

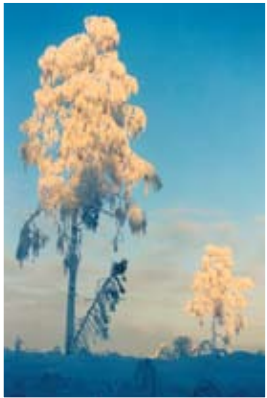


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The Epicenter of Winter



I remember my summer vacations with the family to Lapland, filled with camping, hiking, berry picking and other fun activities. But not until after living abroad and becoming

a seasoned traveler have I really understood the unique beauty of Lapland, its magical wilderness scenery, the shimmering displays of greens in the Northern Lights, its snow-blanketed fields and its snow-covered trees. The winter months in Lapland are referred to as "kaamos"; a Finnish word to describe the seemingly perennial polar night, during which a mystical bluish light reflects from the snow. The sun is back above the horizon towards the end of January, while during the summers Lapland is referred to as the 'Land of the Midnight Sun.'

Most of Lapland lies above the Arctic Circle. A coating of snow generally arrives in November and lingers on the ground until May. Santa Claus lives here with his elves and reindeers; you can even visit The Santa Claus Village, located right on Arctic Circle, near the city of Rovaniemi. The indigenous Sami (or Saame) people have lived and herded their reindeer in the region for thousands

of years. Since Lapland is not densely populated, this region offers vast areas of untouched wilderness, pristine forests and huge national parks in addition to sprawling ski resorts.

The Lapland winter feels magical to me, perhaps because I love the winter outdoor activities. Brave hearts seeking to improve their 360-degree turn skills on a Formula One champions' winter speedway can do that on the Arctic Rally Course in northeastern Finland. One can also take a ride sledding with fast-running huskies, ice swim, ice fish, ice skate, snowshoe, kick sled, cross-country ski, downhill ski, snowboard or telemark. I also recommend going on a snowmobile tour that stops for a nice reindeer stew and berry juice by a camp fire; it can be an exhausting but fantastic experience, and fun for all ages. Once I took the trip in a group with an 82-year-old man. In this winter paradise, you can also find your "löyly" tolerance (for high sauna heat).

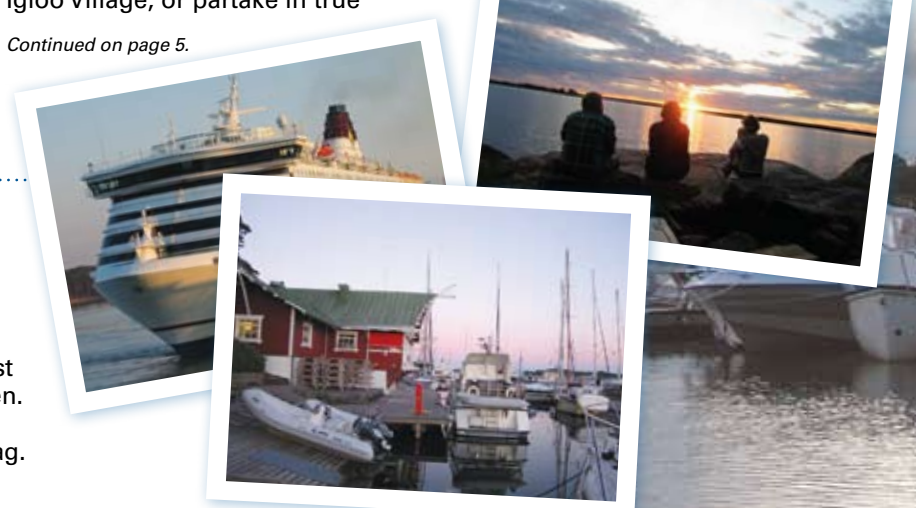
You'll need to pack layers for the harsh winter, but indoor accommodations are plenty; there are regular hotels, some with spas, or chalets and log cabins of various prize ranges (I have seen some of the world's most luxurious log cabins in Finnish Lapland). The adventurous can even stay in glass igloos (with heat and small amenities) in Kakslauttanen Igloo Village, or partake in true

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Åland

The Åland Islands, Åland in Swedish (pronounced AW-land) and Ahvenanmaa in Finnish, is an archipelago consisting of more than 6,500 islands situated Southwest of the Finnish mainland and East of Sweden. Åland is autonomous and has its own government, postal service, and its own flag.

