



EXPERIENCE THE JOYS OF WINTER
IN THE SAVONLINNIA REGION

2024

Frozen Saimaa

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Frozen Saimaa

From midwinter to spring awakenings

Do you enjoy the biting, frosty weather, slippery ice, sparkling snow and beautifully frosty trees?

Frozen Saimaa is the main theme of the winter season, celebrating the best time to be outside in the fresh air enjoying the wonderful winter landscapes of the Lake Saimaa area.

Frozen Saimaa - come and be amazed!

Moonlight skiing

Imagine a perfect track in front of you, a snowy landscape lit by an outdoor fire around you, and a perfect moonlight above. Full moon days in late winter and early spring

25.1. | 24.2. | 23.4.

Lunar eclipse 25.3.



Throughout the ages, Finns have tried to predict the weather from various signs of nature. We have looked at the sky and followed the movements of animals. In addition, in the old days, people had a lot of predictions about the future weather based on the calendar. In the agrarian community, the weather was an essential factor affecting livelihood and work.

Nature has been an inspiration for many names in the Finnish language, including the names of the months. In Finnish, all the names of the months end in “kuu” which means “moon”.

Saint Knut's Day

After Saint Knut's Day, a long time period without celebrations begins. Even though nature sleeps, the mother bear gives birth to her cubs in the winter nest and the burbot heads for the spawning grounds.

TAMMIKUU = JANUARY

TAMMI MEANS THE MIDDLE BEAM OF A MILL. THIS MONTH IS IN THE MIDDLE OF WINTER AND THE COLDEST TIME OF THE YEAR.

13.1. Saint Knut's Day – Saint Knut takes Christmas away.

HELMIKUU = FEBRUARY

HELMI MEANS PEARL OR BEAD, AND THE NAME OF THIS MONTH COMES FROM THE ICE BEADS THAT GLITTER ON THE TREE BRANCHES DURING FROST THAT FOLLOWS THAW.

2.2. 🥞 Pancake Day

3.2. 🇫🇮 Alvar and Aino Aalto Day, Day of Finnish Architecture and Design

4.2. Candlemas - the last day of midwinter and the first day of spring

5.2. 🇫🇮 Runeberg Day – the day of Finland's national poet

6.2. 🇫🇮 Sámi National Day

9.2. 🐟 National Fish Soup Day

11.2. 112 day (Finnish emergency number is 112)

11.-14.2. Shrovetide Shrovetide begins on Shrove Sunday and ends on Ash Wednesday.

14.2. Valentine's Day

21.2. International Tourist Guide Day

22.2. 🐕 Walking the Dog Day

24.2. Winter-Matti throws a hot stone into the water and grows icicles on the eaves of the buildings.

28.2. 🇫🇮 Kalevala Day, Day of Finnish Culture Kalevala is the national epic of Finland (1828), Elias Lönnrot.

MAALISKUU = MARCH

MAA MEANS GROUND, AND THIS MONTH GETS ITS NAME FROM THE GROUND THAT IS EXPOSED FROM UNDER THE MELTING SNOW.

3.3. World Wildlife Day

8.3. International Women's Day – roses for a loved one

9.3. 🍖 Meatball Day

10.3. New Moon in March predicts spring weather – If the Moon in March is born with a mild southerly wind, there will be an early, beautiful and warm spring. If, on the other hand, a cold north wind blows, it will be a long, slow and cold spring.

In Savo, the new moon in March is associated with marital happiness. The future partner could be seen in a dream the night after seeing the first moon in March.

19.3. 🇫🇮 Minna Canth Day, Day of Equality – Minna Canth was the first Finnish female journalist, writer and social activist, whose contribution to the development of Finland as a pioneer country in equality and education has been significant.

20.3. Day of Happiness and Spring Equinox – Day and night are of equal length.

24.3. Palm Sunday

In Finnish, the days of the week preceding Easter have been named according to the traditional chores that people used to perform on each day:

• On *malkamaanantai*/"Beam Monday", beams were collected.

• Kindlings or small sticks to light a fire carved on *tikkutiistai*/"Stick Tuesday", were thought to be endowed with good luck and to drive away evil spirits.

Delicious:

Traditional Finnish Easter dishes were egg milk, blood sausages, fresh bread, roasted lamb, oven cheese – and of course cold malt porridge *mämmi*!

• On *kellokeskiviikko*/"Bell Wednesday", cows were let out to spring pastures with bells on their necks.

• On *kiirastorstai* an evil creature, *kiira*, was chased away by going around the house and yard with rattling scrap and a smoking pot of tar.

• On *pitkäperjantai*/"Long Friday", you were not supposed to leave home, so the day could feel long.

• *Lankalauantai*/"Yarn Saturday", was a good day for dyeing yarns.

• *Sukkasunnuntai*/"Sock Sunday", gets its name from being quiet, in Finnish "*sukkasillaan*".

31.3. Daylight saving time starts – We set clocks forward towards summer, and the evenings get longer.

HUHTIKUU = APRIL

HUHTA CAN MEAN CLEARED WOODS. THIS MONTH USED TO BE GOOD FOR BURNING DOWN STRETCHES OF FOREST TO FERTILIZE THE SOIL. THE FORESTS WERE NOT YET TOO DRY, WHICH MADE IT EASIER TO CONTROL THE FIRE.

