Enjoy Helsinki’s urban delights, see Finland’s best-loved national landscape, and experience the wilds of the Finnish-Russian borderlands. Discover Finland’s history from ancient times to modern events.

**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](http://www.visithelsinki.fi).

**DAY 2**

**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 nowaday 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](http://www.nationalparks.fi/vallisaari/services).
In the romantic Kjirjoki mansion you can enjoy delicious authentic Finnish cuisine, followed by a steamy session in a lakeside sauna to relax after dinner. Kjirjoki 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 Oravi 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.oravi-village.com and Järvisydän Resort www.jarvisydan.com, Accommodation is also available in Savonlinna www.visitsavonlinna.fi

DAY 6
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 to the Järvisydän resort in Rantasalmi, both by the blue Lake Saimaa.


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

DAY 7
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
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.nationalparks.fi/kolinp/sights/kolinryynanenartandculturecentre

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.

www.koli.fi

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.

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

Cottages www.ruunanimatkailu.fi

A two-hour drive through dark, mystical forests and small villages takes you to the town of Kuhmo and Petola Visitor Centre, whose exhibition features Finland’s fantastic wildlife, including bears and wolves. Enjoy traditional, tasty local food in one of Kuhmo's restaurants or cafés.

After lunch, head on northwards to Lentua Nature Reserve, where you can enjoy a breath of fresh air by the famous Lentuankoski Rapids and the serene Lentua Lake before driving on for three hours to Hossa. This long and winding road leads you through the old spruce forests and hills of Finland’s eastern borderlands. Here you can explore the newly designated Hossa National Park on foot, by bike or in a canoe. Fishing is also popular here, or you can just relax and enjoy a traditional sauna and a dip in the crystal clear water of Lake Hossanjärvi.

Activities and relaxation: Hiking, biking, canoeing, fishing, swimming, sauna

Accommodation: Camping Hossan Lumo www.hossa.fi (in Finnish)

Camping Karhunkainalo www.suomussalmi.fi

Tourist information: Kuhmo Visitor Centre Petola petola@metsa.fi

Hossa Visitor Centre hossa@metsa.fi

www.nationalparks.fi

A traditional Finnish smoke sauna down by the waterside www.ruunanimatkailu.fi/smokesauna

You can now set off on a mystical trip back in time! The adventure starts from the café at Lake Julma-Ölkky. After a boat trip to view amazing lakeside
cliffs from the water, have a coffee break or lunch here. Suitably refuelled, you can now set off on a 4-km hike to see the ancient rock paintings on Värikkäli Cliffs. These mysterious paintings, thought to be 3,500–4,500 years old, depict hunters and fishers. A new footbridge enables visitors to see the paintings up close. You might next like to visit the Predator Center in Kuusamo where you can safely meet some of Northern Finland’s animal inhabitants: foxes, lynx and bears. If you want to meet the king of the taiga forest in his realm, sign up for an unforgettable bear-watching trip, where you spend the evening and night in a specially designed safe viewing cabin, watching and photographing wild bears.

If you don’t feel like encountering a bear, Hossa offers plenty of other activities from hiking or biking to canoeing or fishing.

Services and activities: www.wildtaiga.fi www.nationalparks.fi/hossa/services Hossa Visitor Centre hossa@metsa.fi Boat trip, guided tour, ancient rock paintings, Predator Center, bear-watching, photography, canoeing, biking, hiking, fishing etc.

Accommodation: Camping Hossan Lumo, Camping Karhunkainalo, Kylmälauoma Camping www.nationalparks.fi/hossa/services

DAY 11
Adventures around Ruka
Head into the town of Kuusamo next, to stock up with local, high quality products and souvenirs, before driving to the start of the famous Pieni Karhunkierros Hiking Trail, in Juuma. This trail takes most of the day to follow, running alongside the River Kitkajoki and over three hanging bridges, passing the magnificent scenic highlights of Oulanka National Park. Enjoy a packed lunch by the powerful Jyrävä Falls or relax by the calmer waters of Harrisuvanto. Ruka village has plenty of suitable accommodation. In the evening you can explore the area, by feeling the magic of Nightless Night on the top of Konttainen Hill or taking a ski lift up to the top of Ruka Fell and then returning slowly stopping to admire and photograph its amazing scenery. Thrill-seekers should hurtle down the kilometre-long Ruka Sled Track, reaching speeds of up to 60 km/hour!

Those who prefer to relax can try memorable traditional sauna experiences offered by Saunatour. You can choose between different kinds of sauna experience: slow & silent, wild & free, alive & strong — or anything in between.

Activities and relaxation: www.wellbeinginwilderness.fi Shopping, hiking, photography, summer sledding run, sauna, relaxation www.ruka.fi

Accommodation: In the Ruka area: Iisakki village (Ruka safaris), Hotel Rantasipi Rukahovi, Ruka Suites, Rukatonntu Hotel & Restaurant etc. www.ruka.fi

Tourist information: Karhuntassu info@kuusamo.fi Rukainfo info@ruka.fi Oulanka Visitor Centre oulanka@metsa.fi

DAY 12
Oulanka’s wild waters
Today you can enjoy the essence of Oulanka by canoeing through the national park. The day starts at Oulanka Visitor Centre with an exhibition about local nature. You will then be transported to the River Oulanka to begin an amazing journey passing ancient forests, lush meadows, steep cliffs and attractive natural sandy beaches.

The 25-km paddling route is also suitable for families and beginners. After your trip, head on to Karhunkierros starting point at Hautajärvi, where you can walk at least the first kilometer of Finland’s most famous trekking trail: the 82-km Karhunkierros. From Karhunkierros it’s just half an hour’s drive to the village Salla where you can rest and spend the night at the Holiday Club Salla spa.

Activities and relaxation: Canoeing, exhibition, swimming, sauna, spa Oulanka Visitor Centre oulanka@metsa.fi www.nationalparks.fi/oulanka www.ruka.fi www.visitsalla.fi

Accommodation: Salla: Holiday Club Salla spa www.holidayclubresorts.com

DAY 13
Back to Kuusamo and on homeward

For more information:
Oulanka Visitor Centre oulanka@metsa.fi
Koli Nature Centre Ukko ukko@metsa.fi