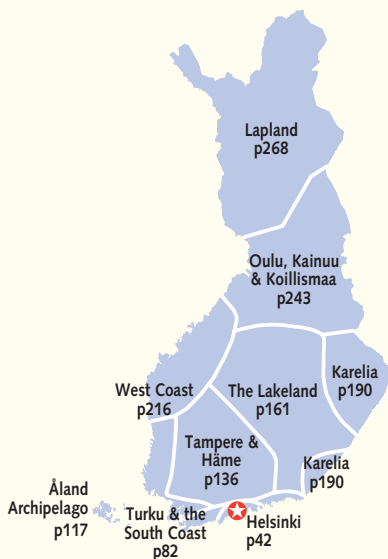


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THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

Andy Symington, Fran Parnell

➤ Every listing is recommended by our authors, and their favourite places are listed first

➤ Look out for these icons:



Our author's top recommendation



A green or sustainable option



No payment required

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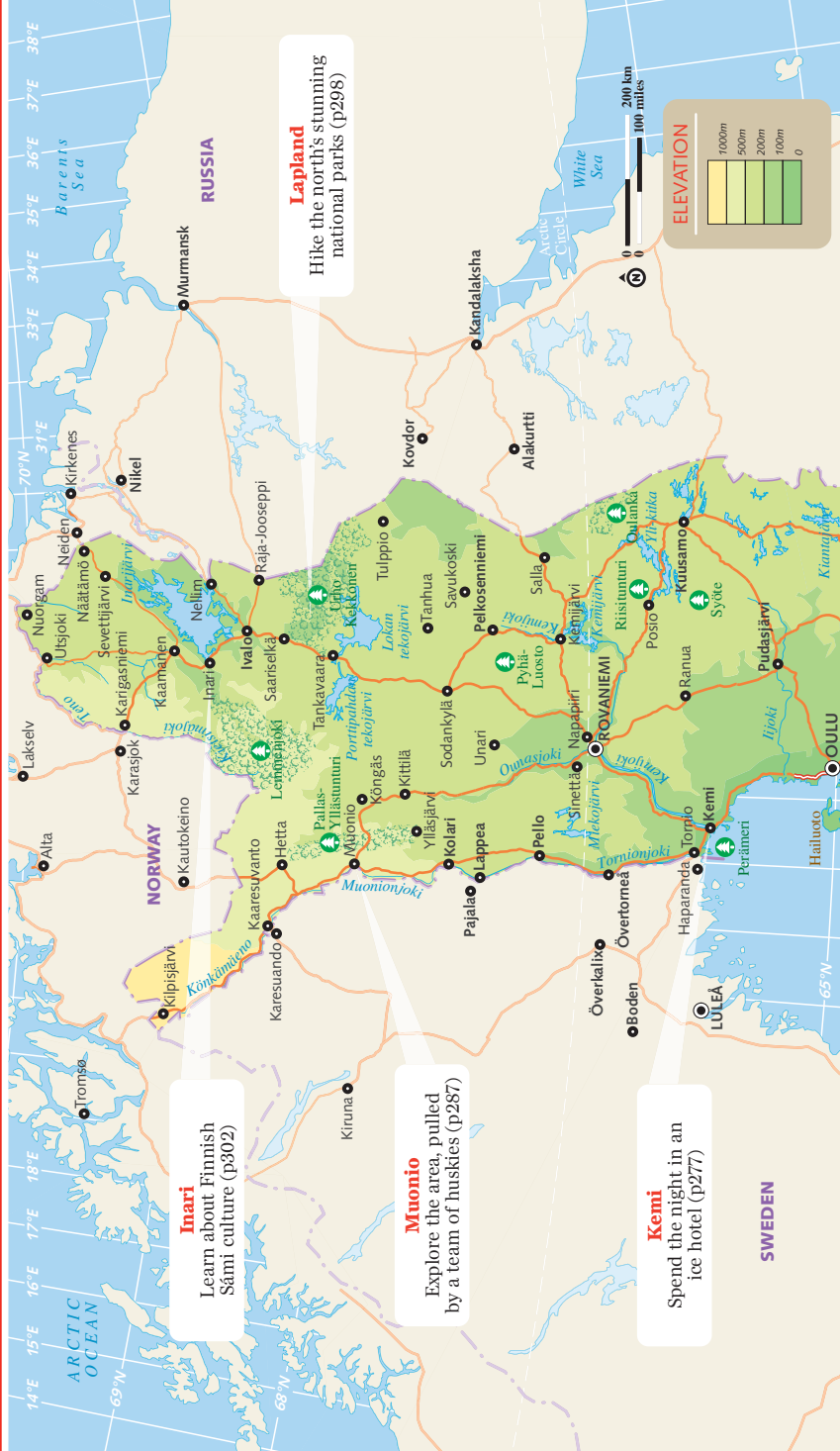
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**Eastern Finland**  
See bears in  
the wild (p260)

