Day 1: Welcome to 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. Two enchanting island destinations lie just 20 minutes by boat from Helsinki’s Market Square: Suomenlinna is one of the most impressive fortified islands anywhere in the world. First founded by Finland’s Swedish rulers in 1748 on a group of islands overlooking the sea, Suomenlinna is included in UNESCO’s World Heritage List as a unique example of military architecture. The nearby island of Vallisaari earlier served as home and workplace for hundreds of people, including soldiers and pilots. But more recently the island has been left to nature, and today it has a uniquely wide range of flora and fauna.

Regular ferry and waterbus services run from Helsinki’s Market Square to the islands – all year round to Suomenlinna, and to Vallisaari in summer.

Accommodation in Helsinki: [www.visithelsinki.fi](http://www.visithelsinki.fi)
Tourist information: [www.myhelsinki.fi](http://www.myhelsinki.fi)
[www.suomenlinna.fi](http://www.suomenlinna.fi)
[www.jt-line.fi](http://www.jt-line.fi)
[www.aavalines.fi](http://www.aavalines.fi)
[www.nationalparks.fi/vallisaari](http://www.nationalparks.fi/vallisaari)

Day 2: Into the Forest, and Down to the Sea

Head west from Helsinki, first to Nuksi National Park, whose beautiful forests and lakes make an excellent setting for hikes and rambles just half an hour from the Finnish capital. The Finnish Nature Centre Haltia lies beside lovely Lake Pitkäjärvi on the edge of the park. Spend the evening in the idyllic old town of Ekenäs, whose old cobbled lanes are lined with colourful
Enjoy the sea air and sample fresh seafood down by the town’s pleasant beach and harbour. Ekenäs is also worth a longer stay.

Nature lovers should not miss the Ekenäs Nature Centre, housed in an old wooden building on the quayside near the beach. The centre’s exhibitions feature local life in the archipelago, and here you can also get tips on how to visit the fascinating islands of the nearby Ekenäs Archipelago National Park.

Accommodation in Ekenäs: www.visitraseborg.com
Tourist Information: www.espoo.fi
www.haltia.com
www.visitraseborg.com
www.nationalparks.fi/ekenasarchipelagonp
www.nationalparks.fi/en/ekenasnaturecentre

Day 3: Castle Ruins and Historic Villages

Drive on westwards towards Turku.

Some of Finland’s finest castle ruins can be found near Ekenäs at Raseborg. This once formidable castle was built during the Middle Ages by Finland’s Swedish rulers. Today you can wander through the old knights’ hall and along ramparts where archers would target invaders. Fine views can be enjoyed from the castle towers and a viewing platform. After lunch in the Castle Guard’s Lodge, take a stroll along the Lovers’ Path (0.5 km) to the charming nearby village of Snappertuna and back. On the way, stop off in the small folk museum of Fångården to learn about how people used to live here from fishing and farming.

Before heading on towards Turku, it’s worth making a brief diversion to the historic 17th century ironworks village of Fiskars, which is today an attractive and lively centre for artists and craftsmen. Fiskars’s picturesque lanes, handicrafts stores and frequent events make it a popular destination for all the family.

On towards Turku lie more castle ruins at Kuusisto, which used to provide safe refuge for Catholic bishops. The ruins and the surrounding scenic countryside are a joy to explore. In the area you can also visit Kuusisto Art Manor and walk round the 3-km Kappelinmäki nature trail.

In the evening take time to discover the historic riverside city of Turku.

Accommodation in Turku: www.visitturku.fi
Tourist Information: www.visitraseborg.fi
www.nationalparks.fi/raseborg
www.fiskarsvillage.fi
www.nationalparks.fi/kuusisto
www.visitturku.fi
Day 4: Turku – Finland’s Oldest Town, and the Gateway to the Archipelago

Turku’s highlights include the River Aura, a formidable castle, a market square and a grand old cathedral. There’s plenty to do and see around town, as befits a city chosen as the European Capital of Culture for 2011.

The roots of the city Turku lie at Koroistenniemi, the location of Finland’s earliest known bishopric and administrative centre, dating back to the 1200s. Today only the stone foundations of those earliest buildings remain, but this is a great place for pleasant riverside walks.

Continue on from Turku towards the old town of Rauma.

Accommodation in Rauma: www.visitrauma.fi
Tourist information: www.visitturku.fi
www.nationalparks.fi/koroistenniemi
www.nationalparks.fi/untamala
www.visitrauma.fi

Day 5: The UNESCO World Heritage Site of Old Rauma; and the Bothnian Sea National Park

Enjoy Rauma’s 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.

Out in the open sea, swept by the wind and the waves, lies the lighthouse island of Kylmäpihlaja. The island is full of life, especially during the seabirds’ nesting season. Waterbuses run daily in the summer to Kylmäpihlaja, which lies in the heart of the Bothnian Sea National Park.

