



# Finland



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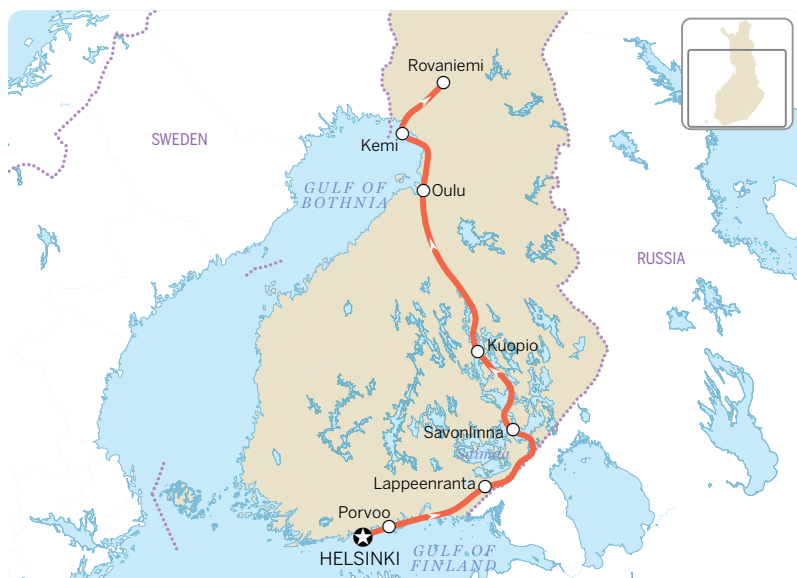
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# Itineraries



## 2 WEEKS Essential Suomi

This highlights tour of Finland covers some of the best places the country has to offer, with cities, castles, lakes, saunas and Santa on the menu.

Kick-off in capital **Helsinki**, prowling the buzzing design district and unwinding in excellent restaurants and bars. Hit Suomenlinna or an island restaurant to get a feel for the archipelago, and day trip to historic **Porvoo's** enchanting wooden buildings. Next head to **Lappeenranta** on the shores of Finland's largest lake. Then – go by boat in summer – it's gorgeous **Savonlinna**, where the stunning castle hosts an opera festival. It's a memorable place with plenty to do in the surrounding area: take your time.

Then to the heart of the Lakeland, **Kuopio**, another segment you can do on a lake boat. Try to time your visit to coincide with the convivial smoke sauna. The high latitudes are in evidence once you get to **Oulu** – depending on the season, the sun barely sets or barely rises. It's one of Finland's liveliest towns, with a great summer marketplace.

In winter stop in **Kemi** to see the snow castle and take an ice-breaker cruise. Finally, head to **Rovaniemi**, capital of Lapland and a great base for any number of activities. From there, explore the north or get the sleeper train back to Helsinki.



## Lapp Gold

Lapland's unique charms deserve plenty of time. This can be done in a week, but take two if you can, giving yourself time for some of the numerous activities on offer.

**Rovaniemi** is Lapland's capital and a logical place to start. It's also a good spot to hire a car. Santa Claus is the big crowd-puller here, but the real don't-miss attraction is the excellent Arktikum museum to learn about these northern latitudes. Further south in **Ranua**, you can see some of the region's fauna at its zoo. Cut eastward to **Ruka**, a lively winter ski resort and activity base. Here, there's walking to be done in **Oulanka National Park**, including the Karhunkierros, one of Finland's best treks. You can also canoe some great river routes and go bear-watching from nearby **Kuusamo**.

From Ruka, head north via **Kemijärvi** to **Sodankylä**. Don't miss the wonderful old wooden church. Continue north through ever-more-sparsely populated territory; when you reach **Urho Kekkonen National Park**, you're in one of Europe's great wildernesses. Take some time out for a hike across the fells, or try gold-panning at **Tankavaara**. **Saariselkä** is the best base to organise all sorts of summer and winter activities.