**Kuopio**  
Sweat it out  
in a sauna (p183)

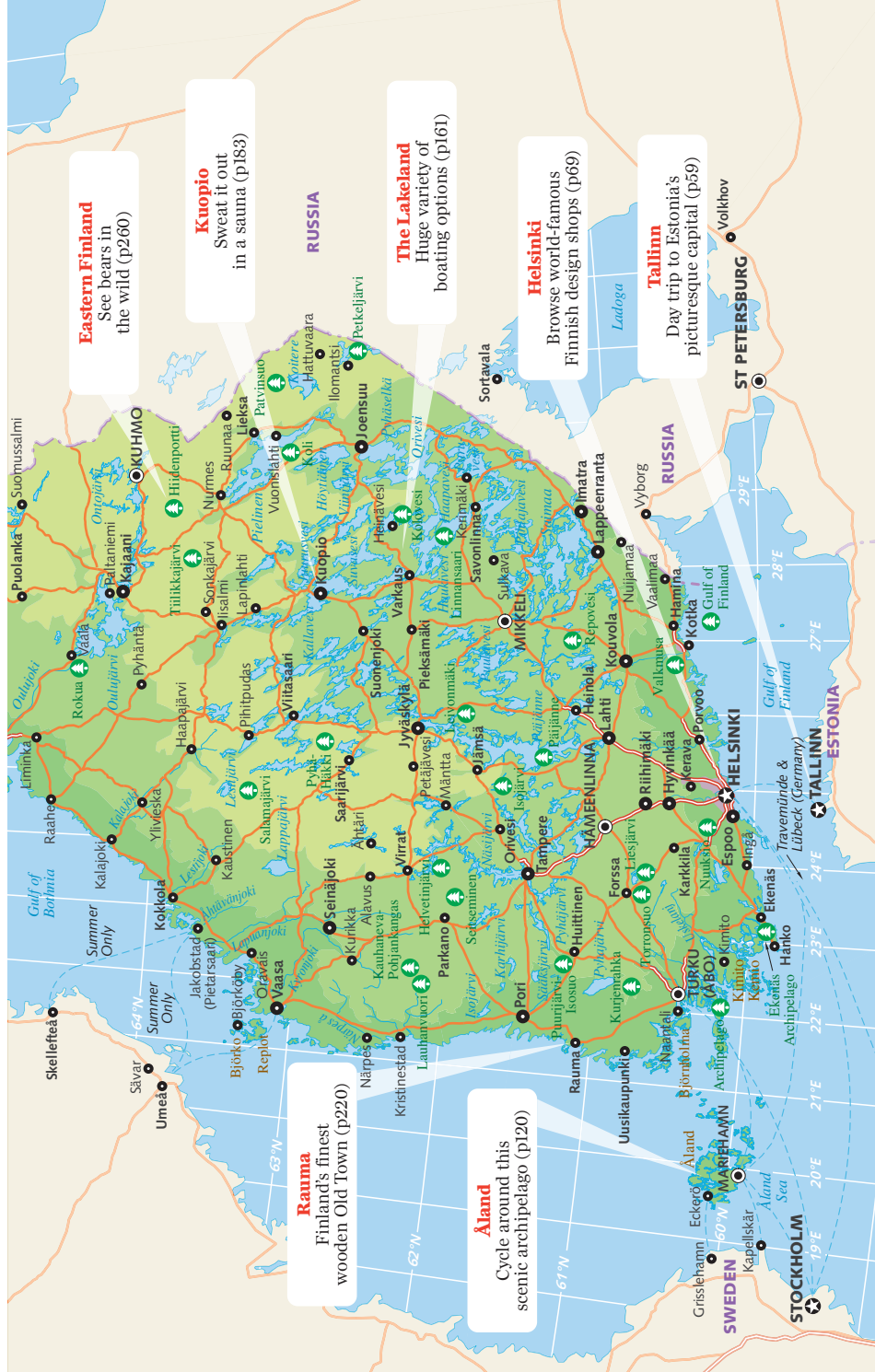
**The Lakeland**  
Huge variety of  
boating options (p161)

