

TRAVEL MAGAZINE

VISIT SAAREMAA & MUHU

LIFE IN A PARADISE OVER THE SEA

CRADLE OF
THE VIKING
AGEHOW TO GET
TO THE ISLAND
BY YACHT?CAPTAINS OF
THE ISLAND
IN ANTARCTICAKURESSAARE -
A EUROPEAN
CITY OF SPORTGREAT
SPA
GUIDEBEST BIRD
WATCHING
SPOTSTO SAAREMAA FOR
A FAMILY HOLIDAY!CULINARY CURIOSITIES
ON THE ISLANDS

WHAT A STORY!

15
places
TO ENJOY
CULTURE

PRFOODS

Heimon
K A L A



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Our trout is grown in Saaremaa.
That way we can offer really fresh
fish, as if you caught it yourself.



Photo: Priidu Saart

**“Saaremaa on a summer night
is the best place in the world”
says a popular Estonian song.**

Welcome!

Indeed, why not pack your bags and head to Saaremaa? The sun loves Saaremaa! The biggest West Estonian archipelago enjoys more sunshine than any other place in Estonia - almost 250 days a year.

Various surveys place one of the centres of Europe to be in the village of Mönnuste in Saaremaa. Nearby is the native town of the world's fastest man, the pride and honour for all the islanders, World Rally Champion Ott Tänak. Saaremaa has been a home to a number of famous people: Admiral Bellingshausen, a discoverer of Antarctica, Carl Oswald Bulla, a court photographer to the Russian tsar and Louis Kahn, a world famous architect.

A decade ago, a Viking Age ship burial place was discovered in the village of Salme and last year the most precious jewelry, a snake's head bracelet, unique to the Baltic region, was found in Saaremaa at a 1700-year old place of sacrifice. The future will show how this discovery changed the way we perceive the first centuries of Saaremaa, as well as the rest of Estonia.

Saaremaa and its nearby islands are part of the UNESCO area Mand and Biosphere, meaning that islanders live in harmony with nature and consider sustainability as part of their daily lives. The green mentality is gaining traction in all spheres of life: festivals have quit using plastic tableware, local food is more valued and sport and exercising are popular.

Saaremaa is a great destination for business as well as pleasure and the island has plenty to offer the whole year round. Some ideas: go on a cycling tour, play golf, visit light-houses or medieval churches, look down from a cliff, peep into a windmill, stomp around the junipers, go on a photo hunt, taste local beer and dried fish, relax in the sauna, follow the viking trails, cheer the sports events, go mushroom picking, sail to the nearby islands, stroll through antique shops and handicraft markets take your time enjoying the sunsets and indulge in some delicious food in the numerous local cafes and restaurants. Museums, galleries, concerts and spas are a good idea regardless of the weather. Sounds nice, doesn't it?

**Saaremaa and Muhumaa welcome
you with open arms – come alone,
with family and friends.**

This magazine aims to inspire with
fascinating articles and maybe even
some surprises waiting for you inside.

Follow us on social media and
share your impressions with us
#visitsaaremaa



Margit Kõrvits
www.visitsaaremaa.ee

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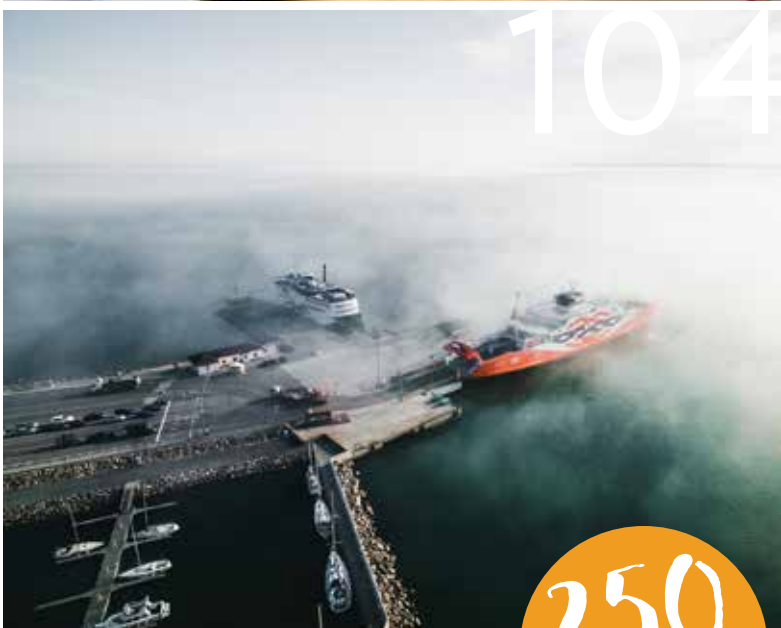
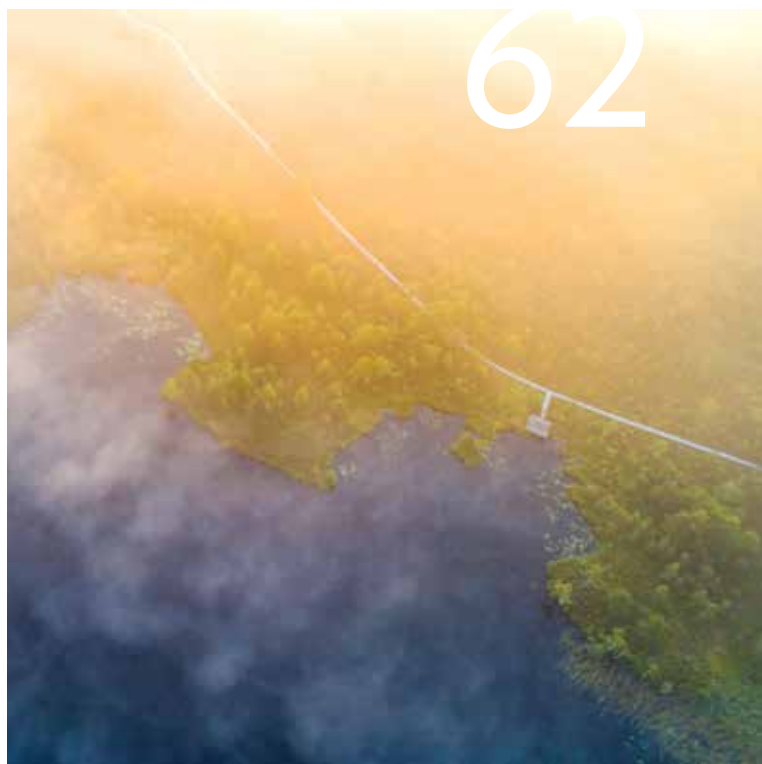
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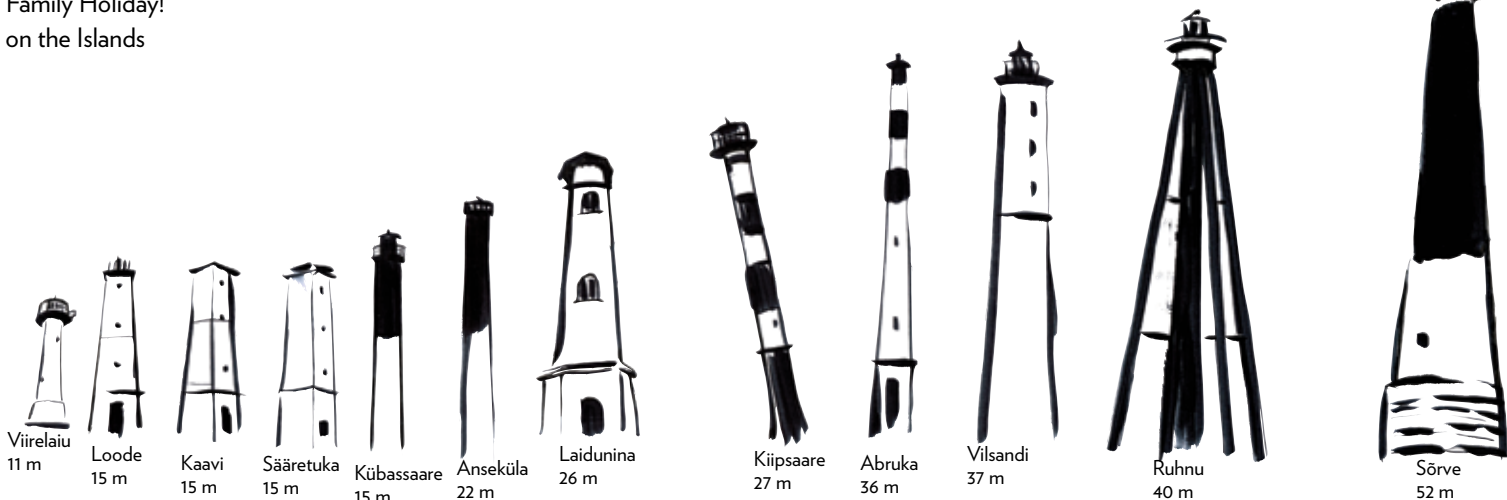
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250 sunny days



EDITORIAL



COVERPHOTO: **Valmar Voolaid**
Women from DMO Visit Saaremaa
in local folk costumes.

Muhu islanders, photo from 1920



VISIT SAAREMAA

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Published by | MTÜ Visit Saaremaa

Sponsored by | Saaremaa Parish

Printed by | Printall

Distribution | MTÜ Visit Saaremaa



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Printed matter
4041 0820

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Saaremaa Tourist Information offers information on accommodation, events, sights, guides, car and bicycle rent. We help you buy ferry tickets and we sell souvenirs.

Drop by – we will help you!

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visit
saaremaa

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- David S



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- Georgi V

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Photo: Toomas Tuul

HISTORY

The highest points of Saaremaa began to emerge from the Baltic Ice Lake in about 9600 B.C., the island of Muhu about 8000 B.C. and towards the end of the Stone Age, the first settlers, the seal hunters arrived. The traces of the long, exciting and eventful history of the islands can still be found today: from the Viking Age findings to grand manors, churches, historical sacred natural sites and the still surviving old traditions.

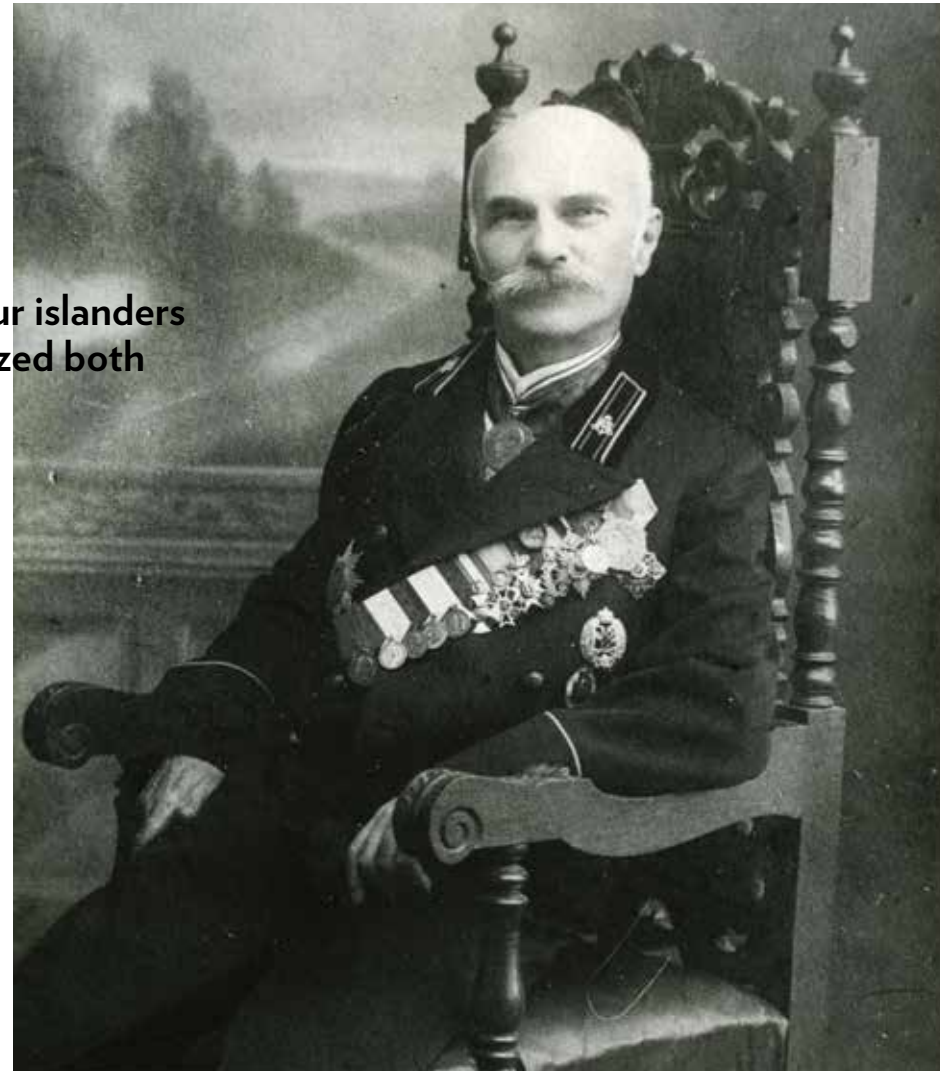


Famous Islanders

TEXT: HANNA-MARI VILLSAAR, TÖNIS KIPPER | PHOTOS: MARGIT KÖRVITS, ANNA WEBBER, SAAREMAA MUSEUM

Saaremaa is just a small island but it has produced a fair number of outstanding cultural figures for Estonia, including explorer F.G.B von Bellingshausen (1778-1852), Estonia's greatest wordsmith and language reformer Johannes Aavik (1880-1973) and a new World Champion Ott Tänak (born 1987).

➤ We are going to introduce four islanders whose work has been recognized both at home and away.



Carl Oswald Bulla

an outstanding court photographer

The court photographer Bulla is one of the most famous residents of Saaremaa. He is equally accepted by the speakers of German, Russian and Estonian. He was born in Prussia in 1855, lived in Russia and died in Saaremaa in 1929, after having fled the revolution and finding love.

In his lifetime his hundreds of thousands of photographs showed the families of the Russian tsar and the European royal families, as well as the disciples of the October revolution. In the last years of his life, his camera recorded the lives of ordinary islanders and the daily life of the Cape of Sörve.

The twenty-year-old Bulla opened his first photo studio in Petersburg in 1875. A decade later, he obtained the mayor's permission to take photographs outside his studio as well. He photographed life on the street, people, vehicles – anything that felt interesting and worth recording. There is every reason to consider him a pioneer of documentary photography. His fame helped him to take photographs of the people who

would normally refuse to be photographed, including Lev Tolstoi.

In 1904, Bulla obtained permission to photograph the emperor's court and related events. Carl Bulla's life and career in Petersburg were interrupted by the revolution but his photo studio on Nevski Street is still there.

Carl Bulla ended up in Estonia thanks to his third wife Christine Juliane Keselberg who came from the the farm of Nõmme in the village of Iide in Sörve. Christine worked as a dispatcher of completed works in Bulla's studio. They got married around 1904 and had a grand, two-storey house with a tower built in the village of Iide. First used as a summer residence, it became the permanent home of the Bulla family in 1918.

Carl Oswald Bulla lived in Saaremaa for 11 years. In 2018, a hundred years after his moving to Saaremaa, a museum celebrating the life and work of Carl Oswald Bulla, was opened in the village of Iide in Sörve.

Mai Leisz

a bass guitarist with an incredible career

Mai Leisz (born Mai Jõgi) is a bass player and song writer, today one of the top jazz musicians in the world, was born in Kuressaare on 5th May 1988. She grew up in Leisi in the North of Saaremaa, today she lives in Los Angeles in the USA, writing music and performing with her own band MaiGroup, touring the world with the legendary David Crosby.

Mai started her studies at Kuressaare music school in the field of classical violin and she came to the bass guitar and jazz music later when studying under the guidance of Tiit Paulus. Mai's phenomenal diligence, her disciplined practice regime and

her unconditional love of music led her to continue her music studies in Sweden where she formed her own jazz-fusion band MaiGroup with her fellow students as band members in 2010. The band has released three studio albums "Luv" (2013), "You" (2015) and "Metamorphosis" (2019), the last one including the stars like David Crosby, Bill Frisell, Greg Leisz and Charles Lloyd.

A couple of times a year, Mai manages to visit her native island to enjoy the familiar surroundings in the company of her friends and family.





Ivo Linna

a singer of people's hearts

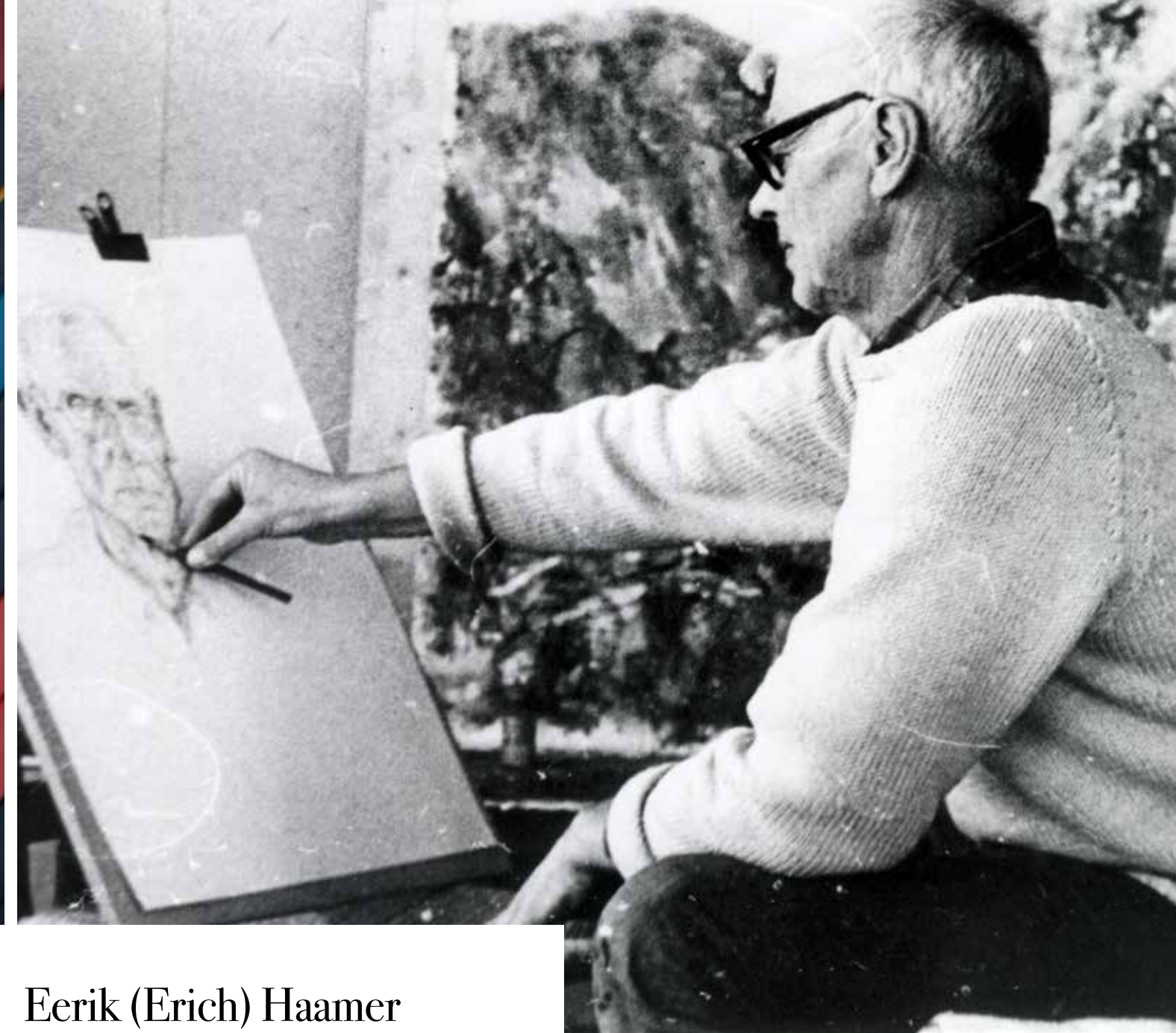
Ivo Linna is the person who is entitled to bear the title of “people’s love” without any doubt. A local newspaper Saarte Hääl ran a survey to identify 100 outstanding islanders and every third person chose him.

Ivo was born in Saaremaa on 12 June 1949, and is now a permanent resident of Muhu. He has been an active member and soloist in the bands Apelsin and Rock Hotel, singing on tiny little stages as well as at grand music venues. His musical career and success are more than 52 years old.

He began his singing career in the school band Müstikud in 1966 playing an allegedly self-made guitar, leading to singing the famous patriotic songs of the singing revolution by

Alo Mattiisen, numerous rock and pop tunes and the 1996 Eurovision song “Kaelakee hääl”. This song that was sung by the duet of Ivo Linna and Maarja-Liis Ilus came fifth in the contest. In 2017 he was given the Hendrik Krumm Award for his outstanding creative career as well as for the consistent representation of the islands of Saaremaa and Muhu. His jubilee concert tour in summer 2019 filled the courtyard of Kuressaare Bishop’s Castle to the brim.

“Our Ivo,” say the islanders and this recognition is harder to earn than the Estonian President’s award which Ivo actually has – the Order of the White Star, Fourth Class, from the year 2000.



Eerik (Erich) Haamer

paintings straight from life

Eerik Haamer, Saaremaa’s best-known artist, was born in Kuressaare on 17 February 1908 the youngest son of Aleksander Haamer and Karoliine-Juliane Jasner. His brothers were Harri Haamer, a future clergyman and scout leader and Eugen Haamer, a future architect and civil engineer.

In the autumn of 1944, Eerik Haamer fled to Sweden by boat from the island of Vilsandi. In 1945–1975 he lived in Gothenburg, working in the archive of the ethnographic museum and later as a draughtsman in Nils Einar Eriksson’s architectural bureau.

Haamer made it back to his native country twice. At the turn of 1970–1971 he participated in the opening of an exhibition of his work in the art museum of Kadriorg, in May 1986 he participated in the opening of another exhibition of his work and he also managed to visit his native island.

Haamer’s numerous paintings include over 500 oil paintings and about the same number of drawings. He preferred to paint man and nature, the daily lives of the coastal folk with their tangible

and non-tangible moments of joy. There is a clear distinction between his work created at home and in exile – the brightness of the colours and the joie de vivre were left in his homeland, to be replaced by the dark colours of exile. His self-portrait of 1992, his very last work, sums up human life.

“Eerik Haamer valued people, he showed respect to everybody and he was a very open person with great inner freedom,” says Eenok Haamer, the vicar of Mustvee congregation, about his uncle.

Eerik Haamer passed away in 1994, at the age of 86 in Kungälv in Sweden. In January 2005, Haamerite näitusemaja (the Exhibition House of the Haamers) was opened in Kuressaare, built in the birthplace of the artist, today it functions as a home gallery and it can be visited by prior arrangement. Since 2018, the City of Kuressaare (now Saaremaa Rural Municipality) and the local expert group of the Cultural Endowment of Estonia has awarded the Eerik Haamer Art Prize. |

A Born Islander?

TEXT: EIA UUS | PHOTOS: PRIVATE COLLECTION | ILLUSTRATION: EIKE MALVA

➤ All my friends know that I am an islander. Most of them would never imagine that I was not from Saaremaa.

I grew up on the mainland, in Noarootsi Peninsula. My parents married and had their wedding party at their summer place in Saaremaa. I made my first ferry trip when I was three months old and I was christened in Jämaja Church.

It was the area around Riksu, her summer place where my mother had more time to keep her diary and where she hosted lots of guests with cameras, thus recording most of my childhood in the pictures of Saaremaa. Near the house, by the sea, a little island had formed on the sand dunes, called the kingdom of Eia because I loved toddling around and bustling about there in my infancy. My mother's diary brings back memories of me hitting my head against an ice cream parlour in the town of Kuressaare (then called Kingissepa) and then screaming my head off and me grizzling along with the organ in Jämaja Church. Grandfather Georg whom I had never met, was from Saaremaa but would it really explain the true fact that I could not properly pronounce my õ sounds even by the end of secondary school?

Now, as I leave Tallinn for Saaremaa every weekend, my friends ask me: HOW on earth can you be bothered – four hours there and four hours back? But every ferry trip reminds me the excitement of my childhood – endless ferry queues, packed lunches for the long queue and the pushing of cars in neutral, boys and penfriends whom I met in my teens while waiting at the port, the ice cream I used to eat on the ferry...

Saaremaa has always made me feel like its daughter. When we lost our summer place near Lümanda, a small place in Panga adopted me. When I grew out of this place, I made a best friend in Vätta and I have my proper home there now.

