Finland

The Land of Islands and Waters

The Island Committee
No hidden vale, no wavewashed strand is loved, as is our native North.

Our Land, the Finnish National Anthem
Lyrics by JL Runeberg 1846
Translation by Clement Burbank Shaw
Dear Reader

Finland is the country richest in waters and one of the richest in islands in Europe. We boast 76,000 islands that cover over half a hectare in area, 56,000 lakes over one hectare, 647 rivers and 314,000 km of coastline. Every Finnish municipality has waters, almost all of them have islands. Every island, lake and river has a special place in the hearts of Finnish people. This brochure has been created to illustrate these unique riches of ours.

The multitude of islands and waters makes the Finnish landscape fragmented, creating extra costs for the economy as well as the State and municipalities, but it is also a unique strength for us. Our islands, sea areas, lakes, rivers and coastline are positive regional development factors in a world where living is increasingly made by producing experiences and adventures.

Recreational residences (1.9 million people staying at recreational homes), boating (700,000 boats), recreational fishing (1.2 million fishermen and women), nature enthusiasts and tourists ensure that our islands and waters and their development are issues that touch the entire nation. Finland is the number one boating nation in Europe.

The islands and waters are the operating area of many public authorities, including the Defence Forces, the Frontier Guard, the police, the district rescue departments, the Finnish Maritime Administration (commuter ferries, fairways, ports, charting, assistance of winter navigation), the Finnish Road Administration (ferries and cable ferries), the Finnish Institute of Marine Research, the environmental authorities, the Finnish Game and Fisheries Research Institute and other fisheries authorities as well as the National Board of Antiquities.

Finland’s policy on the islands balances the adverse effects that arise from the fact that our country is broken up by water bodies and utilises the country’s islands and richness in waters as regional development factors. The Island Development Act and the Island Development Programme are important tools in this work. Consideration for biodiversity as well as cultural and landscape factors form an essential part of the Finnish islands policy.

The Government has set the objective of developing island and lake tourism into a European attraction factor and recreational residence into a foundation supporting rural development. There are excellent prerequisites for this. Finland offers its own citizens and foreign visitors a safe environment to experience the warmth of the summer, the russet colours of the autumn, the snow and ice of the winter and the brightness of the spring on our numerous islands and vast sea and freshwater areas.

We wish you pleasant read.

The Island Committee
The Ministry of the Interior
Which European country is the richest in islands and lakes?

Let us take a look at islands first. Greece has approximately 1,400 islands, Denmark around 500. These well-known island nations do not, however, get anywhere near the three northern European ‘continental’ nations, Norway, Sweden and Finland. Finland has 76,000 islands that are over half-hectare in area. When every island covering at least a hundred square metres in area is included in the count, we reach a total of 178,947. Finland also takes the lead in comparison with Sweden in the number of large lakes, despite the fact that Sweden is larger in area than Finland. Although Norway also has a lot of islands, their steep rocky shores are often more difficult to utilise for tourism and recreation than the gentler Finnish terrain. The country richest in islands in the world is Canada.

The well-known island nations also remain far behind Finland in the number of inhabited islands. Although many of our islands are linked to the mainland by bridges, Finland still has 455 islands with year-round habitation that are without a permanent road connection to the mainland. In Greece such islands total a little over two hundred and in Denmark around one hundred. More than 200,000 Finns live on islands with a

The Sulkava Rowing Race is the biggest rowing event in the world. The route around the island of Partalansaari is over 60 km, and in recent years the number of participants has been around ten thousand. The team long-boat race is a particularly popular category, but there are always plenty of participants in the singles and doubles races, too.
### Finnish islands by region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>0.5 ha–1 km²</th>
<th>1–10 km²</th>
<th>Over 10 km²</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Varsinais-Suomi</td>
<td>9,687</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9,853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Etelä-Savo</td>
<td>8,918</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9,024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Lapland</td>
<td>8,594</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8,657</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Åland</td>
<td>8,014</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8,105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Pohjois-Savo</td>
<td>5,229</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5,276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. North Karelia</td>
<td>4,386</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4,433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Ostrobothnia</td>
<td>4,187</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4,010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Central Finland</td>
<td>3,971</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4,010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Pirkanmaa</td>
<td>2,897</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. North Ostrobothnia</td>
<td>2,570</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2,583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Satakunta</td>
<td>2,493</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2,506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. South Karelia</td>
<td>2,151</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2,184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Kainuu</td>
<td>1,933</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Itä-Uusimaa</td>
<td>1,783</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1,805</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Kymenlaakso</td>
<td>1,618</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Päijät-Häme</td>
<td>1,318</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Central Ostrobothnia</td>
<td>623</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>626</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Kanta-Häme</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. South Ostrobothnia</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>75,029</strong></td>
<td><strong>713</strong></td>
<td><strong>76</strong></td>
<td><strong>75,818</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Road connection – including almost 50,000 people in the Finnish capital, Helsinki.

Almost 100,000 of the Finnish islands – more than half of them – are located in a lake or river. Indeed, the number of freshwater islands in Finland ranks very close to the top in global comparison. Finnish freshwater areas have more than 150 islands with year-round habitation and without a bridge connection.

Finland is also the country richest in the world in waters. Our freshwater areas total 33,000 km² and account for ten percent of the area of Finland. In addition, the area of Finland covers 52,760 km² of sea, and we have 647 rivers. The length of the Finnish coastline is 314,000 km – an amazing eight times around the Earth. The coastline of the other European countries is generally only a fraction of the Finnish coastline.

Floating timber in the River Pielisjoki. Floating has been an important mode of transporting timber, particularly in our freshwater areas. As late as in the early 1980s, the annual volume of timber floated was almost ten million cubic metres, with a fifth of this floated in the sea. Today, floating is still an important activity in the water system of the eastern Finnish River Vuoksi.
The largest sea areas

The largest sea areas are located in the regions of Åland, Ostrobothnia and Varsinais-Suomi. Itä-Uusimaa is also a major sea region in proportion to its area.

Finland’s largest lakes

Finland’s largest lakes are Saimaa, Inari, Päijänne, Oulujärvi, Pielinen, Haukivesi, Orivesi-Paasivesi, Kallavesi, Keitele, Pyhäselkä-Jänisselkä, Pihlajavesi, Puulavesi, Puruvesi, Lokka, Höytiäinen, Näsjärvi, Suvavesi, Juojärvi, Kemijärvi and Yli-Kitka.

Finland’s largest islands in sea areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Area (km²)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mainland Åland</td>
<td>Total of 7 municipalities</td>
<td>685</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kimito</td>
<td>Kimito, Dragsfjärd, Västanfjärd, Halikko</td>
<td>524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Hailuoto</td>
<td>Halluoto</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Replot</td>
<td>Korsholm, Västanfjärd, Halikko</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Aasla/Otava</td>
<td>Rymättylä</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Lemland</td>
<td>Lemland</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Eckerö</td>
<td>Eckerö</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Öja</td>
<td>Kokkola, Larsmo</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Storlandet</td>
<td>Nagu</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Ålön</td>
<td>Pargas</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Kyrklandet</td>
<td>Korsavälimaa</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Kivimaa</td>
<td>Kustavi</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Pyhämaa</td>
<td>Uusikaupunki</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Vessölandet</td>
<td>Porvoo</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Kirjalaön</td>
<td>Pargas</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Oxkungar-Tengmo-Kvimo</td>
<td>Maxmo, Oravais</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Lillandet</td>
<td>Nagu</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Stortervolandet</td>
<td>Pargas</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Larsmo</td>
<td>Larsmo</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Kaurissalo</td>
<td>Kustavi</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Finland’s largest islands in freshwater areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Area (km²)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Soisalo</td>
<td>Heinävesi, Kuopio, Leppävirta, Varkaus</td>
<td>1,638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kerimäensaari</td>
<td>Enonkoski, Kerimäki, Savonlinna</td>
<td>1,069</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Hurissalo</td>
<td>Mikkeli, Puumala</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Partalansaari</td>
<td>Puumala, Sulkava</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Viljakansaari</td>
<td>Puumala</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Manamansalo</td>
<td>Vaala</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Åitsaari</td>
<td>Ruokolahti</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Moinniemensaari</td>
<td>Savonlinna</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Oravisalo</td>
<td>Rääkkylä</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Kirkkosaaari</td>
<td>Taipalsaari</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Väisälänsaari</td>
<td>Hirvensalmi, Mikkeli</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Virmaila</td>
<td>Padasjoki</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Kuivainen</td>
<td>Savitaipale</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Pyylinsaari</td>
<td>Heinävesi</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Varpasalo</td>
<td>Rääkkylä</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Paalasmaa</td>
<td>Juuka</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Salosaari</td>
<td>Ruokolahti</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Judinsalo</td>
<td>Luhanka</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Lintusalo</td>
<td>Puumala</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Kyläniemi</td>
<td>Taipalsaari</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Rivers and coastline