**Inari**, one of Lapland's most intriguing towns, is the capital of Finland's Sámi, a handicrafts centre and home to the memorable Siida museum. Next it's nearby **Lemmenjoki National Park**, where treks, river trips, gold-panning and more Sámi culture await. With time, head up to **Kevo Strict Nature Reserve** for a great three-to-four day trek.

Continue the loop towards northwest Finland, perhaps cutting through Norway, ending up at **Hetta**, another Sámi town, and trailhead for more excellent walking. If you have time, take a detour up the 'arm' of Finland to remote **Kilpisjärvi**, in the shadow of fearsome Norwegian mountains and the smaller bulk of Saana Fell, a rewarding climb with some memorable views over three nations.

Then **Muonio**. In winter you should go husky-sledding, but even in summer it's worth meeting the lovable dogs. Finally, return to Rovaniemi, stopping to ski or rent a summer cottage at built-up **Levi** or peaceful **Pyhä**.



10 DAYS

## Contemporary Cityhopping

Finland's thriving design and music industries mean that its cities, though small, pack plenty of contemporary punch.

Take a few days to get to know **Helsinki**. Check out the Design Museum, then Puna-vuori's small studios and shops. See what's on at Kaapelitehdas and Korjaamo cultural centres, and pay Kiasma a visit. Fine-dining restaurants and stylish, quirky or just plain weird bars make the evenings fly by.

Ferryboat across to **Tallinn**, Estonia's capital. The traditional architecture of the Old Town meets post-Soviet creative energy in an intriguing mix. Back in Helsinki, aim for **Tampere**, a model of post-industrial regeneration. Take in the bohemian vibe and stunning lakescapes, and head for a half-day trip down to **Iittala** to see the home of one of Finland's iconic design brands.

Cut southwest down to **Turku**. The country's stateliest city has plenty going on, whether it's the Ruisrock festival or the latest exhibition in Ars Nova, the contemporary art centre that hosts the Turku Biennaali. Head back to Helsinki along the coast. Thirsty for more? Sort out your visa and St Petersburg is just a train ride away.

10 DAYS

## Baltic & Bothnian Coasts

This trip takes you through Swedish- and Finnish-speaking communities and gives the chance to see picture-perfect wooden towns and sparkling blue water.

Heading west from Helsinki, stop at the pretty ironworks village of **Fiskars**, near family-friendly seaside **Ekenäs**. Then on to the noble wooden villas of **Hanko**, where St Petersburg society once summered. **Turku** has many drawcards, as does the surrounding **archipelago** and picturesque **Naantali**. Further offshore, **Åland** offers cycling and maritime history.

**Uusikaupunki**'s museum deserves a prize for ironic humour, while **Rauma** features charming wooden buildings. **Pori** hosts a pumping jazz festival. The next coastline is 'Parallel Sweden': first stop **Kristinestad** with its Swedish-speaking majority. **Vaasa** has an excellent museum. West of here, **Kvarken archipelago** is an ever-changing landscape.

**Jakobstad**'s Old Town rivals Rauma's for beauty. Beautiful coastline runs north to **Oulu**. Stop off at **Hailuoto** island for a relaxing stay by the sandy beach; it's not often you can have a dip this far north.



## 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 Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Beijing and Delhi, 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, fuelled by a love of wilderness hiking, the *Kalevala*, huskies,

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



### Catherine Le Nevez

**Turku & the South Coast; Åland Archipelago; Karelia; West Coast** Catherine's wanderlust kicked in when she roadtripped across Europe aged four, and she's been hitting the road at every opportunity since, completing her Doctorate of Creative Arts in Writing, Masters in Professional Writing, and postgrad qualifications in Editing and Publishing along the way – as well as scores of Lonely Planet guidebooks and articles covering destinations throughout Europe and beyond.

Having experienced Finland's freezing mid-winter temperatures, this trip's highlights included hitting the country's fabulous summer festivals and blissfully warm beaches.

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