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Travel Issue

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Pop Music in the Finnish Archipelago

"...Her house was big, tall and white - facing a broad and quiet bay..."

I'm reading a Finnish book from the '30s to my son. We are on the deck of a house facing a serene Turku archipelago in June of 2008. We rented this house for a two-week's vacation in my home country after having lived for more than ten years in New York City. I knew my memories would overwhelm me but I was hoping I could bring part of that magic to my family, although none of them had really lived it.

"What's that crap all about?" asks my son.

"It's the magic of Finnish summer, the sea, the islands, the smell of pristine nature, the silence. The white nights, the feeling of cooling water after sauna," I say.

"Cooling water?" he replies. "Have you tried to swim in there? It's like ten degrees centigrade man!"

"Well, it's a symbolic statement. You have to appreciate the lack of rotten smells or the constant noise of emergency vehicles."

"Sure I do. Am I supposed to appreciate the Finnish Pop Music you are listening to non-stop on the radio as well?"

"You have to listen to the words, try to understand the melancholic soul of Finnish people..."

"Right, and all the melodies are in minor. Aren't there any happy songs in Finnish? Or at least funny?"

"It's not the point. It's the tradition. Music has to be touchy when you sit like this with the sun, the sea, and the barbecue."

"Speaking of which. Could I prepare the food this time? I would like to have some real hamburgers instead of those traditional 'blackened frankfurters with mustard'. Is it also part of the nostalgia or are you just being a masochist?" he asks.

"OK. We can also have some smoked salmon for starters. I bought it from our neighbors. It's fresh from the sea; still almost alive. You can't possibly make any sarcastic comments on that?"

"I'm not sarcastic. I'm just from another generation. We need something more than sauna, grill, and Finnish pop music."

"Next you are going to complain about the lack of internet on this island!"

"No, I don't need the computer. I much rather read a book on the veranda and listen to the birds. You seem to have a weird idea about our generation. What would you do yourself if there wasn't a TV in this house?"

"Well, I made sure there is one before booking. How could I miss the European soccer championship!"

My son had a funny smirk on his face. "I've made some plans on my own too. Tomorrow we'll play tennis. You may want to sit here on the porch all day but I need to move my young feet. I found a court next to a hotel on the main island. It's behind some real old and nice-smelling pine trees. After the game we can drive to the harbor. There's an outdoor bar where you can have your pint. I'll rent a scooter or a bike and explore the island for a while. That should be a good compromise."

"It's a deal. Perhaps we'll make another trip next week to Turku. We can take an early morning ferry to Åland. We can see the beautiful archipelago and be back by the evening."

"That sounds great. I heard they have big jacuzzis and some cool video games on board."

"OK," I continued, "but before the vacation is over I would still like to row the boat over to that little peaceful, shallow bay we saw the other day. Remember? It had thick reeds growing next to steep, gray rocks. It looks like a perfect place for fishing. If we catch enough perch we can prepare fish soup. The farmer on the other side of the island sells potatoes and fresh onion."

"Can I climb those rocks?"

"Oh yeah, it's a good workout — and from the top you can probably get an awesome view of the bay."

"Cool," my son finally answered, taking a sip of his Jaffa.

I saw the sun crawling lower, knowing it would still take hours before it would just disappear behind the

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FINLAND CENTER FOUNDATION 2008 Membership Form

Age Range (head of household):

18-24 25-34 35-49 50 and over.

