



SCANDINAVIA - FINLAND - LAKES, RIVERS & SAUNAS - 6N/7D



ITINERARY

Itinerary:

Day 1 : Arrive Helsinki - sightseeing then depart for Kuopio

A few hours in Helsinki to enjoy the glorious Art Nouveau architecture in the city, or to wander down to the harbour - the heart of the city. See the beauty of this stunning Nordic city on an introductory sightseeing tour with live commentary, it's a great way to get a taste of the city. The tour takes in the historical centre with Senate Square, the Presidential Palace, City Hall, the Parliament building, Finlandia Hall, and the Opera House. Depart for Kuopio, a 4 hour drive into the heart of the lakes - one third of Kuopio is water and a half is forest.



Day 2 : Kuopio at leisure - water activities, spa, festivals



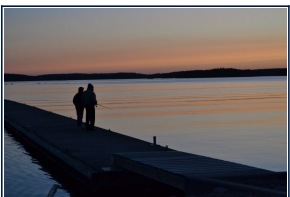


At Kuopio, science and technology blends with the natural beauty of the local environment. Surrounded by Lake Kallavesi, much of Kuopio is island terrain. Try some Kalakukko, a Finnish fish pie, at the vibrant open market place. Visit the Pajaharju Farm, a farmhouse museum in a genuine savo (native to central Finland) based courtyard area. Puljo hill is a famous landmark, 150m high, with an observation tower on its peak offering magnificent views of over the lake land scenery. The waterways of Kuopio offer a myriad of water-based activities including swimming at Vainolanniemi Beach, and sailing, wind-surfing, jet-skiing and water-skiing at Lake Kallavesi. Enjoy a spa combined with a traditional Finnish evening at the Jatkankamppa Lumberjacks Lodge – an authentic lodge from the 1950s in a scenic lake setting with the world’s biggest smoke sauna. Two of Finland’s most dynamic festivals take place in Kuopio each year, the Kuopio Dance Festival in June and the International Wine Festival in July. The festivals take over the city with music and dance events by the harbour and wine tastings at venues throughout the city.



Day 3-6 : Cottage experience in Saimaa/Lapeeranta region

Take a four hour drive from Kuopio past lush forests, green open spaces, peaceful waterways and inland beauty, to the Saimaa and Lapeeranta regions. Or hop on a ferry – the SS Heinaves – from Kuopio to Savonlinna, passing through scenic waterways, canals and locks, and stopping along the way at Oravi, Kavio canal and Palokki. Book in to your idyllic wooden cottage by the lake and get ready to explore culture and history at nearby preserved medieval castles. Or simply relax amongst some of Finland’s most outstanding areas of natural beauty in the midst of the country’s largest lake system. Savonlinna is the perfect spot for enjoying cruises around the Castle Olavinlinna, and the Lake Saimaas archipelago is home to the protected Saimaa ringed seal. See if you can spot a white-backed woodpecker and a corncrake too. Or get active with trekking, hiking and cycling as well as fishing and kayaking, canoeing and diving. Lappeenranta is on the southern shores of Lake Saimaa. Here you can see Finland’s oldest Orthodox Church, as well as the largest sandcastle in Scandinavia, and numerous other museums, churches and cultural landmarks.



Day 7 : Depart for Kuopio & return to Helsinki for return flight.

Things To Do:

The Market Alley Of Pillu-Pietari: A hidden treasure of Kuopio, situated in idyllic old stables paces away from the market square. The log building includes a café and charming shops selling local handicrafts and antiques.

Kuopio Museum: From the enigmatic mammoth to the charming black cottage, delve into Finland's rich and fascinating history and heritage these two excellent museums.

Archipelago Avenue: A great way to see the expanse of Kuopio's expanse of waters, this is a new main road connecting suburbs to the city centre over Lake Kallavesi.

Olavinlinna Castle, Savonlinna: An impressive fortified castle built in 1475, this castle of St. Olaf was built to protect the strategically important Savo region.

Savonlinna Provincial Museum: Sailors will enjoy this museum, set on the island of Riihisaari that presents the history of sailing on Lake Saimaa. During the summer the unique steamships moored at the museum are open to visitors.

Take A Nature Cruise Around Lake Saimaa: A leisurely cruise through the archipelago for nature and wildlife watching including a walk ashore along a nature trail, a visit to a sauna, and swimming.

Shopping In Savonlinna: The world famous Marimekko brand has a factory shop in the town, or browse through the local arts and handicraft shops for local design ware.

Fishing And Hiking: Step away from the world and spent relaxing day fishing by the lakes, or hike into the nearby Kolovesi national park - you might see elks, foxes and rabbits.

Linnansari National Park: This is Finnish Lakeland at its best. With its hundreds of islands and broad open waters, it is a paradise for boaters, and home to the Saimaa Ringed Seal.

Seal Trip: Take a guided nature trip on the home waters of osprey and the Saimaa ringed seal, and a visit to Louhimaa croft and a climb up Linnavuori hill to admire the view. Departs from Oravi harbour.