best of their stay. It prevents guests from getting lost during excursions or disturbing the environment by leading them directly to the locations where birds are. Even though it is early days yet to quantify the economical advantages of the system, the guesthouse has already experienced an increase in the number of its customers since January 2011. Moreover, Ekkerøy Holidayhouse has acquired a better and well-known reputation as the perfect destination for birdwatchers and nature lovers.

Eco-friendly tourism



“The bird watching system allows us to offer a unique service to our customers, making us different to any other tourist firm and more popular as our customers share their experience with other birdwatchers.”

Ingjerd Tjelle, Ekkerøy Holidayhouse

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