



West Coast

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Best Places to Eat

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Best Places to Stay

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Why Go?

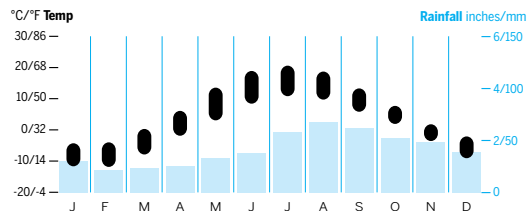
Stretching for 500km along the sandy shoreline, Finland's west coast harbours a cache of historic old wooden towns such as Uusikaupunki, Kristinestad and Unesco-listed Rauma, founded at the height of the Swedish empire. The area still retains strong links with neighbouring Sverige (Sweden), with Swedish spoken almost everywhere.

Fantastic summer festivals held in the region include the Nordic countries' biggest folk-music gathering in tiny Kaustinen, huge rock and tango festivals in Seinäjoki, and world-renowned jazz in Pori.

But the coastline itself is the biggest attraction. Some of the best beaches are in and around the arty, seaside city of Vaasa, with kids' amusement parks, waterparks and spas on its adjacent island. Stunning beaches also extend south of Kalajoki at Hiekkasärkät, where holiday cottages hide among the dunes and forests, and the horizon turns a fiery kaleidoscope of crimson, orange and magenta hues during spectacular sunsets.

When to Go

West Coast



May Windsurfing season starts at the beautiful 6km-long beach, Yyteri.

Jun Outdoor waterparks open their slides and turn on the wave machines.

Jul Some big festivals: Pori Jazz, Seinäjoki's Tango-markkinat and Vaasa's Hietsku Rock.

West Coast Highlights

1 Wandering the colourful Unesco World Heritage-listed wooden Old Town of **Rauma** (p190)

2 Pondering outlandish retro-futuristic inventions at Uusikaupunki's humorous **Bonk Museum** (p189)

3 **Cruising** (p203) the rapidly rising islands of the scattered Kvarken Archipelago

4 **Nordic walking** (p206) through the white-sand dunes of the sport's birthplace, Hiekkasärkät

5 Zipping to the top of modernist architect Alvar Aalto's **Lakeuden Risti Church** (p198) to view his harmonious town centre in Seinäjoki

6 Taking in natural history exhibits and artworks by Finnish and international masters at Vaasa's diverse **Pohjanmaan Museo** (p199)

7 Surveying the stone burial cairns scattered through the forest at the Bronze Age **Sammallahdenmäki** (p194) burial site

