



12 DAYS

BLUE FINLAND – EXPERIENCE A LAND OF WATER THE BALTIC SEA, FINNISH LAKE LAND AND WILD WHITE WATERS

DAY 1

Helsinki, the capital of Finland



The Finnish capital Helsinki is a modern city with over half a million residents. Helsinki offers lots to see, do and experience for visitors of all ages.

Accommodation: Hotels, campsites and hostels in Helsinki www.visithelsinki.fi

DAY 2

1 2 3 Vallisaari — fortifications overlooking the Baltic Sea

The islands of Vallisaari and Kuninkaansaari, near the famous island fortress of Suomenlinna, are enchanting destinations for outings, just 20 minutes by boat from Helsinki's Market Square. The two islands have served as home and workplace for hundreds of people and military personnel, but are nowday known as a unique nature paradise. The islands have a wider range of flora and fauna than anywhere else in the metropolitan area, including many bat species, badgers, and lush woodlands teeming with birdlife. A regular waterbus service from the Market Square to Vallisaari runs between May and September.



After your day trip to Vallisaari drive east from Helsinki to the town of Kouvola. On your way, you might stop at Finland's oldest arboretum at Mustila to admire its famous rhododendrons and a total of 250 tree species.



Activities:

Helsinki Vallisaari island: The Alexander Tour (3 km) and the Kuninkaansaari Island Tour (2.5 km) take you safely to the islands' picnic sites and high spots where you can admire magnificent sea views. Guided tours

and other thematic activities take visitors back in time to days of old. At the same time you can learn all about the islands' historical and natural features.

www.nationalparks.fi/vallisaari/services

Kouvola and Mustila: For more information and other interesting local destinations see

www.visitkouvola.fi/en

Accommodation: Hotels, campsites and hostels in Kouvola www.visitkouvola.fi

DAY 3

4 5 6 Adventures in blue and green

On your way to the Repovesi National Park you can visit a unique UNESCO World Heritage Site at Verla Groundwood and Board Mill. The mill was established by the Verla Rapids in 1872. To combine nature and art also visit the nearby Vuohijärvi Nature and Culture House.

www.verla.fi

www.kulttuurivuohijarvi.fi



Experience rugged cliffs, deep forests and sparkling waters in the one of the most popular national parks in Southern Finland. Repovesi National Park offers everyone accessible adventures in truly wild settings. When you sit round a campfire listening to the eerie calls of red-throated divers echoing over the lake, the city feels a million miles away.



After visiting Repovesi enjoy the evening in the lively town of Mikkeli.

Local food and saunas near Repovesi NP: Orilampi Cottage and Holiday Center serves traditional Finnish cuisine lovingly prepared from locally

grown ingredients. The centre also has several kinds of sauna, including a traditional smoke sauna, which you might enjoy after a refreshing cruise on the lakes of the national park. www.orilampi.fi

In the romantic Kirjokivi mansion you can enjoy delicious authentic Finnish cuisine, followed by a steamy session in a lakeside sauna to relax after dinner. Kirjokivi is open by appointment. For reservations: www.woikoskifeeling.fi.

Services and activities: Local firms offer a wide variety of services from natural outdoor meals to rock-climbing trips. Guided tours and equipment are also available.

On the Ketunlenkki Trail (5 km) in the national park you can experience Repovesi's highlights, including a suspension bridge, the manually operated Fox's Ferry and breathtaking views over green forests and blue lakes. For a change from hiking you can explore the lakes of Repovesi by canoe or on boat tours. www.nationalparks.fi/repovesi

Accommodation: Hotels, campsites and hostels in Mikkeli www.visitmikkeli.fi

DAY 4

7 8 In the heart of Lake Saimaa — historic Savonlinna



In the heart of the Finnish Lake district lies the lively town of Savonlinna — and the most northerly surviving medieval castle anywhere in the world. Each summer Olavinlinna Castle hosts the world-class Savonlinna Opera Festival. Enjoy local food in atmospheric settings on the market place, stroll along lakeside promenades, and visit Savonlinna's many small shops and cafes. Boat trips and cruises take visitors out to see beautiful lakeland scenery and with luck also Lake Saimaa's most famous inhabitant: the Saimaa ringed seal.

In the evening head on to the charming village of Oravi or to the Järvisydän resort in Rantasalmi, both by the blue Lake Saimaa.

Services and activities: Guided tours in Olavinlinna castle www.kansallismuseo.fi/en/olavinlinna-castle, Riihisaari — Lake Saimaa Nature and Culture Centre www.savonlinna.fi/riihisaari, steamship cruises www.visitsavonlinna.fi www.visitsaimaa.fi



© Saimaa ringed seal by Teuvo Juvonen

Accommodation: Oravi Village www.oravivillage.com and Järvisydän Resort www.jarvisydan.com. Accommodation is also available in Savonlinna www.visitsavonlinna.fi.