The largest rivers by discharge are Vuoksi, Kemijoki, Tornionjoki, Kymijoki, Kokemäenjoki, Oulujoki, Pielisjoki, Paatsjoki, Iijoki, Muoniojoki, Ounajoki, Tenojoki, Kiehimmäjoki, Lieksanjoki, Kajaaninjoki, Kitinen, Koitajoki, Juutuanjoki and Kyrönjoki.

The regions with the highest proportion of freshwater areas of their total area are Etelä-Savo, South Karelia, Päijät-Häme, North Karelia, Pohjois-Savo, Central Finland and Pirkanmaa.

The regions with the longest coastlines are Lapland, Etelä-Savo, North Ostrobothnia, Pohjois-Savo, North Karelia, Kainuu, Varsinais-Suomi and Central Finland.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division of coastline</th>
<th>km</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total seashore</strong></td>
<td>46,198</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– mainland coast</td>
<td>6,299</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– islands</td>
<td>39,675</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– lakes on islands</td>
<td>96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– islands in lakes on islands</td>
<td>128</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total lakes</strong></td>
<td>214,896</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– mainland coast</td>
<td>171,506</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– islands</td>
<td>39,443</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– lakes on islands</td>
<td>2,242</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– islands in lakes on islands</td>
<td>1,705</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total rivers</strong></td>
<td>53,510</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– mainland coast</td>
<td>51,142</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– islands</td>
<td>2,368</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total coastline</strong></td>
<td>314,604</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In all 85% of the total length of Finnish coastline is located in freshwater areas and only 15% on the seashore. Nevertheless, only nine other countries have a longer sea coastline than Finland. This is due to Finland’s richness in islands: 86% of our sea coastline consists of island coastline.
lake or river can be found near most of the Finnish villages and built-up areas. Around one hundred municipalities are located by the sea. Spending time at a recreational home, boating, ship cruises, recreational fishing, birdwatching and other nature pursuits, diving, cross-country skiing on frozen lake or sea ice, tour skating and traditional skating, kick-sledging and snowmobiling are activities that have made very many Finns familiar with the island areas.

Almost every Finn visits an island every year. The visitors may not even notice or come to think of the fact that they are on an island. For example those visiting Savonlinna, Kotka or Pargas may not realise that the main parts of these towns are on islands. Many of Finland’s most popular tourist attractions can be found on islands. Every year, 1.6 million tourists visit Åland, 700,000 Suomenlinna, 500,000 Korkeasaari, 200,000 the “Moomin Islands” of Naantali, 60,000 Manamansalo in Lake Oulujärvi. Built on the 15th century on a tiny islet off Savonlinna, Olavinlinna Castle draws in two hundred thousand visitors a year – 60,000 during the annual Opera Festival. Despite its remote outer sea location, even the Bengtskär lighthouse island attracts 15,000 visitors.

Excluding the permanent island residents, Finns with the deepest relationships with an island are those who have a holiday home in an island environment. In 2004, there were around 465,000 recreational residences in Finland, of which 85% were on the coast. On average, people spend 80 to 100 days at their holiday home, and the figures are increasing. In many island municipalities, the number of recreational residents exceeds that of the permanent residents.

Visitors’ marinas total 400 in our sea areas and more than 700 in freshwater areas. The respective numbers of fishing ports are 24 and 15 and cargo ports serving freight traffic 23 and 5. Excluding the winter months, the Saimaa Canal connects the waterways of eastern Finland to the sea.

 Millions of passengers feast their eyes on the islands of Uusimaa, Varsinais-Suomi and Åland while travelling on board the huge ferries between Finland and Sweden, which usually call in at Åland. The island province of Åland receives 1.6 million tourists every year.
residents: Kustavi tops the chart with its recreational population quadrupling the number of permanent inhabitants.

In 2004, almost three billion euros was spent on recreational homes in Finland. Holidaying at recreational homes has become one of the main development factors in rural Finland. Recreational residents help maintain shops and other services in small municipalities, but their diverse competence and contacts could be even more important assets to the municipalities. Therefore efforts are made to include recreational residents in municipal and village functions. Developing participatory mechanisms for them is an important challenge for the municipalities.

Converting recreational homes into second homes without changing one’s municipality of residence is rapidly on the increase. Recreational properties are more spacious and better equipped these days. Developments such as information technology have increased the amount of location-independent employment. There has also been an increase in the desire to convert recreational homes into permanent homes.

The environmental impacts of recreational residence have been studied in recent years. The level of environmental impact has been found to be reasonable. Traffic to and from recreational residences amounts to 7% of all car traffic in Finland.

Recreational residence accounts for less than one per cent of phosphorus and nitrogen discharges into waters, and these loadings are further decreased by new legislation regarding the treatment of wastewater from households outside sewerage networks. Coastal construction does, however, have an impact on local natural conditions, including the waters, coastal ecology and landscape. Recreational residences currently take up one tenth of the total Finnish coastline, but the proportion is considerably higher in the most popular areas.

On the other hand, spending time at a holiday home provides great environmental education for many Finns, with positive effects on their attitudes towards environmental protection and a simple, natural lifestyle. From the viewpoint of sustainable social development, these recreational residences constitute a key form of urban-rural interaction, promoting the maintenance of a living and diverse countryside.
Traditional and new means of livelihood side by side

Winter seine net fishing of vendace (Coregonus albula) in Lake Kostonjärvi, Taivalkoski. In the past decades, technological developments have made winter fishing less strenuous and considerably more efficient, but the number of seine cooperatives has declined.
Even today island life is still lively and diverse. Statistics show that on average the business structure of islands clearly differs from the national situation.

The service industries do already employ almost half of our island population, but even this is below the national average. The development of tourism and recreational services is, however, a critical issue for the future of the islands. The development opportunities are good. Islands, lakes and rivers can be turned into tourist attraction sites. Entrepreneur training, intensified marketing efforts and networking all have a key role to play. It would be particularly important to extend the tourism season – the islands have a lot to offer in every season of the year.

State functions have had a major impact on employment and wellbeing in the island areas. In 2002, the defence administration had over 500 employees in island municipalities, the Finnish Maritime Administration 140, Finnish Road Administration 66 and the Frontier Guard 130. The most significant research sector employer is the Finnish Game and Fisheries Research Institute.

In particular the defence administration jobs are on the decrease, which is highly taxing for certain island municipalities.

In 2002, agriculture and forestry accounted for some 17% of the industries in island and part-island municipalities, while the corresponding national rate was less than five per cent. The islands enjoy the

Hot baths and cold plunges at SaimaanSydän, Rantasalmi. Plenty of high-quality accommodation, catering and programme services have sprung up on our islands and coasts. In fact, developing island and lake tourism into a European attraction factor is one of the objectives of the Finnish Government.

State jobs and services are important for islanders. Today, Finland's public roads have more than 40 ferry crossings. The ferries carry around ten million people and five million vehicles every year. There are also 19 commuter ferries operated by the Finnish Maritime Administration and 21 cable ferries on private roads, most of them in Lake Pihlajavesi.
benefit of a strong image associated with attributes such as ‘clean’ and ‘genuine’, which can be utilised in the marketing of local special products. The growth season is also longer in the southwestern archipelago than the rest of the country. On the other hand, it is difficult to create the relatively large units favoured by modern farming as the fields are small and fragmented. Therefore specialised farming is a prime asset of the islands. Farming has decreased on the smaller and outer islands, although new forms including sheep farming have emerged on a smaller scale on many sea islands.