**Helsinki**  
Browse world-famous  
Finnish design shops (p69)

**Tallinn**  
Day trip to Estonia's  
picturesque capital (p59)

**Rauma**  
Finland's finest  
wooden Old Town (p220)

**Aland**  
Cycle around this  
scenic archipelago (p120)





## OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Melbourne, London and Oakland, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

## OUR WRITERS



### Andy Symington

**Coordinating Author; Helsinki; Tampere & Häme; The Lakeland; Oulu, Kainuu & Koillismaa; Lapland** Andy has covered Finland for Lonely Planet several times, having first visited Helsinki many years ago more or less by accident. Walking on frozen lakes with the midday sun low in the sky made a quick and deep impression on him, even as fingers froze in the -30°C temperatures. Since then they can't keep him away from the country, fuelled by a love of the Kalevala, huskies,

saunas, Finnish mustard, moody Suomi rock and metal, but above all of Finnish people and their beautiful country.



### Fran Parnell

**Turku & the South Coast; Åland Archipelago; Karelia; West Coast** Fran's passion for northern Europe began while studying for a masters degree in Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic, and any opportunity to visit the region is taken with glee. Particular highlights of this research trip were wandering the Bomarsund ruins eating wild strawberries; seeing bears in Karelia; rowing at midnight on Lake Pielinen; and coming across so much Finnish warmth and generosity while on

the road. Fran has worked on other Lonely Planet guides, including *Scandinavian Europe*, *Iceland*, *Sweden*, *Denmark* and *Reykjavik*.

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# 15 TOP EXPERIENCES

## National Park Hiking, Northern Finland

**1** Finland's great swaths of protected forests and fells make it one of Europe's prime hiking destinations. Head to the Karhunkierros (p262) near Kuusamo for a striking terrain of hills and sharp ravines, never prettier than in autumn. The Urho Kekkonen National Park (p298) in Lapland is one of Europe's great wildernesses; the spectacular gorge of the Kevo Strict Nature Reserve (p307) and the fell scenery of Pallas-Yllästunturi National Park (p289) are other great northern options. A network of camping huts make itinerary planning easy and are good spots to meet Finns. Oulanka National Park

## Design Shopping in Helsinki

**2** Functional, elegant, outrageous or wacky: the choice is yours. The capital's decidedly nonmainstream chic is best explored by browsing the vast variety of design shops that spatter its centre. Whether examining iconic 20th-century Finnish forms in the flagship emporia of brands like Iittala, Marimekko and Artek, or tracking down the cutting edge and just plain weird in the bohemian Punavuori district, you're sure to find something you didn't know you needed but just can't do without.