Recently, a newcomer told me: 'You know what these islanders are like – they stick together, they are kind to strangers but they never let you into their hearts.' I had no idea what he was talking about, because Saaremaa has always cared for me better than any other place on earth – and this is the place that has always drawn me back from places all over the world in my travelling days. Saaremaa never runs out of people who will offer a bite to eat and a piece of good advice to consider. It is an inspiration for endless, unbelievable stories to write and tell others when travelling in the world.

My mother's diary brings back memories of me hitting my head against an ice cream parlour in the town of Kuressaare (then called Kingissepa) and then screaming my head off. |

~ Eia Uus,
a travelling writer
and journalist



^ Eia at fairy-tale Panga

> Little Eia in the Muha farm at Riksu



Sea, Fire, Iron and Blood

TEXT: MEHIS TULK | PHOTOS: SALME VIKINGITURG, ASVA VIKINGITE KÜLA, MARGIT KÕRVITS

For present day Southern Europeans, the pre-Christian Nordic countries were a gloomy, suspicious place, full of all sorts of supernatural creatures and nasty weather. It was the edge of the world, a bugbear speaking the language of fire, iron and blood. Saaremaa was part of this magical borderland.



'Viking!' Whoever said this word, would get an emotional reaction from anyone. We might have different knowledge about the meaning of this word but it would not leave anyone cold. This word denoting the ancient sea warrior, is very much alive in lots of places around us even today. Names of ship companies, window manufacturing companies, burger makers, cycling clubs, football clubs – these are just the few that cross our minds, not to mention decades of comic strips in the company of Hagar Hirmus or Marvel's Thor Odinson.

Militant Viking Era

In the annals of our millenia-old civilization, the Viking era makes up about two and a half hundred years of an extremely militant period in it. The aggressive raids of Scandinavians, their image of force and success has turned out to be so viable that it still captivates people even now, at the beginning of the 21st century, in the era of science, globalisation and technology.

We should point out the changed style of writing about history in recent decades. The development of science and technology have made it possible to see the ancient times in a completely different light from the earlier studies that were mostly based on historical records and written data.

More efficient search tools and a rapid increase of the number of hobby researchers have brought to light numerous new locations of antiquities. Precision research of findings, e.g. DNA analysis of bones and their comparison with existing genetic data, are already more telling than ancient records or runic scripts. The closer collaboration between scientists of different fields has made it possible to get a much clearer picture of prehistoric times and people.



730.-750. a

Ship Burials at Salme

The looting of the Monastery of Lindisfarne in England in 793 is considered to be the beginning of the Viking era. The two unique ship burials unearthed in the village of Salme in Saaremaa in 2008 and in 2010 may well change this definition in the future because the last resting place of dozens of buried sea warriors dates from an era half a century before that i.e. 730–750. Furthermore, the bigger Salme ship is the oldest recorded sailing ship in the Baltic region so far. Namely the introduction of sails was one of the preconditions for making longer overseas looting raids. Maybe the cradle of the Viking era should be moved from England to Saaremaa altogether?

True, we do not know and we are probably never going to find out what exactly happened at Salme 1300 years ago. Was it a looting raid by some young Viking King or Viking Prince of Mälaren that the islanders bravely stood up to? Or did something go wrong on an ancient diplomatic mission and a fight broke out leading to the slaying of these foreign warriors, led by their young chief and his bodyguards?

By all means, it was a powerful incident, followed even by a more powerful funeral. Plenty of time was spent on sending the fallen to the underworld in a stately manner. Dozens of victims whose violent deaths became obvious from their remains, had not been buried randomly. The whole burial followed a logic, not to mention an abundance of possessions in the grave that speak to the high social status of the deceased.

Salme findings have been examined and interpreted and this ancient puzzle has developed for over ten years. Actually, for present day islanders it is not of utmost importance to find out what exactly happened at Salme. It is far more important whether we want and know how to appreciate the Vikings.

Sagas and Archaeological Findings

The main written sources about the Viking era are the Icelandic, Danish and Norwegian sagas. Saaremaa, 'Eysysla' for Scandinavians, frequently occurs in them all as part of the world where ancient sea warriors once fought their heroic battles. These sagas often amount to folkloric fiction spiced up with supernatural characters, blurring ancient reality, whereas the Viking-era archaeological findings are not a fairy tale but a reality. A time that once came to a halt, now becomes tangible and visible. These are stories about our heroic and dignified past. You just need to pick them up.

When the Viking ship Stefneir, built by Swedes, visited Salme in summer 2015, its skipper Hans Eklund pointed out a thought-provoking fact. He noted that the coat of arms of Saaremaa depicts a flamboyant Viking ship but there is no Viking museum in Saaremaa. Now, five years later, an imposing sail and tail have become the adornments of the newly established big parish of Saaremaa and the Viking theme is much better acknowledged.

793. a



Viking Life Renewed

Inspired by the ship findings of Salme, the Viking enthusiasts launched the first and the only Estonian Viking market in Salme coastal park in 2016. Annual Viking markets in August attract dozens of reenactors who erect their Viking village providing visitors with an authentic atmosphere and insight into archaic Viking life. Traditional handicraft skills are demonstrated in the handicraft market, martial arts and other fun performances are also presented.

The Viking theme park, recently erected near the ancient stronghold of Asva, is developing at a rapid pace and the developers have no shortage of ideas. In addition to visual and physical entertainment, the ancient traditional Viking kitchen section is also making progress.

Saaremaa museum is working on a very exciting exhibition project, bringing the whole intriguing story of the ship findings at

This piece of jewellery, the property of SAAREMAA MUSEUM, and 70 other artifacts were found at a place of sacrifice in Saaremaa in September 2019.

This discovery, unique to the Baltic region, is going to change not only our understanding of Prehistoric Saaremaa but of the whole of Estonia.

The golden bracelet and the other discoveries will be exhibited in Kuressaare Castle in May 2020.

A MAJESTIC GOLDEN SNAKE'S HEAD BRACELET FROM THE 3RD CENTURY



SAAREMAA MUUSEUM

is one of the oldest and biggest in Estonia.

At the heart of the museum complex is the 14th-15th century Kuressaare Episcopal Castle.

The museum comprises permanent exhibitions on the wildlife of Saaremaa, on ancient and recent history, as well as temporary exhibitions. Concerts, plays and other events are organized. The address is:

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Info: www.saaremaamuuseum.ee

www.facebook.com/kuressaarecastle

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VISIT ALSO:

AAVIKUTE MAJAMUUSEUM (Vallimaa t. 7, Kuressaare)

MIHKLI TALUMUUSEUM (Viki küla, Kihelkonna)



BULLS OR WARRIORS?

The famous horned war helmets of popculture actually have nothing to do with the Viking era.

The misconception of horned Viking helmets became more widespread after the performances of Richard Wagner's opera cycle 'The Ring of the Nibelung' in 1870. The costume designer Carl Emil Doepler must have borrowed the horned helmets from the works of the Swede August Malmström where they erroneously ended up via incorrectly dated archaeological findings or the misinterpretation of antique texts. The Greek and Roman chronicles describe the war helmets that were adorned with ornaments including the depictions of wings, single horns or wild animal antlers. The findings of all horned helmets date from the pre-Viking era and they are associated with priests and ceremonial functions. The only recorded Viking era helmet has no horns.



The Viking theme park offers fun activities for everyone.

2016. a

2021. a

Salme to the public in 2021. The exhibition will be opened with an international conference where the researchers of the location and the best experts in the field are going to thoroughly explain the facets of researching ship burials. Considering the volume of the findings, the exhibition of solely Salme burials will be of the size of a small museum, and it will be a long step forward in opening up the Viking era of Saaremaa.

The design and construction of several Viking ships have progressed without much public attention, hopefully they will be launched in the near future. We need to point out that Viking era archaeological findings keep emerging in Saaremaa and can only conclude that there is no lack of ancient wind in Saaremaa. Come aboard, we will tighten the sail and you can feel the boat cutting through the waves.

Sagas often amount to folkloric fiction spiced up with supernatural characters, blurring reality, whereas the Viking-era archaeological findings are not a fairy-tale but a reality.

Gulfers or Traders

The word 'Viking' probably originates from an ancient Nordic language word *vík*, meaning a gulf. In that case a Viking would be 'a gulf' or a seafarer. According to another theory, the name of Vikings originates from an Old English word *wíc*, meaning a trading settlement. The truth is that apart from the militant and aggressive Viking era, the Nordic people were rather engaged in land cultivation, handicrafts and trade. Seafaring-warriors formed a relatively small section of them.

Why warrior culture, later Viking culture, developed, is not completely clear. Different theories point out climatic cataclysms of the 6th century that brought along crop failures, causing a devastating effect on the population in lots of regions, including the Nordic countries and Estonia. The dilemma of living or dying did not leave more choices than forcibly taking food from those who had it. This way the importance of warriors grew in society and in order to gain special status, warriors had to go on looting raids collecting booty and fame in battle. |

**Maybe the cradle of the
Viking era should be moved
from England to Saaremaa
altogether?**

VIKINGS ON SCREENS

Fearless Vikings were already inspiring film makers in the early days of cinematography. The short silent movie *The Viking's Daughter* of 1908 tells a fast love story of an imprisoned Saxon and a Viking girl, *The Viking* of 1928 was a full-length silent movie with background sound attached to it.

Hundreds of movies have been made about Vikings, including about fifty documentaries, most of them in the last thirty years. The middle aged should remember the epic movie *The Vikings* with Kirk Douglas and Tony Curtis, bringing back fond memories of all that excitement in their early teens. A TV series under the same name has acquired a cult-like status in the last five years.

Unlike Americans and Russians, Scandinavians have a rather different attitude to their past; they are anything but dead-serious about it. For example the Norwegian humour series *Norsemen*, teetering on the borders of bad taste, mocks everything and everybody and the parabolic science fiction series *Beforeigners* binds together the final stages of the Viking area, the present and the 19th century.

BREWED IN
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Photo: Tanel Kindsigo

KURESSAARE

The ancient, stylish resort town Kuressaare is attractive to holiday makers as well as to culture vultures, there is something for everyone! Curiously enough, Kuressaare is probably the most spa-dense city in the world – there is a spa place for every tenth resident. After relaxing spa sessions, take a walk in the ambient old town, enjoy its architecture, its cafes and galleries.



Islands Made for Indulgence

TEXT: MO SAAREMAA | PHOTOS: MAANUS MASING (SAARTE HÄÄL) JA SPAAD

› The islands of Saaremaa and Muhu with their large number of water heavens are perfect places for indulgence. As each spa hotel has its own unique spirit and character, use this guide to pick your best fit.

INTERESTING FACT
Kuessaaire is known for its mud treatment traditions, having provided help with health problems through the centuries. The curative mud has an anti-infection and pain-easing effect, it fosters the functioning of internal organs and it strengthens immunity.



< A pretty view of the old town of Kuressaare from the roof terrace with a private sauna.



Kuressaare has the largest number of spas on the islands. In the very heart of the city centre and yet, on a quiet side street there is:

JOHAN SPA – a gem in the centre of the old town

Johan strikes the eye with its special architecture and interior design, largely inspired by the landscapes of Saaremaa. Lots of natural interior features create a highly cosy atmosphere. It is a perfect holiday venue for all – families with children will enjoy its safe and compact set-up and couples will love its stylish, romantic atmosphere. Johan's beauty parlour has over 50 beauty treatments to offer. Why not try Saaremaa hay therapy? The pools and saunas of the sauna centre have been named after various places in Saaremaa – they might inspire you to explore more of the island! The hotel has a spacious lounge, a perfect place for enjoying cocktails and snacks over a game of pool. Restaurant Pähkel uses mostly local produce in its dishes. Due to its location on a peaceful old town street, Johan makes for the perfect place for big events, providing guests with excellent opportunities for relaxation after crowded functions. The hotel has 51 rooms, including various suites and eight apartments of different sizes that are perfect for family holidays. There are three conference halls in the building. The gem of the hotel is its super popular private sauna on the roof terrace – you can enjoy a wonderful view of the old town of Kuressaare from the outdoor Jacuzzi. What more could you ask for!

In Lossi Street you can't miss the boutique hotel **ARENSBURG – centuries of a piece of luxury**

In this wonderful 300-year-old building, contemporary architecture and centuries-old luxury come together. A visit to Arensburg Boutique Hotel & Spa allows its guests to travel back in time. Arensburg has been awarded the title of the most culture-friendly hotel and for its the integration of modern architecture and centuries-old architectural heritage Arensburg merited the architectural award of Surprise 2007. The boutique hotel is a favourite place for business and cultural clientele and the management organizes a lot of concerts as well as sponsoring a number of larger cultural events. There are conference rooms of different sizes and two restaurants. Across the road from Arensburg, Meedla Koda has luxurious conference and party rooms for rent. There is a spacious summer terrace in the courtyard of Arensburg with its weekly open air concerts, famous all over the island. The historical environment provides you with a unique way of taking care of your mind and body. The spa has a limitless choice of massages and treatments for women, men and youngsters. Arensburg also offers relaxing baths to restore body and spirit. Arensburg spa is small enough to be accommodated in the heart of the city of Kuressaare and big enough to accommodate a small pool, a big Jacuzzi, a sanarium, a Finnish sauna and a steam sauna. You can make a separate booking for the infra-red sauna and a private sauna comprising a Finnish sauna and a steam sauna and also a spacious common room with a Jacuzzi. It sounds truly tempting, doesn't it?

< Boutique hotel is a favourite place for business and cultural clients.

In the city centre of Kuressaare, on Tallinna Street you will be welcomed at

GRAND ROSE SPA – romantic and admired

As the name hints, you can see roses all over the place, in the rooms, corridors, restaurants and in the sauna centre. This symbol of love, youth, health, freshness, friendship and success makes a perfect image of a spa! The spa and sauna centre practises a modern approach with pools, saunas, treatment rooms and the spa bar all next to each other. The oriental sauna centre comprises a total of seven stylish designer saunas, including a Saaremaa style juniper sauna and a birch sauna. The popular aroma sauna and salt sauna are also at your disposal. There is a bar with a variety of refreshing cocktails and light snacks. The exotic spa and sauna centre contains common rooms connected to personal treatment and therapy rooms. The atmosphere allows clients to spend their time in lots of different ways, letting them forget all their daily grievances. The spa hotel restaurant has been recommended by White Guide with every good reason – the restaurant in a nice, vaulted room offers delicious dishes cooked with mostly local produce accompanied by a carefully selected list of drinks. The hotel also makes for a luxurious venue for conferences, dinner parties and other events.



The gentle romantic interior design of Grand Rose Spa caresses body and sense of beauty.



Walking in the castle park in the direction of Sörve Cape, you will end up at the twin-like spa hotels

RÜÜTLI & MERI – centres of water attractions and active recreation

Meri and Rütli are located on a beautiful seaside promenade, close to the marina and Kuressaare Castle Park. A wide variety of services and peaceful atmosphere make them great holiday centres for families as well as for friends. Rütli spa hotel has a perfect 25-metre pool for serious swimmers, two squash courts, with gyms and pool tables in both buildings. Bicycles and walking poles are also available. Children's favourites are the 52-metre long sliding pipe at Rütli water centre, air hockey and table tennis. Both hotels have children's playrooms. The spa hotels have over a hundred treatments from classical spa treatments to Saaremaa type mud treatments. Both hotels have rooms with views of the garden suburb of Kuressaare, the sea or the castle park and the castle. The spacious, comfortable rooms are of classical interior design. Indulge yourself in the limitless variety of fun activities of the twin spas!



< Rütli and Meri spa hotels offer active holiday opportunities as well as opportunities for relaxation.

INTERESTING FACT
The first mud treatment centre was established in Kuressaare in 1840.





> **GOSPA** is a cosy place for all spa enthusiasts.



Find another spa hotel by the sea, near the marina

GOSPA – a golden example of a child-friendly holiday centre

Perfect place for a family holiday! All family members, big and small, will feel fabulous here. This place is well known for their friendly attitude to children and this has made them a favourite of clients.

After spending time here, families will arrive home, happy and relaxed. No age groups have been neglected here – there are treatments for babies, for older children as well as for adults. In addition to traditional massages and body treatments the spa has its very own body treatment line KENA by GOSPA. Kena (nice in English) – is a beautiful word often used in Saaremaa and it expresses the very essence of Saaremaa, the skills and the best natural produce is available here.

This Spa hotel runs a Babies' Club, Children's Club and Women's Club that organize regular monthly events from spring to autumn.

GOSPA is ideally located for golfers, being at a short distance from the golf course and offering a sauna for relaxing after a game of golf.

The restaurant has a special children's menu and it has been awarded the title of the best family restaurant for two years. They are the best proof for the restaurant's efforts to have something to offer to everybody. The restaurant can be proud of its wonderful view of the castle, the most remarkable sight in Kuressaare .

In Saaremaa Parish

On the Beach of Mändjala you will find

HOTEL SAAREMAA – cosy, peaceful and scenic

This Spa hotel is located in the protective shade of beach pines. Just a few steps and you will be walking on the sand or you may be swimming in the sea regardless of the season, why not try winter swimming? As the water gets deep slowly, it is most suitable for families with little children.

The spa and sauna centre is sweet, small and private and in addition to traditional treatments you can enjoy exotic Thai massages by professional masseuses.

The advantages of this place are the peaceful location on the seaside and the personalized service. Make your choice between saunas, treatments, walks and Nordic walking or yoga.



> The hotel under the coastal pines is sweet, small and private.



> The sea that gets deep only slowly makes the sea perfect for the families with young children.

> Look for more, all spas can be found from here:



On Muhu island

Enjoy dreamlike moments in the middle of Muhu wildlife at

PÄDASTE SPA – a wellbeing oasis in an ancient manor park

Pädaste SPA aspires to harmonize all six senses. The mission of the spa that is located in the breathtakingly beautiful manor park of Pädaste, just a couple of steps from the sea, is based on a belief that perfect wellbeing is only possible when all our senses experience positive energy, peace and relaxation.

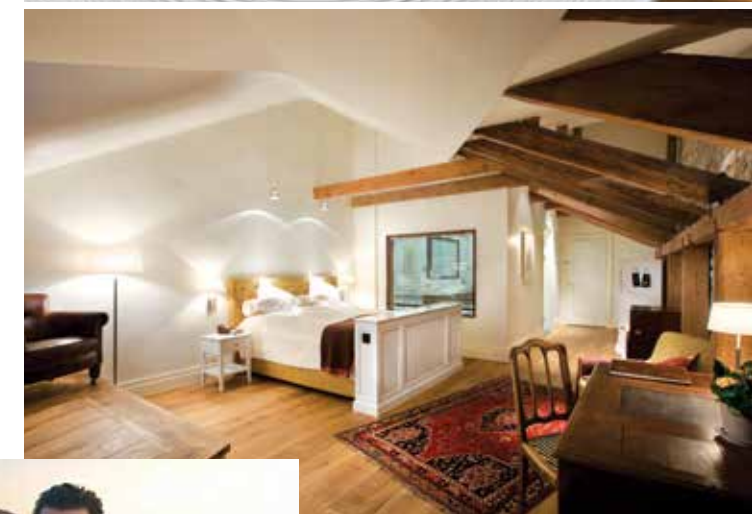
Enter Pädaste spa and you first sense of peace. The relaxing procedures at Pädaste are all based on the centuries-old local tradition of applying herbs. All herbs have been picked in the countryside of Muhu Island.

Pädaste spa has a spa menu, similar to a fine Michelin star restaurant. The menu offers body treatments, half-day combinations of various treatments or integrated three-day packages. Oils, creams and body lotions are all made in Pädaste spa kitchen and only pure natural raw materials of high quality are used in them. You can buy all products and continue your spa treatments at home. Why not take a piece of Muhu with you?

Muhu traditional steam sauna, a herb-aromatic steam sauna, Siberian cold water tub in the midst of wildlife, a private tub filled with heated sea water on the beach, a bay-side sundeck, massages, a relaxation room with water beds or hay wrappings under juniper tree roots – it all makes you feel as if you were in a dreamworld and you can experience it all. Go ahead and relax, enjoy the peace and quiet and the scenery that have made Pädaste famous worldwide.

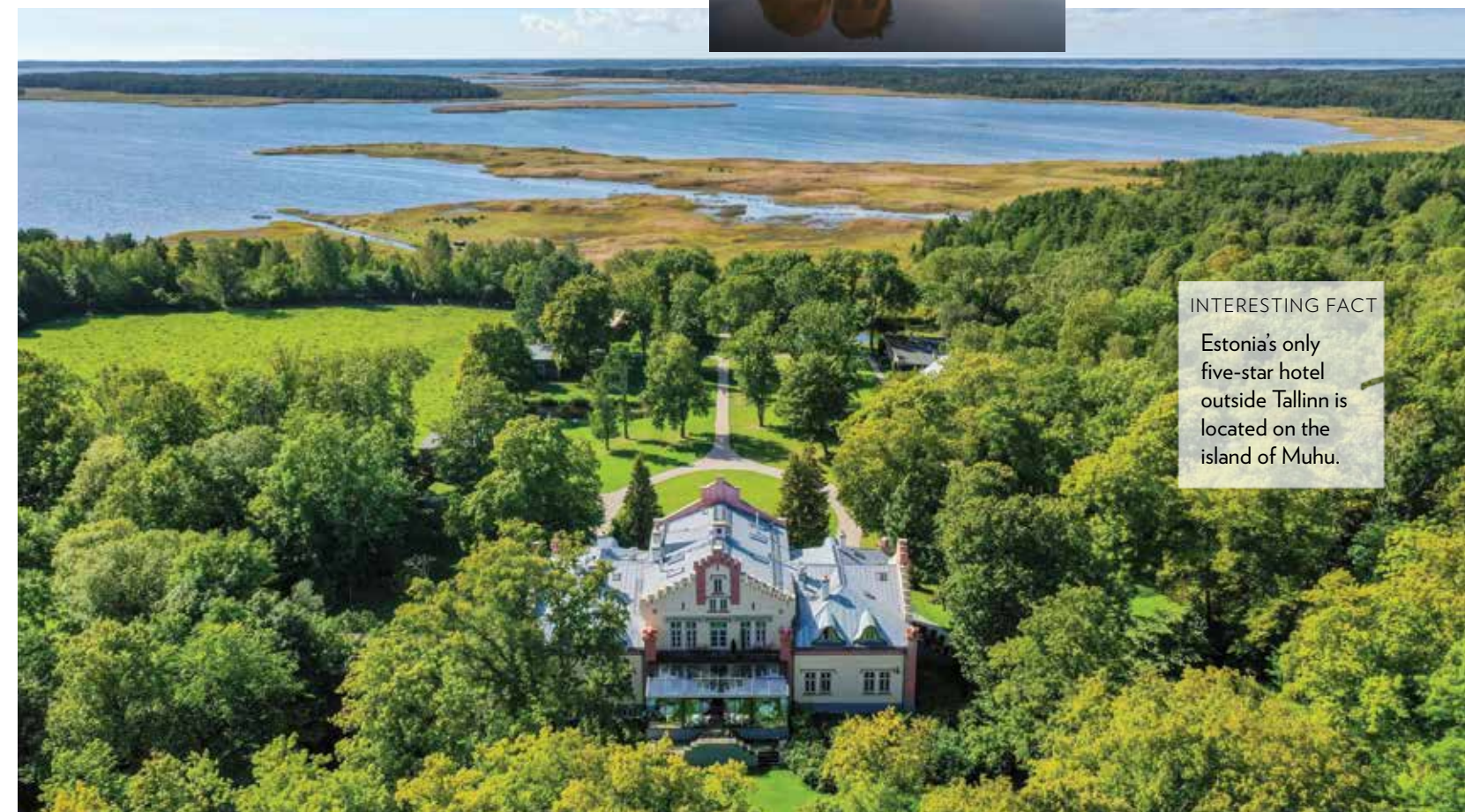


> The chef and his team from Pädaste create incomparable flavours.



< The keywords of Pädaste Spa are supreme peace and proximity to nature.

✓ A moment of relaxation near the sea.



INTERESTING FACT

Estonia's only five-star hotel outside Tallinn is located on the island of Muhu.



ENJOY
THE VIEW

 **TALLINK** Shuttle

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Why do I love Saaremaa?

TEXT: HARTWIN DHOORE | PHOTO: VALMAR VOOLAID

I was born in Flanders in Belgium and since 2014 I'm living on Saaremaa, the birthplace of my wife Leana Vapper-Dhoore. We met each other in Belgium and lived there for five years after which we decided we will move to Saaremaa.

I'm practising Estonian language and hope to speak it one day. It's a difficult language but very beautiful. Leana's songs sound like poetry to me and many other people in the world.

Because I grew up in a very populated country, where forests and open space is rare, I value the natural environment of Saaremaa a lot. As Leana and I are both free-lance musicians and write a lot of music, Saaremaa is the perfect place to get inspired with its beautiful landscapes, total silence, idyllic countryside, it's foggy bogs and dark winters.

Surrounded by the sea we find inner peace. Often, we are out in the world for concerts and tours and coming back to Saaremaa has the effect of leaving the world behind you. Once we come from the ferry it feels like the world ends. Sometimes the silence here is like a mirror and can be very confronting. It is challenging you to stand still and ask yourself questions that make you stronger in the end.