There are around three thousand professional fishermen and women in Finland; three quarters of them fish at sea. Their number has been decreasing and may even go down to one half of the current figure during the next decade. The catches of fish have, however, been increasing and
reached a record level in 2004: approximately 170 million kilograms a year. This means that what remains of the industry is the most efficient and most professional part of it, which has a major employment impact in the fields of trade, food processing and fishing equipment production. – In fish farming problems are caused by cheap imported salmon and on the other hand by the discharge load caused by the fisheries. There are still around 600 jobs in this sector in Finland, most of them in island areas.

Recreational fishing is an essential part of island culture. Finland has 1.2 million recreational fishermen and women and even more if a looser definition is applied. Although the value of their annual catch only amounts to 50 million euros, the services related to fishing increase the economic significance of this pastime four to sixfold. Recreational fishing is an essential part of Finnishness, promoted by our country’s richness in waters and the extensive fishing rights.

There is little industrial employment in the deepest archipelago, but many municipalities with good ports on the sea coast do host some of the country’s major industrial plants.

Lohimaa in Ääskoski, Tervo, is the biggest fishing centre in Finland. In all, there are almost a hundred businesses specialised in fishing tourism, and thousands offer fishing as an ancillary service.
Demand for genuine culture of the islands and waters on the increase

Rising tourism increases demand for genuine island culture. The culture of our islands and waters consists of history, tradition, nature and the environment. Culture is all of the things that islanders do and appreciate. It entails buildings, food, clothes, language, thoughts, beliefs... It is – fortunately – impossible to precisely define island culture.

It is no coincidence that the Savonlinna Opera Festival, perhaps the best-known Finnish cultural event, takes place on an island. Other island attractions include Moominworld and the Seurasaari Open-Air Museum, which presents samples of Finland’s building heritage. The historic Suomenlinna fortress island is one of the country’s major tourist sites.

Our islands boast many buildings and structures that cannot be found elsewhere in Finland. These include lighthouses, pilot posts, historical navigation marks and also our underwater cultural heritage. Military history is strongly present on sea islands: old fortresses include Suomenlinna in Helsinki, Bomarsund in Åland, Gustafsvära in Hanko and the fortresses of Kotka.

The first impressions of new visitors to an island are created by the village community spread around the harbour. The visitor’s eye can be caught by a lighthouse standing on a rock, an old windmill or the harmonious beauty of red wooden houses. The lifestyle and bare living of the islands have tended to preserve old settlements more commonly than elsewhere. In freshwater areas the villages are often located towards the island’s interior, so the visitor may not sense the human inhabitation and activity as strongly as by the seaside.

Even the smallest of island municipalities often have a museum of local history.

The popular and influential 19th century authors, Johan Ludvig Runeberg and Zachris Topelius, inspired a special love for their country among Finns, particularly through the stunning waterways. Painters who delighted in watery themes included Albert Edelfelt, Akseli Gallen-Kallela and Eero Järnefelt. Many artists also retreated to life at the lake- or seaside, and our great composer Jean Sibelius drew inspiration from the Finnish waterscape.

Loggers’ games have remained popular, especially in eastern and northern parts of the country. The tradition started in the River Lieksanjoki in the 1930s. Typical events include poling, rolling, the logger’s oath and riding down rapids on a log.
and culture presenting old objects and building heritage. The Maritime Museum of Finland is responsible for archiving our maritime cultural heritage. Currently located in Helsinki, the museum will be moving to Kotka. Museums specialising in the sea and seafaring can also be found in Mariehamn, Turku, Rauma and Kristinestad. The Museum of Finnish Recreational Fishing is located in Asikkala, and Kerimäki has a Lake Fishing Museum.

Both our sea and freshwater areas boast plenty of prehistoric remains: stone labyrinths, rock paintings, ancient settlements and harbours. Island culture features extensively in literature, fine arts, drama, music, songs and films. The waters were strongly present in the Finnish national epic, the Kalevala, and the composer Jean Sibelius was inspired by our waters.

The cultural heritage of our freshwater areas and islands is represented by timber floating museums, loggers’ games, old canals, fishing ports and fish markets as well as marinas and old steamboats. By the seaside the number of volunteers participating in the painstaking task of building and restoring traditional sailing ships is a telltale sign of love for the old islander culture.

Postal traffic across the Quark – the threshold between Finland and Sweden – began in 1617 and continued for almost two centuries. Today this tradition is honoured with the annual rowing event for old-style boats. The starting point alternates annually between Replot, Finland, and Holmö, Sweden.

The living culture of our islands and waters is upheld by permanent and recreational residents, boaters, professional and recreational fishermen and women, tourists and many others. Despite the strong tradition, it is also important to generate new culture that is, where appropriate, created on the basis of the old heritage. Indeed, this has been achieved in many of the fine cultural events organised on the Finnish islands in the summer.

Korppoo Jazz represents modern island culture that is largely a result of the expertise of recreational residents.
How will the Finnish island areas be faring in the year 2020? Here is how the Island Committee visions the future:

“Finland’s living islands will be regarded as our common riches both at the national and European level. Knowledge-intensive businesses will have sought their way to the islands and coastal areas. The traditional industries – fisheries and agriculture – will be producing quality products for demanding consumers. Finland’s islands and waters will be our most significant tourist and recreation attractions.

Living on the islands will have become more common as highly educated people in particular will value a high-quality living environment. A great number of former recreational residents will have moved permanently to the island areas. In addition, those with a second home there will be spending long periods of time in their second home as

An estimated half a million Finns have jobs suited for teleworking. It is particularly beneficial for island and rural municipalities to invest in improving the facilities for telework at summer homes.

There are half a million recreational residences, with two million regular users. New holiday homes are being built at the rate of 4,500 a year.
In force since 1981, the Island Development Act obliges the State and municipalities to work towards safeguarding the opportunities for pursuing a livelihood and the availability of transport and services on the island areas as well as to protect their environment. According to the Act, the concept of ‘island’ covers sea and freshwater islands without permanent road access as well as other islands and mainland regions with conditions otherwise comparable to those of islands.

The Government has defined Finland’s most island-rich municipalities as island municipalities and part-island municipalities. In early 2005, Finland had 13 island municipalities and 44 part-island municipalities.

Our island municipalities are Dragsfjärd, Enonkoski, Hailuoto, Houtskär, Iniö, Korpo, Kustavi, Malax, Nagu, Puumala, Rymättylä, Sulkava and Velkua.


Their special status is taken into consideration as a factor increasing their need for support in issues including the regional policy and central government transfers to local government. – The Island Committee is a permanent statutory advisory committee that operates in connection with the Department for Development of Regions and Public Administration at the Ministry of the Interior. The Island Committee participates in the development of island areas jointly with the municipalities, regions, State authorities and other relevant parties.

The future of our island areas will naturally depend on many national and international trends and phenomena. Globalisation is underway, but at the same time there will be a greater focus on localisation. Economic cycles are fluctuating faster; the forces of technological change have a profound impact. Europeans are ageing, the interface between the public and private sector is shifting.

Pupils of a nature school on Boskär, Nagu. These schools teach children about the ecology, culture and history of the Archipelago Sea. They also organise activities including voluntary work camps for adults.
When Finland arose from the sea after the last Ice Age, the first piece of land was an island. No one knows precisely where that embryo of Finland was located. It might have been the top of Tiirismaa, the highest point of today’s southern Finland (222 m). Around 12,000 years have since elapsed.

In addition to water, the first island may have been fringed with the edge of the continental glacier receding northwest. A millennium after the first glimpse, Finland already consisted of hundreds of islands. The Finnish mainland also gradually began to emerge around the area that today is Finland’s eastern border. Finland was no longer composed only of islands.