DAY 5

Island adventures in Lake Saimaa — Linnansaari National Park



Today's destination is Linnansaari National Park — an ideal place to spot rare lake seals and majestic ospreys. This part of Lake Saimaa is dotted with lush green islands and rocky islets. At Linnansaari Croft traditional slash-and-burn farming practices are preserved. A boat service takes trippers from Oravi to the main island where you can swim in Lake Saimaa or walk along a trail leading to Linnavuori Hill, to admire the lakeland scenery. You can also join boat trips or fishing excursions organised by local firms. In the evening you can relax in a lakeside sauna and enjoy tasty local food.

Activities and relaxation: Boat trip to Linnansaari National Park, Linnansaari nature trail, sauna, organised outings, fishing www.nationalparks.fi/linnansaarinp

In Oravi village you can try a Finnish specialty: sauna yoga. This activity is suitable for everyone and requires no previous yoga training. The gentle heat of the sauna melts away the strains in your back and shoulders, and beneficial effects can be felt immediately after a single session. After the sauna you can enjoy a refreshing swim in the lake. www.oravivillage.com

Relax in the sweet heat of a sauna by the lakeshore at the Hotel & Spa Resort Järvisydän. Here you can also discover the Finnish Sauna World, a complex with two Finnish wood stove saunas, a smoke sauna, a steam sauna and a hot tub where you can relax under the blue sky. www.jarvisydan.com

Accommodation:

Oravi Village www.oravivillage.com and Järvisydän Resort www.jarvisydan.com. Accommodation is also available in Savonlinna www.visitsavonlinna.fi.

DAY 6

9 10 Peace of mind



The New Valamo Monastery is the most active centre of Orthodox religious life and culture in Finland. Located in the beautiful surroundings of Heinävesi, the monastery welcomes visitors throughout the year. Visitors may freely participate in church services and view holy icons and Orthodox artefacts in the monastery's museum.

Head on from the monastery to Joensuu — a vibrant and rapidly growing regional centre with a great deal to offer including the distinct Karelian lifestyle and a city center with many services, situated by the broad River Pielisjoki. Urban attractions like rock concerts and quiet rural attractions can be found here in close proximity. Joensuu is both a high-tech centre and the traditional marketplace for Eastern Finland's Karelian borderlands region.

Tourist information: Valamo Monastery www.valamo.fi
Joensuu www.visitkarelia.fi

Accommodation: Various accommodation available in Joensuu www.visitkarelia.fi
Valamo Monastery www.valamo.fi

DAY 7

11 Finland's best loved national landscape



When you take in the marvellous views over Lake Pielinen in Koli National Park from the top of Ukko-Koli hill, it's easy to see why this spot has attracted so many Finnish artists, photographers and nature-lovers over the centuries. This splendid scene always instills a sense of serenity and wonder in visitors. Take a guided tour from Nature Center Ukko, or explore the many well-marked trails that lead through the hills of Koli. Live like a local in Koli village, visit the harbor, and spend a luxurious evening in the pools and saunas of Koli Relax Spa.

Local food, Summer Café Tour: Kolin Ryynänen Art and Culture Centre a gateway to the national park for hikers and artists alike. After exploring the park you can stop by at the gastropub to savour local and international drinks, food and artworks.

www.koli.fi/en/Accommodation/Bamp;B-Guesthouses-Farm-accommodation

The Summer Café Tour is a unique café-hopping trekking route that runs for 6.8 km through Koli National Park.

You can start from any of the cafés along the route, including Kolin Ryynänen Café.



© Koli Spa by Tatiana Yakovleva

Activities: Sightseeing and scenic viewpoints, well-marked trails, horse riding, boating, canoeing and rowing, cycling, swimming, nature centre, fishing, Koli village, cruises on Lake Pielinen www.koli.fi

Accommodation:

In Koli National Park: Break Sokos Hotel Koli

www.sokoshotels.fi

Hotels, cottages and campsites in the Koli area

www.koli.fi

DAY 8

12 Raging rapids in Finland's eastern borderlands



The wild white waters of Ruunaa's rivers can be enjoyed from a traditional wooden boat or an inflatable raft by thrill-seekers, or from a shady riverbank by keen anglers. Guided rafting and paddling excursions are available. A great way to round off a day in the wilds is to grill a freshly hooked fish on your campfire. Fall asleep to the sound of roaring white waters after a relaxing evening in a waterside sauna.

Services and activities: Restaurant and equipment rental at Ruunaa Hiking Centre. Whitewater rafting and restaurant services www.ruunaanmatkailu.fi

A traditional Finnish smoke sauna down by the waterside www.ruunaanmatkailu.fi/smokesauna
Whitewater rafting and canoeing, fishing, well-marked trails (2-km Närelenkki Nature Trail, 31-km Koskikierros Trail), cycling, swimming, sauna, services for disabled visitors.

www.nationalparks.fi/ruunaa



Accommodation: Ruunaa Hiking Area, Ruunaa Hiking Centre www.ruunaa.fi
Cottages www.ruunaanmatkailu.fi

DAY 9

13 14 15 Explore open bogs, sandy shores, peaceful esker ridges and lakes in the Karelian borderlands



Scanning the open marshes of Patvinsuo National Park you might be lucky enough to see a distant bear, though bears typically do their best to avoid people. From viewing towers you can overlook the changing marshland scene on misty autumn mornings, light summer nights, or in the springtime when birds flock to the bogs to feed and breed. After a nice walk take a cooling dip by a sandy shore.

