Cultural Landscapes and Natural Attractions (9 days)

Day 1: Turku – Finland’s Oldest Town, and the Gateway to the Archipelago

Down by the River Aura
Turku has many features typical of European towns that became important in the Middle Ages, including a riverfront, a market square, a castle and a cathedral. The River Aura flows through the heart of the modern city, linking the two poles of historic Turku: a formidable castle and a grand old cathedral. Most of the city’s other sights also line near the river. There’s plenty to do and see around town, as befits a city chosen as the European Capital of Culture for 2011.

Activities: sightseeing, thematic walking routes, rent-a-bike, paddling, explore the River Aura with a rented canoe, SUP-board or electric boat
www.visitturku.fi
Accommodation: www.visitturku.fi

Day 2: The UNESCO World Heritage Site of Old Rauma; and the Bothnian Sea National Park

Enjoy Rauma’s elaborately decorated wooden houses, idyllic street scenes and comfortable cafes and restaurants. This enchanting old town was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1991. Kylmäpihlaja Lighthouse Island lies out in the open sea, swept by the wind and the waves. But the island is full of life, especially during the seabirds’ nesting season. Water buses run to the island daily in the summer. Kylmäpihlaja island is part in the Bothnian Sea National Park.

Activities: sightseeing, shopping, birdwatching
Accommodation: Hotels and hostels in Rauma
www.visitrauma.fi

Day 3: A Rare High Spot in Low-Lying Western Finland

Drive on from Rauma to Lauhanvuori National Park. On the way you can visit Pori and explore the town’s National Urban Park. Walking on Lauhanvuori hill you can go back in time and discover traces
Day 4: A Haven for Wildlife

The marshes of Kauhaneva-Pohjankangas National Park are among Finland's most scenic wetlands, and they are designated as being of international importance for wildlife. Wild windswept bogs extend westwards from the old medieval road that leads northwards through the pine forests of Kyrönkangas. The marshes are peaceful and atmospheric all year round. This is especially a great place to watch birds. In summer you can cool your toes in Kauhalammi pond, while the autumn is the best season for enjoying the rich colours of the marshland vegetation.

Activities: Hiking, birdwatching, photography, observation tower, Salomaa campfire site
Accommodation: Parkano www.hotellipesti.fi
Tourist information
www.nationalparks.fi/seitseminennaturecentre

Day 5: Natural Sights and Cultural History in the Wild Backwoods of Seitseminen National Park

Experience how crofters used to make their living in these remote backwoods at the heritage farm at Kovero. Learn about the park's flora and fauna at the pleasant Seitseminen Nature Centre – the best place to start exploring the old forests, lakes and marshes of this fascinating part of Finland's backwoods. Walk through the heart of Seitseminen National Park to the old-growth forest of Multiharju with its nearly 400-year-old pines, ancient spruces and stately old aspens.

Services and activities: Seitseminen Nature Centre www.nationalparks.fi/seitseminennaturecentre,
Local food at restaurant Ravintola Seitsemisen Portti in the Nature Centre
Visit Kovero Heritage farm, hiking, Multiharju Old-Growth Forest Trail (2 km), rent equipment for outdoor pursuits
Accommodation: Ruovesi, farm tourism, B & B www.yla-tuuhonen.fi

Day 6: Gorgeous Geological Sights

The landscapes of Helvetinjärvi National Park are dominated by geological features created millions of years ago by mighty movements deep in the Earth's crust. After admiring the rugged cliffs around Helvetinjärvi (Hell's Lake) and Helvetinkolu (Hell's Hole) you can relax on the sandy lakeshore at Haukanhieta, or hike the Helvetistä Itään (East from Hell) Nature Trail, where you can admire a waterfall, walk through brook-side spruce forests and enjoy a break and a picnic surrounded by beautiful marshland scenery. Spend the evening in the lively city of Tampere.
Services and activities: Local food at Ravintola Helvetin Portti (Hell’s Gate Restaurant)
Hiking: The 4-km Helvetistä Itään Nature Trail from Kankimäki to Helvetinkolu, geological and natural sites, campfire sites, day trip hut, equipment rental  
www.nationalparks.fi/seitseminennaturecentre
Accommodation: Hotels and hostels in the Tampere area

Day 7: Outstanding Views and a Medieval Castle
Aulanko Nature Reserve near the old city of Hämeenlinna has many unique attractions. An English-style park was created here between 1883 and 1938. This area's buildings and cultural history make it a nationally valuable site. The views over the valley of Lake Vanajavesi, as seen from the lookout tower on Aulangonvuori Hill, are considered to be a Finnish national landscape. These views are said to have inspired the famous Finnish composer Jean Sibelius to create his most widely known composition Finlandia. In summertime there is a café at the foot of the lookout tower and a kiosk by Lake Joutsenlampi. The Aulanko area forms part of Finland’s first National Urban Park, in Hämeenlinna. Hämeenlinna is a lively and pleasant town, with attractions including churches, museums, galleries and restaurants. Don’t miss the fascinating Häme Castle, one of Finland’s few surviving medieval castles.
Activities: Golf, spa, horseback riding and shopping  
www.nationalparks.fi/aulanko  
www.visithameenlinna.fi  
www.kansallismuseo.fi
Accommodation: Spa Scandic Aulanko, hotels and hostels in the city of Hämeenlinna

Day 8: Traditional Rural Life at a forest ranger’s Croft
Relive the past at Korteniemi Heritage Farm. The buildings, fields and gardens of this old croft have remained largely unchanged for over 100 years. In summer native Finnish farm animal breeds including horses, cows, sheep, chickens and a rooster are kept here; and traditional local crops are grown using old-fashioned methods. Visitors can help out with farm chores, count sheep, or try Korteniemi's traditional smoke sauna.
Services and activities:  
www.nationalparks.fi/hamenaturecentre,  
www.eerikkila.fi
Walk round Ahonnokka nature trail (1.5 km), visit Häme Nature Centre, enjoy sports at Eerikkilä Sport & Outdoor Resort
Accommodation: Eerikkilä Sport & Outdoor Resort:  
www.eerikkila.fi
Accommodation in the Forssa and Tammela area  
www.forssanseutu.fi

Day 9: Back to Turku or on to Helsinki
More information about the tour: Finnish Nature Centre Haltia haltia@metsa.fi  
Häme Nature Centre luontokeskus@eerikkila.fi  
Seitseminen Nature Centre sisasuomi@metsa.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