One of my favorite places in Saaremaa is Koigi Raba. It's the inspiration behind one of my compositions called after that place. It's a place where I connect with the nature and find my inner calm. Simply beautiful.

An other absolute "must see" spot is Sörve Säär, a place where the world ends. There is a beautiful lighthouse which is a symbol of hope for me. Even when it's very dark or cloudy there is a light shining somewhere. Also very fascinating to see how the waves cross each other at that point.

Also I have fallen in love with a recently renovated harbor Kungla Sadam where Leana and I played a concert at last year's Merepäevad. I think Merepäevad is definitely the major festival at this moment. Bringing together the history of this fisherman island and the very best Estonian artists.

Last summer I also went for the first time to I Land Sounds – a brilliant electro and dance festival in Orissaare. It was an inspiration for me even though I work mainly in the acoustic and folk music scene. I have seen some very good DJ's who made cooperations with live music. The beautiful location is cherry on top of the cake.

One other lovely event is the museum night. I'm not a fan of museum visits. Usually I can't stay longer than a half hour in a museum. But during the latest edition I went with a good friend to Kuressaare castle and we had a beer on the rooftop of the castle from where we could see Kuressaare centre by night. It's just an astonishing view now that the city is completely renovated. |



„Surrounded
by the sea we
find inner peace..“

◀ **Hartwin Dhoore**,
accordionist and composer,
the team member of
folkbands Trio Dhoore
and Estbel.



Today the main street of Kuressaare, *Tallinna maantee*, runs from the newly renovated central square in the direction of Muhu island and Kuivastu Port. However, the historical main street runs in the opposite direction, connecting the two significant buildings of this sunshine capital – the town hall and the castle. The street was even named after the latter (*loss* = a castle).

Lossi Street began to look like it does today, about two hundred years ago thanks to Balthasar von Campenhausen who had moved to Kuressaare (then called Arensburg) in 1783 as a deputy governor. He initiated the reforms that converted a village type settlement into this nice Livonian provincial town.

Campenhausen founded the first local weekly newspaper (*Arensburgische Wochen- oder Intelligenzblätter*) in 1785. In the same year a men's club started its gatherings in his house and two years later a school theatre was launched and then the first library on Saaremaa was opened. All of this resulted in an explosive growth in social life (there were weekly shows performed at the theatre for a while) and this helped Campenhausen to develop Lossi Street into a grand street in the way we know it today.

It was possible to take a carriage trip to a party or to the theatre and back home in the same evening for the landlords whose manors were closeby. However, it was out of question for the landlords whose manors were further away. In the 18th century there was just one hotel in Arensburg – Hotel Hilling, built on Campenhausen's initiative. For that reason, the deputy governor encouraged landlords to build houses in town in order to enable the upper crust to fully enjoy their merry-making without worrying about a place to stay. Allegedly, Kuressaare is the only town where the landlords' town mansions are named after their manors, adding them an Estonian word '*koda*' which is an archaic translation of the German word *das Haus* – *Meedla Koda*, *Lööne Koda*, *Kargi Koda* etc. Although there are more kodas in Kuressaare as a whole, we will have a closer look at those that are located on the route from the central square to the castle.

LOSSI STREET – THE HOME OF *KODAS*

TEXT: OLAVI ANTONS | PHOTOS: PRIIT NOOGEN, VALMAR VOOLAID, ARENSBURG OÜ, SAAREMAA MUSEUM, SAAREMAA COUNTY

➤ Charming stately mansions line the main street to welcome guests arriving in Kuressaare. Each mansion has its own story to tell. How did this once plain village become a grand Livonian provincial town?



Lossi 1 –

Dellingshausen's Koda (also: landlords' koda)

When starting a walk from the town hall toward the castle, the first grand building on the left is a knighthood building, built in the 18th century by a merchant Gustav Adolph Dellingshausen as his residence. Dellingshausen's kinsmen owned over ten mansions in Saaremaa at one point. The Dellingshausens sold their residence to the knighthood of Saaremaa in 1800, whereas in 1912 the knighthood moved with all their assets to the newly renovated Kuressaare Castle and they sold the building to the noblemen's club *Ressource*. In 1920 the Saare County Council bought the building as office space for the county government. During the Soviet occupation the building accommodated the district executive committee and from 1991, Saare County Government.



< **Now and then** >
Landlords' Koda at the end of 1920s, photo by N. Köningsfest



Lossi 6 –

Meedla Koda

This two-storey townhouse with its classical facade used to belong to the Polli family, the landlords of Meedla manor. The most famous member of the Polli family Saaremaa branch is probably Balthasar Alexander Ludwig Odert von Poll (1869–1935), who was a renowned farmer and an active knighthood figure. In 1917, the knighthood and General von Seckendorff sent him on a mission to Germany, to state chancellor Georg von Hertling with the purpose of uniting Saaremaa and Germany. Fortunately, he failed. Odert von Poll sold the building to the Bank of Estonia in 1923. In 1940 the bank was nationalised, and the building became the seat of the Kuressaare Department of the USSR State Bank (for years Kuressaare was under the name of Kingissepa). In the 1990s a youth centre occupied the premises and it became known as the House of Boys. Now *Meedla Koda* is an elegant venue for accommodation and parties.



< **Now and then** ^
Meedla Koda in 1920s, photo by N. Köningsfest



> Now and then ◃
Lööne Koda at
the beginning of
the 20th century



7 Lossi – Lööne Koda

Under Campenhausen this house, the property of Lööne landlord Gildenstubbe, had been one of the centres of social life thanks to its hall and its high ceiling where on 13 May 1804, a great ball was organized in honour of the Russian tsar Aleksander I who visited Saaremaa. Naturally, the hall was later renamed the Emperor's Hall. In 1885, Lööne Koda hosted Grand Duke Vladimir, a son of tsar Aleksander II and a brother of tsar Aleksander III, together with his wife, Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna. By the way, on a working outing in the meadows of Lööne manor, the idea for an extremely popular song The Waltz of Saaremaa, came to Debora Vaarandi, the author of the verses of the song.

In the second half of the 19th century, the building came into the possession of the Buxhoeveden family. In 1909, Egon von Buxhoeveden sold the building to a renowned building entrepreneur Karl Bergmann. He built apartments on the top floor and the bottom floor was taken up by a watchmaker, a bakery, a confectionery and the landlord's own office and shop. The Bergmanns left Saaremaa in October 1939 and in 1940 the building was transferred to the Soviet Army. After the re-establishment of Estonia's independence, Kuressaare police department moved in.

12 Lossi – Kargi Koda

The family von Toll from Kargi manor is a noble family whose members consider themselves as originating from the Netherlands and descend from Lucas Toll, a clerk who had studied at the University of Wittenberg and who arrived in Saaremaa together with Duke Magnus. The family members have been members of knighthoods in Sweden, Finland, Saaremaa, Estonia as well as Livonia. Today it is the location of the Social Insurance Board, Kuressaare Customer Service.

> Now and then ^
Kargi Koda in 1938



< Now and then ◃
Haeska Koda
in 1930s

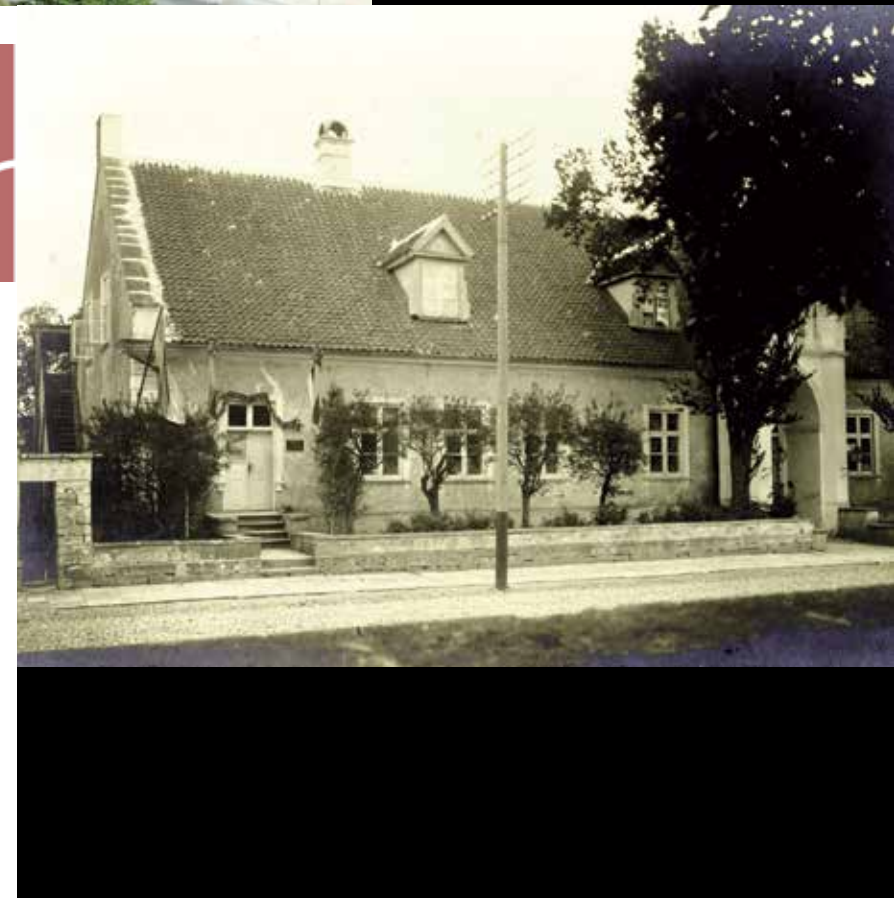
INTERESTING FACT

Kuressaare is the
sunniest town in
Estonia.

15 Lossi – Haeska Koda

The Nolcken family of Haeska manor considers the year 1618 to mark the starting point of their family history in Saaremaa, as this is the year when Heimart von Nolcken moved to Saaremaa. On 3 May in 1632 he bought the manors of Mullutu and Nolgimõisa in Saaremaa and he laid the foundations of the family lines in Saaremaa as well in Livonia. Ironically, Swedish genealogists have proved by now that it is pure fantasy. Actually the Nolckens were residents of Saaremaa, probably even of Estonian origin. The last owner from the Nolcken family seat (until expropriation in 1919) was Erich von Nolcken.

During the years of Estonia's independence, the building accommodated Saarte Ühispank (the Joint Bank of Islands), during the Soviet occupation, it was a courthouse and today, the grand Hotel Arensburg. |



: goodmoodfood.ee



: vegan &
hypoallergenic-friendly



GOOD MOOD FOOD

Cosy courtyard summer cafe



: pets welcome

best breakfasts - delicious lunches - healthy cakes

Tolli 2, Kuressaare

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Photo: Valmar Voolaid

THE SEA

Mentioning the sea cheers every islander up – the sea is sacred, it is the source of life and wellbeing. Did you know that more than half of the beaches in Estonia are located on the islands? Seafaring and ship-building have always been inseparable from Saaremaa and the ship and boat builders of Kihelkonna have won international recognition. Be adventurous and follow a maritime route to the neighbouring island Hiiumaa or to the vibrant small islands of Abruksa, Vilsandi, Ruhnu.



Bellingshausen's Two Voyages to Antarctica

TEXT: TIIT PRUULI | PHOTOS: CJ KASK, MARTIN LAZAREV, JAMES EADES

When Captain Fabian Gottlieb von Bellingshausen from Saaremaa first saw Antarctica in January 1820, he could not possibly have grasped the significance of his discovery. 200 years later, Bellingshausen is heading toward the icy continent once again to celebrate this outstanding discovery, this time in the form of a ship under the guidance of three captains, all from Saaremaa.



< **Tiit Pruuli**,
a leader of expedition
Antarctica 200

Saaremaa has always considered itself a mighty maritime country, on a par with England. The islanders are right in one respect – the great British explorer James Cook tried to find the continent of Antarctica but he never did. The grand islander Fabian Gottlieb von Bellingshausen is one of the discoverers of Antarctica. Bellingshausen was born on 20 September 1778 in the Manor of Lahetaguse in Saaremaa. He spent his childhood at the neighbouring Manor of Pilguse. It is quite likely that these beautiful seaside places inspired young Fabian to wonder what was there beyond the horizon. The Bellingshausens were Baltic Germans and that made them part of the ruling class of Estonia back then. However, the head of the family's passion for card playing unexpectedly impoverished the family and the 10-year old Fabian was sent to the city of Kronstadt,

close to St Petersburg, the then capital of the Russian Empire, where he graduated from the Naval Cadet Corps. From 1797–1803 Fabian served in The Russian Baltic Fleet and in 1803 another famous Baltic German explorer Adam Johann von Krusenstern included him in the crew of the first Russian circumnavigation (1803–1806) expedition as a cartographer. After that, Bellingshausen served again on the Baltic Sea and from 1812 in the Russian Black Sea Fleet. He spent the last years of his life in Kronstadt and he is buried there.

The Unknown Lands

After James Cook's second circumnavigation of the globe, there were very few people in Europe who believed that far away in the South was Terra Australis – an unknown South-

ern continent that the antique geographers had been talking about. One of the people who believed was Marquis de Traversay, a Minister of the Navy of French origin who managed to convince the tsar that Russia would gain respect and economic benefit from the expedition's success in discovering land in the proximity of the South Pole.

The expedition of two ships was rapidly constructed and due to concurrent circumstances Bellingshausen was appointed the commander of the expedition. Two ships, Mirny and Vostok with 190 men on board, left Kronstadt in July 1819.

After a few stops in Europe and in South America the expedition arrived in the waters of Antarctica. On a foggy day on 28 January 1820, Bellingshausen and captain of the other ship Mikhail Lazarev described something

that people had never seen before – icy walls towering from the sea to the skies. Bellingshausen wrote: "Between the icebergs and icebanks I could see a giant array of ice with broken edges emerging and it stretched as far as I could see, it looked as if it were land."

Later measurements prove that at that particular moment they were about 20 miles away from the Queen Maud Land. Had it been less foggy, they would have probably realized that it was not just plain ice but an icy continent.

Although Bellingshausen did not grasp what he had actually seen and what he had achieved, he did later see on the same expedition, being most probably the first man in the history of mankind, solid land in the South Arctic Sea, South of the Southern Tropic – Peter I Island (21 January 1821) and Alexander I Coast (28 January 1821).

Rebirth of the Expedition

When the expedition returned in Russia, its results were received with a feeling of disappointment. The Minister of the Navy shut down further expeditions and the results of this expedition were left gathering dust on the archive shelves. (Bellingshausen's travelogue was translated into English only in 1947).

The results of Bellingshausen's expedition came to new light during the Cold War when the countries began to divide spheres of influence in Antarctica. Now the Soviet Union was keen to be present, thus bringing about the rebirth of Bellingshausen's expedition. Unfortunately, the circumstances were politically charged and the rest of the world did not take their arguments very seriously.

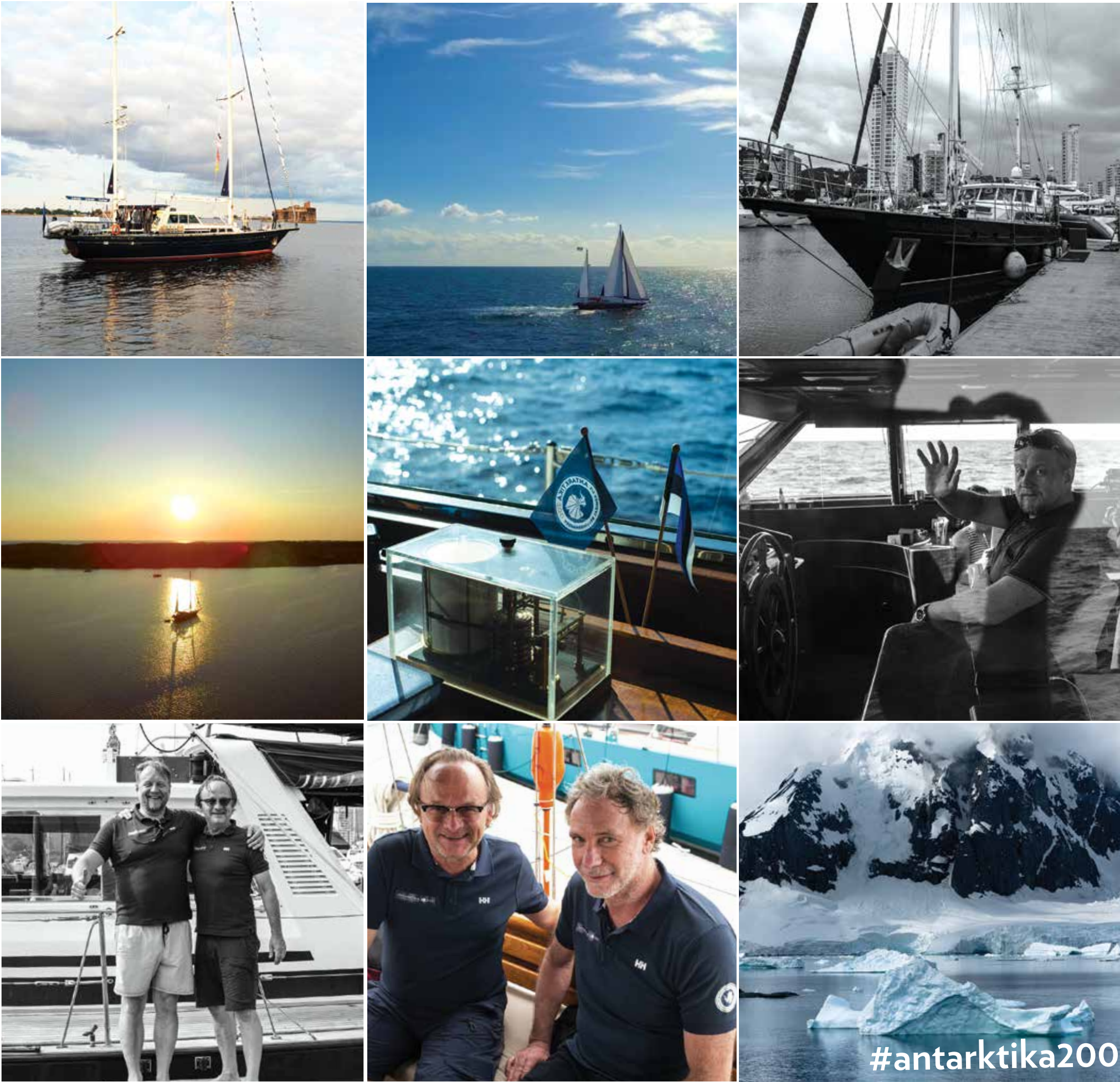
Bellingshausen acquired his just position in history only in the last quarter of the 20th century when he was being named one of the discoverers of Antarctica beside Irishman Edward Bransfield (he saw land on 30 January 1820) and American Nathaniel Palmer (he saw land on 17 November 1820). He is often seen as the first discoverer of Antarctica regardless of his unawareness of his discovery; like Christopher Columbus who did not realize that he had discovered America.

In the Year 2020

In order to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the grand voyage of an outstanding islander, the Estonian Maritime Museum and the NGO Thetis Expeditions, an association of entrepreneurs, decided to organize a voyage to Antarctica. This voyage set off from Kronstadt in July 2019 and would culminate with anniversary celebrations at various research stations on the Peninsula of Antarctica in January 2020.

If old Bellingshausen rapidly strove for the South, then we made lots of stops on our trip – we organized seminars, mini conferences, forums, art events. These ventures took place in co-operation with partners in St. Petersburg, Kaliningrad, Kiel, Copenhagen, Oslo, London, Lisbon, Las Palmas, Montevideo, Ushuaia and plenty of smaller gatherings and media events in lots of other places. Through these events we want to tell the world about Bellingshausen, Saaremaa and Estonia.

In addition, our trip focuses on the topical issues of marine environment protection and climate problems. On our trip we take samples of water and dust, a group of about twenty researchers and marine experts are accompanying us, including President of the Estonian Academy of Sciences and Director General of the Estonian Maritime Administration who are helping to promote sea-related research and knowledge. Articles, radio programmes and a 10-part TV series will be developed about the trip, a travelling exhibition and a quiz for schoolchildren will be organized as well. |



› **Fabian Gottlieb von Bellingshausen,**
islander and the a leader of
The First Russian Antarctic
expedition 1819–1821

FACTS OF INTEREST

Yacht Admiral Bellingshausen has more ties to Saaremaa, besides its name.

- The ship was built in Holland in 1984 and it sailed on the Meditarrenean before the great expedition to Antarctica. The vessel was thoroughly refurbished in the early spring of 2019 in the Baltic Workboats Shipyard at Nasva in Saaremaa. Its steel hull was inspected, the new main engine, generators, modern communication and navigation devices, heating and ventilation systems and brand new sails were installed.
- During the voyage there were three captains. At the first stages the ship was under the command of **Indrek Lepp** who works as a captain on large Tallink passenger ships. He was followed by **Meelis Saarlaid**, a yacht captain who has circum-navigated the globe. Captain **Indrek Kivi** took the vessel through the waters of Antarctica. Indrek works as captain of the icebreaker Botnica in the Canadian Arctic.
- All three of these seamen come from Saaremaa, the native island of Fabian Gottlieb von Bellingshausen.

◀ Follow Bellingshausen's route on Facebook and Instagram, keyword **'Antarktika200'**
The expected arrival time of the expedition is January.

In comparison with the people on the mainland, the people on small islands have always led more demanding and complex lives but it has never kept Estonians from populating small island through the centuries. What does Abruksa behind the sea have that keeps attracting permanent residents as well as enthusiasts back to the island?

The Island of Abruksa, a Miracle behind the Sea

TEXT: KADRI ALLER AKA ISLAND-CRAZY | PHOTOS: PRIIT NOOGEN, MERJA ROOSTALU

The 8.8 square kilometres make the Island of Abruksa the 11th biggest island of Estonia. Considering the awe-inspiring total number 2222 (!) of Estonian maritime islands, it has a very prominent position on the list. The easiest way to get to the island is by the small boat Abro from Roomassaare Port in Saaremaa. Definitely, the most enjoyable trips are the warm midsummer voyages when you can take deep breaths of fresh air in the stern while keeping the outline of the approaching island in sight behind the white tops of waves. Visting small islands is a nice change, an excellent opportunity to break up the routine and look at your life from a new perspective, thus helping to find solutions to some fairly complex problems. Sounds good, doesn't it? Very well, let us disembark, go and explore Abruksa.

Take Time Out

If you happen to have a bit more time on your hands, spend more than a day on the island. Everybody will find accommodation to his/her taste: there are campsites – one at the port, the other one on a forest meadow in the middle of the island and a third on the

southern tip. So you can choose between several tourist farms with hospitable families, plentiful orchards and soft beds where you can cosily doze off to the sound of the sea in the background.

Abruksa is also a great place for island hoppers because you can walk through the water to its satellite islands: Vahase with its two giant erratic boulders and two bird habitats, Kasse-laid (no visitors 01.02–31.08) and Linnu-sitamaa (no visitors 15.04–31.07).

A Crane Shaped Island

Disembarking at the Port of Abruksa you first see the harbour building where you can pick up a map of hiking trails and sights. Taking a first look at the map of sights, you can easily imagine the local legends about the emergence of an island as a result of the fall of a giant crane into the sea. The diamond-shaped Abruksa clearly looks like the body of that graceful bird with its neighbouring islands on its eastern and western coasts forming its streamlined wings. The visitors with more romantic mindsets can easily imagine hearing the sounds of wingstrokes of the giant bird, gliding over their heads.

IN TAKE THE TIME OUT CAFE

The cosy cafe at the Port of Abruksa is called **Võta Aeg Maha** (Take the Time Out) and you should take it literally. There are no fixed opening hours – it remains open as long as there are clients. If it really is closed, just call the number on the door. All dishes are cooked from local produce: fish is caught by the women who keep the cafe, meat and eggs come from the local farmers.



< Abruksa port expecting the arrival of visitors

More information about Abruksa:

abrukainfo.eu



< Abruksa coastal meadows are maintained by the sheep



MEMORABLE VOYAGE TO ABRUKA

If you want to sail to Abruksa Island in a particularly stylish manner, jump onto the historic sailboat Hoppet just from the Raiekivi Cape next to Kuresaare Castle! This schooner, built in 1926 by Estonian shipbuilders, accommodates up to 50 passengers, it takes passengers to Abruksa according to its weekly schedule or on private cruises.

A day cruise to Abruksa includes a delicious lunch on board and at least three hours for walking around the island. More enthusiastic passengers are permitted to climb the mast, participate in the hoisting of sails and in steering. It is possible to stay overnight on the boat as well.