Drive on along the road Pamilontie to Petkeljärvi National Park. Pine-clad esker ridges formed during the Ice Age rise over pristine blue lakes in this beautiful part of Finland's eastern borderlands. Don't miss the lively and picturesque old Karelian village of Möhkö near the park. The colourful history of the area during World War Two is also of interest.



Services and activities: Accommodation, food, sauna www.mohko.net

Wildlife observation www.eraero.com

Well-marked trails: Suomunkiertö trail (15 km), Kuikan Kierros Nature Trail (6.5 km), Harjupolku Trail (3.5 km), canoeing, swimming, cycling, fishing, birdwatching, Möhkö village

www.nationalparks.fi/patvinsuo

www.nationalparks.fi/petkeljarvi

Accommodation: Petkeljärvi National Park, Petkeljärvi Camping Centre, guest house www.mohko.net

DAY 10

16 17 Wetlands with rich birdlife

Situated on a natural bird migration route, the wetlands of Siikalahti are full of birds from April through till November, including many nesting species as well as visiting migrants. Over the year more than 200 bird species are seen here, and it's possible to see as many as a hundred species on a single day. Easy trails lead visitors to birdwatching towers.

Your journey continues to the city of Imapra. The rapids at Imatrankoski formed 5,000 years ago,

when the waters of Lake Saimaa broke through the Salpausselkä following post-glacial land uplift. Imatrankoski has been a famous tourist attraction since the late 1700 and it also one of the National landscapes of Finland. Kruununpuisto Par (Crown Park), with imperial lookout pavilions, rock carvings and potholes, was founded in 1842 by Tsar Nicholas I, making it Finland's oldest nature park. In the same area, a kilometre-long City Brook has been built which brings the area's history and geology to the fore.



Activities: Siikalahti nature trail, Imatrankoski rapids
Siikalahti www.nationalparks.fi/siikalahti
Imatra www.gosaimaa.com

Accommodation: Imatra — many types of accommodation www.gosaimaa.com



DAY 11

18 A day by the seaside

Explore seaside and urban parks, the raging rapids of Kymi River, and the Eastern Gulf of Finland National Park

Kotka is an attractive coastal city located where the River Kymijoki reaches the sea. The city centre is on an island with several famously beautiful parks.

Guided tour of Kotka's parks/Exploring on your own
Sapokka Water Garden — water is the dominant element of this park, which features the sea, several small brooks and ponds, and a waterfall nearly 20 metres high. The park is also famous for its beautiful plants, including rhododendrons and azaleas.



Seaside Park Katariina — this 20-hectare outdoor recreational area has been built around the ruins of the 18th-century Svensksund fortress. The park has extensive meadowlands, an inspirational play park and fantastic picnic areas, including one with a magnificent stone picnic table for 50 persons, down by the seashore. www.southeast135.fi/parks



A trip to the Eastern Gulf of Finland National Park. Departure from Sapokka Marina

Many of the islands in the Eastern Gulf of Finland are worth visiting, and served by regular boats. The Gulf of Finland National Park is located in the outer archipelago, whose islands are well known for their seabirds. Some of the islands are big enough to have sizeable forests.

Sea cruises to the Eastern Gulf of Finland National Park from Kotka Marina Harbour.

www.meriset.fi

www.nationalparks.fi/gulfoffinlandnp



© Dog and fishermen by Mari Hirsikallio



Visit to Langinkoski Imperial Fishing Lodge



The Langinkoski Imperial Fishing Lodge is located by the beautiful Langinkoski rapids, on the River Kymijoki. Alexander III, the Emperor-to-be of Russia, became infatuated with this place more than 100 years ago, and later as he became the Emperor spent many summer days here with his family.

www.langinkoskimuseo.com;

www.nationalparks.fi/imperialfishinglodge

Accommodation: Lodgings of many kinds available in Kotka www.visitkotkahamina.fi

DAY 12

19 **The idyllic town of Loviisa — and back to Helsinki**
Attractions in the picturesque town of Loviisa include the

historical sea fortress of Svartholma, the Laivasilta area, museums, stunning churches, manor houses, districts full of old wooden houses. Enjoy small town life, or join a cruise to the family-friendly island of Svartholma. After visiting Loviisa, the route heads back to Helsinki.



Services and activities: Services in Loviisa

www.visitloviisa.fi

Guided walking tours are available on Svartholma island, where an exhibition features the rich history of the fortress. A restaurant operates on the island in summer.

www.nationalparks.fi/svartholma

For more information:

Koli Nature Centre Ukko ukko@metso.fi

Nationalparks.fi

Up-to-date information about Finnish national parks and their facilities

VisitFinland.com

The official travel guide of Finland

Outdoorsfinland.com

Find the best hiking, cycling and canoeing trails in Finland

Outdoors  Visit Finland

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