Distance from your home to New York:

under 10 miles 10-25 25-50 over 50

Languages used in your home:

English Finnish Swedish Other(s)

If living in the US or Canada, how often do you visit Finland:

Annually or more often Every 2-5 years
 less often or never

If living in Finland, how often do you travel to US.:

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 less often or never

Are you, your family or friends interested in obtaining information about group health insurance through the FCF?

Yes No

Please list a few Scandinavian festivals that you attend throughout the year:

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Extra donation (for capital fund) \$ _____
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OR if you would like to pay online using a credit card or PayPal, please go to www.finlandcenter.org and fill out the "join our mailing list" form (even if you are already on our list, please update your info!)

Your membership card will arrive in the mail soon!

Thank you! Kiitos! Tack!

 Cut out and mail to:
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Pop Music in the Finnish Archipelago

Continued from page 2.

horizon, never actually giving way to real darkness. It felt so quiet and peaceful; I was ready to live that moment forever. A bird was flying over the water, making a mysterious, squeaking sound. The only thing missing was a frankfurter and a bottle of beer.

"Shall we put on the grill and heat the sauna?" I asked.

"Let's do that — but with one condition: I brought with me a CD of BomFunk MC's. I'll play that instead of the radio while preparing sauna?"

"I'll give you fifteen minutes of that hip-hop, electro noise and then we're back to Finnish pop!"

"Make it twenty!"

Vanya & Juha Himanen

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Now you can become a member of our organization and help support ongoing work to secure a permanent home away from home in New York for Finns and all friends of Finland! This project is for you, me, our children and our friends... **JOINTODAY!**

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- Invitations to members-only events
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More to come – and the more members, the more benefits we will get!

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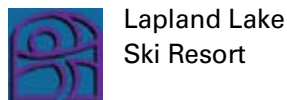
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VIKING LINE

Åland

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Its population is 25,000, of which 11,000 live in the only city, Mariehamn. Its language is Swedish, but as in Finland in general, everybody (we are exaggerating only slightly) speaks English!

Visitors most often access Åland by one of the commercial ferries that offer a variety of services such as restaurant dining, spa facilities, and tax free shopping. Another, off the mainstream, and more scenic, route to Åland, is by traveling on one of the local ferries, Landskapsfärjorna. The local ferries are connected to a network of ferries that service different islands, providing a convenient way to travel though the outer parts of the archipelago, enabling the traveler to explore Åland's unique nature and wildlife.

Most vacationers come to Åland to enjoy the tranquility and to spend time with their family and friends. Boating, as well as biking, is popular among the tourists and locals, and the law permits people to even enter privately owned

land and islands.

You can also explore Åland's rich history by visiting one of the numerous museums on the islands for a nominal fee. There is also a large number of delightful medieval stone churches to see.

My favorite place is Vårdö where I retreat to a small island to recoup from hectic New York City living. The local traffic is very different from the one in New York. I may spend days on the island before I hear a boat passing in the far distance. When that happens I realize how remote the small island is, but at the same time minutes from civilization.

Come and explore Åland for yourself. Åland is a perfect retreat for visitors who seek to explore a world beyond landscaped parks and artificial lakes.

Mika Hallakorpi



The Epicenter of Winter

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igloo sleeping, where a hay filled-sleeping bag and some hot water bottles provide your only shield against the cold. Besides Kakslauttanen, you can also find igloo accommodations in the Lainio Snow Village near Ylläs. If your plans involve mostly skiing, you might stay in or near one of the ski resorts. The largest of these are Levi, Ylläs and Ruka, without forgetting Saariselkä, Salla, Iso-Syöte, Pyhä and others.

Lapland offers cultural activities, from the Arktikum Museum in Rovaniemi or Siida Museum in Inari to the fascinating Design House of Idoli. I also recommend taking a short shopping detour; look for traditional wooden cups, intact reindeer skins, beautifully carved knives and fur hats.

For practical information on traveling to Finnish Lapland, visit the following web pages.

www.laplandfinland.com

<http://www.visitfinland.com>

Helena Niskanen

Laadukasta palvelutaloasumista Suomessa



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