## Sledding & Snowmobiling, Lapland

**3** Fizzing over the snow behind a team of huskies under the low winter sun is tough to beat. Short jaunts are great, but overnight safaris give you time to feed and bond with your lovable dogs and try out a wood-fired sauna in the middle of the winter wilderness. It's no fairy-tale ride though; expect to eat some snow before you learn to control your team. If you're more of a cat person, you can enjoy similar trips on a snowmobile or behind reindeer. Gulf of Bothnia, near Kemi

## Music Festivals

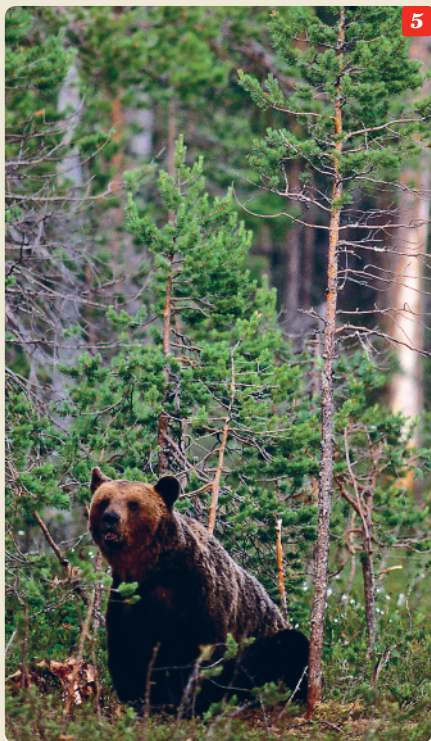
**4** Are you a chamber-music aficionado? Or do you like rock so raucous it makes your ears bleed? Whatever your pleasure, Finland has a music festival to suit. Savonlinna's fortress is the dramatic setting for a month-long opera festival; fiddlers gather at Kaustinen for full-scale folk; Pori, Espoo and Tampere attract thousands of jazz fans; workaday Seinäjoki flashes sequins and high heels during its five-day tango festival; temples to rock are raised in Seinäjoki, Tampere, Turku and Vantaa; and the Sibelius Festival ushers in autumn with classical grace. Savonlinna Opera Festival



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## Bear-Watching, Eastern Finland

**5** Old Honeypaws, the brown bear (*Ursus arctos*), is the national animal of Finland. Around a thousand of these powerful creatures live in the northeast, coming and going with impunity across the Finnish–Russian border. Several operators run bear hides close to the frontier, where you can sit a silent night's vigil as bruins snuffle out elk carcasses and carefully hidden chunks of salmon. The best time to see them is between mid-April and August – with a slight gap in July when the bears have mating rather than meals in mind.

## Summer Cottages

**6** The symbol of the Finnish summer is a cosy cottage perched on a placid blue lake, with a little rowing boat, a fishing pier, and perhaps its own swimming beach. The simplest rustic cabins have outside loos and water drawn from a well, while the most modern designer bungalows have every creature comfort, from state-of-the-art coffee machines to infrared saunas. Whether you're looking for a wilderness escape or somewhere for a big family party, you're bound to find the perfect place from the thousands of rental cottages on offer.

## Food Markets

**7** Counters selling speciality cheeses, rough black rye breads, handmade chocolates, Finnish sausages and smoked Baltic herring fill richly scented indoor market halls (kauppahalli) throughout Finland, while fleeting summer market squares (kauppatori) burst with straight-from-the-garden vegetables. Around Midsummer, fill your bags with tiny new potatoes, nutty and sweet. In July, meander with a mouthful of juicy red strawberries, or sit on a sunny bench to pop peas fresh from the pod. Autumn's approach is softened by tumbled piles of peppery chanterelles and glowing Lapland cloudberries, which appear through August like a magician's trick.



