

## PURE FINLAND

10 nights / 11 days

Self drive tour



The beautiful Finnish nature is combined with a harmonious blend of Russian, Swedish and Finnish culture. You will love this country and its gentle peaceful life. There is more than 100,000 lakes weaved together with many forests that cover the country. Enjoy the great Finnish summer with its magnificent landscapes and dive for a breath of fresh air. The lakes are linked by rivers, straits and canals and you can travel around them in any sort of boat from a canoe to an old-fashioned steamship. Not to be missed is the Finnish sauna, that integral part of the way of life in Finland.

### **Day 01: Arrival in Helsinki**

Arrival in Helsinki accordingly to your own itinerary. Helsinki, the capital of Finland, was founded in 1550 by the Swedish king. In 1917, Finland gained its independence and Helsinki became the capital of the new Republic. Helsinki is a vibrant, cultural and modern city. The city is highly characterized by the presence of water.

Overnight at the Sokos Hotel Presidentti.

### **Day 02: Helsinki - Hämeenlinna - Tampere (175 Km)**

Breakfast at the hotel. Enjoy sightseeing to discover Helsinki, we recommend: Senate Square, Uspenski Cathedral and the Temppeliaukio Church. Start tour self drive vacation driving in direction of Hämeenlinna, birthplace of the composer Jean Sibelius, to visit its beautiful Medieval castle. Continue north passing by the Aulanko's park until you reach Tampere the third largest city in Finland. There are 200 lakes and ponds in Tampere and a total of 450 in the entire region. We recommend the Tammerkoski rapids that run through the city.

Overnight at the Sokos Hotel Villa.

### **Day 03: Tampere - Vaasa (240 Km)**

Breakfast at the hotel. Start your journey visiting the village of Stundars in Korsholm - a large open-air museum and a living centre of culture and art. In the afternoon arrival in Vaasa, located at the narrowest point of the Gulf of Bothnia - only 80 km from Umeå in Sweden. Vaasa is known to be Finland's sunniest town. The sea with its countless islands gives Vaasa the authentic feel of a coastal town. Boating, fishing, exploring the archipelago are all popular activities in the city.

Accommodation at Sokos Hotel Vaakuna – Vaasa.

**Day 04: Gulf of Bothnia - Oulu (315 Km)**

Breakfast at the hotel; discover the Gulf of Bothnia and the region marked by a Swedish influence. Visit Jakobstad and the famous 'School Gardens', located in the centre of town. The park is an architectural masterpiece and an outdoor stage for summer events. Pass by Kalajoki a well known tourist attraction due to long sandy beaches and related activities before arriving in Oulu. Visiting the Rotuaari pedestrian street and Market Square will immerse you in the city atmosphere, the City Park's Hupisaaret islands will show you great nature, and not to be missed the Tietomaa Science Centre and a shopping therapy tour in the city centre.

Overnight at the Cumulus Oulu Hotel.

**Day 05: Lapland: Oulu - Rovaniemi (225 Km)**

Breakfast at the hotel and enjoy your trip through Finnish Lapland until you arrive in its capital: Rovaniemi, situated close to the Arctic Circle. In Rovaniemi you can experience Christmas throughout the year. Rovaniemi is the hometown of Santa Claus who can be met on any day of the year at the Santa Claus Office in the Arctic Circle.

Accommodation at Clarion Hotel Santa Claus.

**Day 06: Rovaniemi - Kuusamo (205 Km)**

Breakfast at the hotel; today you will continue your journey crossing a beautiful landscape made of hills, rivers and lakes. Ranua is located 80km south of Rovaniemi, here you can visit the Rauna Wildlife Park where you will have the chance of seeing Nordic and Arctic animals. Arrival in Kuusamo located in the east of Finland in Oulu Province on the border with Russia.

Accommodation at Sokos Hotel Kuusamo.

**Day 07: Kuusamo - Kajaani (250 Km)**

Breakfast at the hotel. Leave Kuusamo in southern direction passing by the Kajaani region in the centre of Finland. Summer days in Kajaani are very long, thanks to the Midnight Sun. Here you can enjoy a wildlife watching safari. Visit the Kajaani Castle ruins: the castle played an important role in the early history of the town. Kajaani offers excellent opportunities to those interested in culture, such as the fascinating world of theatre and concerts arranged in Kaukametsä's concert hall.

Accommodation at Sokos Hotel Valjus.

**Day 08: Kajaani - Kuopio (170 Km)**

Breakfast at the hotel. Today you will be back in the Lake's region; you can pass by Koli located along the coast of the Pielinen Lake where you can enjoy an extraordinary view. On your arrival in Kuopio we recommend a visit to the Orthodox Church Museum of Finland with its beautiful icon collection. The backdrop for the summer atmosphere in the Kuopio region is provided by lakes and islands, great to explore on boat cruises, as well as by the landscape of forest-covered hills. Boating, hiking and other forms of outdoor recreation are all found here.

Overnight at the Cumulus Kuopio Hotel.

**Day 09: Kuopio - Savonlinna - Lappeenranta (270 Km)**

Breakfast at the hotel. On your way south you can visit the Orthodox Monastery of New Valamo in Heinävesi, established in 1940 that has developed into a significant centre of Orthodox culture in Finland in recent decades. The monks live the communal spiritual life of a monastery which includes the principle that the monastery should earn its own living. Its principal source of livelihood nowadays is tourism. Continue your trip in order to admire the breathtaking scenery in Savonlinna, which is famous for its annual opera festival.

Overnight at the Cumulus Lappeenranta Hotel in Lappeenranta.

**Day 10: Lappeenranta – Porvoo - Helsinki**

Breakfast at the hotel and enjoy your day driving on the King's Road, an old mailing route dating back to the 14th century by which Swedish kings plundered eastward into Russia, and by which Russian tsars plundered back. Continue to Helsinki along the beautiful Gulf of Finland passing by Kotka and Porvoo, cities marked by Russian influence. Enjoy your evening in Helsinki, the capital of the Republic of Finland.

Overnight at the Sokos Hotel Presidentti.

**Day 11: Helsinki**

Breakfast at the hotel and day at leisure before your departure according to your own itinerary.

**Hotel description:**

The price is based on accommodation in good tourist class hotels (3-4 stars). If any of the hotels are fully booked we will find alternatives in the close region of equal standard.

**Services:**

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

*The price is valid from 01.05.2012 – 30.09.2012*