1.4. Easter Monday

1.4. April Fool's Day

9.4. 🇫🇮 Mikael Agricola Day, Day of the Finnish Language

14.4. The Summer Day – the first summer day of the year

17.-23.4. Thrifty Week

25.4. Markku's Day

27.4. 🇫🇮 National War Veterans' Day

The singing cuckoo announces that summer is arriving.

Birch sap

Birch sap is nature's own healthy drink that is collected from nature in March-May. Fresh sap is clear, odourless and sweet liquid that is low in calories, a real "super drink" that has for centuries been used both as a medicine for stomach aches and joint problems and as a source of youth.

TOUKOKUU = MAY

TOUKO IS AN ANCIENT WORD FOR SPRING. THE HARVEST IS SOWN, THE SAP FLOWS AND THE BIRDS SING.

1.5. 🇫🇮 May Day, Labour Day in Finland

Delicious:

Funnel cakes, doughnuts and mead

9.5. 🇫🇮 Europe Day

9.5. Ascension Day - In the old days, bonfires were lit to bring good luck.

12.5. 🇫🇮 Mother's Day

12.5. 🇫🇮 J.V. Snellman Day, Day of Finnish Heritage

13.5. 🐼 Finnish children's forest excursion day and apple pie day

19.5. 🇫🇮 Remembrance Day (third Sunday in May)

19.5. Pentecost

25.5. Urpo's Day – The weather begins to warm up considerably.

31.5. 🐼 National Smile Day

If you don't have a sweetheart at Pentecost, you won't have one all summer.

In the old days, the year was divided into only two seasons, summer and winter. Nowadays, there are four seasons, and this day is best known as the first day of the spring.

If it's not cold on Candlemas and no frost on Paavo's day (25.1.), then it's frost in July and winter in the middle of summer.

Delicious:

Runeberg torte

Delicious:

Blinis, or savoury pancakes, are also part of the Eastern Finnish Shrovetide traditions. Hot blinis are eaten with smetana, caviar and various garnishes, such as onion and pickles.

Delicious:

Traditional Eastern Finnish dishes: Karelian hot pot with mashed potatoes, Karelian pies and Finnish blueberry pie with rye crust, *rättänä*.



Inkeritalo waffle café

The idyllic Inkeritalo opens its doors for winter holiday makers and is open:
19.2.-10.3. (weeks 8-10)
Thu-Sat from 12:00 to 18:00
Sun from 12:00 to 17:00
Soup lunch served daily from 12:00 to 15:00
On the day of Torch Skating until 9 p.m.!



23.2. Punkaharju Torch Skating

Traditional event in Punkaharju, where some of the tour skating trails (approx. 5-6 km) are lit for the evening with outdoor fires creating a magical winter atmosphere.



24.2. Linnansaari Day

Outdoor day for the whole family in Linnansaari National Park.



9.3. Retro Ski Day

A fun skiing event, where you can dig up old ski equipment and clothing for use.



WINTER EVENTS IN THE SAVONLINNIA REGION

13.1. MOGA-club: Rytmihäiriö + Hyljätyt
(Finnish hardcore / metal / punk band)
House of Olaf

13.1. The Good Stuff
(Finnish neo-rockabilly band)
Restaurant Rinssi-Eversti

3.2. Jarkko Martikainen (Finnish artist)
House of Olaf

10.2. Leavings orchestra featuring vocalist Timo Rautiainen
House of Olaf

16.-18.2. Wellbeing Weekend
B&B Taipaleenniemi

23.-25.2. Winter Yoga Weekend
B&B Taipaleenniemi

23.2. Tero Vaara (Finnish artist)
Restaurant Rinssi-Eversti

24.2. Snow Yoga and Lunch
B&B Taipaleenniemi

22.3. Ellinoora (Finnish artist)
House of Olaf

29.3.-1.4. Easter Week in Oravi

30.3. Miljoonasade duo (Finnish rock band)
Restaurant Rinssi-Eversti

13.4. Jenni Mustajärvi
(Finnish poprock artist)
Restaurant Rinssi-Eversti

For all the events in the Savonlinna region, see:
tapahtumat.visitsavonlinna.fi/en-FI



Whatever the weather



OLAVINLINNIA CASTLE

The northernmost medieval castle in the world is a perfect place to visit all year round.

olavinlinna.com



RIIHISAARI

The unique Riihisaari museum next to Olavinlinna Castle takes its visitors on a journey to the culture, history and nature of Lake Saimaa with its permanent and changing exhibitions. Riihisaari has been awarded as the museum of the year in 2023.

riihisaari.fi/en



RELAX IN THE SPA

There are several good destinations in the area for a short break alone or with the family. Explore the offerings of **Kruunupuisto**, **Tanhuvaara**, **Spahotel Casino** and **Järvisydän**.



Good night and sleep tight!

The region's accommodation options are versatile. Whether you're travelling alone, with a partner or with your family, the region is sure to have something for everyone. You can spend your winter vacation relaxing and recovering from the stress of everyday life, or you can visit one of the region's spas or get active on the children's terms.

STAY IN A HOTEL...