Approximately 10,200 years ago, the level of the Baltic glacial lake suddenly dropped by almost thirty metres and the Yoldia Sea was created. Many of the islands grew larger: the largest one in Finland was Ristisaari, Pyhtää. Ice and waves prevent vegetation from spreading onto the expanse of smooth rock.
created in what is now southern Häme. A few decades later, glimpses of Åland could be seen amidst the waves. About 9,000 years ago the last remnants of the continental glacier melted away in the area that is now Finland. The Baltic was a lake again, with its largest island stretching over an area four times larger than Zealand, the largest island of today’s Baltic Sea.

Around 7,500 years ago the Baltic became a sea again. Compared with its current location, the coast was further inland, by 50 to 100 km at the Bay of Bothnia, 30 to 60 km at the Sea of Bothnia and 20 to 40 km at the Gulf of Finland. There were not very many islands at that time, but tens of thousands of them were waiting to rise from the depths. With the continuing land uplift, they began to emerge over a more extensive area. Although the movement of the coastline merged former islands with the mainland, the largest of Finnish archipelagos – the Archipelago Sea – was gradually created in the southwest. Today the area has almost 40,000 islands, which is more than in Polynesia in the South Pacific. These days the number of Finnish sea islands over 100 m² in area totals 80,897, with their coastline stretching over 39,803 km.

Some of our lake islands are older than their home waters: they were already islands before the lake separated from the sea. As millennia have passed, land uplift has tilted the lake basins, resulting in the appearance and disappearance of islands. The creation of new discharge channels has in one go dramatically altered the size and island map of many major lakes, including Saimaa and Päijänne. Small islands have been destroyed by ice and waves, and when lakes have become overgrown, their islands have naturally also disappeared. People have drained many lakes or lowered their water levels, causing islands to emerge or merge with the mainland.

Today the number of our freshwater islands totals 98,050. Almost a thousand of them are islands on islands: they are located in lakes that themselves are located on islands. Finland has a couple of thousand of these lakes-on-islands. The total island shoreline in our freshwater areas stretches over 43,496 km, of which islands in rivers account for 2,368 km. Thus our freshwater areas just beat the sea areas in both the number of islands and the length of coastline. The same applies to the total area of islands: the freshwater islands cover about 7,200 km² and sea islands 5,800 km².

In 1873, the author Zachris Topelius wrote that “Every century the Baltic Sea donates to its daughter Finland enough land for a new principality.” According to the current estimate, around 300 hectares of new land emerges on the coast of the Gulf of Bothnia every year.
The Finnish sea islands are a veritable paradise for the researcher. They are young and undergoing constant growth and change. Land uplift is still bringing up new islands from the sea. An islet born on the open sea often remains almost totally without vegetation for some three centuries until it has risen high enough to provide a habitat for a few grasses, rushes and other herbaceous plants rooted on rock crevices.

With the island growing in height, the seaweeds washed in by the waves are deposited into crevices and depressions. Increasing in density, the root layer binds the composting matter underneath. This creates a miniature meadow with blooming plants including sea mayweed (*Tripleurospermum maritimum*), chives (*Allium schoenoprasum*) or biting stonecrop (*Sedum*...
Towards diversity

The larger an island grows, the larger its number of species and their genetic diversity. Often only around ten species of vascular plants can be found on small islands, on medium-sized ones perhaps fifty and on reasonably large ones even more than one hundred. Not enough time has passed for any endemic species to evolve on the islands in Finland’s sea areas, although such species are typical of many islands of the world. The migration of our islands from the outer islets to the bosom of our inner archipelago and their final merger with the mainland has been too fast for the evolution of new species. Certain microevolution has, however, taken place: our sea islands have forty-odd species of vascular plants with features clearly different from those of their inland ancestor species. The homes of some of these subspecies are also apparent from their Finnish and scientific names: the common bird’s foot trefoil native to Åland (Lotus corniculatus var. alandicus), the field mugwort that grows by the Bay of Bothnia (Artemisia campestris bottnica) and the hair-grass found by the Sea of Bothnia (Deschampsia bottnica).

Purple loosestrife (Lythrum salicaria) and meadowsweet (Filipendula ulmaria) can often be found in damp depressions. The depressions can also become swampy and plants such as crowberry (Empetrum nigrum), marsh cinquefoil (Potentilla palustris) and even cloudberry (Rubus chamaemorus) can rise from the mossy ground. The first immigrant trees are the prostrate junipers (Juniperus), followed by rowans (Sorbus aucuparia) and the twisted and knotted pines (Pinus). The spruce (Picea) carpets vast areas in the depressions.

Insects are the first representatives of the animal kingdom to arrive, although not by any means voluntarily but blown in by the winds. With more and more areas available for shelter, feeding and reproduction, the insect diversity increases. The larger winged creatures – birds – also appear relatively early. Gulls (Larus), waterfowl (Anseriformes) and wading birds efficiently fertilise the islets. The majority of island birdlife is only present during the summers. An even larger group are the migrating birds passing through, which on the best days can be seen in flocks of tens of thousands.

Amongst the first mammal invaders are the voles (Microtinae) that can at times practically decimate a young island’s vegetation. An island is in any case a harsh environment for many species. Reproduction is difficult; habitats are destroyed by storms and ice. It takes tough persistence – and good luck – to survive.

The impact of land uplift is particularly pronounced on the shores of the Gulf of Bothnia. The landscapes undergo dramatic transformations in as little as one century in areas such as the Quark, the threshold between the Sea of Bothnia and the Bay of Bothnia. The geological structure of the
A long history of human activity has had its impact, especially on the state of the Gulf of Finland and the Archipelago Sea, but protection measures have succeeded in recovering the endangered white-tailed eagle (Haliaeetus albicilla) population: more than 200 young eagles hatch every year again. Even the crayfish (Astacus astacus) is doing well, despite the state of the sea bottom being poor in places.

Islands is also changing towards north: rock is being replaced by glacial till, or moraine. Plants growing near the waterline on rocky shores include sea aster (Aster tripolium), salt-marsh rush (Juncus gerardii) and creeping bent (Agrostis stolonifera) and those further up purple loosestrife (Lythrum salicaria) and the seashore subspecies of common valerian (Valeriana sambucifolia s. salina). Sea buckthorn (Hippophae rhamnoides) is a type plant on many coastal stretches. Deciduous woods dominated by birch (Betula) or aspen (Populus tremula) are common. The Quark’s birdlife is characterised by black guillemots (Cepphus grylle), razorbills (Alca torda), arctic terns (Sterna paradisea) and mew gulls (Larus canus). Even the state-ly white-tailed eagle (Haliaeetus albicilla) is no longer a rare sight in the area.

In about two thousand years, the land uplift at the Quark will have created a land connection between Finland and Sweden. In three million thousand years there will also be a land connection from mainland Finland to Åland across the Skiftet strait. The largest island in the Bay of Bothnia and the third largest in Finland’s sea areas is Hailuoto. Despite its highest point now rising over 30 metres above sea level, the island was not born until a little under two thousand years ago. The land uplift has not been quite this extreme: winds have piled sand up onto the top of the island. When the island was a hundred years old, it covered only around one square kilometre in area, by its first millennium it was approximately 50 km² and today, with the island approaching its second millennium, its area totals 195 km². The Hailuoto landscape is characterised by vast lichen-rich pine heaths. Tar pines buried in sand and bottle logs sticking out from sand drifts are interesting local sights.

The islands in our sea areas are usually divided into three zones. The outer archipelago is dominated by water, and a basic characteristic of the islands is their lack of trees. The middle archipelago is a balancing act between land and water, with more barren open-water islands between forested islands. The inner archipelago is dominated by land, with areas of water meandering around it as narrow sounds, straits and bays. The most barren areas are woodland, former sea bays most often farmed clay soil.

In reality the mosaic of our island areas is much more diverse than this simplification. Every island is different – the local impacts of the sea, light, waves and wind
specify the forms of life on each island. Nature and landscape are shaped by limestone deposits, fertilisation by birds, the amount of sand and gravel. This creates a ten-thousand piece jigsaw puzzle where every single piece is embedded in its place although the human eye fails to distinguish it.