The Bronze Age Burial Site at Sammallahdenmäki, 20 km from the centre of Rauma, became Finland’s first archaeological site to earn world heritage status in 1999. The site includes 36 burial cairns, which can be viewed from a 1.5-km trail.

Accommodation in Rauma: www.visitrauma.fi
Tourist information: www.visitrauma.fi
www.nationalparks.fi/bothnianseanp
www.sammallahdenmaki.fi
Day 6: Along the Shores of the Bothnian Sea to Kristiinankaupunki

Drive on northwards from Rauma. On the way you can explore one of Finland’s National Urban Parks in the town of Pori.

Explore high sand dunes and relax or take a dip on some of the finest and longest sandy shores anywhere in the Nordic Countries at Yyteri, near Pori. Your route continues on, passing the lovely coastal landscapes and seascapes of the Bothnian Sea National Park.

Spend the evening in the pleasant seaside town of Kristinestad, with its charming old wooden houses and inviting small restaurants. Energetic visitors can rent a bike, join a guided fishing trip, or explore riverside scenery and a hanging bridge along the trail in the Tegelbruksbacken-Norrfjärden nature reserve.

Accommodation in Kristinestad:  
www.visitkristinestad.fi
Tourist information:  www.visitpori.fi  
www.visityyteri.fi  
www.visitkristinestad.fi

Day 7: Head on from Kristinestad towards Vaasa, and Finland’s First Natural World Heritage Site

The Kvarken Archipelago is a living world heritage site where local people live in harmony with their unique natural setting. Discover the village of Molpe and its pleasant seashores and restaurant. On Bergö Island you can enjoy magnificent seascapes and charming boathouses. The ferry from Molpe village to Bergö Island takes about 10 minutes.

Picturesque old boathouses are among the highlights of one of the largest boat museums in the Nordic Countries – the Kvarken Boat Museum in the village of Malax.
Today you have a chance to enjoy the famously sunny city of Vaasa and its lovely natural surroundings, before taking a boat to Sweden in the evening. Vaasa is embraced by a beautiful archipelago. This vibrant, youthful and modern city offers visitors plenty of activities in scenic and historic settings. Visit Vaasa's bustling market hall, stroll along its green esplanades, and enjoy the myriad islands and islets of the archipelago.

In summer 2006 The Kvarken Archipelago was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List as an extension of Sweden’s High Coast. Together these two areas form a unique geological area where post-glacial land uplift is still continuing, gradually reshaping local landscapes and seascapes. Every year the total land area in the Kvarken Archipelago increases by about 1 km² as new land emerges from the sea.

Climb up the viewing tower by the fishing harbour of Svedjehamm to get superb views over this uplifting scenery and a unique set of moraine island ridges. Or take a guided boat trip from Svedjehamm through the treacherous rock-strewn waters of the archipelago to the lighthouse of Valsörarna – known as “Finland's Eiffel Tower”. Back in the mainland, explore the historic village of Björköby with guided bicycle tours or you can take a walk round the Bodvatnet Nature Trail (3.5 km) in Svedjehamm.

In the evening let the Wasaline's ferry take you on a restful four-hour trip from Vaasa across the Gulf of Bothnia Sea to Umeå in Sweden.

Accommodation in Umeå, Sweden: [www.visitumea.se](http://www.visitumea.se)

Tourist information: [www.visitvaasa.fi](http://www.visitvaasa.fi)

[www.nationalparks.fi/kvarken](http://www.nationalparks.fi/kvarken)

[www.kvarkenworldheritage.fi](http://www.kvarkenworldheritage.fi)

[www.wasaline.com](http://www.wasaline.com)

[www.visitumea.se](http://www.visitumea.se)
**Day 9: Sweden’s High Coast**

Umeå is famous for its creativity and vibrancy. The city truly has something for everyone, with cultural offerings include everything from insights into the lives of the indigenous Sámi people, to opera, dance, sport, modern art and all genres of music.

Drive south along the coast. Just before the town of Örnsköldvik turn off the E4 Highway and drive 30 km southwards to the charming fishing village of Skeppsmalm on Sweden’s High Coast. Here you can discover a lovely old chapel and the lighthouse of Skag, which overlooks treacherous coastal rocks.

Near the town of Docksta lies the Naturum visitor centre, where you can learn about the attractions of the High Coast and nearby Skuleskogen National Park, as well as local opportunities for outdoor activities. Make your own way on southwards towards Stockholm, from where you can easily catch a car ferry back to Finland, arriving in Helsinki or Turku.

**Accommodation:** [www.hogakusten.com](http://www.hogakusten.com)

**Tourist information:**
- [www.hogakusten.com](http://www.hogakusten.com)
- [www.visitumea.se](http://www.visitumea.se)
- [www.nationalparksofsweden.se](http://www.nationalparksofsweden.se)

**More information about the tour:**
Finnish Nature Centre Haltia haltia@metsa.fi

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**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