Original Sokos Hotel Seurahuone Savonlinna

Cozy hotel rooms and stylish
Seurahuone Apartments

sokoshotels.fi/en

Spahotel Casino

A spa hotel in the Savonlinna city centre

spahotelcasino.fi/en

...OR RENT A COTTAGE

Rent your own cottage for a vacation or for working remotely and make your work a little more relaxing. What could be better than to start or end the working day with a morning sauna and a dip to the lake through a hole in the ice? If cold water isn't your cup of tea, an outdoor hot tub is also available for many cottages. Check out the options: visitsavonlinna.fi/en/rental-cabins-at-lake-saimaa/



A HOLIDAY FOR ADULTS ONLY?

Do you want to get away from everyday life to unwind and be pampered? This is possible in Rantasalmi, where you can enjoy the peace of nature, experiential accommodation and delicious seasonal food. **Nature Hotel & Spa Resort Järvisydän** together with **Kuru Resort** provide a relaxing escape where you can focus on just being. For the more adventurous, versatile activities are also available.

jarvisydan.com/en



Tip!

"Winter rooms" at Waahto Brewhouse

Book a winter room for an idyllic dinner with a loved one or with friends. A fun experience in the harbour while admiring the steamships. waahtobrewhouse.fi/?lang=en

We recommend!

www.lomalehto.com/en

www.oravivillage.com/en

www.punkaharjuresort.fi/en

www.harjunportti.fi/en

A holiday apartment instead?

www.kruunupuisto.fi/en



We recommend!

Savonlinna's specialty are sympathetic art birdhouses made by a self-taught folk artist Marko Ruuskanen. You can come across these by chance or go on a self-guided tour that takes you around the city, introducing you to the wonderful landscapes and works of art found along the way.

Pick up a brochure from **Riihisaari** or see visitsavonlinna.fi/en/savonlinna-area-info



Peace of mind naturally

The Lake Saimaa nature provides natural relaxation and stress relief.

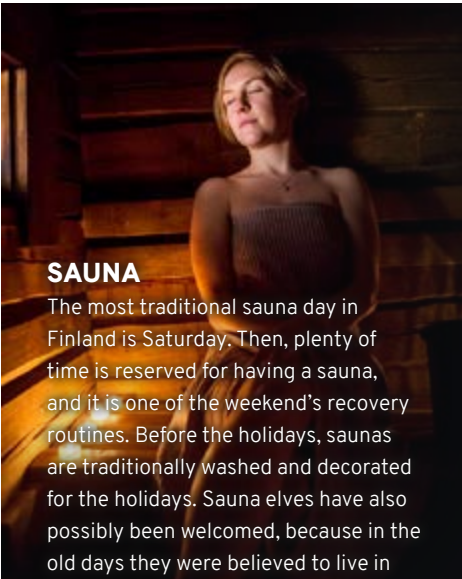
Ground yourself and breathe.

In winter, you can relax in peace, with all your senses and with no rush, by enjoying peaceful days in the middle of quiet nature. The crunching of the snow, the hum of the wind, the creaking of the ice, the wonderful starry sky and the crackling of the fireplace with woollen socks on your feet will calm even the most stressed mind.

Did you know?

In 2020,

Finland's sauna culture was inscribed in UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage List, as the first in Finland.



SAUNA

The most traditional sauna day in Finland is Saturday. Then, plenty of time is reserved for having a sauna, and it is one of the weekend's recovery routines. Before the holidays, saunas are traditionally washed and decorated for the holidays. Sauna elves have also possibly been welcomed, because in the old days they were believed to live in the sauna.

Sauna has many health effects, and it is the national medicine of Finns – Sauna relaxes, prevents stress, increases immunity and helps to stay healthy. Finns are said to have swum in a lake through a hole in the ice and rolled in the snow as early as in the 17th century.



Rejoicing allowed

Taking a sauna in winter is a bit more fun... if you take snow and ice with you to the sauna

Snow sauna

Take snowballs with you to the sauna. Make snowballs and put one drop of bath fragrance or essential oil per snowball. Place one snowball at a time on the stove stones. You can also massage hot skin with a snowball – it has a nice cooling effect. You can also take snow into the sauna in a bowl.

Playing with snow is allowed!

Rolling in the snow

Rolling in the snow naked is as liberating as winter swimming. The best kind of snow for this activity is wonderfully soft, frosty snow. Packing, wet, sticky snow doesn't feel as nice.

Sauna tips in the region!

You can book a sauna yoga class at **SaimaaHoliday Oravi**. During the guided class, accompanied by gentle heat, six different yoga positions are performed in 30-45 minutes. After this, there is a possibility for a 1-hour sauna session, where you can relax and take a dip in the canal's refreshing water. oravivillage.com/en

In **Kruunupuisto's sauna world**, you relax in the heat of a traditional Finnish *kelosauna*, a sauna that is made of pine tree logs. In the renovated spa, you can enjoy water sports, massaging bubbles or take a dip in the cold pool. The Inkeritalo morning sauna experience can also be booked in advance. kruunupuisto.fi/en