**Dialogue between humans and nature**

Our freshwater islands have a much more stable past than their maritime cousins. Land uplift, changes in the water balance and the human craze for draining lakes have, however, altered islands in our lakes and their ecology. Floods have eroded the top ends of river islands and piled up new soil at the downstream end. The creation of new river branches has separated sections of mainland into islands.

The flora and fauna of freshwater islands do not usually differ greatly from those on the surrounding mainland. There are very few isolated open-water islands in our freshwater areas: the distance to a neighbouring island or headland pointing out from the mainland is hardly ever more than one kilometre.

Nature is also a culturally bound concept. Without humans the island ecology would be a lot poorer than it is today. Of course human activity has reduced the habitats of some species, but at the same time entirely new biotopes have been created. These include the wooded meadows created by traditional animal husbandry. Since grassland areas were limited on the islands, people used to cut leaf fodder from trees for their cattle for the winter. The flora and fauna of these wooded meadows are exceptionally diverse. The spring sees the bloom of anemones (*Anemone*), the summer brings up the rare orchids (*Orchis*) and many members of the bellflower family (*Campanulaceae*). A multitude of mosses, lichens, shelf fungi and insects live on gnarled and decayed trees.

For the islanders nature is an environment defined – in addition to the diversity of species – by bonds and experiences specific to a place, everyday chores and social relationships. Virgin nature may be regarded as ugly and unkempt; nature is part of one’s own everyday territory that can and should be worked. Attempts have been made to take this extended concept of nature into consideration in the protection of the Archipelago Sea Biosphere Reserve – in addition to nature, the protection extends to the continuous interaction between people and their environment.
Seven island parks

- Finland does not have a single national park totally lacking water areas or even islands. But seven of our national parks have been established to conserve island nature in particular. Four of them are located at sea and three in our lake districts. The island parks cover around 2,500 islands and islets and vast areas of waters.

- The oldest of the national parks is Linnansaari, located at Haukivesi in Lake Saimaa, and established in 1956. It covers an area that is some 40 kilometres long and 10 kilometres wide. There are over 130 islands that cover more than one hectare in area as well as hundreds of smaller islands, but the area is still dominated by vast open waters. The park is home to more than fifty extremely endangered Saimaa ringed seals (Phoca hispida saimensis), and its osprey (Pandion haliaetus) population is one of the densest in Finland. You can learn about slash and burn farming and the lifestyle of past generations at the old Louhimaa farm, a small holding that has been restored to serve as a visitor attraction. Traditional methods have been reintroduced to manage its immediate surroundings.

- The other one of the national parks in Lake Saimaa is called Kolovesi. It was established in 1990. Although the park only has forty islands, these include two of the largest islands in our national parks: Vaajasalo (1210 ha) and Mäntysalo (740 ha). The park is characterised by long and narrow fjord-like inlets penetrating deep into the interiors of the main islands. The most majestic of the granite rockfaces rise almost vertically to heights up to forty metres and take as deep a plunge underwater. Commonly found species of fish include vendace (Coregonus albula), smelt (Osmerus eperlanus), perch (Perca fluviatilis), burbot (Lotia lutta), whitefish (Coregonus lavaretus) and ide (Leuciscus idus). Rarer species include brown trout (Salmo trutta m. lacustris), arctic char (Salvelinus alpinus) and fourhorn sculpin (Myxoccephalus quadricornis), a relic of the last Ice Age with spikes and bony protuberances.

Information about the Linnansaari and Kolovesi National Parks is available from sources including the Linnansaari Visitor Centre Nestori in Savonlinna, the Oravi Nature Cabin in the village of Oravi, the Saimaa Nature Centre Nestori in Savonlinna as well as the Kolovesi Nature Cabin.

- Established in 1993, the Päijänne National Park comprises around fifty undeveloped islands and islets as well as parts of the inhabited islands. The heart of the park is Kelvete, an esker island that is eight kilometres long and 50 to 800 metres wide. Its special features include long sandy beaches and sheltered lagoons. The rocky banks and the terraces on the sides of the esker bear witness to ancient water levels.

Information about the Päijänne National Park is available from sources including the Kelvete Nature Cabin, the park’s information point at Padasjoki harbour.

- The oldest of Finland’s maritime national parks is the Eastern Gulf of Finland National Park, which was established in 1982. The park’s bedrock, however, is the youngest among our island parks: the reddish rapakivi granite is “only” 1.6 billion years old. The twenty forested islands and the couple of hundred islets total 800 hectares in area. The largest island is Ulko-Tammio. Eastern Gulf of Finland is an important breeding area for seals, and the area is also rich in sea birds. In addition to its natural values, the park also has many military history monuments, including a fortress, torpedo boat station and a cave used for military purposes during WWII. A national park is also being planned on the Russian side of the national border.

Information about the Eastern Gulf of Finland National Park is available from sources including the Haapasaari Nature Cabin.

- Established in 1989, the Ekenäs Archipelago National Park covers a sea area totalling around 52,000 hectares, with almost five hundred islands and islets. The park also includes the Pojoviken waters – often referred to as the only fjord in Finland. The park boasts a perfect succession of archipelago zones: outer, middle and inner, which also results in a profound change in the flora and fauna when moving from the open seas to Pojoviken where water is practically non-saline. Several glo lakes that have separated from the sea and fladas that are still undergoing separation provide valuable nesting and resting areas for birds. The largest island, Älgö (700 ha), is also the largest in area in all of our maritime parks.

Information about the Ekenäs Archipelago National Park is available from sources including the Ekenäs Visitor Centre and the Rödjan Nature Cabin.
The Archipelago Sea National Park is located in the southwestern outer archipelago in the municipalities of Dragsfjärd, Nagu, Korpo and Houtskär. The park has about one thousand islands and islets. The landscape above the sea level is characterised by outer islands with short trees, lush inner islands, glaciated rock as well as numerous islands of sand and pebbles (Jurmo, Sandskär, Sandö) belonging to the third Salpausselkä lateral moraine. The underwater landscape is rather spectacular with clear lines of depressions and ruptures as well as the Gullkrona sunken valley.

The park's nature has the richest biodiversity in the entire country. Approximately one tenth of the park's land area is managed in order to preserve the old pasturage and wooded meadows. The park and its neighbouring areas form the Archipelago Sea Biosphere Reserve that belongs to the UNESCO network and has a permanent population of 1,200 people. The objective in this area is to preserve endangered natural and cultural values and promote the coexistence of humans and nature.

Information about the Archipelago Sea Natural Park is available from sources including the Blåmusslan Visitor Centre in Kasnäs, Dragsfjärd, and the Nature Cabins on Berghamn in Nagu and Jurmo in Korpo.

Located off the coasts of Kemi and Tornio, the Perämeri National Park is 157 km² in area, of which 2.5 km² is land. The park's islands and islets total around forty. Most of them can be found in groups separated from each other by vast open seas. They provide the opportunity to observe the constantly changing sea environment created by land uplift as well as the fishermen's bases and landscapes created by the traditional local source of livelihood, fishing. The Haparanda National Park can be found on the Swedish side of the border. Information about the Perämeri National Park is available from sources including the National Park's Nature Cabin in Kemi.

Many other Finnish national parks also have significant islands and island landscapes. These include Koli, Tiilikka and Isojärvi. There are also many large conservation areas outside our network of national parks that are connected to our island nature. These areas are part of the national coastal, birdlife or esker protection programmes.
he first human who set foot on the soil of what is now Finland found themselves on an island. We know this for certain, and we also know that the spot where they came ashore is now far inland. The arrival would have had reason to remark: “That’s one giant leap for Finland and not a step that small for me, either.” But they might well have come ashore quiet and cautious. Where they came from is something we do not know for sure. It is down to the linguists to argue in the ancient form of which language it was that they uttered their first words on these shores.

What happened to this daredevil? It is likely that they found the conditions too harsh and made a hasty return home. Perhaps they only intended to be the first ever summer resident on our islands: catch a few seals and wonder at the bright nights of the northern summer. Other daredevils did, however, follow and the first year-round dwellings were probably built some 8,000 years ago. The first person born and bred in Finland saw light in some humble abode.