The inhabitation and the establishment of the farming manor dates from the Middle Ages but permanent settlement only goes back to the 18th century and the island enjoyed its maximum number of inhabitants (150) in the pre-war Republic of Estonia. Back then, men were mostly engaged in fishing and women looked after small plots. The number of population went into permanent decline with the Soviet occupation, fostered among other things by the shutting-down of the local primary school as well as the merging the local Abruksa fishing collective farm with the ones of Saaremaa.

As for the origin of the name, there are a few theories. It's hard to prefer the alleged origin from the proper name Apro, from the word *abrikas* meaning a shallow, wet spot on a meadow or a marsh ' or Low German

ab roh(r) meaning away from reed or away from Roomassaare that used to be covered with reeds.

Charming Village Atmosphere

The charm and pain of Abruksa and its village life have been genuinely described by the writers Albert Uustulnd and brothers Ülo and Jüri Tuulik. The likable characters, funny incidents, the local dialect and the practical jokes of the local village men guarantee a proper reading experience.

Culture vultures can see old village settlements, an ice-cream selling museum, a pretty bird-watching tower, a sturdy windmill, a miniature, well-looked after cemetery and cosy farm buildings. Bearing in mind that Estonians are a singing nation, unsurprisingly,



✓ In the Middle Ages, Abruka was used as a bishopric pastureland for horses, today it is a pasture for sheep and Highland cattle.



The oldest building of Abruka



Waiting and loving



Manor's whipping stone



A sauna of an old farm ready for sauna-goers.

there is a song festival place where everybody is more that welcome to test his vocal cords. You can still spot some wall fragments and foundations of the ancient farming manor and admire the sight of the slender, stately ferro-concrete lighthouse of 36 metres built in 1931. The village atmosphere is complimented by the presence of exotic ostriches in a farm pen and the sweet, shaggy Scottish Highland cows grazing on the coastal meadows.

Encounters in the Fairy-Tale Forest

The greatest treasure of the island is definitely its nemoral forest with its mighty lime trees with their rough bark and sprawling branches making you feel as if you were in the safe company of an old friend. Tall ferns and the bountiful flora with their bulky snails make it a

fairy-like enchanted forest where an unwordly fairy-tale character might any time appear from its emerald depths . Once I experienced a similar encounter. Walking on a hiking trail in the depths of the forest, a red fox was suddenly looking at me through the vegetation. Our clear, alert glances met just for a second but it was like looking into the depths of one another's souls, thereafter the fox disappeared, swishing its fluffy tail.

I recommend that ramblers look down at their feet because there is an abundance of vipers in Abruka. Out of carelessness I would once have landed on a plump snake, had it not warned me with its loud and disapproving hissing. Red deer and pheasants had been imported to Abruka in the past but in consequence of the joint efforts of cold winters and foxes

Abruka biodiverse broad-leaved forests have been under protection since 1932.

< The island is small but there is a lot to explore. Old cosy village sites and farm buildings, unique scenery...

they had mostly dissappeared by 1940. In the pre-war years there was a pen for the red deer that were very popular with the tourists who came in large numbers to watch them. The old drinking spot of the red deer is still there.

Old Devil

Finally, a little story about a mighty male deer known as Ruling Bull, that had been brought to Abruka from Germany in 1927. First the bull had no female company. The hot-blooded viable creature was lovesick and prone to mischief, like breaking well covers and collecting washing on his horns from the washing lines. Finally he became so vicious that he started poking people with his horns. So he was locked up in a pen and provided with some female company. This was followed by an increase of the local deer population.

The newspaper Kaja published a colourful article in 1928 about the Ruling Bull's pre-pen single days: 'Its face and horns appeared behind the window at midnight and he knocked. Then he boxed around walls and doors. No-one was able to sleep. The bull was particularly fond of sermons. In the middle of a touching sermon his ugly face would stare at the women through the window. Women often ran away from the sermons because the old devil himself had appeared at the window. That's what the old devil of Abruka was like- one of the peculiar creatures loitering on the mysterious Abruka. |

Sailing Ship Hoppet a Pearl of Estonian Maritime History

Only 150 metres from the castle's defence walls in the Cove of Tori, is the present home of the Prettiest Boat of the Republic, the 94-year old schooner Hoppet. It is Estonia's only survived prewar seagoing and historic ship.

Therefore, we are at an ancient gateway to the sea with a beautiful promenade, a castle park, an episcopal castle, spa-hotels, an old railway station, a sandy beach. A variety of pretty streets lead to the centre of town. Saaremaa is famous for its explorers and fine sailors. Let Hoppet help us keep and value centuries of authenticity, demonstrate its maritime romanticism and take us to an era of genuine sea dogs when ships were made of wood and men were made of iron.

The schooner Hoppet (Hope) was built in the community of the coastal Swedes in Estonia in 1925-1926 and it is the flagship of our maritime traditions.

Until 1970s, vessel was a working cargo ship in Estonia, Gotland and Sweden. Then it entered a new era, carrying people who wanted to breath in the salty air of the sea.



The head of the Republican Sailingship Society and the Hoppet is fully devoted to his mission to make sure that this gem of a ship continues sailing in Estonian waters. A part of maritime history should be made available to the public again and the maritime traditions kept alive and also new projects should be launched to keep the maritime traditions alive among the future generations.

Hoppet has a lot of services to offer: unique wooden ship trips to small islands; cultural events on board; introducing maritime activities and history as a part of the development of local tourism and the food culture of the islands. It is also involved in celebrating maritime festivals on small islands, the opera festival, the castle festival, Kuressaare Gin Festival, Abruka folk music festival (S)Torm etc.



We are grateful to all supporters of the maintenance of this Estonian historic sailing ship thus keeping alive maritime culture and traditions.

Welcome on board!

For summer cruises there can take up to 50 visitors onboard. In the Admiral lounge, a leading Estonian chef from Saaremaa and the Captain will treat you to delicious coastal and Scandinavian style dishes, all made from local ingredients marked as EHTNE /Authentic Island. The vessel stocks a variety of its own produce:

Local famous local homemade: Boatswain craftbeer, Officers gin, Mermaid cider, Viking Axe shot and authentic rums from all over the world. On the sea can learn about navigation and old ship; setting sails or climb to the mast or just relax and listen to the soothing sound of the sea.

The moments spent on an old sailing ship will always stay with you. We look forward to seeing you on board of the Hoppet.

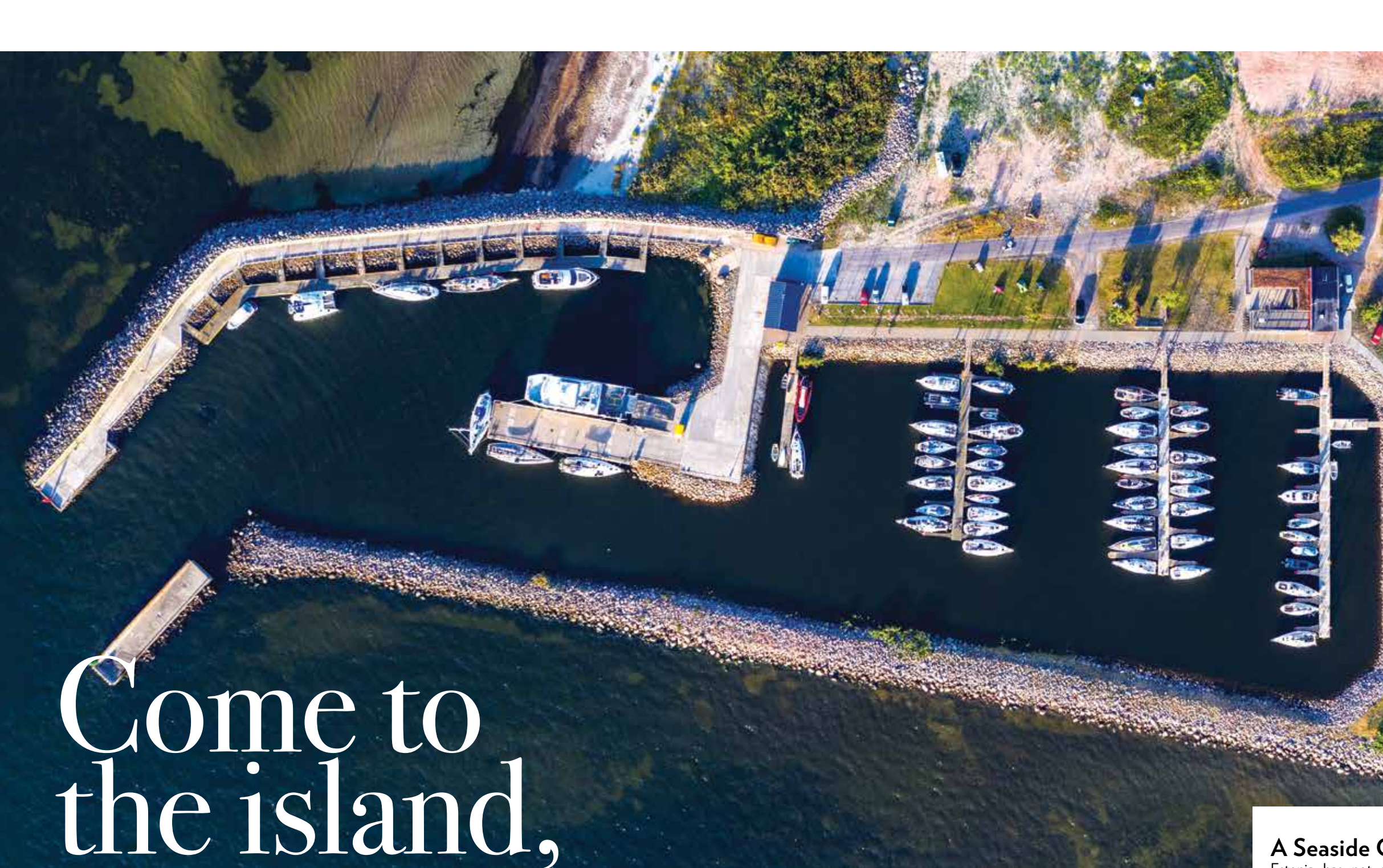


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- » Holiday-makers' sailingship daytrips to Abruka (incl. lunch & car ride).
- » Nature tours, bird watching etc.
- » Shorter, 1-2-hour trips on the sea (with provisions on request).
- » Sunset cruises to the bay.
- » Concerts on the sea (jazz, romanticism, sea songs, folk, guitar, etc).
- » Music festivals: (S)Torm Abruka ethno, Gin del Mar festival on the sea, etc
- » Charter cruises for groups and longer sailing trips (4h, daytrips etc).
- » Company summer outings, motivation rides, team building events.
- » Educational projects, children and youth' camps etc.
- Trips with an overnight stay are available- all amenities on board and beds for 25 people.

In winter, Admiral von Bellingshausen's lounge for up to 20 guests is open to celebrate anniversaries, to hold seminars, workshops and Christmas parties.



Come to the island, make your way over the waves!

TEXT: VILLU VATSFELD | PHOTOS: AHTI PAJU, SAAREMAA MUSEUM

› **'The islanders, the sea and the ports have always belonged together. The ports have never been just a means for going out to sea and returning from the sea but they have been important meeting places and connection points with other countries and cultures,' says Villu Vatsfeld, the author of this article and manager of Saarte Liinid**

My father was an islander and my mother came from Central Estonia. I already realized in my childhood that man has a straightforward relationship with the sea: he either sees it as unknown and limiting or as freedom and opportunity. The islanders definitely agree with the latter. Every proper islander knows that the sea has a connecting power. It connects countries, both distant or nearby. It also connects nations, customs and cultures. It connects those people who protect and understand the sea.

A Seaside Country

Estonia has not always been a maritime country, but it is definitely a seaside country. Did you know that the total length of Estonia's coastline is 3794 kilometres? It is longer than the distance to Gibraltar or Teheran. It equals the distance by plane from Tallinn to Tashkent in Uzbekistan or to Nuuk in Greenland. Our coastline is as long as that of Sweden, one of the largest countries in Europe and twice as long as Portugal, the birth place of explorers. The coastal sea is a treasure that was unavailable to the majority of Estonians for almost fifty years and we are only just learning to live with it again. The coastal sea stretching from Narva-Jõesuu to Ikla constitutes proper

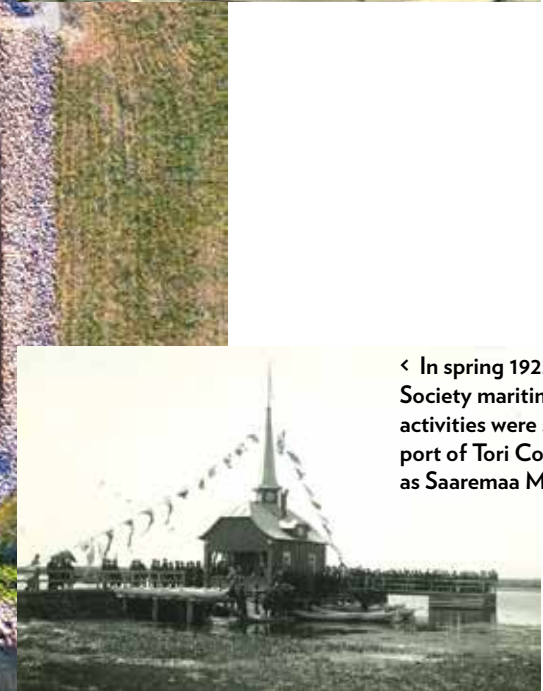
freedom and a wide variety of opportunities which means responsibility. The beaches, fishing villages, ports and maritime towns of Estonia have all come back to life and the best way to see them is from the sea. More than half of Estonian beaches are on islands, most of them in Saare County, totalling 1400+ kilometres. These beaches have absolutely everything! From the corals of Vilsandi to the reed beds of Kübasaare, from the cliff of Üügu to the dunes of Harilaid, from the shingle ridges of Abu to the Bay of Sutu and from the Cape of Sõrve to the Cliffs of Panga. Not to mention the treasures that are a bit further from the coast, in the heart of the island.



< The cradle of Kuressaare maritime life is Tori Cove. View of Vanasadam (the Old Port) in 1920s (demolished). In the background the port warehouse, still standing today.



< Maritime sports and social centre before World War 1 was the German Yacht Club (the site of today's marina), at first it was for city gentlemen only.



< In spring 1925, Kuressaare Estonian Society maritime sports club activities were started at the fishing port of Tori Cove. Today it is known as Saaremaa Maritime Sports Society.



< Maritime Sports Society members and the orchestra on the boats. In the background Lootsi Street buildings and Kuressaare ship building yard (today the site of GOSPA). Standing at the bow is Mihkel Neps, the first commodore and Saare county governor.

> The whole coast of Saaremaa has been accessible to boats and ships. Before the Port of Triigi was built in the 1920s, small boats provided transport to and from steamboats.



market squares and at fairs, coastal folk tend to gather where the sea, the ships and the boats are. At the port you will hear all the news and the gossip and you can meet up with old friends and make new friends. Today, the port managers try to keep this old custom alive. Ports are managed by private businesses, local governments, non-profit organizations, as well as visionaries and dreamer-developers who all strive for the sea, the coast and the ports to be open to one and all. 'When you begin your long voyage, do not look back at the home port or the coast. There is this prejudice... whereas once you are back in your home waters, you get excited days and hours before the first sight of your home port. It just feels good to be back. I last had this sensation in February when we were returning on our sailboat from the Mediterranean. The first sight of the flashing light coming from Sääre lighthouse on the horizon warmed my heart...', said Meelis Saarlaid, captain of the Estonian expedition sailboat Admiral Bellingshausen, sharing his thoughts on seafaring, just before crossing the Atlantic on his way to Antarctica in October 2019. A seaman. An islander. |

< Besides Kuressaare, Kihelkonna was a fashionable resort at the beginning of the last century. Boats would take holiday-makers to Abaja Bay boat route or to the Russian tsarist army built Papissaare Harbour, where a pleasant cart ride would take them to their destination.

How to Get Here?

If you have a small boat, a launch or a sailing ship, with or without an engine, you can choose a marina in Saare County that meets the requirements of your vessel, depending on your destination and your plans. According to the Estonian Maritime Administration State Port Register, there are 45 smaller and bigger ports and moorings in Saare County. Out of them, Saaremaa has 36, Muhu Island 6, Abruksa 1, Vilsandi 1 and Ruhnu 1. It is the proof of the revival of our coast; let's hope it will remain so.

We should point out that a number of ports on the register are still under development and some of them still lack a proper waterway and proper port services. For that reason this is a list of the best ports for anchoring. If your vessel needs more water under its keel and you are under sails, the following ports would provide you with a safe mooring and proper maritime atmosphere:

Kuivastu – The harbour building includes a shop, a cafe and a sauna right next to the big ferry port. Buses run to Liiva, the central village of Muhu Island and back.

Lõunaranna on Muhu island – a nice place for camping, for spending time in an authentic cafe, for enjoying a wood-heated sauna, and last but not least, bicycles are available for rent. Only a couple of kilometres away is Pädaste Manor with its internationally recognized hotel and restaurant.

Kõiguste – a beautiful location with a bar that is always open, as long as there are clients. There are showers and a sauna. The Viking Village is just 6.5 km away.

Roomassaare – a marina well hidden within a big cargo port has a summer cafe, bicycle and scooter rental and a sauna at your disposal. Kuressaare, the charming capital of the island is just 4 km away, the local airport is just 1 km away. There are both regular taxi and bus services available.

Kuressaare – a pretty, trim marina, located practically in the centre of town. Visitors can enjoy a nice meal in a harbour restaurant, relax in the sauna, experience a voyage on board of a historic sailing ship or an ancient viking boat etc. The spa hotels with their

wide variety of services are just 150m away, the unique Kuressaare Episcopal Castle is just 300 metres away and the vibrant old town is 500 metres away. The summertime maritime and opera festivals are just a couple of the multitude of functions that you can participate in.

Mõntu at the Tip of Sõrve Peninsula – a new, safe marina with berths for about twenty yachts or launches. A sauna and a bicycle rental are available. A couple of kilometres from the marina, there is the Southern tip of Saaremaa, Sääre with the tallest lighthouse of the area, seasonal cafes and a museum.

Veere – a quiet, beautiful spot on the North coast of Saaremaa with its six berths in the shade of the fishing port. If you are lucky, you will find a cosy seasonal cafe.

Saaremaa Port at Ninase – a large port with the capability of servicing both passenger boats and cargo ships. There are also a quay for the port's auxiliary fleet and a floating quay for servicing small boats. There is a summer cafe, a sauna and showers which are bookable in advance. A couple of kilometres

from the port are the historic fishing village of Tagaranna, the cliffed coast of Ninase and military heritage objects.

Triigi – the ferry port servicing the traffic between Saaremaa and Hiiumaa. The newly renovated marina has over twenty mooring places, saunas and toilets. The harbour building comprises accommodation as well as a sauna. Triigi Philharmonic concert house, located next to the port, has an almost weekly concert program in the summer months. In addition, there is a cosy cafe and a bicycle rental.

Orissaare – a nice little harbour, located in a small town with a good variety of shops, pubs and cafes. The small island of Illiku hosts one of the regional top events I Land Sound that takes place around the harbour.

Ringsu on the island of Ruhnu – a new, spacious safe marina at the South tip of the island. You can experience the best of this gem of the Gulf of Livonia close at hand. Don't miss the ancient farms of the Ruhnu Swedes, the historic churches, shops and sandy beaches.

Abruksa – the harbour on this beautiful island, a short distance from Roomassaare, has a sauna, cafe and a bike rental with a campfire site and a beach within a stone's throw. Don't fail to hike through the rare broadleaf woods that Abruksa is famous for.

If you sail by a launch or a boat, make a stop at **Koguva** port in an ancient fishing village of the island of Muhu and enjoy its unique atmosphere. In summer have a delicious meal in the local restaurant and pay a visit to Muhu museums. On the South coast of Saaremaa drop by at the **Kungla** harbour, **Nasva** and **Salme** river ports, on the West coast at **Lõmala** and **Papissaare** harbours and don't miss the northernmost port of Saaremaa at **Soela** with its cafe and guest houses, open during the season.

Let's Meet at the Port!

Nearly all the ports of the islands have always been maintained by the community. While on the mainland people meet up on

Would you like to share this sensation? Come aboard!

For more information:
sadam.kuressaare.ee
www.saarteliinid.ee
www.slmarnas.eu
www.lounaranna.ee
www.montusadam.ee
www.lomalasadam.ee
www.soelasadam.ee



An islander & a seaful of excitement

TEXT: TERJE METSAVAS | PHOTO: PRIVATE COLLECTION

› **‘The sea is a spiritual need and my passion,’ says singer, writer, seaman and master of his own life Jaan Tätte. The multifaceted sea and an islander’s life in Vilsandi are part of the daily life of his dreams. ‘We all seek for our peace haven,’ Jaan sums up his choices in life.**

This tiny piece of land on the island of Vilsandi must be covered with your family’s footprints. And the sea, no doubt, is spotted with energetic strokes of the oar. Have you trully found your safe haven after all this seafaring?

Our big mission in life is to find the piece of mind. We should find it at least a fraction before the final, eternal silence. It is pointless hoping that a peaceful little place will bring peace: you move to the island of Vilsandi and you’ve got peace. Peace is at the end of your journey, your accomplishments and your movement toward your dreams. In that sense Vilsandi is my safe haven indeed – it has been one of my dreams to move here and this has come true.



I have made great efforts to make this dream come true and this journey that I have made makes me happy because I think that I picked the right route.

How did a mainland boy like you ever end up on the land in the sea? Viljandi*-Vilsandi – just one letter changed in this place name. That seems fateful!

I was nine years old when I first saw the island of Vilsandi. My Tallinn relatives had a summer place here and they took me along to stay in Vilsandi for the whole month of August. I remember very clearly how I cried the whole way on the boat when leaving at the end of the summer, and I kept looking back at Vilsandi. It was the serious first love of my life and nothing has changed since. Of course I noticed this Viljandi-Vilsandi word play as a child, I sometimes wrote on my school notebooks Vilsandi Secondary School No.1, Form 9 B.

„Peace is at the end of your journey, your accomplishments and your movement toward your dreams.“

How many (thousands) of faces does the sea have? Which of them fascinates or rather, scares you the most?

Yes, it makes me sigh! If someone had told me back then when in my childhood I was trying to build a sailboat with an air mattress and a jacket as a sail, that some day I would sail around the world and then once again over the Atlantic Ocean and then once again over the Pacific Ocean and that one day I would have my own sailboat and several more boats – I would have never believed it. I would have got upset about all the teasing. I have seen the sea numerous times in all kinds of variations. I have seen a sleeping, waking, smiling, breathing, warning, cross, angry and evil sea... a tired sea and a sleeping sea. The list is endless. I have also noticed the different colours and sounds of the sea, different waves in each sea and each ocean. I am very happy that I have experienced it all. When I sit on my Vilsandi beach and watch the horizon, then the sea and I have plenty of stories to tell one another. Or, actually, I have plenty of stories to tell the sea. The sea couldn’t care less for me, it does not need me. I, in contrast, do need it.

* a town in the south of Estonian mainland

What does the sea sound like, what is tone of the wild call like, that the sea(mad) men speak about?

When I was in the Russian army for two years, a girl sent me an audiocassette with an hour of recorded sounds of waves sloshing on the beach. She knew that I was missing my Vilsandi more than anything else. But this was not the sound of my Vilsandi sea and I was very disappointed. Once I was a tour guide for a group of blind people in Vilsandi. I was very impressed by their saying that they had never heard the sea like that before. The water around here hides the 400-year-old coral reefs that seamen have always been scared of and they make sounds even in a lull, as if they were breathing heavily and tiredly. The sounds of the winter sea and the summer sea are very different – these are the sounds of warm and cold waters. Cold water is thick and heavy, it forms completely different waves.

Does the sea call you or do you scream for it?

The sea never calls people. The sea is no place for a man. But the sea, this endless-looking expanse and freedom has a big and significant place in part of the human soul, seeking expanse and freedom. It is so difficult to adapt to mundane matters after longer seafaring. I enjoy watching other seamen in ports of the world. Their eyes bear a similar look, there is something very clear about them.

Your theatre career and you playwright’s experience have brought different characters close to you. What kind of show do you expect from the sea, once you have taken your seat on your bench in the box of your home beach?

All is extremely cool. I really do have a bench on the beach where I sit and watch shows. I probably spend too many hours there for a healthy man of full working capacity but this is the best the life on the island can offer me. Sometimes when I get too carried away with all the household jobs in my farmyard, I remind myself that I live here because of the sea, not because of this wooden home where I can sleep at night.

And the shows that the sea offers, are always different. My favourites are the ones when the weather forecast has predicted a storm but I am still sitting in a complete calm. Then you sit on the bench in the first row, watching the water surface that is as smooth as a mirror and you are waiting for the first signs of the storm to appear. And then, suddenly, the water surface begins slightly to sway, like a chest breathing slowly – then the sea itself begins to move. The slow waves of the tidal water start rolling to the beach and black clouds emerge from above the horizon. And in a couple of hours storm and tempest have arrived and you must run away from them – unlike a real theatre.