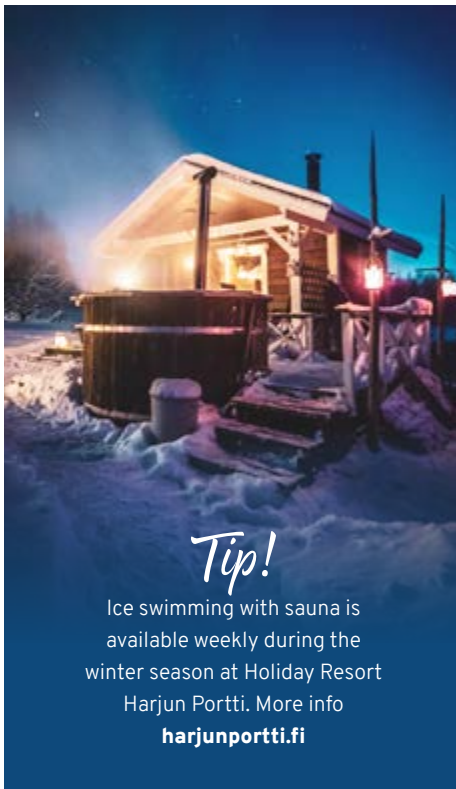
A Savonian sauna experience surrounded by sunken logs at **Nature Hotel & Spa Resort Järvisydän**. In addition to the spa experience, you can try what winter swimming feels like, because in the spa's outdoor pool, there is always refreshing Lake Saimaa water, the temperature of which varies according to the season.

jarvisydan.com/en



WINTER SWIMMING

Swimming in the lake through a hole in the ice has been practiced for health reasons since the 1920s, and nowadays it is something that has plenty of positive effects on health and wellbeing of both the body and the mind. Many winter swimmers wear a hat, and it is a good idea to put on for example woollen socks. Beware – many have been hooked on winter swimming and turned it into a long-term hobby!



Tip!

Ice swimming with sauna is available weekly during the winter season at Holiday Resort Harjun Portti. More info harjunportti.fi



SEAL SLEEPING

This guided relaxation is a tribute to the history of Kruunupuisto. Originally called "hallimakuu" i.e. sleeping and resting on the outdoor terrace, it was a form of treatment for tuberculosis patients at the Kruunupuisto Sanatorium in the past. The term "seal sleeping" comes from the sleeping bags, which make you look like a rare Saimaa ringed seal. This relaxing exercise will take you into the midst of nature to breathe and feel the fresh ridge air. Surrounded by picturesque forest and lake views, we hear the wind humming, allowing all our thoughts to just come and go. kruunupuisto.fi/en



Please keep in mind

Moving on the ice is always at your own risk, but there are routes that are maintained daily according to changes in the weather conditions. You should always have ice claws and a friend with you and stay on maintained routes, because there are spots where the water currents can be dangerous for those inexperienced in moving on the ice.

Call of the ice

In spring, a beautiful, maybe a little eerie concert can be heard on the ice when it groans and creaks. The phenomenon is completely normal and often also indicates that the ice is in good condition. Cold, freezing nights contract the ice, and the warming sun during the day expands it. This variation creates wonderful music, the song of the ice, moaning and groaning.



CHARM OF SPEED ON ICY TRAILS

In the Savonlinna region, in Punkaharju and in Linnansaari National Park, you can find Finland's longest maintained tour skating trails. Skaters should check the ice conditions in advance, as they vary greatly depending on the weather. You can find links to the tour skating diaries at visitsavonlinna.fi/en/tour-skating-lake-saimaa/

Punkaharju

In Punkaharju, the tour skating route (approx. 16 km) starts in front of **Holiday Resort Harjun Portti**. Kick-sledding is also possible on the route. In many places, next to the skating trail, there are winter hiking trails that are meant for walking and cycling (fatbikes are best in winter). Skiers have their own track next to the ice route. Don't deviate from the marked routes. Along the route, in **Kruunupuisto**, there is the wonderful **Inkeritalo** (opening hours on p. 4), where you can take a break and enjoy some warm juice with delicious waffles. During the winter season, Harjun Portti pancake hut is also open during selected opening hours. See the schedules on their website.

harjunportti.fi/en • kruunupuisto.fi/en

Linnansaari National Park

The marked and maintained ice route (approx. 20 km) from **SaimaaHoliday Oravi** via Linnansaari National Park to **Nature Hotel & Spa Resort Järvisydän** in Rantasalmi is great for a winter excursion. At both ends of the route, in Oravi and Järvisydän, rental equipment and versatile services to complement the excursion day are available. In addition, two pancake cafés along the route on Linnansaari and Kaarnetsaari islands are open from time to time. On the plowed trail, you can enjoy tour skating or kick-sledding, and winter cycling is also allowed on the edge of the trail. It's also possible to move on foot or on skis on the marked route.

oravivillage.com/en • jarvisydan.com/en

Tip!

Sledding from Oravi to Linnansaari island is also possible.



WINTER YOGA

Even in winter you can do yoga in nature! Try winter yoga in the snow or on the ice in the fresh air. For equipment, you need warm and slightly flexible clothes and thick woollen socks. Winter yoga is available at Yoga Saimaa. yogasaimaa.fi/en

GREAT CATCHES AWAIT

Lake Saimaa gives plenty of fish also in winter, and there are many options for winter fishing. In the region, seine fishing is a really important form of fishing, but traditional ice fishing is also a good way to bring the day's meal to the table. Perches and roaches are good food, without forgetting the pike. Oravi and Järvisydän and many cottage entrepreneurs offer guided fishing trips and equipment rental.



ARCTIC ICE FLOATING

If you want to experience how it feels like to get into frozen water and try to get out, you should definitely try ice floating: You put on a warm dry waterproof rescue suit and go into the cold water to float. In the Savonlinna region, floating is possible in Oravi's canal or in Olavinlinna Castle's stream. The best time for floating are the cold spring days, when the water which is warmer than the air evaporates and creates a wonderful layer of mist over the ice. Bookings: oravivillage.com/en



Did you know?

