

A wide-angle photograph of the Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights) over a snowy forest. The sky is dark, and the aurora displays vibrant green and white light patterns. The foreground shows a snow-covered field with a line of evergreen trees in the distance.

The story of Luxury Action

Writer: Tim Bird, an English journalist, travel writer and award-winning photographer who has lived in Helsinki, Finland since 1982. Tim contributes regularly to the inflight magazine of Finnair, Blue Wings, as well as numerous other magazines and websites. His work has been published in Finland and the Nordic region, the UK and the USA, for example, and he has written a number of books about Helsinki, Finland and the Baltic region.

Bringing joy to the customer

Warm hearts, enthusiasm and attention to details: these are at the core of Luxury Action, according to its founder Janne Honkanen.

Entrepreneurship runs in my blood, says Janne Honkanen, CEO and founder of Luxury Action, Finland's most exclusive agency for bespoke luxury travel. Honkanen claims that he has inherited the business spirit of his father whose own impressive history includes an influential presence in the forest product chemicals business. "I wanted to be with my dad, help him at meetings and so on, and he guided me in the early years. Business has highs and lows, but my father showed me that nothing teaches as well as experience."

An interest in snowmobile racing brought out the entrepreneurial spirit in Honkanen in his youth as he started to make calls and put out feelers for sponsorship. "I started to find out I'm good at sales," he says. "I had a dream to be a pro snowmobile racer, although back then I was studying to be a carpenter. I passed my exams and attended the Polytechnic Institute at Rovaniemi, the capital of Finnish Lapland on the Arctic Circle and my home town."

His prowess as a snowmobile racer attracted attention from the USA, and his early dream came true when he was invited to the States as a pro driver for Arctic Cat. Serious crash injuries cut short that career in Minneapolis in 1999 and he returned to Finland for surgery.

"I had been lucky enough to meet some great people and start making excellent contacts and I was also able to learn English at that time in the USA," he says. "But during my medical treatment another potentially fatal illness was discovered and it became clear that I wouldn't be able to go back to racing. Obviously I suffered from depression then, but it also dawned on me quite clearly that two things matter most in life - family and good health."



A turning point

The illness, which happily did not develop as it could have done, was a moment of revelation and a turning point for Honkanen, opening a new phase in his life. "In the US I had been introduced to mini-snowmobiling and I started a school for kids at the Santa Claus Village in Rovaniemi later in 1999.

I began teaching kids and developed good relationships with their families and soon more affluent families were asking me to make arrangements for their children."

This period, he says, was the start of Luxury Action, and other projects also materialized, providing valuable entrepreneurial experience. "I opened a chocolate shop and two ice cream shops, as well as a scooter rental business in the Finnish capital, Helsinki. I started learning more languages. As my Grandmother used to say, if you don't understand someone you should make an effort to understand him or her. I learned Spanish and Italian as well as some French and Russian, and this helped me to understand different cultures." This has become a crucial asset in dealing with the cultural spectrum of Luxury Action's clients. Honkanen's father began to manage the mini-snowmobile company at the Santa Claus Village, a position he still holds at what is the longest established business there.

"My own focus fell more and more on exclusive and bespoke tourism. Over the years the people I have met have given me the chance to rent their very special and exclusive houses, for example. These locations bring a lot of happiness to our guests, and I get a lot of joy when I see people happy. I want to share that. I work around the clock but I try to live a healthy lifestyle - that's important."



Image, style – and substance

Honkanen enjoys the challenges of maintaining the highest standards for his VIP customers and guests. “It really is challenging to achieve reliability, as well as to continue attracting the level of clients that we have. We have been successful so far. Image and style are important, but they would be nothing without the substance of Luxury Action. Customers are looking for more and more customized travel services, and we’ve taken it to a new level.”

He pays tribute to his hard-working and loyal colleagues who understand the meaning of exclusive travel and for whom no customer request or preference is too much trouble.

“Our staff and our network of partners depends entirely on people with passion, warmth and with their hearts in their own roles, whether they are property owners, snowmobile operators, reindeer farmers, handicrafts experts, or husky-sled drivers. We will never say ‘No’ to a client, but always stop and think about how we can satisfy their wishes.”

Enthusiasm, attention to detail, and a warm and willing heart – these are absolutely key words for Luxury Action.