But watching the sea is – what a cliché! – like watching a woman. Just watching a beautiful woman in the street is one thing, but running into a woman that you once had a relationship with and maybe there is still some love left, is a completely different thing. You are in the same trouble when watching the sea. If you have had a longer-term relationship with it, you know it better, then there is also more to see.

What does a seaman think about on the sea? And when sailing toward home?

I experienced it on my round the world voyage. I had experienced it earlier, too, but never so distinctively. On a longer voyage you may come to a point where you think nothing. It is a feeling that I would like to experience again and again... It is probably the same that people aspire to through meditation and yoga. Suddenly you think about nothing and at the same time you feel cohesion with everything – the sea, the sky, the stars. Suddenly everything makes sense.

What or who is the sea god? Have you two ever met on the sea or have you felt its presence?

As I said before, the sea is no place for a man. People are made to live on land. And on land I see the people who believe in one or other god but really they believe barely anything. On the sea, I could say that all seamen are believers. The sea can do anything to you and to your boat. You comprehend how big and how imperceptibly mighty and unpredictable it can be. And then you just wait and hope that there might be someone to protect you. The list of commandments for what you must do or must not do on the sea in fear of Neptune, is much longer than the one on land for Christians. No voyage begins without certain rituals. You must possess great reverence and respect for the sea.

Your long voyage began nine years ago under the name ‘Around a wonderful world.’ Have you now, years later, re-interpreted this wonderful world in some ways? What has turned out or what has become clearer after these long years?

If I drop all these stories about wildlife, then the most splendid experience was to realize that the people are all built in a very similar way. They all want the same things: love, attention, understanding, children. The media has made the world a beastly place where everything is bad and we all hate each other. Actually, it’s the other way round, all people seek kindness.

The globe is tiny. You get going and soon you will be back at the beginning. And it is still beautiful, as mankind has not managed to make everything ugly yet; although the plan seems to be there.

The sea is probably not just an immeasurable water range but it helps to survive – in its own way on your own island. What makes your days as good as gold and as white as silver?

What may feel silver-white to me, can make another person crazy. I like living in the middle of the silence and the sounds of the nature. Waking up and falling asleep together with them. Going to bed when I feel sleepy and waking up when I no longer feel sleepy. And listening to the sea when waking up and when falling asleep. And wondering what I am going to do when waking up and wondering why I did not do it when falling asleep. I

INTERESTING FACT

The westernmost point of Estonia’s mainland is located on the island of Vilsandi – Nootamaa island.

Photo: Valmar Voolaid

THE LAND

Saaremaa and Muhu possess rich and particular flora and fauna thanks to their mild climate and calcareous surface. There are nature trails at Viidumäe Nature Reserve, at Vilsandi National park with its thousands of migratory birds and on the small island of Abruksa with its orchids and the lush forest. Do not miss the opportunity to visit some of the sacred, historical and natural sites on the island.

The nature of Saaremaa touches the soul

TEXT: MARTIN VESBERG | PHOTOS: MARTIN VESBERG

With its rocky surface and heavy winds Saaremaa is my favourite place in the world,' says gifted young nature photographer Martin Vesberg, already a winner of several awards. It is the most marvellous experience to feel like a little human being in the middle of the great outdoors, and Saaremaa has a plenty of such moments to offer.

That morning I was looking for stags but I did not have much luck. Until, on my way home, this elk walked out of the bushes. This made my day.

I developed my interest in wildlife as early as in my first years at school, I discovered photography when I was 11. Combining these two favourite hobbies, I found nature photography. Perfectly still mornings in bogs, face to face encounters with wild animals, distinctive birds – these are just a few examples of what I want to capture with my camera over and over again. I could take endless photographs of the exciting bird species that can be found in the islands, like cranes and sea eagles.

It goes without saying that you get to see the sea and the birds in Saaremaa. You often think that Saaremaa is all about junipers and rocky coastal pastureland, but actually we have big forests where you can meet up with all sorts of characters.

The easiest times of the year to get good pictures are spring and autumn because of the mysterious light. The summer sun tends to burn the wildlife and it shows in the pictures. I highly recommend everybody to make an effort and get up before the sunrise – everything looks different in the early morning light. You always get your reward for an early rise as the mornings are enchanting! |



The roe deer have their weddings in summer. The roebucks clash horns and the roe deer watch, in the hope of spotting the strongest.



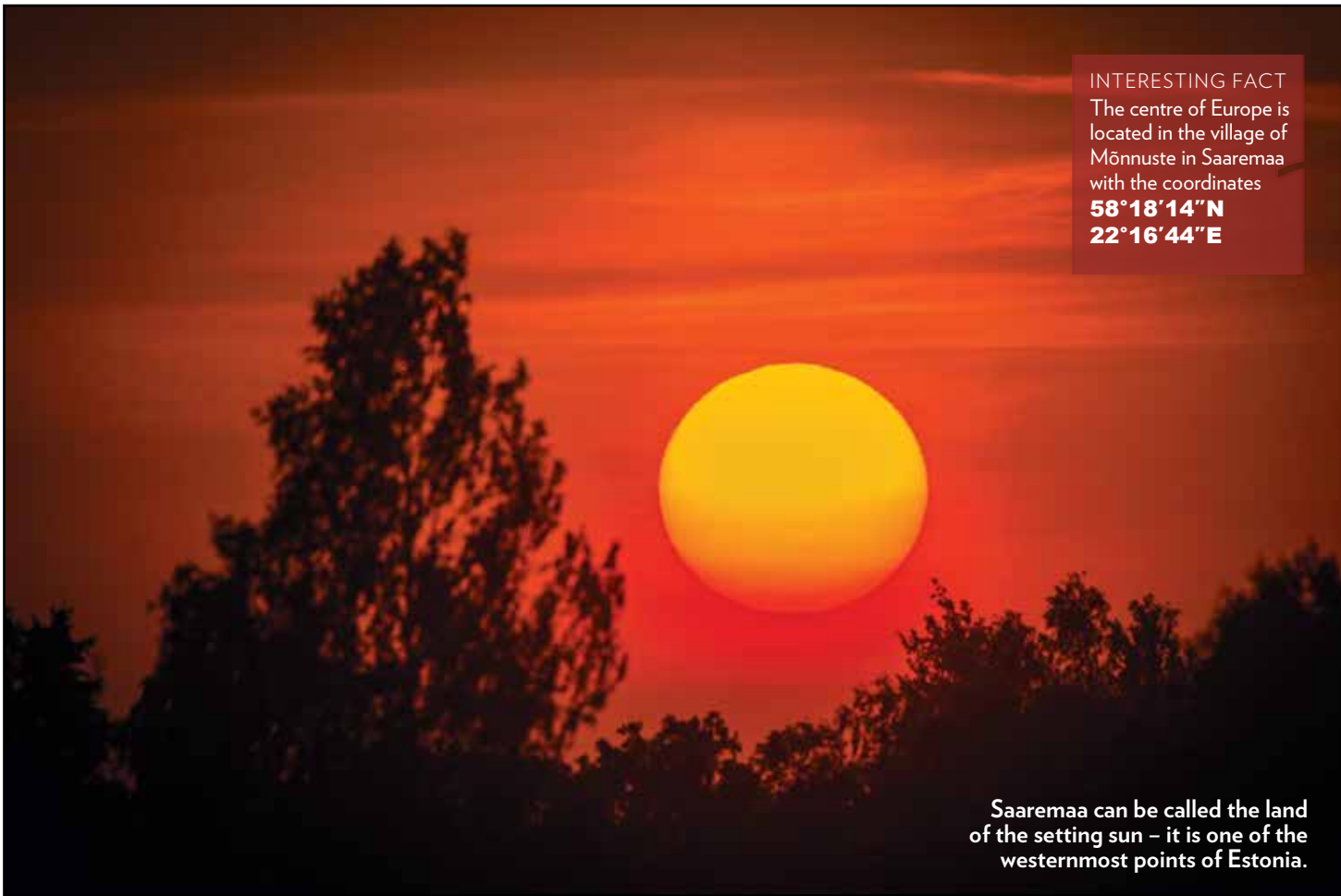
The wedding season of the red deer is the time of the year that I always most look forward to. It is absolutely amazing to see the wild animals with huge horns walking around so daringly and squinting toward the sky, roaring.



In autumn mornings you can enjoy the miraculous sunrises from the watchtower of Viidumäe.



It is hard to catch the agile and skilfully hiding hare. No wonder with a list of enemies ranging from foxes to eagles.



INTERESTING FACT
The centre of Europe is located in the village of Mõnnuste in Saaremaa with the coordinates **58°18'14"N** **22°16'44"E**

Saaremaa can be called the land of the setting sun – it is one of the westernmost points of Estonia.



At the end of May fox cubs poke their heads out of their lairs. There is a new whole world to discover and the fear of humans still needs to develop. I just sat quietly on the ground until the tiny one came to study me.

Green Saaremaa

TEXT: MARIA RUUBAS | PHOTOS: MARGIT KÕRVITS, PRIIDU SAART, I LAND SOUND, INDREK KASESALU

SLOW FOOD

All islanders are gatherers to some extent. Bathtubs of mushrooms and buckets of berries that people carry home from the woods are like the island's version of Black Friday. Supermarket trolleys tend to fill with produce that comes from the pure environment of the island through the work and experience of the local people. This produce is marked with the authentic product label of Saaremaa. Seeking out delicious flavours in restaurants you can taste the fruits of the farmers labours and with the feeling that it has all been produced just for you.

Being a city girl through and through, I have fallen victim to modern horticulture. I am a gardener in my apartment, planting seeds in pots on window ledges. Last year I went a step further, though. I pulled myself together and dug up a little plot of land and I pretended to be a proper gardener. You want to know, why? Because self-grown potatoes are the yellowest and the peas are the sweetest! It is a tremendous joy to see the plant that you have planted and watered with your own hands, finally beginning to bear fruit.

You are what you eat. Food must be good to you as well as to the people who grow it and to the planet. If putting your fingers in the earth is not really your cup of tea, you can always find your own farmer, hunter or fisherman on the island. A sharing economy works here and crops grown on farmland and homemade preserves and liqueurs are an invaluable currency.

Time stops in Saaremaa, helping people to find balance with their surroundings. Tiny positive changes and more informed choices in daily life support our natural environment as well.

The poetry of daily life, an opportunity to live my life at a slow pace and to experience my enjoyable, exotic isolation – this has been my reality for a year and a half. However, a luxurious living environment in isolation does not give us an opportunity to escape the issue of sustainability which is the greatest challenge of today. By taking small steps toward a sustainable lifestyle, we can all contribute to making Saaremaa an organic island - a place in this increasingly hectic world where green forests make you green with envy, where food is slow, where tastes are authentic and local; where destinations can be reached at a peaceful pace; where celebrations are held in the way that makes everybody feel good; where room is always available for authentic items with character. The island where you protect the environment while taking care of yourself.



CONSUME SMARTLY: REDUCE, RECYCLE.

BE GOOD TO YOURSELF AND TO THE ENVIRONMENT!

IT MAY COME IN HANDY!

We are all looking for something unique and novel in experiences, feelings and things. There is plenty of everything and it might all become yours. Never abandon your critical thinking and ask yourself "Maybe I could do without it?" We all know the overwhelming mentality that one day we might need it. This mentality goes back to our history of having shortages of everything. There were limited amounts only and we definitely learnt how to be resourceful and creative in order to create something from nothing. All the items that we bring to our lives should have a value and a reason for wanting them. Something that is a burden for one, might be a treasure for another. Take your time to explore the antique shops of the island, full of treasure with a lot of character. They come from the old times, they are a bit deformed, maybe a bit battered. You can spot long-forgotten books, Soviet era characteristic items, pearls from the years of Estonia's first independence, unexpectedly cool paintings, unbelievable finds in second-hand shops. These shops are homes for the items that carry memories with them. This is your chance to give all these items a new life that looks just like you.

Search for vintage treasures!



10 000 OBLIGATORY STEPS

All modern life amenities can be enjoyed on Saaremaa and if you can no longer keep up with modern life, you can in no time disappear into the wilds and recharge your batteries. Destinations are never too far from each other on the island. Prefer 10 000 steps, a bicycle or a scooter to make your moves and do your deeds. Strengthen your connection with mother nature with an alternative vehicle. It is environment-friendly but first and foremost, it is good for you.

While on the island, you will see that the charm of movement is in the process and the arrival is a part of that, not a goal. Motion on the island is supported by an infrastructure that allows you to enjoy the unlimited freedom and scenery of the island. Just the frame and you, wind playing with your hair, a nice day ahead is the only possible option. An ordinary day. Anybody who lives in Kuressaare, can cycle round the city using just the light traffic route. Even further, one of my definite favourite routes is the road between Roomassaare Port and the City of Kuressaare where among the juniper trees you can keep your eye on Kuressaare Castle. A proper island idyll. In case you are planning some longer routes, you have to be able to assess your stamina to face the challenge. If you have doubts about your fitness, you can get well prepared, participating in various sports competitions throughout the year. Local people, as well as visitors need party moments to break the mundane daily grind. Saaremaa is a proud venue of several events that make room for something special and unique, sparing at the same time both, visitors and the environment.

LET THE PARTY CONTINUE!

The way events are organized on the Isle of Illiku could be a model for everybody, on the island as well as on the mainland. I Land Sound is a festival that focuses on sustainable, beautiful life, organized by a team which acknowledges the importance of reducing waste and promoting recycling. The festival values unspoiled nature as much as it does genuine emotion. Kuressaare Maritime Festival (*Merepäevad*) make for the grand end of the summer, inviting visitors to think along on its environmental lectures. If you can't wait that long, you are most welcome to come and enjoy Kuressaare Street Festival (*Tänavafestival*) in May where everything, including drinking glasses and experiences are authentic at this big party. There are events for everybody the whole year round – just look for them!

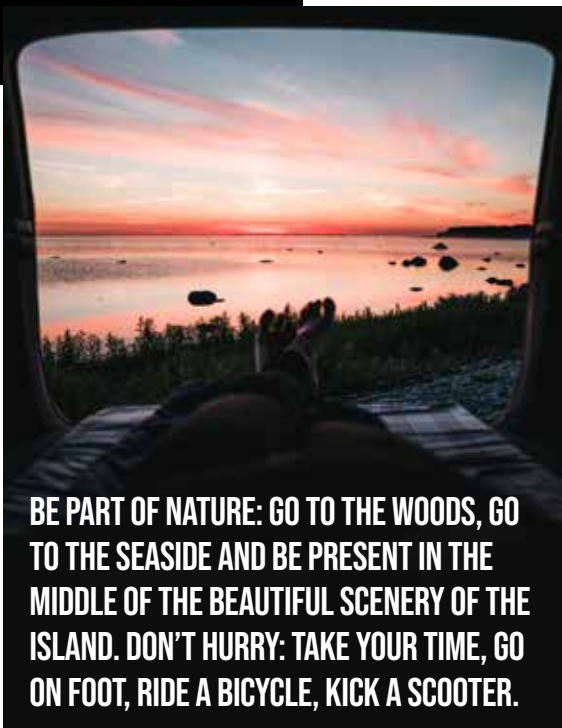
INTERESTING FACT

Interesting fact: Saaremaa has been a part of UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme since 1990.



ATTENTION! PREFER THE PRODUCE & SERVICES THAT BEAR THE AUTHENTIC LABEL OF SAAREMAA.

FIND OUT WHERE YOUR FOOD COMES FROM: GROW YOURSELF, FIND YOUR OWN FARMER, A FISHERMAN OR HUNTER. JOIN THE FB GROUP "KORILASELT KORTERISSE, SAARLASELT SALVE" – THE BEST EXAMPLE OF THE SHARING ECONOMY.



BE PART OF NATURE: GO TO THE WOODS, GO TO THE SEASIDE AND BE PRESENT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE BEAUTIFUL SCENERY OF THE ISLAND. DON'T HURRY: TAKE YOUR TIME, GO ON FOOT, RIDE A BICYCLE, KICK A SCOOTER.



FORGET DISPOSABLE: GET A REED STRAW, PREFER PROPER PLATES, NAPKINS, AND RECYCLE



HAVE BREAKS IN YOUR MUNDANE DAILY ROUTINE AND WHEN CELEBRATING, DON'T FORGET YOUR PLACE IN NATURE.

ASPIRE TO BALANCE – IN YOU & IN YOUR SURROUNDINGS

Secret Saaremaa

TEXT: LIISA KAASIK | PHOTOS: MARKO PALM, VALMAR VOOLAID, MARIS SEPP, AHTO KAASIK

The research, protection and wider introduction of the historical sacred historical sites has been a passion of my husband, Ahto Kaasik, for almost thirty years. In our family, folklore is still very much alive and in use in everyday life. My husband's roots are in Saaremaa and thus we make a trip from our home in Tartu to visit the sacred places in Saaremaa every year.

I have always been fascinated by the different nature and spirituality of Saaremaa. The sense and the course of time of native islanders is very different from urban impatience. A lot of the ancient understanding of the world and the power of the earth still exist here, fascinating and recharging our family.



> Kaali meteorite crater, a mysterious place beyond doubt, is the greatest natural wonder of Estonia.



^ Holy Panga Cliff, where water and sea fairies and the local forests have been worshipped for centuries.



Sacred Trees

Worshipping trees has always been important in entire region. We are probably the only nation who put a picture of a sacred tree on its banknote – the red 10-kroon banknote had a picture of a 700-year old Tamme-Lauri oak tree on it. The **Rämmi oak** at Rannaküla and the **Täri lime tree** at Liiküla are the two ancient sacred trees in Saaremaa which have really appealed to me. Rämmi oak is just by Orissaare-Leisi road, towering above it, telling us the numerous ghost stories that are associated with it. The 400-year old Täri lime tree, a couple of kilometres away from Panga Cliff, is an old giant of a tree, the thickest and oldest lime tree of Estonia and the oldest resident of Saaremaa. The landlady of the neighbouring farm told us that people continue to go to the ancient lime tree for healing purposes. I must say that many of my dreams have come true after I have tied ribbons around sacred trees.

Beautiful ancient Saaremaa is full of mystery. There are sacred groves, healing springs, sacrificial stones and other sites of primal power. Getting acquainted with local traditions and ancient customs allows visitors to experience the miraculous healing power of these sites.

Throughout the ages, Estonians have believed in the gods of the sea, the earth, the heavens and the water, as well as the supporting power of their ancestors' spirits. The life of the people in the countryside used to run in harmony with nature. Man would never set himself above nature but he would live in harmony, take notice, ask for advice, listen and thank. The places for communicating with the fairies, for praying, for receiving treatment and blessings were places of special power of the earth which we now call historical sacred natural sites.

Best-known sites of power on the islands:

- Toomalõuka Village Sliding Stone
- Kõrgema Spring
- Kärja Pühajõgi (Sacred River)
- Pühatu Spring
- Täri Lime Tree at Liiküla
- Läägi Village Sacred Grove
- Üügu Silmaalikas (Eye Spring)
- Panga Cliff
- Rämmi Oak Tree
- Tumala Sacred Grove
- Kaali Sacred Lake
- Väkra Sacred Grove

INTERESTING FACT

Kaali Meteor Crater is the easiest to access and the easiest to observe meteorite crater in Europe.

SAAREMAA

The historical sacred natural sites of Saaremaa are different and varied: sacred groves, healing springs, ghost stones, sliding stones, sacred trees. The best known are probably Panga Cliff and Kaali Meteorite Crater with good reason, as both are powerful and impressive.

Panga Cliff has been worshipped and utilized as a sacred site by residents of Mustjala Parish for centuries; the wall of the cliff itself is almost 430 million years old. People come here to worship the water and the sea spirits as well as the surrounding forests.

The story of the fall of a mysterious star that gave birth to the **holy lake of Kaali**, has found its way into runo songs and it has fascinated writers and artists through the ages. The older residents of Saaremaa remember that once, the holy lake of Kaali had been so rich in water that it overflowed and there was a dense forest growing around it. According to folklore, a couple in love who walk hand in hand clockwise around the Lake of Kaali, can never be torn apart.

Springs

Several sacred, healing springs flow across Saaremaa – **Odalätsi**, **Pühatu** and **Ariste money spring**. Estonians still trust and worship springs today. Visiting springs often myself, I can see people taking spring water home in large containers. Washing the eyes with spring water and drinking directly from the spring are common practices, too. Today Estonians still preserve wild cranberries in spring water and pickle cucumbers in it.

MUHU

Muhu is a tiny place, rich in traditions. For visitors of Saaremaa, Muhu tends to remain just an anteroom of the big island that you drive through. If you are a fan of ancient sites of power, make time to explore the tiny island, as Muhu has about a hundred registered historical sacred natural sites.

For a genuinely memorable way of getting acquainted with Muhu folklore, get a horse carriage or a riding horse from Tihuse tourist horse farm and make a trip to its surroundings. Tihuse also displays a permanent exhibition of historical sacred natural sites in Estonian and in English.

One of the best-known and most beautiful scenic sights of Muhu is **Üügu Cliff** with its ancient healing *Silmaallikas* (Eye Spring). Several local people have told stories about the miraculous healing powers of the waters of *Silmaallika*. Upon arriving at Üügu Cliff, take a walk on the picturesque trail through the mysterious *Kitsekambri* (Goat Chamber) and *Sokutoa* (Bock Room) caves.

If you would like to make an acquaintance with a sacred grove stone, take a walk along a soft moss covered stone fence on the border of Paenase village that eventually leads you to **Paenase sacred forest**.

› The Cliff of Üügu with its beautiful view and the ancient healing Silmaallikas/Eye Spring.



› The sacred spring of Odalätsi



UPON ENTERING SACRED NATURAL SITES:

- SLOW DOWN,
- CALM YOUR SENSES,
- SAY HELLO,
- BE PRESENT,
- SAY YOUR WISHES, PRAYERS, THANKS OR OATHS,
- LEAVE A GIFT.

Good customs

Sacred natural sites are ancient sites of power which are intended for praying, healing, bringing offerings and celebrating. Please tune in and get prepared before your visit. There are some unwritten rules at the sacred sites and knowing and following them will provide you with a powerful, multi-layered experience.

- As the sacred natural sites amplify our thoughts, words and deeds, we recommend visiting these sites with a **sober mind and body**. You must not hurt anyone or anything with either word or deed there.
- Upon entering a sacred natural site, **say hello**. The idea of greeting a spring, a tree or a meteorite crater may feel new but in this country, this custom is as common as greeting a host family.

- Please take away your rubbish but **do not take anything else** – flowers, branches, berries or any other forest produce. These restrictions do not concern spring water but it is an old custom to bring something to the water fairies. You can make offerings made of natural materials, e.g. bread, woollen yarn or silver coins as tokens of gratitude or an oath.

Join a sacred grove trip!

You will experience an exciting insight into the long history of our country and people through folklore, runo songs and harpsichord sounds.

MTÜ Põline Pere sacred grove trips are educational, experiential and spirited excursions on the sacred landscapes of Estonia. The trips take place all over Estonia beginning at county centres. A sacred grove trip of Saaremaa Parish will take place on 27 June 2020, beginning in Kuressaare, for further information, keep your eye on: MTÜ Põline Pere facebook.com/polinepere

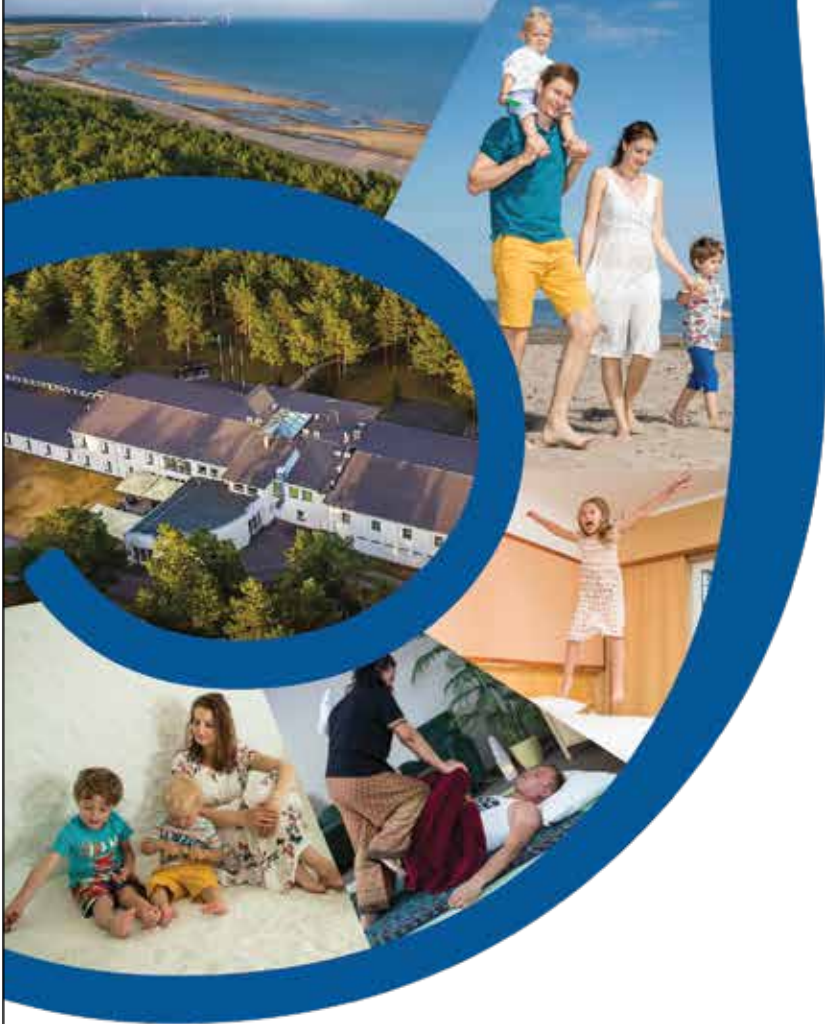


Where are the sacred sites located?