Fresh water ice is stronger than sea water ice of the same thickness. A snowmobile needs 15 cm of black ice ("steel ice"), while 5-10 cm carries a person.

*We recommend:
Burbot soup*

Burbot is a fine food fish that is traditionally caught under the ice with fykes, nets and bait hooks from January to the end of February.



MAKE A SNOW ANGEL, FREE CHOICE, OWN STYLE

Lie on your back on clean, soft snow. Move your legs from side to side - this is how the angel's gown is created in the snow. Move your arms up and down while lying in the snow - this is how the wings are formed. After that, you can decorate the angel: Stones, sticks, pine cones or whatever you can find in nature can be used for the hair, the eyes and the mouth. You can also put a candle in the angel's hand and decorate the edge of the gown.

Magic of snow

The Savonlinna region provides a wonderful setting for winter outdoor excursions on foot, on snowshoes, on a bike or on skis. The maintained lean-to-shelters are great for taking a break, or you can just go to one to roast a sausage and to enjoy the fresh air and the beautiful scenery. There are enough destinations for several visits, from daily outdoor spots preferred by locals to the serenity of a national park or a national landscape.



A PEARL IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CITY

Sulosaari island in the heart of Savonlinna city is a nice place to enjoy nature and to relax, also in winter. You can walk or snowshoe the Sulosaari island's route, and there is a lean-to-shelter on the island. The island is ideal for families with kids, and after walking the route, one can go enjoy the pools and saunas of **Spahotel Casino**. spahotelcasino.fi/en



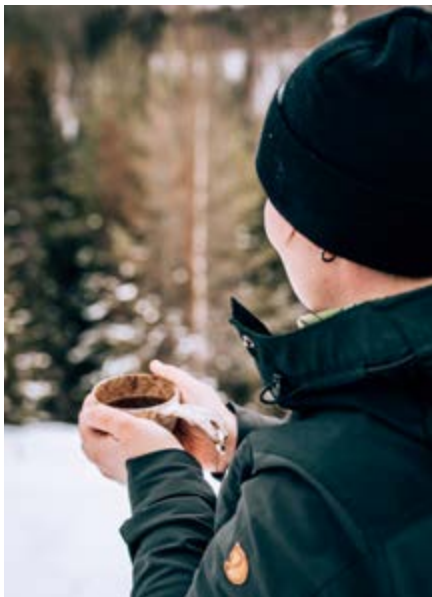
THE JOY OF CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING

Savonlinna region has a very versatile and well-maintained ski trail network. The most eager can enjoy skiing already in November on the first snow ski trail at **Sport Resort Tanhuvaara** and as the snow situation improves there's plenty of ski trails to choose from. You can check the condition of the trails conveniently on our website visitsavonlinna.fi/en/cross-country-skiing/tanhuvaara.fi/en



EXPERIENCE THE NATIONAL LANDSCAPE IN PUNKAHARJU

Punkaharju national landscape can be reached by train, so you don't need your own car. Explore the wintery research park with plenty of tree species on snowshoes or skis, and stop by the lovely **Karjalankallio lean-to-shelter** to enjoy your snack. The cross-country skiing, hiking and winter cycling trails, in addition to tour skating trails, guarantee that there is something to do also during a longer visit. Comfortable accommodation is available in **Punkaharju Resort** or **Kruunupuisto**, whose renovated spa is definitely worth a visit. **Holiday Resort Harjun Portti** offers, in addition to accommodation, also versatile equipment rental services. kruunupuisto.fi/en punkaharjuresort.fi/en harjunportti.fi/en



PISAMALAHTI HILLFORT IN SULKAVA

Pisamalahti Hillfort is a great destination for an excursion also in winter. Caution should be taken and the top of the hill may not be the best place for young kids, but there is a lot to see also at the base of the hill, as well as a maintained lean-to-shelter for roasting sausages. It is easy to get close by car, so you don't necessarily have to reserve a lot of time for the excursion.

LINNANSAARI NATIONAL PARK

Linnansaari National Park is a great excursion destination also in winter. The snowshoeing routes (3 & 7 km) on the main island of the national park or even just the journey to the island along the winter hiking trail in the home waters of the Saimaa ringed seal is a refreshing winter experience. Equipment and a ride to the island can be booked from **SaimaaHoliday Oravi**. oravivillage.com/en

Tip!

Landscape safaris on snowmobiles (5.1.-30.3. almost daily) are arranged in Porokylä's ("Reindeer village's) versatile forests, the best spots of which have a view over Lake Saimaa. The duration of the excursion is 1.5h. More information and reservations:

porokyla.com/en/Winter/Snowmobile-safaris



THE BEST SLEDDING HILLS IN SAVONLINNA...

Ruunarinteet in Pihlajaniemi is mostly known as a skiing centre, where it is easy to learn downhill skiing. In addition to slopes, there are jumps and trails suitable for tricks, and usually also the first sledding hill of the winter, thanks to snow cannons. The hill has lighting, and next to it, there is a lean-to-shelter for roasting sausages and enjoying snacks. When the slopes are open, there is also a café.

