



Oulu, Kainuu & Koillismaa

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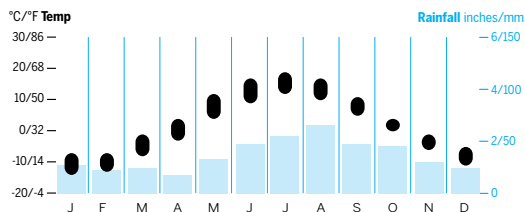
Why Go?

Stretching across Finland's waist from the Gulf of Bothnia to the long Russian border, this broad swath of territory takes in Oulu's technology boffins and brown bears raising their shaggy heads as they patrol the eastern forests. It offers some of the nation's most memorable outdoor experiences, from birdwatching and beachcombing in the west to skiing, canoeing and trekking in the east.

The further you get from Oulu, the more remote things become. Kainuu is a heavily wooded wilderness and important animal habitat traversed by the famed UKK trekking route. Koillismaa, near the Russian border, is the transitional region between the south and Lapland, and includes Oulanka National Park, one of Finland's natural highlights. It is an area of tumbling rivers, isolated lakes and dense forests. This is perhaps Finland's best destination for getting active in the great outdoors, whether in summer or winter.

When to Go

Oulu



Apr Still good snow cover for skiing, but acceptable temperatures and plenty of light.

Jul Bear-watching in Kuusamo, canoeing in Oulanka National Park and chamber music in Kuhmo.

Sep The most beautiful time for hiking, with autumn *ruska* colours filling the forests.



Oulu, Kainuu & Koillismaa Highlights

1 Canoeing river routes or **trekking** the Karhunkierros trail in Oulanka National Park (p223), through some of Finland's finest wilderness scenery

2 Creeping into the evening forests to **spot brown bears** (p221) or meet their boisterous

orphaned cousins (p220) near Kuusamo

3 Chilling out in the evening sunshine that kisses the **kauppatori** (market squares; p210) in Oulu

4 Getting back to Finland's Stone Age at the informative **Kierikkikeskus** (p215) museum

5 Braving the Bothnian waters on relaxing **Hailuoto** (p214) island

6 Letting the young musicians string you along at Kuhmo's excellent **chamber music festival** (p218)

History

The region reflects its tar-producing history. In the 19th century the remote Kainuu and Koillismaa areas began producing tar from the numerous pines, and sent it on the precarious journey downriver to Oulu, whence it was shipped to the boat-building nations of Europe. The merchants prospered, and Oulu still has a sleek, cosmopolitan vibe

compared with the backwoods feel of the rest of its province.

Oulu

208 / POP 141,670

Prosperous Oulu (Swedish: Uleåborg) is one of Finland's most enjoyable cities to visit. In summer angled sunshine bathes the