To find the locations of the sacred natural sites, use the internet map application:

hiiepaik.ee/vaata/kaardirakendus

Another good guide is “*Pühapaikade teejuht* Guide to Sacred Sites” by Ahto Kaasik. It contains descriptions of the 13 most imposing sacred sites of Saaremaa Parish: access routes, boundaries, scenery, history, traditions and customs. There is a list of recommended activities for the sacred sites at the end of the book. I



This cosy beach hotel Saaremaa, located on the beautiful beach sand of Estonia's biggest island, just 10 kilometres from the city of Kuressaare, is like a gem, surrounded by pure, untouched nature...

The two floors accommodate 41 rooms, each with a different style and view, four saunas and a hot tub in the sauna centre. Healing massages are performed by Thai masseuses.

Enjoy a plentiful breakfast in the dining hall or on the sunny terrace and your à la carte dinner with a beautiful view.

The Hotel's seminar rooms are perfect for business meetings, seminars and conferences for up to 90 participants.

The restaurant halls are made for celebrating birthdays, weddings and other anniversaries.

We arrange transport to the island and back by ground or by plane.

See you in Saaremaa!

HOTELL
Saaremaa

Info: www.saarehotell.ee
saaremaa@saarehotell.ee
Tel 505 8272 või 454 4100
Hotell Saaremaa, Mändjala, Saaremaa vald

Paradise for Bird Lovers

TEXT: JOUNI VALKEENIEMI | PHOTOS: JOUNI VALKEENIEMI, MARGIT KÕRVITS

After this trip I have been back to Saaremaa numerous times, exploring the island criss-cross at different seasons and have experienced unforgettable moments with incredible birds. Before my first trip, I had heard stories in my native country Finland about bird lovers' trips to Saaremaa but once again, my own eye was the king – as a popular Estonian saying goes. The multitude of birds and the richness of species exceeded all my expectations. They were all there – geese, water birds, waders and insect eaters. Back then it felt as if I had travelled much longer way than just the 400 kilometres that are between my home and Saaremaa.

✓ Steller's eiders nesting in Siberia spend the winter on the North coast of Norway but small number moves to Estonian waters for winter. You can see them in the Western harbours of Saaremaa.

Barnacle goose is like a signature bird of Saaremaa. Hundreds of thousands of barnacle geese pass through here in the spring and in the autumn.



◀ Montagu's harrier prefers damp beach meadows and bays of sea. A male bird in the picture.

^ Little tern nests on the rocky coast and lowlands of Saaremaa.

INTERESTING FACT
The history of Vilsandi National Park goes back to 1910 when the bird sanctuary of Vaika was established, being the first nature reserve in the Baltic countries.

I remember the most memorable moments when I saw the flocks of hundreds or thousands of barnacle geese on the beaches and fields of Saaremaa. It was something special. Back then, barnacle geese were very rare in Finland, in my neighbourhood in particular. It is different now, you can go and watch barnacle geese in the parks of the centre of Helsinki, for example. I had heard that in spring the barnacle geese would gather in the area of Matsalu Bay in West Estonia but I had no idea there were so many of them in Saaremaa. It was a nice surprise at the time when the internet was only just making its breakthrough and data on the birds that had been seen in the other places of the world moved at a much lower speed than now.

I still remember my first bird watching trip to Saaremaa, even though it took place nearly 25 years ago. It was May, trees were in buds, cowslips were in full bloom and considering the time of the year, the birds were at the peak of their activity. It was love at first sight.



^ Jouni Valkeeniemi, a freelance photographer and journalist from Finland, who has been a bird-watcher for more than 40 years and done more than 50 bird-trips to Estonia, especially to west coast and Saaremaa.

Saaremaa is a Paradise for Bird Lovers in Many Ways

First, the bird kingdom is rich and varied. The island is located at the crossroads of good migration routes. Several southern and northern species, as well as western and eastern species meet up there. There is something to see in every season, including winter. Second, Saaremaa is a pleasant place for rambling. There is plenty of free space where you can watch birds without disturbing the local people. I have never experienced a negative attitude to

birdwatchers in Saaremaa. It's the other way round, people often walk up to you and ask which birds you have managed to see. It is great that the beaches of Saaremaa are not surrounded by fences or developed like in some regions of Finland. Saaremaa is a big area with plenty to explore – it takes time to get to know the island properly. It has great birdwatching spots for several days. Of course I like it very much too that Saaremaa has no shortage of accommodation or places to eat: proper rest and a good meal are a bonus for every bird watcher. I



Beautifully coloured red knots are common sight on the coast of Saaremaa in the spring. They also nest on the Siberian coast.



Common rosefinch lets us enjoy its melodical whistle from May to Midsummer.



^ Rare dunlin nests here and there on the low growth beach meadows in Saaremaa.



An early summer night and nightingale song are inseparable. This species is very common in Saaremaa.



> The shy and timid black stork hardly ever nests in Saaremaa. With a bit of luck, you may see it mostly in May when the young ones are exploring life outside the nest.

RARE ENCOUNTER

I vividly remember another episode from my first trip to Saaremaa. One evening in a quiet village of Lõmala, a European roller of a beautiful colour was sitting on a power line. I was fascinated. It was a wonderful finding of a species that has always been very rare in Finland. This bird nests here and there in Estonia, particularly in Saaremaa according to a bird book from the 1970s. This information was actually out-of-date already then because the whole population of European rolls had collapsed in the whole of Northern Europe by the early 1990s. This bird that I saw at Lõmala in May back then, is still the only European roller that I have seen in Estonia, in addition to the very South near the Latvian border. The European roller no longer nests in South Estonia either, this species has disappeared from the list of birds permanently nesting in Estonia.



Some species disappear, some species appear to replace them. It is part of the bird world's life cycle.


Helpful websites for birdlovers:
www.linnuvaatleja.ee
www.eoy.ee
www.visitsaaremaa.ee

Best Bird Watching Spots in Saaremaa

1. Viidumäe Old Forests

Bird species that prefer old forests, nest in Viidumäe Nature Reserve. Spring nights offer a good chance of hearing the hooting of owls.

3. Vilsandi Island

Kingdom of sea birds. A sheltered area is a perfect place for nesting and resting of birds. Significant region for Steller's eiders for their rare wintering in the Baltic Sea.

4. The whole South coast from Tehumardi to the Tip of Sõrve Cape

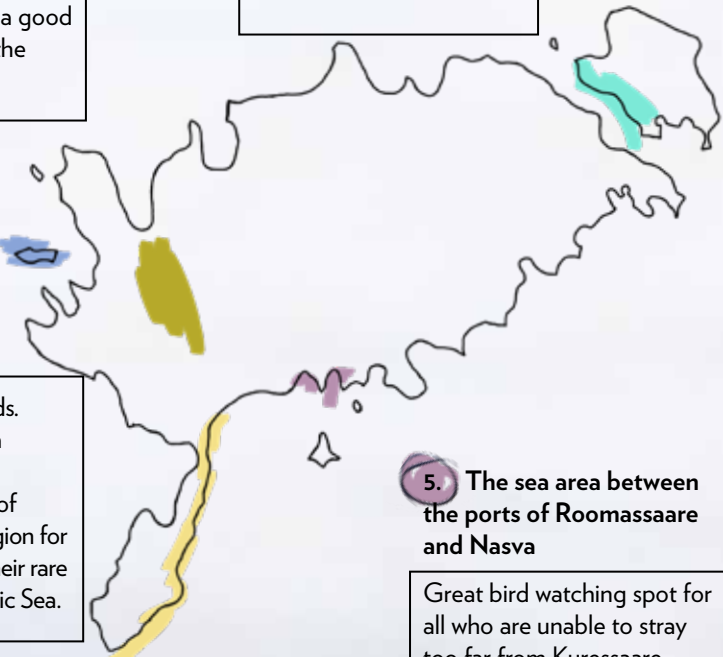
Saaremaa probably has the most interesting bird kingdom of Estonia, including bird-friendly beaches, especially at the Tip of Sõrve Cape and in Rahuste Nature Reserve. The Peninsula of Sõrve has the most favourable location from the point of view of the autumn migration.

2. Väike Strait (Väike Väin) between Saaremaa and Muhu Island

A popular place with water birds and waders. The best conditions for observing are when the sea water is low and a lot of bottom mud is visible.

5. The sea area between the ports of Roomassaare and Nasva

Great bird watching spot for all who are unable to stray too far from Kuressaare. Plenty of nesting birds and a sufficient number of resting migratory birds. The Western lowlands of Nasva Port are the perfect spot for seeing waders.



A heaven on earth in a pretty
seaside farm complex with an
orchard, stone fences and groves.



The name *Hülgeranna* (Seal Beach) was given to a place in the village of Atla on the territory of Vilsandi National Park a dozen years ago by Maria Tamander when she was working on the renovation of her grandparents native farm. She and her husband John Mathieson, a cinematographer, had decided to fix up the beautiful old farm site that was completely overgrown back then.

Peace at *Hülgeranna* Retreat

TEXT: TIINA KOLK | PHOTOS: TOOMAS TUUL

Back then Maria Tamander, the London-based producer, organizer of advertising campaigns, a supervisor of young talent and one of the owners of the successful pub The Cleveland Arms, did not know that the old name of the farm had been *Kallaste*. “*Hülgeranna* is actually the name of a building project but it perfectly characterizes this place where you can often see and hear the seals in the sea. Occasionally the wind will bring the sounds of seals from the islets, making it sound as if there was a great beach party going on,” says Maria. *Kallaste* used to be her grandparents’ quiet seaside property. Friedrich and Pauliina had cows and sheep, fields and an orchard. Some apple trees still bear fruit. Just like in the old times, they pick blackberries on the seaside in late summer, just like back then, the hazel trees line the farmyard. Maria’s grandfather was an enthusiastic fisherman and a village joiner. In September 1944, the couple and their daughters Eevi and Eena fled to the island of Gotland in Sweden, leaving behind a well-groomed farm including a house, a cowshed, a workshop, barns, a sauna, a cellar and a boathouse in the bay.



Back to Roots

When the Kallaste farm daughters were able to return half a century later, accompanied by their daughters Maria and Ulrika, it was a real challenge trying to spot the farm site. Their relatives in Kuressaare knew a lady who had been to Friedrich and Pauliina’s wedding and she knew which way to go. “As the Soviet Army had changed the old roads, we had to stop at each bay in order to check whether the stone that my mother remembered, was there. Finally we found the boulder that we had been searching for and on our way back, we managed to spot the orchard referring to a farm site and the remains of the kitchen staircase,” reminisces Maria who revisited *Hülgeranna* four years later when she was expecting her first daughter Isla. Thanks to her father’s employment with various representative offices of the air company SAS in lots of different countries, Maria has been travelling in the world since her childhood and she has had homes in various countries. While working for production companies, she used to spend 260 days a year abroad but for the last twenty-five years she has been living in London. “I really longed for a place where we could spend time together with our family and friends, enjoy the scenery, its peace and quiet – *Hülgeranna* keeps exceeding my expectations in many ways,” contemplates the woman who initiated the fixing up of the place and constructing the new buildings in 2007. Back then, Maria’s mother Eevi and her aunt Eena who had been returned the property, were seriously contemplating selling the overgrown land. That summer, Maria and John rented a caravan in Sweden and drove to Saaremaa together with their children to say good-bye to



^ John Mathieson and Maria Tamander enjoying their autumn break in their (country) home.



< An igloo sauna on the beach.



Soon an artists’ studio will emerge from among the stones and sculptural objects.



Hülgeranna residents have built a cosy home over the years.





John and Maria have settled in this house. The landlady with her interest in interior design lets her imagination fly free when furnishing the rooms, yet taking into account the habits and preferences of her family.



Saaremaa. They parked their caravan on the seaside to fully enjoy the roaring of the sea and the beautiful views. “Every dinner on the beach was accompanied by a uniquely beautiful sunset. Right there John and I decided to take the farm over from the parents and start renovating it for the family and future generations,” reminisces the woman, adding that they had to start from scratch because according to the local people, the Soviet Army had moved the house to the military base in Kuressaare and demolished all the other buildings, even the stone fences were knocked over or used for building the walls of the seaside bunkers. “My mother can only remember the kitchen in the house with its big wood-heated cooker with a built-in copper water tank that was surrounded by green tiles. She can also remember the staircase leading from the kitchen to the small cellar,” says Maria.



The couple thinks that Hülgeranna may become their permanent retreat in the future.

Persistence Leads to Purpose

Hülgeranna is hard to recognize today. There is a tidy coastal landscape with stone fences and groves, a pretty yard with newly-erected buildings, old apple trees and a vegetable garden. A scrub-free beach

is perfect for walking or bird watching, going kayaking and swimming in the sea.

Once Maria and John decided to restore the farm, Maria used to make monthly trips from London to Kuressaare from the autumn 2007 to attend to business and review the progress of the construction work in order to spend summer holidays on their own land.

“One morning my younger daughter Iona asked me why I was going on a holiday every month on my own. After I had explained what I was doing, she asked me whether in *Hülgeranna* she could really just open the door and go for a walk in the wilderness. Then I realized that they would never have that opportunity in London,” says an enthusiastic lady with Saaremaa roots under whose leadership the buildings were finished by the following July.

The architecture of the buildings of *Hülgeranna* was inspired by various styles of Estonian farm houses, resulting in the wooden buildings with shingled gable roofs. Those shingles would gradually wear grey like the autumn sea or the leafless trees.

“We spend more and more time at Atla in Saaremaa: our friends from all over the world come to visit us, the girls bring their friends, my sister and her family bring their friends. John and I are planning to spend the whole year at *Hülgeranna* in the near future to experience the change of seasons,” comments Maria on their future plans.

Important Integration

As John has more time to work on the farm and the land and the children can manage on their own in London, they spend more time at *Hülgeranna*. Integration into village life and participating in the affairs of the local school, Vilsandi National Park and the local artisans are very important for them. John Mathieson, a nominee for an Academy Award Best Cinematography and a winner of BAFTA Award for best Cinematography, is planning to run film(master)classes.

“Usually we open the season at Easter and then we return a couple of times before Midsummer and prepare the buildings, work in the vegetable garden and make preparations for our retired parents 8–10-week summer holidays at *Hülgeranna*,” say the couple. The rest of the company arrives at the end of June once the schools have emptied and they stay here until the end of August.

“Last autumn John and I came back to the island several times and we participated in a great food festival at Karala. My sister and I spent the first week of November at *Hülgeranna* together and it was wonderful – we went hiking, we had saunas and we cooked,” says Maria and she adds that they would come back to Saaremaa even more often if the direct flights to Stockholm were still available as they once were. The farm is fully equipped to receive them the whole year round: solar panels provide them with electricity, there is a well and a gas boiler. Maria and John have plenty of future plans. Their next project, the development of an artists’ studio on the beach in place of a Soviet Army surveillance point, will be probably completed this year. Together with the development of the artists’ studio they are planning to organize the so-called writing trips to groups of about ten guests who could spend their days writing, enjoying the incredible coastal scenery and indulging in good food. These ventures could last until the end of summer, followed by game hunting in the autumn.

“Bearing in mind a growing family, we would like to build some houses on the neighbouring Heldama property offering bed and breakfast. We are also working together with the State Forest Management Centre and Vilsandi National Park to turn the hiking trails into two-three-hour routes. Who knows, *Hülgeranna* may become our permanent retreat...” contemplates Maria Tamander. I



Photo: Margit Kõrvits

CULTURE

Estonia's biggest island Saaremaa and the third biggest island Muhu are addictive: they keep visitors busy the whole year round. In Saaremaa you can visit the old town of Kuressaare, the medieval stone churches, Sõrve Lighthouse, the Ruins of Maasi Castle, military sites or Mõhkli Farm Museum. In Muhu make sure you visit the village of Koguva with its long stone fences, the Cliff of Üügu and Muhu St. Catherine's Church with its pagan tombstones. Seek adventure and explore!

M-Y S-A-A-R-E-M-A-A

TEXT: MARGIT KILUMETS | ILLUSTRATION: EIKE MALVA



I am an islander by name only. I became a Kilumets (sprat forest) after marriage and this name has such a nice quirk to it that after thirty years of being a Kilumets, it still makes me smile. Therefore, if you are looking for funny or polysemantic surnames, then I recommend Saaremaa as a place to explore. Saaremaa is rich in such surnames, but not only names but lots of other specialties that keep calling me back to the island.

Saaremaa Opera Festival, for example. I visited the festival for the first time only recently and, unlike confirmed opera fans, it had never been an unseparable part of my summer but a couple of times at the Opera Festival in Kuressaare converted me. During the festival, the town becomes a true little metropolis. I enjoy my morning pancakes in one of the main street cafes and wave at the national opera director, cycling by, being everybody's family member in this week of July. Or in the early evening I put on my formal summer dress and when seeking my seat among other beautiful dresses in the giant opera tent, I feel privileged in the best sense of the word. Or I sit on the hotel terrace in the tender midsummer twilight, sipping a cold bubbly after a wonderful musical experience, knowing that the opera festival will be coming back and I might be lucky enough to be there once again in the next summer. There are also completely different ways of making the most of a Saaremaa summer.

Kayaking around Muhu island is one option. My husband and myself tested it in the middle of the 1980s when our older friends, all confirmed kayakers, invited us along. You do not go to the sea in a tarpaulin kayak but that's exactly what we did back then. We made it to the small islands of Kesselaid and Keinastu, where we were stormbound for three days and we made wild strawberry and semolina mousse with a whisk that we had made from a juniper tree root. We have repeated the kayaking trip almost every summer, along the coast of Saaremaa and around the island of Vilsandi. Kayaking is also one of the most tested forms of couple's therapy, as the boat will not move without perfect teamwork and a tent cures disagreements much better than any spa. However, there are examples that prove the opposite.

Arensburg spa has become my favourite in Estonia and my greatest experiences there come from the years of serious winters. It's minus twenty degrees outside but you let the lava stones heat your body up in the course of a massage and you only need to go to your wardrobe to go to the restaurant. In Arensburg I always feel that I have the whole place just to myself, although the parking lot is full of cars. Arensburg is like no other place in the world. Especially with a pair of strong, coarse hands of a Saaremaa woman taking care of your body.

Andruse farm in Muiküla is the birth place of my mother-in-law. There I learnt to enjoy potatoes with a thick sauce, as well as the beer soup, which is a dessert by the way. I never really felt at home at Andruse, because there is no proper beach around there. What is the point of holiday-making in Saaremaa, without a pleasant beach for swimming and proper sand for basking? Instead, at Andruse I got to know, thanks to my parents-in-law, the emotions of the islanders and I met a lot of funny, kind people.

The rule that I have tried to stick to in the recent years, is to avoid Saaremaa when everybody goes there, for example at Midsummer.

However, the exception proves the rule, and a couple of years ago I spent an atmospheric Midsummer night on the small island of Viirelaid. The sheep had trimmed the pinkflowered wild roses so perfectly that they formed a particular alleyway. Meat was on skewers and wine in glasses and then I suddenly realized what was best about this night. There were bonfires being lit along the coast of Muhu island, the sound of concertinas and the growling of men and I was so close and safely away at the same time.

I probably love Muhu even more than Saaremaa. One of my best friends lives in Hellamaa, and my university mates and myself have been visiting her since our first university summer. Her farmyard and her hay loft are the places where universal truths have been agreed and they still are. I can go there any time, day or night, happy or unhappy – the door will always be open to me.

In my journalistic years I have written plenty of articles about Saaremaa and its people and I have done TV and radio interviews. I can't remember any bad or boring ones and I must definitely thank the place and the people, not myself, for that. You sense the essence of Saaremaa immediately when you get off the ferry – the vibes change and so do you. But ...

Time is something you need in Saaremaa – it is no place for rushing.



^ Margit Kilumets is a journalist with a 30-year career in Radio and TV, currently she presents a weekly cultural programme on Estonian Television.

CONVENT AT REOMÄE

TEXT: RIINE RANDER | PHOTOS: MARGIT KÕRVITS, TOOMAS TUUL

On the road from Kuressaare to Kuivastu, about ten kilometres out of town, at Reomäe, there is a convent - the Holy Order of John the Baptist whose residents – nuns from all over the world who have dedicated their lives to serving God – are known for their openness and joviality. There is no shortage of hospitality!

The Holy Order of John the Baptist at Reomäe is a sister monastery of the Holy Monastery of John the Baptist on the Mountain Kissavos in the Metropolis of Demetrias and Almyros in Greece. The Order is a traditional orthodox communal convent for women. The Order was first established in Saaremaa in the village of Ööriku in 2009, for the last seven years the home of the Order has been Reomäe. The Order was established in Estonia at the request of Metropolitan Stephanos. The Order is under the administration of the Orthodox Church of Estonia and is subordinated to the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

Order is open:

From October to March **9–19**
From April to September **8–20**

www.skiita.ee

When I enter the convent through the gate, the nuns are busy with their beehives. However, they find a spare moment to have a chat with me. Obviously, our first topic are the bees. “Bees have a deep significance in the history of convents,” says Gerontissa Theodekti, Mother Superior of the Greek Mother Church of the Holy Order of John the Baptist, who is visiting Estonia. The bees are equally industrious, so their leadership system is similar to a convent – a hive has a queen and a convent has Mother Superior, one community shares the same beehive and the convent residents share the same space.



Orthodox nuns, like monks, dress in black, live in prayers and dedicate their lives to the service of God.



< During the services the doors of the convent are open to all.

✓ Besides St Andrew's Church, there is a battered outbuilding in the courtyard. Today the old schoolhouse is used as a guesthouse in the summer.

Bees are also kept for practical reasons. Honey is consumed in the convent and visitors can buy it, beeswax is used for making candles. The latter is one of the main sources of income for the nuns. The conversation with Gerontissa Theodekti is warm and cordial, she speaks about monastic life, the nuns' way of life and life in the convent. Monastic life is one of the ways of going back home. “Where is our home?” ponders Gerontissa Theodekti. “It is the place where we have been created, where a kind of paradise has been created. We have been created in paradise. There are convents all over the world and these are the places which aspire to life as if in paradise. It is a place where people care for the environment and share love.”

You feel being cared for every moment you spend in the convent. Coffee and tea are served and visitors are received very warmly. In the order, time acquires another dimension, it seems to stop.

Life of the Nuns

The rhythm of the daily life of the nuns is tightly linked to prayer. In addition to daily prayers, liturgies are held, Holy Communion is performed once or twice a week. During the services, the doors are open to anybody. During our conversation, the nuns pray as well: they read prayers for their interlocutors. Each nun has her own short prayer that she says in her mother tongue, at the same time fingering her prayer beads.

Adapting to the local culture is a significant part of convent life. The texts that are used in liturgies were all originally in Greek but the nuns are constantly busy translating texts, songs and books. Today you can hear Estonian as well as Greek at liturgies.

Bees have been kept in the Order for years. The first beehives arrived in 2014. The abbess Theofili acquired a beekeeper's qualification from a school in Olustvere in 2016 and the same year, kept the first eight hives over the winter. The number of hives has grown to almost fifty today.



< The Bishop Alexander of the Diocese of Pärnu and Saare of the Orthodox Church of Estonia.

In addition to religious holidays, the so-called temple feasts – the memorial days of the patron saints of the convent and its church – are celebrated with particular solemnity. At the end of November, a service is dedicated to the patron saint of the convent’s saint Andrew, followed by a formal meal that all the participants of the service are welcome to join . The end of August sees the temple holiday of the Order – the memorial day of John the Baptist.

The residents of the Order are keen supporters of a self-sufficient way of life. Daily jobs include cultivating fields and vegetable beds and gathering firewood. They grow their own vegetables, potatoes and strawberries. The crops are harvested in the way that they should last until the next harvest. A couple of times a year, they go fishing with their friends. The fish is baked, dried and canned. The convent diet lacks meat, dairy products are not consumed during fasting.

