



Karelia

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Wolkoff Restaurant & Wine Bar (p171)
- ➔ Teatteri (p176)
- ➔ Parpeinpirtti (p178)
- ➔ Alamaja (p180)
- ➔ Säräpirtti Kippurasarvi (p171)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Kestikievari Herranniemi (p181)
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- ➔ Lappeenrannan Kylpylä (p170)
- ➔ Timitranniemi Camping (p182)
- ➔ Ruunaa Hiking Centre (p184)

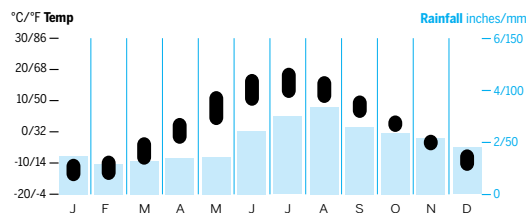
Why Go?

If you're looking for wilderness, powerful history and even the Finnish soul, your search starts here. Densely forested and gloriously remote, the region is a paradise for nature lovers. Bears, wolverines and wolves roam freely across the Russian frontier, and animal hides allow visitors a close encounter. Opportunities to get active abound: the landscape is threaded by hiking routes, whitewater rapids and waterways navigable by canoe, and lakes offer idyllic kayaking and boating. In winter outdoor pursuits include fantastic skiing, dog-sledding, snowshoeing and ice-fishing.

Karelia straddles both sides of the Finnish–Russian border, with a distinct culture, language, religion, cuisine, music and architecture. In Finland's Karelian regions, lakeside Lappeenranta is still strongly connected to its sister cities that have been part of Russia since WWII. Once-battle-scarred Joensuu is now a vibrant university town, and Imatra still recalls its 18th-century golden age as a Russian aristocracy playground.

When to Go

Karelia



Mid-Apr The bear-watching season begins, when brown bears wake from their winter sleep.

Jul Joensuu's party atmosphere amps up during the international Illosaari Rock Festival.

Dec Koli National Park's ski resort opens for business.



Karelia Highlights

- 1 Swooshing down the ski slopes or swooping above the tree line aboard the summer chairlift at **Koli National Park** (p179)
- 2 Shooting Ruunaa's rapids on a rubber **raft** (p183)
- 3 Cruising from Lappeenranta to the Karelian town of Vyborg on a 'visa-free' **trip to Russia** (p170)
- 4 Ticking another 'superlative place' off your list beyond Hattuvaara at the far-flung **easternmost point of the EU** (p178)
- 5 Walking with a **reindeer** (p180) in its natural habitat in the pristine Lake Pielinen region's Haapalahti
- 6 Dangling upside down over torrents of water on a flying fox across the **Imatra Rapids** (p172)
- 7 Falling in love with the woodland chapel at **Paateri** (p181), carved by artist Eva Ryyänen
- 8 Spending the night in an **animal hide** (p182) near Lieksa, awaiting wolverines, lynx and bears
- 9 Hiking the poignant **Karhunpolku** (Bear's Trail; p183), scattered with WWII remains