## Sámi Culture, Inari

**8** Finland's indigenous northerners have used technology to ease the arduous side of reindeer herding while maintaining an intimate knowledge of Lapland's natural world. Their capital, Inari, and the nearby Lemmenjoki National Park (p305) are the best places to begin to learn about Sámi culture and traditions, starting at the marvellous Siida museum (p302). Arrange wilderness excursions with Sámi guides, meet reindeer, and browse high-quality handicrafts and music, the sale of which benefits local communities.

## Traditional Saunas

**9** These days most Finns have saunas at home, but there are still a few of the old public ones left. They smell of old pine, tar shampoo and long tradition, with birch whisks and no-nonsense scrubdowns available as extras. Weathered Finnish faces cool down on the street outside, loins wrapped in a towel and hand wrapped around a cold beer. Helsinki and Tampere are the best places for this, while Kuopio's old-style smoke sauna (p183) takes a day to prepare and offers a more rural experience, with a lake to jump into right alongside.



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## Watery Activities, Lakeland

**10** This part of Finland seems to have more water than land, so it'd be a crime not to get out on it. You can take three days to paddle the family-friendly Oravareitti (Squirrel Route; p174) or head out into Kolovesi and Linnansaari national parks to meet freshwater seals (p171). Tired arms? Historic lake boats still ply what were once important transport arteries; head out from any town on short cruises, or make a day of it and head from Savonlinna right up to Kuopio or across Finland's largest lake, Saimaa, to Lappeenranta. Steamboat, Lake Saimaa

## Finnish Barlife

**11** Rumours about Finnish beer prices are a little exaggerated, and there's a big social drinking scene here that's great to take part in. Finns lose that famous reserve after a *tuoppi* (glass) or three of beer and are keen to chat to foreigners; it's the best way to meet local people. The main cities are full of original and offbeat bars, and you'll soon find a favourite Suomi tippale, whether it's the Finnish ciders, microbrewed beers, sweet-and-sour *lonkero*, or unusual shots such as salty liquorice vodka or cloudberry liqueur.



## Icy Accommodation, Lapland

**12** Even reading the words 'snow hotel' can shoot a shiver up your spine, but spending a night in one of these ethereally beautiful, extravagantly artistic icy buildings is a marvellous, though expensive, experience. There are several to choose from in Lapland (see p16); heavy-duty sleeping bags ensure a relatively cosy slumber, and a morning sauna banishes any lingering chills. Even if you don't fancy spending the night, you can visit the complexes, maybe pausing for a well-chilled vodka cocktail in the bar.

## Day Trip to Tallinn

**13** Estonia's capital, once an important Hanseatic port, is a short ferry ride across the Baltic from Helsinki and offers an intriguing contrast. Its majestic World Heritage-listed Old Town (p59) is one of Europe's best-preserved medieval jewel boxes, but take your time to wander away from the tourist beat, too. Estonia has a vibrant, up-and-coming energy that can be just as intoxicating as the cheap beer that draws the Finnish crowd.







13

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## Cycling, Åland Archipelago

**14** Charming Åland is best explored by bicycle: you'll appreciate its understated attractions all the more if you've used pedal-power to reach them. Bridges and ferries link many of its 6000 islands, and well-signposted routes take you off 'main roads' down winding lanes and forestry tracks. Set aside your bicycle whenever the mood takes you, to pick wild strawberries, wander castle ruins, sunbathe on a slab of red granite, visit a medieval church, quench your thirst at a cider orchard, or climb a lookout tower to gaze at the glittering sea.



14

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15

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## Rauma Old Town

**15** The largest wooden Old Town in the Nordic countries, Vanha Rauma (p220) deserves its Unesco World Heritage status. Its 600 houses might be museum pieces, but they also form a living centre: residents tend their flower boxes and chat to neighbours, while visitors meander in and out of the low-key cafes, shops, museums and artisans' workshops. Rauman *giäl*, an old sailors' lingo that mixes up a host of languages, is still spoken here, and the town's medieval lacemaking heritage is celebrated during Pitsiviikko (Rauma Lace Week).

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