The earliest evidence of stone-age dwellings have been discovered some 30 metres above the current sea level. Life was not easy in an environment providing little shelter and with trees still quite short. Approximately six thousand years ago several permanent settlements had, however, already been established and during the summers traffic was active across the narrowing Gulf of Finland. In addition to objects, many rock paintings still remain from the era of this Comb-Ceramic culture, depicting objects and activities including boats and seal hunting, which was the main source of livelihood. Indeed, it is presumed that efficient hunting was at least partly responsible for the extinction of the harp seal (*Phoca groenlandica*) within the Baltic region.
Budding agriculture
A good 4,000 years ago the southern and southwestern coasts of Finland received the first relatively large wave of migration. Battle-Axe people who used pointed shaft-hole battle axes arrived across the sea from Estonia. The period also saw the start of a revolution in the sources of livelihood: agriculture and animal husbandry began to exist side by side with the hunting culture. The northern Finnic and the southern Estonian peoples were interacting busily, which is evidenced today by the similarities between the Finnish and Estonian language.

Evidence of animal husbandry dating back four millennia has been found on the southwestern island of Nagu. The climate had already become considerably cooler from the Atlantic climatic optimum experienced a good 5,000 years ago. Despite the growing significance of agriculture, the sea remained an importance source of food. More saline than today, the sea areas were rich in cod (Gadus morhua) and other fish. Ringed seals (Phoca hispida), grey seals (Halichoerus grypus) and harbour seals (Phoca vitulina) were hunted, and so were many waterfowl that also provided down.

During the Bronze Age (ca 1000 BC), the Baltic had already become a major connector between those living on its islands and shores. Seafaring and trading were important means of livelihood. During the Iron Age (500 BC–AD 1000) settled areas spread further out as the islands grew in area due to land uplift. Sheep were grazing even on many of the smallest islands.

The Vikings set up bases along their important eastern route in the sheltered coves of the Finnish archipelago. One of these used to be on the island of Hitis-Rosala where a Viking Centre is now attracting visitors.

Swedish settlement was gaining ground in the Archipelago Sea area in the 12th century. By mid-13th century it already reached...
Suomenlinna is one of Finland’s primary tourist attractions, receiving 700,000 visitors a year. The fortress island is also the vibrant home of almost a thousand residents, with services including a school, library and health centre.

Wars and epidemics
The Black Death put an end to the flow of settlers from Sweden in mid-14th century. The two decades that followed did, however, see an increase in the island population, only to be followed by a sudden decrease in late 16th century. The reason behind this may have been a drop in the catches of fish, but also wars and epidemics which – particularly in early 18th century – cast a dark shadow over life on the islands.

The islands of the Gulf of Bothnia emerged from the sea later than our more southern islands, so there is no point in looking for signs of early settlement on them. The first permanent settlers may have arrived on the current islands of the Quark perhaps a thousand years ago and on Hailuoto in the 12th century. In the 15th century there was a considerable increase in the island’s population near sheltered harbours and arable land. Fishing and seal hunting still remained more important means of livelihood on the islands of the Gulf of Bothnia than on the southern islands. Winter hunting trips could take up to two months; temporary stone dwellings have been discovered on many islands. The first wooden fishing huts were built in the 17th century.

Our freshwater islands have been inhabited for thousands of years: hundreds of Stone Age dwellings have been found in areas including Lake Saimaa. Elk (Alces alces) and wild reindeer (Rangifer tarandus) from the forests, beavers (Castor fiber) from the ponds and fish from the lakes were all important catches. In Lake Saimaa the ringed seal (Phoca hispida saimensis) was a treasured catch. Slash and burn farming probably started around the year 500. Barley (Hordeum vulgare) was the first crop to be farmed; the earliest signs of rye (Secale cereale) only date back to the 13th century.

Many of our sea islands have suffered the effects of wars over the centuries. Re-
minders of these include the fortresses that can be found on the coast and the islands, which have become popular tourist attractions. Our freshwater islands have not always enjoyed peace, either. For example, during the Russo-Swedish War in 1742, the Cossacks led by General Villim Fermor crossed the ice to attack the Pihlajavesi islands and killed 43 locals.

The rise and fall of the islands – and a new rise again

Life in almost all of Finland’s island areas grew stronger and more settled during the 19th century. In mid-century, the population of the southwestern Archipelago Sea region began to spread onto the outer islands. Almost three hundred islands became populated over a few decades. Similar development could also be seen elsewhere. New fishing methods such as hook and drift nets no longer required a joint effort by the villagers, which enabled more scattered settlement.

At the same time, seafaring was undergoing a period of strong development. The golden age of peasant seafaring in the 19th century made many of our island areas richer, Åland in the southwest and Tamnio in the southeast to name a couple. Ships sailing the Baltic and the Atlantic were built and equipped on the islands. Sailing ships were, however, gradually supplanted by steamers. Finland’s first light beacon was built on the island of Utö in 1753, the second in Porkkala in 1800.

The economic boom and population growth continued on the islands until the first decades of the 20th century. The islands were bustling with life: many had churches with pastors, schools with teachers, lots of shops and associations. Imports and exports had boosted seafaring and connections with both mainland Finland and the neighbouring countries. Trade with Estonia was flourishing, fish was exported and agricultural products were imported. Fish and for example stone to be used on demanding construction sites were transported from the islands to St Petersburg. Stockholm was an important export destination for the southern and southwestern coast.

There was a wide range of activities on the islands. Good harbours promoted the...
founding of sawmills and shipyards on the islands. The Reposaari island in Pori was a booming industrial island with shipyards and Lamposaari island in Lappeenranta flourished because of its sawmill. The Vaajasalo island in Kuopio had a large hospital, and the island of Själö in Nagu has its own grim history as a quarantined island hosting first a leper hospital and later a mental asylum.

But the world was changing. The industrialising mainland Finland began to attract the islanders. This change applied to all of Finland’s rural areas. Land transport began to displace water transport and, despite the developing road connections, the islands became peripheral areas. Not as many people could find subsistence on the islands. The population began to fall. First people migrated to America, then to mainland Finland or Sweden.

The migration accelerated after the Second World War. During the war, almost 100,000 people still lived on sea or freshwater islands without a road or ferry connection to the mainland. In 1970 the corresponding figure was 30,000 and today it is only 11,000, with more than 2,000 of these in Åland outside the main islands. The construction of bridges accounts for a great proportion of this statistical difference: the islands have not disappeared; they merely continue their existence as islands with permanent road connections.

Haapasaari is an outer island located 20 km south of the town of Kotka. Connected to the mainland by a boat service from Kotka, the island has a church, shop, meeting point, museum, passport control and electricity. Year-round residence is on the increase.
There is also another perspective to the population development: more people live on the islands today than ever before. This is because the increase in the number of part-time island residents has exceeded the drop in the number of permanent residents. Developing telecommunications connections and telecommuting enable the growth of island residence. Our islands are enjoying a new rise again.

For example, the Swedish-speaking Åboland region has about 10,000 recreational residences owned by people from outside the region. These residences are used regularly by some 40,000 people, while the local permanent population is approximately 22,000.

Similar development can be seen on islands in our freshwater areas. In 1950, the island of Paalasmaa in Juuka used to have a population of 410; today’s figure is under 140. The population of Viljakansaari in Puumala has dropped to a quarter of what it used to be in fifty years. The same applies to the inhabited islands of Lake Pihlajavesi. Many smallish islands have lost even their last year-round resident.

Residents of secondary homes have, however, generally replaced the drop in permanent population on these islands, at least in their number. Thousands of new islands have also been inhabited by part-time islanders.