The hill of Heikinpohja sports field is located near the city centre, and can be easily reached even on foot. At first, the hill is not steep, but then descends steeply and ends with a jump. Therefore, the hill is the choice of the wild ones. It is also short enough to be climbed up again and again.

The hill in Talvisalo in the Savonlinna city centre is a good choice thanks to its easy accessibility. The hill is long and wide, but high initial speed is required to get to the base.

Nätkin Nyrkkimäki hill near Nätki school is long and curving, and near the base, there are mounds and a jump, so choose your sledding equipment carefully.

... AND IN THE REGION

Purnun vuori hill is located opposite **Tanhuvaara Sports Institute & Sport Resort**. There are fitness stairs next to the hill that can also be used for climbing up. After sledding, you can enjoy the pools and saunas of Tanhuvaara's Sport Spa.

Tanhuvaara offers accommodation, as well, so it is a good destination for a winter holiday or an active holiday. tanhuvaara.fi/en

Kerimäen kirkonmäki is a hill in front of the world's biggest wooden church, and in winter, a favourite of families with kids. The hill is small, but all the more sympathetic. The services of the Kerimäki centre and a parking lot are close to the hill.

The sledding hill close to the sports hall (Liikuntahalli) in Sulkava has lighting. You can borrow the necessary equipment for sledding from the nearby library.

In Enonkoski, there is a sledding hill at the sport centre. If sledding makes you hungry, head to enjoy the delicacies of **Maitolaituri Kahvila & Puoti**.

13.2. Shrovetide celebrations, Enonkoski's sport centre's sledding hill at 16-19.

The best sledding hills in Rantasalmi are located in Ruutana and Osinkonmäki. The traditional sledding day in Osinkonmäki usually takes place during Shrovetide.



• To the sledding hill!

At the beginning of the winter season, the locals dig out the sleds and sliders from storage and head to the sledding hill with friends or family. This activity doesn't require specific skills and is perfect for children and adults of all ages. Hills suitable for sledding can be found in the city, and for the most daring, there are hills with dizzying speeds.

The equipment most commonly used for sliding down a sledding hill is either a toboggan, a sled, a snow racer or a slider, but the choice is yours.

Did you know?

"Shrove bun", a traditional sweet roll, has come to Finland from Sweden, where the correct filling for it is still almond paste. In Finland, however, jam is the more popular filling – jam-filled rolls are sold double the number of those filled with almond paste.

FINNISH SHROVETIDE TRADITIONS

Shrovetide begins on Shrove Sunday and ends on Ash Wednesday. Its customs were traditionally thought to have an impact on the luck of the following summer or the whole year.

"If the Sun shines on Shrovetide, the year will be good."

In the Finnish peasant tradition, sledding was an important part of Shrovetide. In the past, sledding, in addition to just being a way of having fun, used to have an agricultural significance, as well: The further you could sled, the taller your flax would grow.

Today, *hernekeitto* (pea soup) and *laskiaispulla*, a traditional sweet roll filled with plenty of whipped cream and either jam or almond paste belong to Shrovetide. In the past, the food eaten during Shrovetide was supposed to be particularly greasy.

The more grease there was on fingers and on the corners of the mouth, the fatter the pigs would get and the more milk the cows would give the following summer. It was believed that this way the abundance of the food on the table would continue for the whole year. Eating potatoes was not allowed during Shrovetide, because they were believed to cause boils.

The day following Shrove Tuesday is Ash Wednesday. If one practiced sledding on that day, one could ruin the growth of flax.



FANCY A CUP OF COFFEE OR TEA AFTER TIME OUTDOORS?

Saima Kahvila café along the idyllic Linnankatu street provides accommodation and tasty delicacies.

Afternoon Tea with relevant delicacies is available on most days upon request.

If hunger surprises you during outdoor activities, **Cafe Mertala** and **Cafe Presso** offer you coffee with a little sweet or savory. Both cafes serve also a delicious lunch buffet on weekdays, Cafe Mertala also on Saturdays.

raflaamo.fi/en/savonlinna

Café and custom bakery **Kakkukaaos** serves delicacies at the corner of the Savonlinna market square. Here you can enjoy a tasty weekday salad lunch, sit down for a coffee and pastries or order mouth-watering treats for parties.



Tip from a local

If you happen to be an early bird, head to **Kotileipomo Kupsakka**, a bakery and café that the locals love especially as a breakfast spot. It is located a bit outside the city centre, but is worth all the effort.

All kinds of local delicacies including *rommipullat*, *möttöset* and always fresh Karelian pies are available. These are sure to get you hooked!



Hometown of "saimaannorppa"

The big-eyed the Saimaa ringed seal (*Pusa hispida saimensis*), in Finnish saimaannorppa or just norppa is one of the most endangered and rarest seals in the world. This ice-loving seal can only be found in Lake Saimaa, where it was isolated from the other seals when the Ice Age ended more than 8,000 years ago.

Around 430 Saimaa ringed seals live in Lake Saimaa today - but the threat of extinction still exists. Today, the greatest threats to *norppa* are drowning in fish nets and traps, climate change, a small and fragmented population, and disturbances during the breeding season.



NORPPA LIVE

PS. If this spring, you don't have time to participate in a Saimaa ringed seal safari, in May you can watch "norppa live" and maybe spot a Saimaa ringed seal here: wwf.fi/luontolive/norppalive/

MAY IS THE BEST MONTH TO SPOT A SAIMAA RINGED SEAL

In May, when the Saimaa ringed seal moults, it likes to lie on the rocks and islets to dry its fur. After the moulting season, the seals go back into the water. In July, the head of a Saimaa ringed seal that occasionally peaks from the water is evidence that this mythical creature exists.

