

FINNISH LAKES & FORESTS

7 Nights / 8 Days

Self – Drive



On this trip you will experience the Land of the Thousand Lakes. The seemingly endless lakes in Finland's lakeland are punctuated by several communities that come to magical life in the summer, from Imatra and Lappeenranta in the south to the town of Savonlinna with its medieval island castle. The Karelia region gives you a taste of the distinctive culture, flavoured by the historical influence of the Orthodox faith and the hospitable character of the Karelian people.

Day 01: Arrival in Helsinki

Arrival in Helsinki according to your own itinerary. Helsinki is a modern cultural city, which throughout 450 years of history, has existed in the crosscurrents of the East and West. The colorful layers of history can be seen everywhere; a walking tour of the city centre or of the magnificent Suomenlinna Maritime Fortress will open your eyes to a fascinating past. Sights of interest are the historical centre, Senate Square, the Parliament building, Finlandia Hall, the Sibelius Monument and Temppeliaukio Church (Rock Church).

Accommodation at Sokos Hotel Pasila

Day 02: Helsinki – Lappeenranta (250 km)

Breakfast at the hotel. Leave Helsinki in eastern direction. We recommend a stop in Porvoo, a small, idyllic town, which is the second oldest in Finland. The town has a unique waterfront with red ochre sheds, and a medieval old town with cobblestone streets, and many its restaurants, cafés, museums, galleries. Continue driving east, past the border town of Vaatimaa to Lappeenranta. Lappeenranta is the centre of the South Karelia region in south-east Finland. It is a city renowned for its natural beauty, its happy Karelian character and its good prospects for the future. The lake district of Saimaa gives a distinct flavor to the southern Karelian landscape and life style. The bay area, with its historical fortress and linden trees, is the summer paradise for local residents, welcoming guests and travelers from all over the world.

Accommodation at Cumulus Hotel Lappeenranta

Day 03: Lappeenranta – Lake Saimaa

Breakfast at the hotel. Day at your own disposal. We recommend a 2-hour cruise along Lake Saimaa. Also you should not miss one of Lappeenranta's most famous attractions: The sand castle. A huge sand sculpture located close to the harbour area, which can be visited from June to August. In the evening we recommend an excursion to the Imatrankoski Rapids close to Imatra, which have been attracting visitors for over 200 years. As early as 1772, the Russian Empress Catherine the Great and her retinue visited the Rapids, Finland's first ever tourist attraction. Today however, tourists can admire the daily Rapids shows which are organized every evening during summer (mid-June to mid-August), when the swirling waters are released for a stunning display.

Accommodation at Cumulus Hotel Lappeenranta

Day 04: Lappeenranta – Savonlinna – Joensuu (340 km)

Breakfast at the hotel. Today's drive will really give you the opportunity to experience the famous lake lands. Drive along Lake Saimaa towards Imatra. Saimaa, Finland's largest lake, is a labyrinthine watercourse whose waters flow slowly from north to south and finally through its outflow channel, the Vuoksi, southeast over the Russian border into Ladoga, Europe's largest lake. The Saimaa drainage region covers most of the southern part of eastern Finland, a region about the size of Belgium, extending almost to Lake Oulujärvi in the north and just over the Russian border in the east. From Imatra, continue in Northern direction past Lohikoski and Sulkava to Savonlinna, host of the famous Opera Festival. We recommend a stop in Savonlinna to visit the famous Olavinlinna Castle, which helped the Swedish to secure Savonlinna from the Russians in 1475 and is now used as a stage for the Opera festival. From Savonlinna continue your drive north past Kerimäki and Vihtari to Joensuu. Joensuu is located next to the Russian border and about 400 km North-East from the capital of the country. It is a university town and the lively capital of the North Karelia Region. The city was established in 1848 by the Czar Nikolai I of Russia and it has flourished in the estuary of a notable waterway. It is a vital city with a growing and relatively young population. We recommend a visit to the Carelicum Cultural Center, which is referred to as the cultural and tourism centre for Joensuu. A visit there is a great way to get to know the city of Joensuu and the entire Carelia area, its culture and its characteristics.

Accommodation at Sokos Hotel Kimmel, Joensuu

Day 05: Joensuu – Jyväskylä (250 km)

Breakfast at the hotel. From Joensuu head into western direction. Pass Varkaus on your way to Jyväskylä. Jyväskylä is especially known for its rich variety of culture; museums, art exhibitions, concerts, events and theatre performances. Jyväskylä is the hometown of the world-famous architect Alvar Aalto and houses several buildings designed by him. The Alvar Aalto Museum, located in a building designed by Aalto himself, familiarizes the visitor with the life and work of this great talent.

Accommodation at Cumulus Hotel Jyväskylä

Day 06: Jyväskylä – Tampere – Turku (315 km)

Breakfast at the hotel. From Jyväskylä drive towards Tampere. Tampere is located between two lakes, Näsijärvi and Pyhäjärvi. Since the two lakes differ in level by 18 metres, the Tammerkoski rapids linking them have been an important power source throughout history, most recently for generating electricity. Tampere is also the second most important urban centre in Finland after the Helsinki region and the biggest inland city in the Nordic countries. From Tampere continue to Turku, Finland's oldest city and previous capital. Sights of interest are Turku Castle, the Forum Marinum Maritime Centre, the Aboa Vetus and Ars Nova museums and the Cathedral. The famous Mumin theme park, perfect for a day visit with the whole family, is located close to Turku in the coastal town of Naantali.

Accommodation at Cumulus Hotel Turku

Day 07: Turku – Helsinki (165 km)

Breakfast at the hotel. Drive in western direction past Salo, often considered the original hometown of Nokia telephones, towards Helsinki. On your way you pass along the King's Road, a route comprising some of the oldest roads in northern Europe, starting at Bergen by the Atlantic Ocean and ending at St Petersburg by the Gulf of Finland. Since the 14th century Kings and Merchants, artists and pilgrims, have travelled the King's Road. The Meeting of East and West have created a unique cultural treasury, waiting to be discovered by you. White-brown signs along the road mark sights of interest.

Accommodation at Sokos Hotel Pasila

Day 08: Departure from Helsinki

Breakfast at the hotel. Departure from Helsinki according to your own itinerary.

- End of Services -

Hotel description:

The price is based on accommodation in 3* hotels. If any of the hotels are fully booked we will find alternatives of equal standard.

Services:

- 7 nights hotel accommodation in shared double room with shower/WC
- 7 x Scandinavian breakfast buffet

The price is valid from 01.06 - 31.08.2012