

Wild Taiga – The Northern Jewel

Imagine wilderness of rich evergreen forests, dotted with pure water lakes and bathed in endless sun. In Wild Taiga, the most northern part of the Finnish Lakeland, close to the Russian border you will find a jewel of nature tucked away in the Wild Taiga forests. In fact it is so rare and special a gem, it was awarded the European commissions' Destination of Excellence for 2008.



The forests in Kuhmo and Suomussalmi are filled with mammals, especially large carnivores, which are very rare or extinct elsewhere in Europe. Wild Taiga is one of the few places in Europe where it is possible to watch and photograph these rare animals in their natural environment. This is down to the local knowledge and expertise of the fully trained wilderness guides.

In addition to the carnivores such as brown bears (*Ursus arctos*), wolves (*Canis lupus*) and wolverines (*Gulo gulo*) you can see moose (*Alces alces*), endangered wild forest reindeer (*Rangifer tarandus fennicus*) and flying squirrels (*Pteromys volans*), beavers (*Castor canadensis*) and birds of prey.

Interesting waterways to explore

The midnight sun and its surrounding nature create a stage for exhilarating summer activities including hiking, cycling, canoeing, fishing, berry picking and much more. The tranquil area is abundant with interesting waterways. The rivers, lakes and small rapids offer dozens of kilometers of varying canoeing routes for both the beginners and the experienced. Especially the Hossa Hiking Area – the Finnish Outdoor Destination 2011 – is known for its many clear water ponds and the surrounding eskers, abundant brooks and streams rich in fish.

Canyon Lake Julma-Ölkky with the 3,500 year old rock paintings located at the Värrikallio Cliffs is one the most recommended sights for visitors in Hossa Hiking area. Altogether 61 different figures of elk, human figures, bear paws and lizard-like figures are the largest prehistoric paintings in Finland. The lake is only 3 km long but very narrow, only 20 to 100 meters wide and 42 meters deep. The rock walls on the shores rise up to 50 m above the water level.



The rivers and the lakes of the Finnish–Russian borderlands have been important routes for traders and travelers for thousands of years. Only over the last century have roads and railways become more important. For centuries, tar rowers from the Kuhmo used to transport their barrels of tar through the network of rivers and lakes en route to Oulu, a port for the Baltic Sea. Nowadays there's a paddling route called Tervareitti, "Tar route", which is for the main part an unregulated lake route with short rivers and a few full rapids in between. Most of the islands on Lake Lentua belong to the Lake Lentua Nature reserve and there are fine wilderness shores and islands along the rest of the route as well.

Also in the winter, there is plenty to see and experience. The hard, carrying ice on the lakes is nice to ski or snow shoe walk on and the pristine powder snow and the crisp winter air lure you into the nature where you can walk with snowshoes, take a husky or a reindeer ride to enjoy the snowy landscapes. Swimming in a rapid – in the middle of the winter – feels dangerous as well, but only as an idea. With the help of professional guides and state-of-the-art equipment this unique adventure can be experienced safely. The thick rescue suits used during the swim will keep you warm and dry.

All activity tours and programs are made to meet customers skills – beginners and children may enjoy shorter, less testing tours whilst the more experienced may enjoy week-long packages. The guaranteed international departure dates and weekly activities make it also possible for individuals to participate in the tours.

Culture in the Nature

The location in the border areas of east and west give it a unique cultural background of its own, of which the Finnish national epic Kalevala is the brightest gem. Karelianism was a late 19th century cultural phenomenon in the Grand Duchy of Finland and involved writers, painters, poets and sculptors.



Since the publishing of the Finnish national epic Kalevala in 1835, compiled from Karelian folk lore, culture spheres in Finland became increasingly curious about Karelian heritage and landscape. By the end of the 19th century Karelianism had become a major trend for many works of art and literature in Finland. In the movement Karelia was seen as a sort of refuge for the essence of "Finnishness" that had maintained its authenticity across centuries. The phenomenon can be interpreted as a Finnish version of European national romanticism.

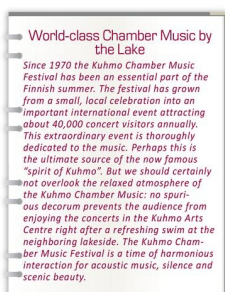
This cultural legacy of Finland is maintained today through craft and song, celebrations and story-telling, delivered with an authenticity and warmth. Sommeelo, International Ethno Music Festival, is an

enthusiastic gathering of contemporary ethno musicians and traditional rune singers. Part of the programme takes place in Viena Karelian rune singing villages in Russia.

The Lentua Lake Nature Reserve introduces the visitor to the rugged, wilderness-like nature. Lake Lentua is familiar through the Finnish painter Akseli Gallen-Kallela's illustrations based on Finland's national epic, the Kalevala.

Lakeside accommodations

There is a variety of accommodation including hotels, self catering apartments and cabins, many of them located in a typical Finnish way by the lakes like Hotel Kalevala next to Hotel Lammasjärvi. Those looking for the peace and quiet of the wilderness have the choice of rustic cabins or fully equipped holiday houses. Camping and motor home areas offer a peaceful and affordable alternative.



<http://www.wildtaiga.fi>

Date: 2011-10-31

Article link:

<http://www.tourism-review.com/travel-tourism-magazine-finland-wild-taiga-attracts-with-lakes-and-culture-article-1650>