The water in Lake Hyrynsjärvi, Hyrynsalmi, can be up to 20°C in the middle of the summer. The plentiful lakes and waterways are tourism assets for the Kainuu municipalities.
Foreign visitors to the islands

The inbound flight of many visitors arriving in Helsinki goes over the Archipelago Sea. First they will spot a few islets hardly distinguishable from the shimmering sea. Then their number increases, and soon one can see thousands at a glance. This will amaze even the most seasoned of travellers as the southwestern archipelago of Finland is one of the rarest landscapes in the world. The birth of an archipelago is most commonly connected with the birth of a mountain range. This was the case in Greece, Indonesia and the Caribbean, but our southwestern archipelago is a zone between water and land that slopes gently from the mainland towards the sea. The minor unevennesses of this zone create a labyrinth consisting of countless parts differing from each other in shape and size.

From Helsinki our traveller takes an onward flight to Savonlinna. Having read that there are 187,888 lakes in Finland, they are disappointed at first: only the odd lake can be seen in the landscape patterned with fields and forests. After a fifteen-minute-flight, however, there are more and more lakes and in half an hour the traveller is perplexed again. Underneath the plane, Lake Pihlajavesi spreads out with its more than three thousand islands. Unlike the Archipelago Sea, here you can detect a sort of orderliness: it is as if most of the islands are in lines ranging from northwest to southeast. Of course the lines are somewhat haphazard, resembling the queues children form inexpertly on their first days of school.

But the Finnish islands used to be important for foreigners long before the first traveller ever stepped into an aircraft. One of the most famous of them was Tsar Alexander III of Russia who took a total of twenty-one holidays on the islands of the Gulf of Finland and the Archipelago Sea. His favourite island was Högsåra in Dragsfjärd where he spent time almost every summer between 1885 and 1894. He made friends with the locals, chopped up firewood and prepared salmon soup with his wife, Maria Feodorovna. It has been calculated that the tsar spent 213 holiday days on Finnish islands.

Royal visitors have also been seen since in our island areas – in 1909 even two emperors at the same time. This was when Tsar Nicholas II of Russia and Emperor William II of Germany met in Virolahti in southeastern Finland. In 1985 Emperor Akihito of Japan cruised with his wife on S/S Heinävesi from Punkaharju to Savonlinna. A couple of years earlier King Carl XVI Gustav and Queen Silvia of Sweden had
taken the same voyage; they have also holidayed in Åland.

How about the not so blue-blooded tourist – what can the Finnish islands offer them?

If I were in the tourism business – and a bit of an idealist – I would market Finland as the country where every visitor can find the island that perfectly matches their personal interest profile. "Fill in this form and you will find the island among the 178,947 islands on offer that was made just for you!" Even the most demanding of nesomaniacs (from Greek ‘nesos’ = island, ‘mania’ = madness) would find a remedy for their health-promoting condition in the diversity of the Finnish islands.

Nature travellers can choose from islands providing adventures and experiences with a strong presence of the wilderness or the open seas. Cultural islands frequented by foreigners include Suomenlinna and Seurasaari, the tourist islands outside Helsinki, as well as the Olavinlinna opera island and Moominworld off the coast of Naantali. The creator of the moomins, Tove Jansson (1914-2001), was herself also a nesomaniac. She spent her childhood summers on an island, and in 1965 she bought an outer island of her own. A solitary rowan tree grew on the barren rocky islet.

With capacity for almost 200 passengers, S/S Suomi has been operating on Lake Päijänne since 1906. A million people take a freshwater or coastal cruise in Finland every year.

Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko of Japan greeting islanders on board S/S Heinävesi. A lake or sea voyage is often included in the tour programme of prominent foreign visitors.
The island of Utö has the most maritime climate in Finland. It enjoys the shortest winters in the country, less than 90 days, while winters in mainland Finland last for 110 to 210 days. Utö summers are 115 days long: only a week shorter than in southern Finland. Days when the temperature rises above 25°C are, however, rare on Utö: on average there is only one in a summer while mainland areas such as Helsinki enjoy 10 to 15 hot days.

When departing from Helsinki, Utö is further away than the Canary Islands. First you drive for three hours – and you should always allow for some extra time for queuing for the Nagu ferry. Then a four-hour crossing on the commuter ferry Aspö, calling at Nötö, Aspö and Jurmo. Finally you get your feet on the Utö jetty and the sign on the red wooden building wishes you welcome to Finland, the EU.

Utö is not a large island; there are more than a thousand islands that are larger in Finland. Utö did not receive its first permanent residents until the 1740s when two sea pilots and their families moved there from Jurmo, although pilots had lived on the island in the summers since mid-17th century. In 1754 the lights of Finland’s first lighthouse went on on Utö. The lighthouse was blown up during the 1808–09 war, and the current lighthouse was completed on the old site in 1814.

Although so far from the rest of the world, Utö’s history has been strongly affected by outside turmoil. Its entire population has been evacuated twice: first during the Crimean War in 1854–55, then at the start of the Winter War between Finland and Russia in 1939. Although Utö has had military significance throughout the centuries, it did not develop into “the army island” until the post-WWII years. Now aged 76, a young medical non-commissioned officer called Toivo Kovanen arrived at the Utö garrison in 1953. Born and bred inland, Toivo was not particularly happy with island life to start with.

– I’d send my transfer application in every week, but they were always rejected.
On a September morning in 2004, Toivo is arriving home from a net-fishing trip off the harbour of Utö. His wife Solveig has laid out a breakfast spread for the family and the visitors. The conversations take place in Finnish and Swedish. The family spent a while living in Turku but then returned to Utö. When they moved to Turku in 1966, their seven-year-old son Timo would have wanted to take along his beloved playing spot, the rock pool. Unfortunately his father had to reject this transfer application.

Toivo’s own transfer applications had become less and less frequent only to come to a complete halt when he married the local pilot’s daughter Solveig Franzén in 1958. Their daughter Hanna acts as the tourist guide, museum manager and local organiser on Utö.

– I used to be a teacher in Turku but now I intend to stay on Utö. I hope to earn a living on the island.

The Utö museum operates in a stone house built in 1753, which originally was the lighthouse keepers’ home. Utö has had a school since 1884. In the first year it had 21 pupils. The sixteenth – and longest-serving – teacher of the school is Brita Willström, who only has four pupils today. Since 1977 this has been a Finnish-speaking school. Utö really began to change from a Swedish-speaking to a Finnish-speaking island in the 1960s when the number of military staff grew.

Utö has two church rooms, with the older one being located in the lighthouse. A new chapel was completed at the eastern point of the island in 1909. Nearby is also the cemetery that was opened in 1962 and that has sand that was brought across on barges from Pargas. Before this, the islanders used to be buried on Jurmo.

People drink water purified from sea water on Utö – just like on the Canary Islands. Electric cable was laid from the mainland in 1996. A diesel unit had been working away since 1935 – first to provide light for the lighthouse and then to bring electric light to the village houses in 1943. The fuel first used on the lighthouse was oil made from lump sucker (Cyclopterus lumpus) oil; later on the rocky waters were lit using fuels including hemp oil and paraffin oil.

Life on Utö has been filled with major ups and downs. The biggest boom was during the first decade of the 20th century, only to be immediately followed by one the most difficult decades in the island’s history when the pilot administration underwent Russianisation. Many families left the island, many others became unemployed.

Today’s main threat is the major cuts in the functions of the army. The lights of the garrison will be dimmed by the end of 2005, leaving Utö without a single army employee. If this results in the disappearance of the shop, the school and health care, the future is looking grim.

Utö’s future has been discussed within contexts including EU projects. Attempts have been made to create a vision of the sustainable development of the island, to make the island a more pleasant living environment and to create the prerequisites for the arrival of new residents on the island. The future of Utö is, however, first and foremost in the hands of the local residents – permanent and recreational alike. It is gratifying to find that there seem to be plenty of people interested in moving onto the island, provided that they can find a home. The islands are highly appealing. The media have also provided positive support to the islanders’ efforts. People are working hard to safeguard Utö’s development in the new and changing conditions.
When Esko Mielikäinen leaves for the meeting of the local municipal council, he has to travel either 20, 45 or 85 kilometres to the Savonlinna Town Hall. His point of departure does not change: he leaves from the Pietolansaari island in the southeastern corner of Lake Pihlajavesi.