Visitors are Welcome

In the sister convent in Greece, visitors are frequent but Estonia still has a long way to go. Gerondissa Theodekti tells us about Estonian modesty: people are too shy to enter the yard and knock on the door. Estonians are overly concerned about disturbing others with their presence. Reomäe usually receives about a couple of thousands of visitors per year but at the Open Farm Days last summer the convent received two thousand visitors in two days. The nuns could not stop wondering where all those people had suddenly come from. Gerontissa draws the conclusion that on those two days it was “permitted” to visit the order and people took advantage of the opportunity. All the visitors were received with open hearts and big smiles.

There is no reason to worry about a possible language barrier. You can speak with the nuns in Estonian, as they have all learnt it. Today five nuns from Estonia, Germany, the USA and Greece live in the convent.

What is the language of communication between the nuns? “Our common language is the love of God,” says Gerontissa Theodekti. It is followed by all the other languages. As the sister convent is in Greece, Greek is studied as well but in Estonia, Estonian is the language that the nuns are consistently studying. All the nuns speak really good Estonian. They respect the country of their residence and they are eager to talk to the local people.

> Nuns are excellent gardeners and beekeepers, whose products can be also bought by visitors.

✓ The beehives in the convent’s courtyard each have a distinct name.



Visiting the convent is an eye- and heart-opening experience. Our conversation is full of jokes, but it comprises the stories that bring tears to my eyes. We have a long conversation and it is impossible to write about it all here. Your own eye is king and for the most authentic experience, you should turn up in person. There is an opportunity to stay in the Order as well. Only women can stay in the convent for a longer time and the minimum length of stay should be three weeks. Regardless of that, men should not be too shy about visiting the convent, because all are welcome! By the way, visitors are greeted and seen off by the dog Argo who got its name from the Greek mythology. The convent is open to visitors every day.



Church and Chapels

The centre of the convent is the church *katholikon*, to be distinguished from the chapels that are located in the other buildings of the convent. The Katholikon is the place for prayers every day at fixed times. Prayers fill every single moment, as all jobs and activities are fulfilled by the grace of God.

The Apostle Andrew Church in the courtyard of the Order is cosy. All its details and icons form a whole. Sparse moon - and sunlight are supplemented by candles and oil lamps, while services are run without electric lights. The church is heated every day and in the very cold weather, even twice a day.

The convent building comprises chapels for winter prayers mostly. In the winter, liturgies are served in the church only on big holidays, whereas in the summer, most of the services and prayers are held there.



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Saaremaa has a wide variety of places where islanders and visitors love spending their afternoons and weekends, enjoying a stage show, an exhibition, a film or a concert.

THE BEST PLACES

to Enjoy Culture in the Islands

TEXT: HANNA MARI VILLSAAR | PHOTOS: PILLELI LÄETS, LIIS SEPP, RAUL OLLO, MARI-LIIS NELLIS, KRISTINA MÄGI

ALL YEAR ROUND

Kuressaare Episcopal Castle

Centuries Old Crown Jewel of the Island

Lossihoov 1, Kuressaare

This late gothic gem on the coast of Kuressaare holds the leading position in the cultural life of the island, offering an opportunity to switch from the daily humdrum to high architectural culture. The fortress with its diverse rooms provides visitors with a porthole to the times past, as well as creating the perfect environment for shows, exhibitions and other functions. The capitular hall with its wonderful acoustics and its arches, high windows and massive candlesticks makes for the most ceremonial, spiritual concert venue on the island.

Kuressaare Cultural Centre

Year Round Cradle of Culture

Tallinna 8, Kuressaare

Kuressaare Cultural Centre is a regular stop on concert tours of popular musicians and more recently, recent stand-up comedians. The spacious, functional rooms also make it a perfect venue for large-scale conferences and various exhibitions.

Thule Koda, a Center of Alternative History

A Mythical Place on the Island on the Edge of the World

Uus 20, Kuressaare

The newest building of the renovated urban environment of Kuressaare makes a meeting place for the people who would rather take life with a pinch of humour, appreciating alternative history and alternative cinema. This most modern cultural centre in the very heart of the town with its 9 different rooms makes this the venue with the widest variety of choices functions and conferences. The Thule Cinema with its two halls really has something to offer for cinema fans of all ages.

INTERESTING FACT

Kuressaare Episcopal Castle (completed in 1381!) is the best preserved castle-fortress in the Baltics

Saare KEK

Our own growing creative campus

Ringtee 15, Kuressaare

The reawakened bohemian building is unique on the island – it is a free, open place for various kinds of functions, exhibitions and conferences. The neo-functionalist building provides an open office, a studio or an office space during the day, whereas in the evening it converts into an inspiring concert stage for its popular culture audience. As a formal concert venue of the Estonian Jazz Union, it is an all year round concert venue for jazz concerts.

Kuressaare Theatre

A Stately Home for Theatre

Tallinna 20, Kuressaare

The small repertoire theatre of Kuressaare with its young full time troupe is one of those few theatres that brings a good amount of local issues and work of local writers to the stage. Numerous guest performances share their theatre magic with the audience – both grown ups and children in the elegant theatre hall which also functions as a cinema hall. Kuressaare Film Week in November shows award-winning films alongside first screenings.

SUMMERTIME

Summer converts the farmyards, woods, beaches and streets of Saaremaa into concert venues. The street festival covers the whole centre of Kuressaare. Land Sound takes place on the small island of Illiku and the maritime festival is held on Raiekivi Cape, the night-time song festival takes over Kaarma fortress. Jaani bonfires are lit on cliffs and beaches as well as on village squares. However, photogenic, exciting summer tumult can be found in a number of summer structures as well.

> A number of restaurants and civic centers offer popular cultural programmes, from concert dinners to book launches. Fantastic acoustics bring musicians to the churches where you should arrive early to get a good seat.



Meritime festival | merepaevad.ee



Triigi Philharmonic

An Outstanding Landmark on the North Coast

Triigi, Saare maakond

Triigi Philharmonic in its perfect harmony with a bustling harbour, is one of the favourite concert and theatre venues for holidaymakers in Saaremaa. The programme of the experimental theatre and concert stage is first class. It is so exclusive that it would be hard to find an equal in the major cities of the mainland. Well into sunrising hours, extending dances, quality music concerts and the open recordings of the radio programme 'Radio Night University' constitute the minimum programme that you should try to participate in during the summer.

INTERESTING FACT

Estonia's oldest stone church is Valjala Church, its construction began in 1227.

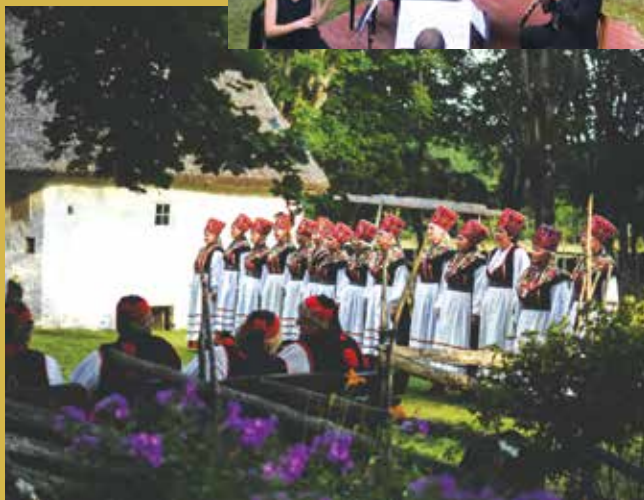
INTERESTING FACT

Ruhnu wooden church is the oldest recorded wooden building of Estonia, its construction began on 22 November 1643.





Coastal Defence Battery of Ninase | FB / Mustjala Festival



INTERESTING FACT
Kihelkonna Church Belfry is one of the 3 surviving separately standing belfries in Europe.

Opera Tent in Kuressaare Castle Courtyard

Midsummer's Noblest Concert Hall

Lossihoov 1, Kuressaare

The 2000-seat opera tent in its full splendour with its rolled red carpets, elegant cafes and niche boutiques is the venue that no celebrity would miss, not to mention the islanders themselves. The grand event of the summer, the opera festival, tunes the whole town in to a different wavelength, converting Kuressaare for one week into a small town of busy streets, burning in the summer sun, like in the luxurious small towns in the homeland of the opera.

Coastal Defence Battery of Ninase

Meeting Place for Music Lovers and Nature

Ninase, Saare maakond

Almost all cultural centres in the island are in good harmony with their natural surroundings. Mustjala music festival takes this to a new level when the music lovers enjoy music literally in the wilds. The concert stage stands in the middle of the Mustjala woods, in the coastal defence battery of Ninase where the music is amplified not by the sound system but by an unbroken ring of spectators and by the pine forest in the background.

< Farmyards and Bandstands
Concert Venues in the Open Air

In summer months, several farmyards open their gates for concerts and choirs and popular musicians gather on bandstands. A farmyard on the Island of Muhu hosts an exotic world music festival Juu Jääd, Leisi Song Festival Ground hosts the Day of Karja Parish and Kärla Park hosts the festival of Kärla Triip.

Mihkli Farm Museum

Cultural Farm Complex

Viki, Saare maakond

The courtyard of Mihkli farmyard is a popular place for experiencing the song and dance culture of the islanders. Over the summer, a series of fun dances and stirring concerts take place on the farmyard lawn.

Sailing Ship Hoppet

Venue on a Sailing Vessel

Raiekivi tee, Kuressaare

The only surviving and still-functioning Estonian Republic era sailing ship, 'Hoppet' hosts visitors on board all summer for concert voyages from jazz to folk music. Extra-programme functions in this historic environment can be arranged any time.

Harbour Storehouse in Kuressaare

Summer Home of Kuressaare Theatre

Veski 9, Kuressaare

The 17th century harbour storehouse that has mostly been used as a warehouse, has been given a new life as a popular theatre venue. For years, Kuressaare Theatre has been playing its summer shows, including some of the big names of Estonian theatre who spend their summers in Saaremaa. This building with its ancient atmosphere, also makes an exciting venue for all kinds of other functions.

Kursaal and Bandstand in the Park

A Romantic Resort Town Gem

Lossipark 1, Kuressaare

It is impossible to miss Kursaal, the top example of Kuressaare wooden architecture in the park. A stylish, light-toned building makes for a perfect seat for its moon cinema and concerts. For years it has been hosting Kuressaare guitar festivals, DJ sessions and rock musicians.

The band stand opposite the Kursaal has been hosting Kuressaare Summer Music Festival for many years, offering free Sunday concerts of mostly instrumental music. Keep your options open as the band stand can have a surprise concert at any time. |

INTERESTING FACT

Kuressaare Summer Music are held on Kuressaare Park open-air stage.



Kursaal and Bandstand in the Park | kultuurivara.ee

Harbour Storehouse | klteater.ee

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SMOKED FISH AND LOCAL HUMOUR



Angla Windmill Park and the Heritage Culture Centre

welcome you with 5-century-old windmills. The arms of the Viite windmill turn around and the Vilidu windmill grinds by the power of wind. The cyclist-weather-ervane entertains visitors with his diligent pedalling.

The heritage Culture Centre accommodates through 3 floors exhibitions of unique century-old handicraft machines, a mantle chimney, local history displays, handicraft workshops and a bakery room with a huge bread baking oven. Folk related events, traditional heritage festivals and concerts are all held here.

Make a reservation to learn how to make things from timber, felt and dolomite and how to bake bread. In the summer months visitors are welcomed by farm animals and birds in their summer "houses". Healthy food made from locally grown ingredients and drinks are served.



Open daily 9.00-20.00

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Kaali Tavern, Meteorite Crater, Museum Hotel

Kaali impresses its visitors with its world-famous meteorite crater and its legends and mysteries.

A new, castle-style Kaali Tavern accommodates 100 guests in its grand hall and serves delicacies made of the best local ingredients, offers drinks and welcomes you to celebrate parties and anniversaries and have a dance. Kaali Bakery offers the best rye bread available.

Also available:

- Cosy hotel with a sauna for 20 people
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- Meteorite Museum with its 96-kg meteorite fragment from Sihhote-Alin
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Incredibly Beautiful Panga Cliff and the Sundial

The height of the cliff on the western coast of Saaremaa is 21.2 m. Here is the sundial.

In the nature reserve you can enjoy a breathtaking view of the sunset, have a picnic, enjoy peace and quiet and the beauty of wildlife.

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The Resort Chair of Saaremaa

TEXT: PRIIT KIVI | PHOTOS: SAAREMAA MUSEUM, MARGIT KÕRVITS, EGON LIGI

The timeless, stylish garden chair made by carpenters of Saaremaa used to be a common sight in resort towns all over Estonia in their golden years. Where did its road to fame begin and how is it doing now?



^ A famous chair maker from the village of Kandla, Villem Jürgefeldt (1884–1941), his wife Juuli and daughter Linda are sitting on town chairs. Unfortunately, in 1919 there were no garden chairs available in Eduard Buhgan's photo studio.

< Most of the flamboyant chairs on the square in front of Kuressaare Kuurhoone in the early years of Estonian Republic, were most definitely made by men from Kärla. Photo: M. Jakobson.

< By the oversized resort chair of Saaremaa, made by the students of Saaremaa Vocational School, visitors can take cool photographs.

~ An old recycled chair adorning a bathroom

We probably need to thank the seamen for bringing this pretty chair to our region, as they have always tended to bring back interesting stuff from their voyages. The origin of this rustic resort chair actually goes back to the classical Windsor chair. The islanders liked the chair so much that making them became a man's winter job for several generations, in particular, in the villages of Kärla parish – for example, there were carpenters in five farms in the village of Kandla and six in the village of Jõempa.

The chairs, made by Saaremaa carpenters, were very popular both in home gardens and in public places. Furthermore, they were exported to Riga during the tsarist Russian era. In the 1920s and 1930s Estonian resort centers from Kuressaare to Narva-Jõesuu bought them in great quantities and they were a common sight in kursaals, bandstands and open air cinemas. The production capacity of the carpenters was absolutely miraculous, as in summer months up to a thousand chairs were sent to the mainland.

The price of the Saaremaa chair was low but the process of making it required skill and patience. The seat and the legs of the chair were made of pine, the arched bent back was made of ash, the seven rods of the back were made of aspen and two were made of birch. A lot of experience and knowledge was needed for bending the arch of the back, as well as fitting the rods as each hole was at a different angle. For the sake of perfect comfort every little detail had to be thought of.

The making of chairs ended together with the fading of resort culture during World War 2. Over time, just a handful out of thousands of these masterpieces survived and today the surviving pieces are kept like family heirlooms.



A couple of years ago, the chair that had fallen into oblivion for decades, was revived by the carpenters of Saaremaa and once again we can all experience the golden years of the resort era. Why not do it? These chairs would perfectly fit into winter interiors in the 21st century as well, reminding us of the hot sand and the hot sun of the beach. |



10 culinary questions

TEXT: RIINE RANDER | PHOTOS: MARGIT KÕRVITS, MARK BAKERY | ILLUSTRATIONS: EIKE MALVA

Thanks to its isolation created by the sea, the local culture of the islands has been able to grow in a distinctive way. Among other things, the crisp sea air has filled the islanders with good and interesting culinary ideas which might first look strange to outsiders. Below you will find answers to some of your questions.

Why do the islanders' eaves seem iridescent in the spring and in the summer?

Fish is the islanders' silverware. The sea-food caught by our own hands is an inseparable part of our diet and we cook it in many ways: we fry, marinate, bake, smoke, fast-salt and dry it. In the spring roach and pike are hung to dry, after Midsummer Day flounder are fairly fat and they are hung to dry as well. For that reason the islanders' eaves are shiny - from the glow of fishscales as the islanders' silverware is getting ready for supper. When visiting the island, try to make conversation with the local people and ask to taste some dried fish.

Why do islanders eat jacket potatoes and what are *runnakad*?

Islanders love potatoes. In the spring furrows are made, potatoes are planted and in the autumn the crop is harvested. New potatoes that are picked in midsummer and early spring, have such frail skins that it would be a sin to peel them - for that reason the islanders often eat new potatoes unpeeled. These potatoes are called *runnakad*. The name of potatoes in the island is also *tuhlis*. When you hear people talking about *tuhlis* ja *nott* - they are talking about potatoes with sauce. They often cook them in a *paargu* or an outdoor kitchen.

Why do some people eat fish in the restaurant with their fingers?

You are in a restaurant and then you notice that the person at the table next to you is eating fish with his fingers. You wonder why. Most probably that person is a local. Islanders eat fish with their fingers, not with a fork and knife - just like Italians eat their pizza with fingers. When you eat fish with your fingers, there is hardly any waste and you get the flesh off the bones nice and easy.

Why do restaurant menus have names of farms on them?

Saaremaa and Muhu are great places for food lovers. Islanders highly appreciate food culture and they really know what to do with ingredients. There is a lot of co-operation with the farmers in order to treat visitors to the best that Saaremaa has to offer. For that reason, several restaurant menus tell their clients where things come from. By the way, Saaremaa and Muhu are the proud locations of several restaurants and cafes that have merited the highly prestigious Scandinavian White Guide recognition. This year nine restaurants received this recognition, in addition to the awardees of earlier years. Do not miss the delicacies of the summer pop-up cafes on the islands.

INTERESTING FACT

The bones of a garpike are green.



What are *apurokk* & *pannileib*?

When looking for a place to eat on Muhu island you may find a dish called *apurokk* on the menu. You will be wondering what it might be - something savoury or sweet, sour or bland? *Apurokk* is a traditional Muhu dish. It used to be a main course but now it is mostly a dessert or a party food. Briefly, it is made of potatoes and flour, it is fermented and it is served with cold milk. Once in Muhu, make sure you find *apurokk*.

Saaremaa's traditional dish is *pannileib*, it was very common in the West of Saaremaa. Its main ingredients are potatoes, supplemented by salted or smoked fatty pork, onions, flour, salt and eggs. It used to be cooked on Saturdays as a post-sauna meal. You can find it on some restaurant menus but occasionally you will spot it in a local supermarket.

Why do lots of items have a blue label with the word "*ehtne* genuine"?

"*Ehtne*" is a regional label ensuring that the product has been made of the local produce on the island of Saaremaa or Muhu. If you would like to find a souvenir or a local flavour to remind you of your trip of the islands, look for this label.

Did you know that Saaremaa together with the other West Estonian islands is a part of the UNESCO biosphere programme area? It means that the living environment here is pure and of a good quality, so is the produce that is grown on the islands around here.



Do islanders bake their own bread?

Yes, islanders like baking their bread! Several local cafes would bake their own special house bread, brown bread, barley bread or white bread. In all the islands there are smaller cafes and guesthouses who bake their own bread and also sell it to their visitors. In shops it's worth finding the products of Karja Pagar, Saare Leib and Muhu Pagar. Take some bread home with you to make the taste of Saaremaa last longer!

Did the islanders really put their Christmas tree into a bottle?

It's weird but very true - last year a local business Lahhentagge picked the branches and needles of the spruce that had been creating Christmas spirit in the centre of Kuressaare for two months and made a spruce-flavoured tonic with it. What excellent recycling! If you still don't know what a spruce tastes like, go and find the special Lahhentagge drink.

Why do they say that the homemade beer of islanders is sneaky and it "cuts you down"?

Make sure you keep the distinction between this type of beer and craft beer. The centuries old method of making home-made beer is completely different. Home-made beer is of golden yellow colour and it is cloudy. While drinking it, you don't realize how strong it is - usually it's 7-8 degrees. It's an old story that men from the mainland who start drinking with great enthusiasm, will soon be asleep at the table. Handle with care!

There are so many junipers on the islands!

Do you make something good from them?

Yes! Wooden spoons and butter knives made of juniper are sold all over the place, it's impossible to miss them because of their easily identifiable and memorable aroma. You can buy the local juniper flavour and take it with you. You will find packaged juniper berries, syrups and jams as well as bottled gin and tonic, flavoured by the local juniper.



To a Family Holiday!

TEXT: TOOMAS JA TRIIN LUHATS | PHOTOS: MARGIT KÕRVITS, PRIVATE COLLECTION, PRIIDU SAART

» **Saaremaa is a second home for our family. It is like a very good friend who we miss and who we simply must see every now and then. Even our two-year-old demands after a while : 'Let's go to Saaremaaaaaa! It is great there!'**

In order to get our four-member family and the dog over to Saaremaa, we need a spacious car and a proper one-month holiday. After meeting all these requirements we start racking our brains for where to accommodate our crowd. There are more options than ever. Georg Ots Spa Hotel is our great favourite but we have been really lucky with guest apartment type accommodation as well. All you need to do is spend some time on the internet and do a thorough search. When planning your holiday, keep in mind that July is the favourite month for all holidaymakers.

A Town of Dreams

A ferry trip across the sea and a ride through Muhu in the direction of Kuressaare moves everyday life miles away from you. Kuressaare is one of the coolest towns in the world for our family. There is a bit of medieval atmosphere as well as a plenty of new and enjoyable stuff to experience and explore. There's the market, Kure Cafe, Kadi Radio, the newly renovated town centre, the children's playground, the castle, spas, the music school – these are the places that we always visit. Kuressaare is so cool that we would honestly like to live there. Flying daily to work in Tallinn would clearly be too expensive but the clean air, pure drinking water and peaceful environment of Saaremaa definitely beat the capital.

Inviting Beaches

About ten kilometers from Kuressaare is Mändjala with its wonderful wildlife and its incredible, long coastline which will leave no one cold. Equally magic and awe-inspiring is Sõrve Peninsula. In Sõrve you can't help thinking of those nearly 3000 people who were forced to leave during World War 2. Before the war Sõrve had been one of the most densely populated areas of Estonia. We have our own beach in Sõrve. Well, actually this secret beach of ours is a public place but we will still not reveal its name. Good luck spotting it. On this beach, land and sky merge, pine trees intertwine in a fairy-tale manner and the anthills are the size of houses. You would not need to add any special effects if shooting a fairy-tale film – all is here already.

We have very fond memories of our holiday at Leisi. The nearby Tuhkana beach is unbelievably beautiful and special with its clean sand and nice view. We could say that this is one of the best places on the northern coast of Saaremaa. We highly recommend to buy fish from the local fisherman Priit while in Leisi – his fish is absolutely delicious and Priit is a very nice guy. Don't miss the village of Karja for its hot bread. Be nice to the ladies working at the bakery Karja Pagar, and they will happily bring you a newly baked loaf or if there is no bread and you are in no hurry, they might put a loaf in the oven just for you. That's how nice they are.

Worthy Gourmet Experiences

There is no way to escape the topic of the food and places to eat in Saaremaa. One of our favourites is Hafen at the yachting harbour of Kuressaare. Our long-term favourite is Castello whose Italian cuisine could probably victoriously challenge the restaurants in Italy. The adults in our family like the Asian restaurant Monk but as our kids do not appreciate spicy food, we usually go for other options.

It is always a good idea to drop by in Kure Cafe for coffees for adults and delicious cookies for kids. Retro Cafe in Kuressaare, Lümanda söögimaja, Sääre Paargu Fish Restaurant at the Tip of Sõrve Cape, Tihemetsa smoked fish farm in Nasva and Pidula Forell (Trout) in Kallaste village are the places where we have always enjoyed delicious meals.

Children are Welcome

For us the attitude to children tells us a lot about a country. Saaremaa welcomes children very warmly. No-one has ever told us in Saaremaa that children are not allowed here or there – we even went to Uime bar together with the children. Uime bar is probably one of the best party venues in the whole northern hemisphere. Georg Ots Spa Hotel is particularly child-friendly, no little detail has been neglected. It may sound like a small thing but it is actually very important. The kids always want to go back to



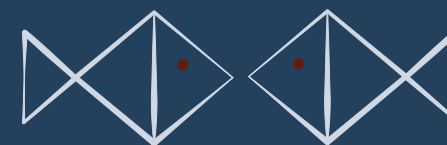
the adventure park on the outskirts of Kuressaare. Our kids were equally impressed by Asva Viking Village where in addition to climbing and ax throwing they could feed and study animals. This Viking Village in the middle of forest is truly an astonishing, unexpected pearl to find. Finally – Saaremaa is one of the best places in the world. The people who live there, do not always realize how lucky they are. Hereby I would like to say, as a bystander, that there is nowhere better than in Saaremaa in the Summer time. |



To avoid ferry ticket queues, buy your tickets in advance
www.praamid.ee



^ Toomas Luhats, purchasing manager of Estonian Public Broadcasting and Triin Luhats, a teleproducer with their children enjoying Saaremaa

A ferry trip across the sea and a ride through Muhu in the direction of Kuressaare moves everyday life miles away from you.



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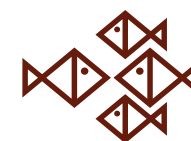
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ACCOMMODATION



ACTIVITIES



EVENTS



^ Piret Pupart, a Professor and Head of Department in Fashion at the Estonian Academy of Arts.

“There is no walking indoors without wearing an apron and there is no walking outdoors without a bonnet...”