The best chance to spot a Saimaa ringed seal is with guides that know the waters well. The lake nature and

the life of norppa are discovered on these kayaking/canoeing trips or cruises in a whole new way. On the same excursion, there is also a chance to spot other rare animals, such as the osprey.

Saimaa ringed seal safaris are a real dream come true for nature enthusiasts. Saimaa ringed seal safaris on Lake Saimaa take you for example to the labyrinthine archipelago of Linnansaari National Park, where, when spotting these rare animals, not even a landlubber can avoid getting excited about the trip.

If you move on the ice of Lake Saimaa, don't go close to the islands on the open waters and the snowdrifts on the headlands, there may be a Saimaa ringed seal's lair. Also keep your dog on a leash.



THE YEAR OF THE SAIMAA RINGED SEAL

The winter lair in the snow gives shelter

In the middle of the winter, the Saimaa ringed seal remains hidden from the human eye. It keeps a few breathing holes open in the lake ice and occasionally takes a rest in the cave it has dug into a lakeshore snowdrift.

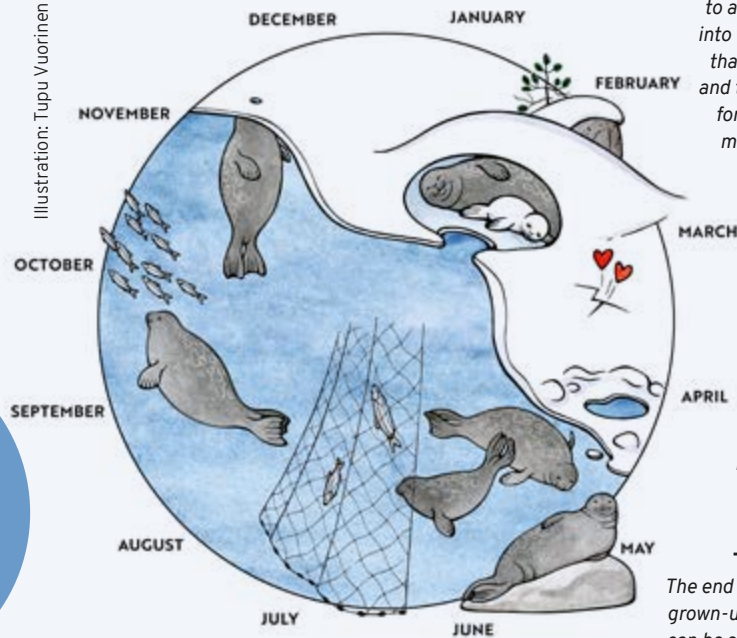
During winters with poor snow conditions, Metsähallitus, together with volunteers, makes snowdrifts where the animals can dig their lairs and give birth to their pups.

Every Saimaa ringed seal has an individual fur pattern, by which it can be identified, just like a human by her fingerprint.

The ringed seal gains weight in autumn

In autumn, the ringed seal eats a lot of fish in order to build up the blubber under its skin. It feeds on small fish that move about in shoals. Its favourite fish are vendace, roach, smelt and perch. The seal requires 2-3 kilos of food on average per day.

Illustration: Tupu Vuorinen



The pup is born

In late February, the seal mother gives birth to a pup in the lair dug into the drift of snow. At that time, the mother and the pup need peace for suckling and are most vulnerable to disturbance.

The Saimaa ringed seal reaches sexual maturity at the age of 4-6 years and can live for more than 30 years.

In the spring, the ringed seals mate

The new pups are conceived in late March-early April.

In late spring, the pup leaves the mother

In mid-May, the mother weans her pup, and the pup starts to live independently.

The ringed seal moults

The end of May is the moulting season for grown-up ringed seals. That is when they can be spotted lolling on lakeshore rocks. Do not disturb a seal drying its fur.

In the summer, the ringed seal faces threats

When learning to live independently, the pup is in great danger of getting entangled in a fishing net or being caught in a fish trap. The use of fishing gear dangerous to ringed seals has been restricted in Lake Saimaa.

The biggest male weighed in Lake Saimaa, "Viljo", weighed 124 kilos. Usually, the weight of an adult "norppa" is approx. 60 kilos. The weight varies greatly depending on the season.

GO ON A SAIMAA RINGED SEAL TRIP

FROM NATURE HOTEL & SPA RESORT JÄRVISYDÄN

Saimaa ringed seal excursion to Linnansaari on a wooden boat

The guide will take you to the labyrinthine islands of Linnansaari National Park, to the best Saimaa ringed seal waters. Savonian espresso with a sweet treat is included. Duration 2.5h.

Price: €87/person (children under 12 y. €43.50)

FROM ORAVI

Unforgettable seal safari to Linnansaari

A safari to the archipelago of the national park, to the home waters of the Saimaa ringed seal and the osprey. Snacks on the main island of the national park. Duration 3h. **Price: €75/person** (children 3-12 y. €40). Wheelchair friendly excursion also available (min €450/boat).