- The distance by road is 85 kilometres. In the summer I take my boat, and it’s only 20 kilometres. In the winter, when I can travel on ice roads, the journey is 45 kilometres.

Pietolansaari got a cable ferry connection in 1989. Lake Pihlajavesi has a total of seven cable ferries on private roads that are currently used by approximately 60,000 vehicles a year. The number has doubled in less than a decade.

Esko Mielikäinen is starting his fifth term as a municipal councillor, and he has held municipal positions of trust since 1969. Those days the municipality was still called Sääminki, and was later merged with Savonlinna in 1973. He finds the merger a positive thing in many ways.

Lake Pihlajavesi has fourteen inhabited islands without a permanent road connection. They have approximately 140 year-round residents. The permanent population of the islands of Lake Pihlajavesi was at its highest in the 1930s when the ten largest islands had 750 residents. In 1950 there were still 700 of them, in 1975 only 280.

But by no means have the islands of Lake Pihlajavesi become deserted – quite on the contrary. There are a good four hundred holiday homes on the islands that have year-round residents, and these have around 1,600 regular users. The other islands of Lake Pihlajavesi have an even a greater number of residential residents.

Esko Mielikäinen stresses the fact that there are also plenty of undeveloped areas remaining as two thirds of the 3,819 islands in the lake do not have a single holiday home.

Prehistoric dwellings have not been discovered on the island of Pietolansaari, but around fifty of

The Pietolansaari jetty was built in 1975 for the commuter ferry Sääminki. The service ended with the introduction of the ferry on the private road in 1990. Savonlinna has the nation’s biggest concentration of private ferries.
them are known in the Lake Pihlajavesi area. It is likely that a village of huts also used to stand on Pietolansaari thousands of years ago. First slash and burn may have taken place in the 600s or 700s to prepare the soil for growing barley. Rye may have been sown in the soils of Pietolansaari in the 13th century. The earliest record tells us that Esko’s forefather Sipi Laurinpoika Mielikäinen was the farmer here in 1560–1607. Now the Mielikäinen house is owned by the 15th generation, and the next two generations live in a new house on the southwestern coast of the island.

– I’m sure farming will continue in one form or the other. At the moment we’ve got fifteen dairy cows and beef cattle.

Many a working group and research project has addressed the relationship between permanent residence and nature conservation in Lake Pihlajavesi. Areas included in the coastal protection programme cover around 4,000 hectares. The future of the Saimaa ringed seal (*Phoca hispida saimensis*) is a key issue: the current population in Lake Pihlajavesi is almost one hundred seals.

– One summer I saw a ringed seal twenty-seven times. During one of my crossings to Savonlinna I spotted four of them, he tells us.

– There are five houses left on this island. Fields have already been afforested, for example on Saukkonsaari. If we intend to preserve the traditional village landscapes, we will also need other support, not just agricultural subsidies.

The traditions of the island villages of Lake Pihlajavesi have received special research attention on the Kokonsaari island. The houses would be found in the interior, whereby the coastal forests protected the fields and created a favourable microclimate. On many farms the buildings were placed around an enclosed farmyard. The only lakeside constructions were boat sheds and jetties. Fishing was, however, an important means of livelihood, at best every farm had a seine net of its own. The most important seine catch was vendace (*Coregonus albula*) that was caught in the summer and early autumn on the open waters and after the autumn spawning season near the shore. In the winter, nets were cast for burbot (*Lota lota*), northern pike (*Esox lucius*) and pikeperch (*Stizostedion lucioperca*).

The water quality of Lake Pihlajavesi deteriorated strongly in the 1960s. Fishing equipment became slimy and no-one would drink the water – the lakewater had traditionally been drinkable. With the start of the appropriate purification of wastewater from Savonlinna and other urban areas, the situation took a turn for the better. Today Lake Pihlajavesi again has areas on the open lake that can be safely used for taking household water.

Kokonsaari boasts a landscape of national value. Traces of subsistence economy and traditional agriculture are still clearly visible. The island has five inhabited farms and another five used as summer homes.

The endless coves and inlets of Lake Pihlajavesi offer plenty of sheltered spots for boats. Even larger vessels can moor on the steep rocky shores.
Finnish island records

The largest sea island: Mainland Åland (685 km²)

The largest lake island: Soisalo (1,638 km²). The second largest lake island in the world, only beaten by Manitoulin Island in Lake Huron (2,766 km²)

The largest river island: Kiettare in Kokemäenjoki river (18 km²)

The westernmost island: Märket (Eckerö), 19° 08’ 02”. Also the westernmost point of Finland.

The easternmost island: an unnamed island in Lake Virmajärvi in Ilomantsi, 31° 35’ 20”. Also the easternmost point of Finland.

The southernmost island: Bogskär ( Kökar), 59° 30’ 10”. Also the southernmost point of Finland.

The northernmost island: an unnamed island in Tenojoki river west of Nuorgam, 70° 04’ 06”. Only 2.5 km south of the northernmost point of Finland.

The island at the highest altitude: There are several small lakes at altitudes exceeding one kilometre on the fjells of northwesternmost Lapland, but these have no islands. A small island can be found when you go down to 808 metres to Lake Lossujärvi (Loassojavri).

The largest lake on an island: Kulkemus on Partalaansaari, 583 ha in area.

The largest island in a lake on an island: There is a 76-ha island in Lake Saamaisjärvi on the island of Soisalo, but the island has no lakes, and no other Finnish islands in lakes on islands are known to have lakes, either.

The largest river on an island: The Vahtovanjoki river on the Soisalo island has a water body covering 118 km², with 45 lakes with around 50 islands. The en-

Canoeing off Kökar, Åland. Kökar is Finland’s southernmost municipality and has 300 residents. The Åland Region has over 8,000 islands.

Tetramäki Furniture Vision is one of the businesses based on Finland’s largest island Soisalo, today part of the town of Kuopio. The company is known for its reproductions of furniture designed by the celebrated Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen.
The majestic Ukko is an ancient sacrificial island of Lapland’s indigenous Sámi people in Lake Inari.

Finland’s longest bridge connects the island of Replot to mainland Korsholm. The cable-stayed bridge is 1,045 m long, its pylons rise 82 m above the sea level, and it has 64 cables. The bridge replaced the former ferry connection in 1997.

The tallest island of Soisalo has over 700 lakes with a couple of hundred islands on them.

The highest-rising island: The highest peak of Mahlatti, the largest island in Lake Inari rises 134 metres above the lake surface. Paalasmaa, the largest island in Lake Pielinen, is a couple of metres lower, and Judinsalo in Lake Päijänne 9 metres lower. Ondalskliint, the highest point of Mainland Åland, is 129 m above the sea level and would rank third among the lake islands. Thus the top of the list is very even. – The tallest island in the Baltic also used to belong to Finland: The Lounatkorkea of Hogland rises to 158 metres.

The lakes richest in islands: If Great Saimaa is regarded as one lake, it boasts a grand total of 13,710 islands. Lake Inari has 3,318 islands, Päijänne 1,886. The number of islands in Finnish lakes over 100 km² in area (totalling 46) is 37,952, i.e. almost 40% of all of the islands in our freshwater areas. – Saimaa is not, however, the lake richest in islands in the world: Lake of the Woods on the US-Canadian border has 14,742 islands. Vänern, the largest lake in Sweden, has 12,285 islands.

The island with the biggest population: The list is topped by Mainland Åland with a population of 20,600. The next two are two urban islands in Helsinki: Lauttasaari with 19,000 inhabitants and Laajasalo with 16,000. Soisalo has a population of approximately 12,000 – a little more than Kotkansaari, which forms the centre of the town of Kotka.

The island with the biggest population without a permanent road connection: headed by Mainland Åland, the top of the league is highly even: Hailuoto 972, Storlandet in Nagu 910 and Suomenlinna 844.

The largest uninhabited island: Mahlatti in Lake Inari, 21 km².

The island of Ulkokalla off the municipality of Kalajoki in western Finland rose from the sea in the 15th century. It has been a lighthouse island since 1856, and fishermen have lived on the island in the summers.