FROM THE SAVONLINNA CITY CENTRE

Saimaa ringed seal cruise to the archipelago

A cruise from Savonlinna city centre to Pihlajavesi archipelago with Elina Enho or Meeri Koivuniemi. A possible Saimaa ringed seal sighting is a happy addition to the programme. Duration 4h. Availability: Sat 11.-25.5. at 10 a.m. and Sun 12.-26.5. at 12 p.m. **Price €53/person** (children €26.50)



Welcoming the new pups

In Finland, there is a tradition that after a woman has given birth, food is brought as a gift to her and her family. In late February, at the time when seal pups are born, there is a fun local event next to Torisilta bridge in the Savonlinna city centre - some food is taken to the Saimaa ringed seal statue next to the bridge, and the nesting peace for the seals is declared.

BOOK THE EXCURSIONS: visitsavonlinna.fi/en/saimaa-ringed-seal-trips



Unique Lake Saimaa

Lake Saimaa, the fourth largest freshwater lake in Europe, offers sparkling pure waters dotted with 14,000 islands and over 15,000 kilometers of shoreline. It is in the top 5 most beautiful lakes in the world – a winding labyrinth filled with breathtaking scenery and the purest nature.



SAVONLINNA REGION

The Savonlinna region at the heart of Lake Saimaa is Finland's oldest tourist destination since the 19th century. Its location between East and West has created a unique way of life, and its diverse and dazzling scenery has long drawn visitors.

DISTANCES BY CAR / TIME

Helsinki → 4:00
Imatra → 1:30
Lappeenranta → 2:00
Mikkeli → 1:30
Varkaus → 1:30
Joensuu → 2:00
Kuopio → 2:00
Jyväskylä → 3:00

HOW TO GET HERE?



By train
Train tickets www.vr.fi



By bus
Bus tickets www.perille.fi



By rental car
Rental cars www.hertz.fi
www.avis.fi
www.eurocar.fi



By plane
Savonlinna airport
www.finavia.fi

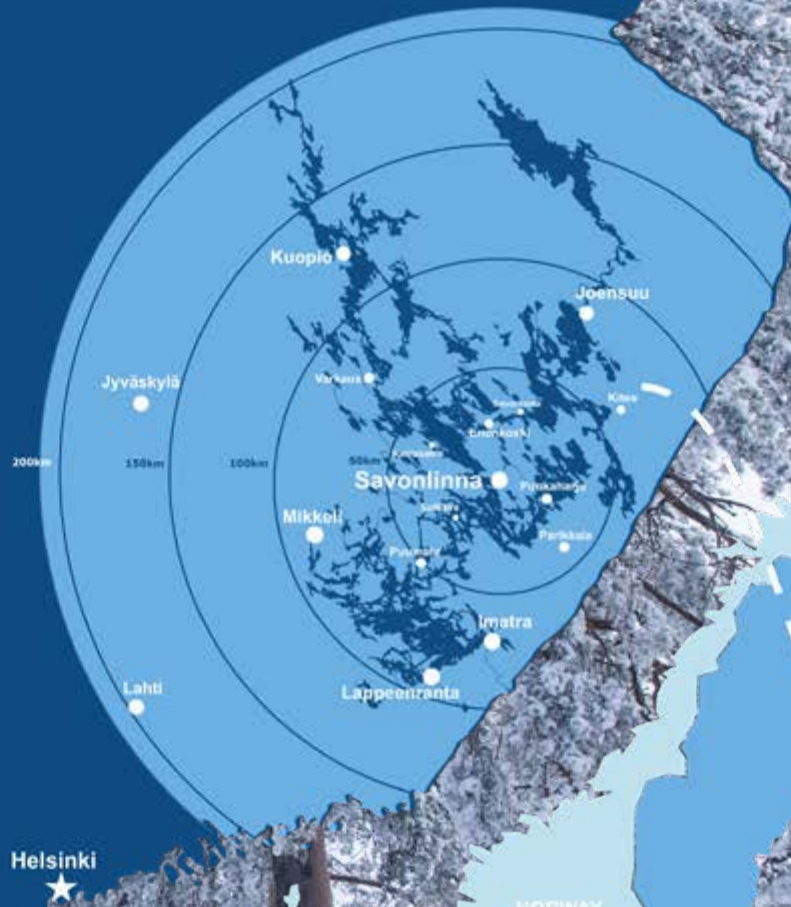
We warmly welcome you to spend an unforgettable holiday in the heart of Lake Saimaa!

TOURIST INFORMATION POINTS IN THE SAVONLINNA REGION

Riihisaari
+358 44 417 4466
info@visitsavonlinna.fi

Punkaharju
The Finnish Forest Museum Lusto
+358 15 345 100
info@visitpunkaharju.fi

visitsavonlinna.fi
LAKE SAIMAA • FINLAND



SUSTAINABLE SAVONLINNA REGION



SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL FINLAND

In August 2023, the tourist area of the Savonlinna region^{*)} reached a significant milestone, when Visit Finland awarded the area the Sustainable Travel Finland (STF) label for destinations. The label is an indication of commitment and systematic work to promote sustainable tourism. Local companies are strongly involved in the development of sustainable tourism in the region, as up to 70 % of companies engaged in international tourism in the Savonlinna region have passed the sustainable tourism program and received the STF label.

^{*)}Savonlinna region = Savonlinna, Punkaharju, Kerimäki, Savonranta, Enonkoski, Rantasalmi and Sulkava