TEXT: PIRET PUPPART | PHOTOS: LIIS SEPP, EESTI RAHVA MUUSEUM, MARGIT KÕRVITS, VALMAR VOOLAID, SILVER SAARKOPPEL

STYLE : KARIN KREEK, KAROLIN KÄRM | MODEL: KAROLIN KÄRM | MAKE UP: PIRET ELLI

This golden rule of a married woman occurs in various dialects and wordings all over Estonia. Once a married woman or “under the bonnet”, you were not supposed to appear bareheaded in public. If you ended up bareheaded outdoors due to some unexpected circumstances, you were supposed to cover your head with your hand. Every woman desired the status of a landlady – it was the matter of honour and pride! Demonstrating this status on the islands was expressed by headgear so particular and even a little crazy that it had no counterpart in the rest of Estonia. The island women would never be happy with a plain headscarf.

Saaremaa and the other islands can boast an extremely wide selection of headgear, in comparison with the rest of Estonia. One reason for that was seafaring, resulting from the influence of various countries. This cosmopolitan touch was also present in the islanders’ attire. As for shoes, the islanders were already wearing them in the 17th century whereas in Mulgimaa in South Estonia, people were still mostly wearing peasant sandals as late as at the end of the 19th century. Islanders were also making fashionable red or even indigo stockings, the Swedish style waistcoats with metal fasteners, called *abu*. Men had stylish English top hats etc.

Muhu Bonnet

Saaremaa women’s most characteristic headgear are the patterned bonnets of the height of up to 25 cm, often densely covered in embroidery, of a trapezium shape, broadening at the top. In West Saaremaa from Mustjala to Anseküla, they were of blue-red-green colour patterns whereas Muhu island is famous for its flamboyant traditional bridal bonnet of a different shape and colour combination.

The oversized bonnets of Mustjala and Muhu are the best-known headgear of the island women – to some extent due to the favourable attitude of the Soviet authorities, who used to interpret the embroidered regional symbol of happiness as the red star. Furthermore, the brightly coloured and richly decorated set of attire made a much grander impression than the costumes coming from the other regions. As a result, the song and dance festivals seemed to have more “islanders” participating than there were people living on the islands.

The island women were industrious handicraft makers but the Muhu women went even further and beautified literally almost every centimetre of their attire. Of course, there were also the women whose handicraft skills were less sophisticated, producing a poorer outcome. People were never direct with their criticism but preferred dropping hints – “this girl has two left hands and all her fingers are thumbs” was one of the comments that would have been typically used.

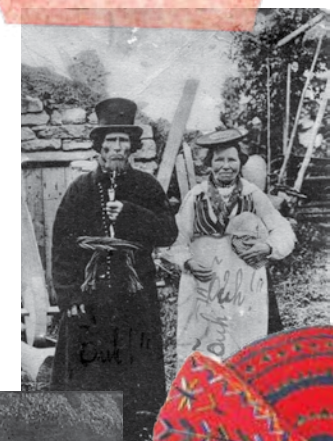
Beret in a Farm Yard

The common Muhu bonnet was fairly small and it leaned on the forehead. To keep it securely on the head, thin strings were fastened to it and they were tied behind the back of the head. The same method was used with other headgear. For example, at Pöide and Karja, a little knitted disc was tied on the forehead, right on the hairline, decorated with a triangular imitation tassel made of glass beads or a piece of fabric.

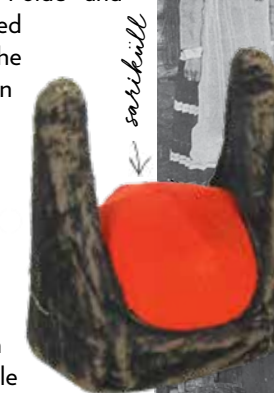
A disc cap (*ketasmüts*) was a more comfortable option of the oversized winter cap (*ratasüül*) that would hover like a big plate above the head. The cap of almost 30 cm in diameter was supported by a round wooden ring installed inside the cap. In winter or on a windy day, a headscarf was attached over the cap, adding a curious look to a woman’s head. This probably inspired fashion designer Saima Krik to make this the crown of her red collection in the style of Saaremaa national costumes in the 1980s. The predecessor of the disc cap and the winter cap is the beret. It arrived here from the Renaissance West where they were much larger than now. Just think of Henry Tudor wearing his oversized beret on paintings.



ratasüül



ketasmüts



saariküll



kiritanu



argitanu





Muhu and Saaremaa people dancing in their folk costumes.



< The more the better. Islanders with all sort of bonnets.

Triumph of a Tassel Hat

Wearing knitted hats with a long tube and a tassel hat is a story in itself. The fashionable item that had been imported from the West by the sea, spread all over West Saaremaa, edging out the embroidered bonnet in many areas. Its heyday was the second half of the 19th century when the common tassel hat became part of the formal attire.

The part of the hat leaning on top of the head kept reducing through times, until strings had to be used to keep it secure, later the strings were replaced by hairpins. However, a more significant

part of the hat were its tube and tassel – the shoulder where they were worn, identified the social status of a wearer. A single woman would wear them on her left shoulder and a married woman would wear them on her right shoulder. In Kärla and Kihelkonna, the tassel would be pushed in the middle of the back. It happened that a single mother would have to wear it in a specifically allocated position.

In East Saaremaa the styles of berets and tassel hats would merge, where the above-mentioned palm-sized or larger disc and a fabric triangle attached to its side (symbol of a tassel) would denote a certain code. Hence, headgear used to stand as social media, offering some weighty details on women's lives. It did not mean that men were free from that kind of info exposition. The location of a wide belt knot would serve the same purpose, although in party situations it could easily change its position.

In Sörve, the mourners and brides in front of the church would wear kerchieves on top of hats that were usually attached using hairpins and arranged corners. This was often the job for older ladies who were then awarded with a shot of spirits. As the women could get quite drunk, the minister of Jämaja A. R. J. Walter abolished the tradition of kerchieves at the end of the 19th century.

The tassel hat never made it to the more urbanized regions: the neighbourhoods of Kuressaare and Kaarma have always been more similar to West and North Estonia where the hoof-shaped hat *pinnmüts* that was pulled over cardboard base and a vertically striped skirt were predominant. An island woman would rather wear a horizontally striped



INTERESTING FACT

On Thursdays in the summer, the centre of Kuressaare hosts a series of folk dancing Neljapäevane Labajalg.

crinkled skirt, whereas the crinkles were often formed with the help of hot loaves of bread. Where would a farmer's wife obtain an iron at the end of the 19th century? Furthermore, its temperature was hard to control. On the other hand, bread was baked in all households and its pressure, milder heat and the humidity oozing from under its crust were perfect for pressing the skirt.

Horned Sisters

As for the summer headgear, there were some mightier counterparts on the mainland, at Mihkli and Kolga-Jaani, but the island women's winter headgear was hellishly fanciful. Such winter hats were called *sariküll* and mostly constituted two thick black horns, a furry lambskin edge and a woollen cloth top; usually one horn would be turned toward the forehead and the other toward the back of the head. Occasionally, horns would be turned sideways, mostly in the parishes of Jaani, Põide and Karja.

Shapes of horns would vary in parishes. In Valjala they would be short and smooth, in Kihelkonna, large and upright, in Anseküla,

> The island women are easy to identify because of their particular bonnets and richly adorned open pockets that are tied to the waist. The open pockets are predecessors of today's bumbags.

the tops of horns would be turned inward. A comment about Mustjala hat says that there "the tops of horns were so tightly together that pick them up on a pole and throw them to the woods". Visually they make for a headgear with a pagan message but they survived most of the Christian era and even paid joint visits to the church, newly married women occasionally wore them to church even in summer.

The top of the hat was mostly of red woollen fabric, blue when in mourning. The code of the lack of red and plenty of blue demonstrating spiritual loss, is predominant in all attire on the islands.

Today, national costumes are mostly worn in summer and indoors and for that reason, the traditional winter headgear is seldom to be seen. Why not make a closer acquaintance with them? |

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Photo: Valmar Voolaid

SPORTS

Did you know that Kuressaare has been elected one of the European cities of sport for 2020? The city has a wide variety of excellent sports facilities: from golf to all sorts of water sports, volleyball and rally driving. Something for all! By the way, the small town, Kärla in Saaremaa is the hometown of Ott Tänak, the 2019 World Rally Champion.

Golf Holiday in Saaremaa

TEXT: MARI RAUNA

PHOTOS: VALMAR VOOLAID, ELERI EVER, SAARE GOLF

“Kuressaare has everything that a golfer might expect from a perfect holiday: a fabulous golf course, spa hotels and excellent restaurants are all within a walking distance which means less travelling and more quality time,” says Mari Rauna, Estonia’s best-known female golfer/coach.



Mari Rauna,
a professional golfer
and a coach



INTERESTING FACT

Kuressaare is one of the eight European cities of sport for 2020.

> The advantage of playing in the evening is the most picturesque sunset.

> Golf season lasts until the first snow.



The highly rated Saaremaa Golf & Country Club which recently celebrated its tenth birthday, is the only one on the island. It naturally blends in with the island’s typical scenery – the junipers, the seaside grass and birch trees giving the impression of dating back centuries.

The standard 18 hole or par 72 *championship*-type golf course was designed by well known Finnish golf architect Lassi Pekka Tilander. The greatest charm of the course is its well-maintained beautiful natural environment where you can play to the singing of birds, away from any traffic noise. It feels as if the clocks are ticking along at a slower pace on the island so that its visitors can enjoy themselves for longer. As the soft maritime climate of Saaremaa extends the golf season, the course usually stays open until November or even longer. It is one of the toughest courses of Estonia, making a round of golf highly enjoyable for all levels of golfers.

There is also a practice area including a driving range with both mats and lawn tees, a green with two sand traps for practising those bunker shots, a separate putting green and two short holes for pitching and chipping. The club house includes changing rooms, a sauna and a restaurant. There is a golf set, cart and buggy rental.

All are Welcome

All golfers are welcome from complete beginners and children to social players and professional golfers. There is something for everyone at Saaremaa Golf and Country Club. Come as a group of players or come alone, bring your family and friends, your birthday guests or colleagues! An introduction of a couple of hours will give a good insight into the world of golf and why this game captivates tens of millions of people, how golf has been played throughout the centuries and also, you can try various strokes under the guidance of an instructor and even compete for the title of the most skilful participant in a mini competition. Beware that one round of golf may result in addiction for life.

The course always has plenty of free slots from Monday to Friday in summer, providing beginners as well as higher level players with great opportunities to play at their own pace. Beginners are advised to bring plenty of extra balls as almost every hole offers the opportunity to hit a ball into water! Early windless mornings are the best time for playing whereas late evenings have the advantage of demonstrating the most picturesque sunsets over the golf course.

To watch out for:

On the fourth hole you may encounter a hare standing on its hind legs on the edge of the fairway, ready to sprint from one thicket to another.

On the back nine, the deer often skip around.

The quality of the balls of the driving range is occasionally inspected by a curious fox family.

To keep the golfers down to earth, occasional encounters with grass snakes or vipers, hissing a warning, may occur.

Saaremaa golf course is perfect for birdwatchers – the list of birds nesting on the course is long. Hopefully, sharing the company of so many birds will have a favourable effect on the score card – with a couple of birdies or eagles adorning the result.





> **The Golf Club's full size 18-hole course makes it possible to organize big competitions.**



> **Beginners should bring plenty of extra balls as almost every hole offers the opportunity to hit a ball into water.**

Golf is deceptively easy and endlessly complex...

Golf is a Challenge

As the holes of different lengths and levels of difficulty are lined with a number of water hazards, and strategically placed sand traps and the total length from the white or rear tees is 6310 m, it makes the course a proper challenge. Strong wind adds to the complexity of this seaside course. It's always wise to practise an opening stroke before starting a hole. If you succeed in striking the ball from the tee area into 'Position A', you have done a good job... until you get to the green. Saaremaa greens are large with numerous contours, therefore you can use the flag positions on paper to estimate the right distance from the flag. If you happen to play at a time when the course is hosting a big competition, these greens are harder and faster and even more complicated to play. Thus, some technically easy golf strokes may not send the ball into hole without a major challenge. As they say, that which doesn't kill you, makes you stronger and the more complex the practising circumstances, the better it will be for your progress in the end!

Varied Competition Schedule

In addition to regular rounds, advanced golfers should include some exciting competitions in their schedules. There are competitions for all levels. Last spring Saaremaa Golf hosted an international golf competition – the Estonian Amateur Open and the Estonian Strokeplay Championship last August. Running big events requires a championship-type golf course. All golf competitions are open to spectators and volunteer workers are very welcome. If a long weekend or a multiday competition sounds too much, then pick a one-day competition from the many that take place over the summer, one of the most popular being the annual #kuuritool which brings together a varied group of participants from all over Estonia. You can always just play golf and not compete at all but practice for the sake of practice may eventually become boring. A famous golfer, Arnold Palmer, perfectly summed up the charm of golf: „Golf is deceptively easy and endlessly complex, it satisfies the soul and frustrates the intellect. It is rewarding as well as annoying – and it is without a doubt the greatest game mankind has ever invented.“ |

DEFINITIONS

Par – the number of strokes a first-class player should normally require to complete a particular hole (depending on the length of hole, either par 3, par 4 or par 5). Pars also calculate the general number of strokes on the course, e.g. par 72, like in Saaremaa, is the indicator of a standard full-size golf course. There are also par 68 or par 70 courses, indicating shorter courses.

Names of golf results:
Birdie – the number of strokes on a hole which is one stroke under par (e.g. par 5 hole is finished in 4 strokes). It is a very good score.

Eagle – the number of strokes on a hole which is 2 strokes under par (e.g. par 5 hole is finished in 3 strokes) – it is a super result!

Tee area – an area for making an opening stroke. Most courses comprise four tee areas on each hole with a differently coloured marking, making the distinction between different lengths of holes in accordance with the players' levels. The length in Saaremaa is the longest from the white tees and it is shorter from the tees of other colours (yellow, blue and red). The shorter the hole,

the easier it should be to play. Beginners and female players play from red, men play from yellow.

Green – most closely mowed areas of grass on the course with holes in the ground for balls. Holes are provided with flagsticks and flags. Each golf hole, (18 on a standard course) begins with a tee area where the opening stroke is played and

ends with a green where the hole is. The goal of a game of golf is to complete all holes with the lowest number of strokes. Each hole is completed when the ball is in the hole on the green.

Fairway – the main playing area, an extensive mowed grass area that is often lined with trees, bushes, sand bunkers, picturesque lakes or ponds.



> **All are welcome, from complete beginners to professional players.**



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The call of the island roads

TEXT: NILS KAJANDER | PHOTOS: NILS KAJANDER, PRIIT NOOGEN, PRIIDU SAART

Travelling is not only about the destination, but the journey too. Curiously the expression *road trip* reflects this perfectly: there's the *road* and the *trip*, but no destination. The journey – the trip, the drive – becomes the destination itself.

But there are obvious factors that either make or break the experience. The roads. The traffic. The scenery. And, of course, to some: what is one driving. Yet whether the vehicle of choice happens to be a rumbling Harley, vintage sports car or a state of the art gran tourer, all the way to a motor home or everyday driver, Saaremaa is made for road tripping.

Roads of Saare County

Against some outdated beliefs, the roads in Estonia are mostly in good shape. According to World Economy Forum's roads quality ranking Estonia's roads are well above average, before Belgium, Norway and Italy among others – and the trend is only upward. On top of that, the quality of roads in Saare County is even better and above the national average. All this giving one the opportunity to concentrate on what truly matters.

The scenery

Through the traditional landscapes, through the greens, through the wild poppy fields, the sleepy little villages... Old windmills standing here and there alongside the roads. Few ruins of collective farms being the only reminder of the past Soviet era. And last but not the least: the sea. Driving over Väinatamm – the largest causeway in Estonia, connecting Muhu and Saaremaa – especially around the sunset, or simply hitting one of the coastal roads, functions as a beautiful reminder that one is on the islands indeed.

< You never get lost on the small islands – wherever you go, sooner or later you end up by the sea.

In this manner Saaremaa offers a perfect backdrop for a road trip, much greater than its size. It invites to stop more often than one planned – to admire the scenery, pasturing cows or lambs, maybe even a sea eagle's glide through the sky – and to change your plans on the fly. Or to drop your plans altogether. Freedom, the essence of any road trip!

The routes

As a road trip destination Saare County is more about the sum of its parts, rather than just one or two spectacular routes. But to get your adventure going, few suggestions:
After arriving to Kuivastu harbor, on the island of Muhu, you might want to consider a small taster what's ahead. And while at it, also avoiding the at times heavy traffic on the main road (no. 10). Hence turn left after 1 km, taking the road 154 to Pädaste. This enjoyable little detour (+ 5 km) through forests and leaf tree alleys won't even slow you down much, as you'll be re-joining the main road approximately in the middle of Muhu, right before Liiva, the main village.

Or alternatively, continue on the main road (10) around 5.5 km, exiting then towards Hellamaa (road 153). After passing through the village, turn right (road 152) heading to Nõmmküla. This detour (+ 15 km) will take you alongside the more rugged north coast of Muhu, re-joining the main road only after Liiva, a bit closer to the causeway leading to Saaremaa.
Then after arriving to Saaremaa itself, turn right towards Orissaare (road 75). In Orissaare, after some 4 kilometers, turn right again, to road 129. This 70 km coastal road will eventually take you to the village of Mustjala (or why not continue even further!), and must be among the nicest drives on the islands – if not in the whole Estonia. Beautiful sceneries, many pleasant stops on offer, and most of all: a winding road with a lovely profile... A true driver's delight! Like the whole Saaremaa.]

> You never get lost on the small islands – wherever you go, sooner or later you end up by the sea..

BUCKET LIST IDEA

Ice roads are the symbols of a proper, cold Estonian winter. The weather allowing ice thick enough (min. 24 cm), they are not opened nor maintained to function as a tourism attraction, but they do provide unforgettable travel experiences too. In fact, they can easily be categorised among the most spectacular roads in the world. Especially the ice road between Saaremaa and the second largest Estonian island, Hiiumaa: it is the longest ice road in Europe, covering a length of 25 kilometres. So, up for a little ice road trip?

> Driving on ice road makes for an unforgettable experience.

During the high-season the ferries from mainland to Muhu and back can get very busy. Especially during the weekends. To avoid potential queuing for hours, buy the tickets in advance by visiting praamid.ee

Coastal road number 129 is one of the prettiest on the island.

INTERESTING FACT
Saare County comprises about 35 nature trails with the total length of 254 km.

TOP 10 SPORTS IN SAAREMAA

TEXT: MO SAAREMAA | ILLUSTRATIONS: EIKE MALVA



1. Saaremaa Rally

On the home ground of the world's fastest man, WRC rally champion Ott Tänak, the last stage of the Estonian Rally Championship takes place. Thousands of fans gather to watch this race with the longest history. Those fans whose skills are not up to the level of the Estonian Championship, speed through the amateur rally stages www.saaremaarally.eu

4. Tennis

Tennis courts can be found among Muhu's junipers and Kuressaare city park. When it gets too cold in the outdoor courts, the indoor courts at Kuressaare Tennis Centre come in handy. This is the venue of the island's best-known tennis competitions – Angerjaturniir / Eel Tournament and Kuressaare Cup. www.kuressaaretennis.ee

7. Maritime Sport

Hundreds of kilometres of coastline provide water sport lovers with wonderful opportunities. Local kitesurfers break Estonian records in height as well as speed. Sailors are equally good on water and on ice. On calm days they team up on paddling boards (SUP). www.visitsaaremaa.ee/naudi/merelised-te-gevused-saaremaal

8. Summer & Winter Swimming

The sea makes not only a wonderful beach in the summer but also a great venue for various competitions. In the annual Väike Strait competition of open water swimming, participants swim from Muhu to Saaremaa. Water attracts the islanders so much that the New Year is traditionally welcomed by jumping into ice cold water at Orissaare Karsumm.

9. Enduro GP

On 17–19 July, an Enduro off-road motor-cycling world cup stage is going to take place in Kuressaare – for the first time in Saaremaa and for the second time in Estonia. Over two days the participants perform tough speed trials on the terrain around Kuressaare. The highlight of the competition will be the speed trial taking place in the centre of Kuressaare. www.endurogp.org

10. Mõlkky European Indoor Championship

Do you know what kind of game is *mõlkky*? You don't? Find out in Saaremaa on 14th–15th March at mõlkky European Indoor Championship in Kuressaare. The throwing game that was invented in Finland, captivates participants as well as spectators. www.molkky.ee/em-2020-3/

5. Volleyball & Beach Volleyball

Volleyball is highly appreciated in Saaremaa. There is a volleyball team, one of the best in Estonia and they also play on their native island. Beach volleyball is popular on Kuressaare beach in summer. www.saarevolley.ee
www.saarevorkpall.ee

6. Cycling Marathon

Boys of Saaremaa Cycling Club Viking show good results the whole year round but the pinnacle for cycling hobbyists arrives in Saaremaa in the autumn. This year, the tenth Karujärve Cycling Marathon is going to take place where all mountain bikers can confront the challenges of the landscape of an old military base and its surroundings. www.karutervis.ee

2. Running Competitions

Saaremaa hosts running competitions of various lengths and history. Ultima Thule Marathon participants have covered the marathon distance in and around the streets of Kuressaare for four years. Three-Day-Race participants cover the same distance on three consecutive days, in Kuressaare and in the woods of Sõrve.

www.saaremaajooks.ee

www.ultimathulemarathon.com

3. Golf

Saaremaa's mild maritime climate makes it possible to play golf from May to November. The 18-hole course of Saare Golf is just a 15-minute walk from Kuressaare old town. The quality of the golf course is considered to be one of the best in Estonia and during the season it hosts a variety of bigger and smaller competitions. www.saaregolf.ee

Kuressaare is the European City of Sport

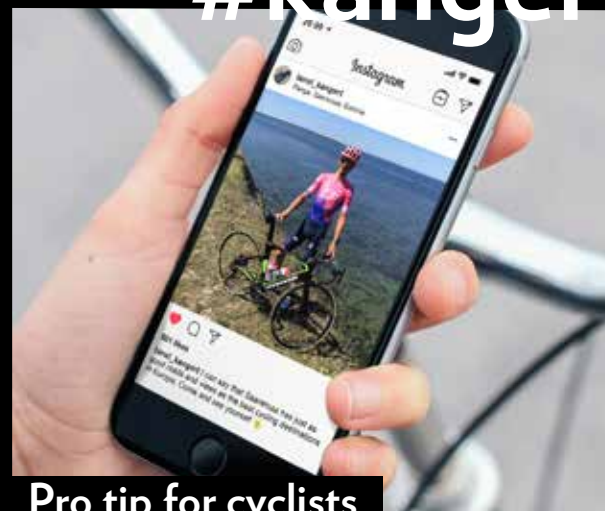
This year Kuressaare gained the distinguished title of European City of Sport, awarded by the ACES Europe, an association of cities of sport in Europe which has been granting this accolade for over 20 years. It is a recognition of a city's excellent sports facilities.

All title-bearing cities are actively involved in organising joint events and conferences and are bound to offer a wide variety of sports facilities in order to increase the number of people engaged in sports - this is the greatest benefit Kuressaare can gain from its title. The European City of Sport title is going to bring about much wider European coverage of Kuressaare sports events and hopefully more sports enthusiasts from abroad as well as larger numbers of spectators.

All are welcome to take advantage of Kuressaare's sports facilities!

2020

#kangert



Pro tip for cyclists

When Tanel Kangert – an Estonian professional cyclist currently riding for EF Education First team – posts to Instagram stating that “Saaremaa has just as good roads and views as the best cycling destinations in Europe”, it's not just empty words. With over ten years as a pro, and after finishing for example five Tour de Frances among other Grand Tours, he should know. And indeed Saaremaa does offer a lot to discover whether you're a cycle tourist, or a serious athlete – or anything in-between. Lots of freshly paved asphalt roads awaiting, offering plenty of shorter and longer routes ideal for road bikes, but on top of that being an absolute paradise for those into gravel grinding. As Kangert put it: come and see for yourself!

(Either way, you'd probably find keeping up with Tanel's pace challenging if not impossible, but luckily following him in Instagram is easy: [@tanel_kangert](https://www.instagram.com/tanel_kangert))



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www.thulekoda.ee/kino

HOW TO GET TO SAAREMAA

SAARE COUNTY

Number of Population: | **ca 33 000**
 Area | **2922 km²**
 Population Density | **11,5 citizen per km²**
 County Centre | **Kuressaare**
 Saare County comprises three parishes |
Saaremaa, Muhu and Ruhnu

BY PLANE

You can fly to Kuressaare direct from Tallinn which has good connections to most European cities.
 Information on booking tickets and flight schedules for Kuressaare Airport >
www.kuressaare-airport.ee

BY BUS

Comfortable buses with WIFI connection on routes Tallinn-Kuressaare, Pärnu-Kuressaare and Tartu-Kuressaare every day. A trip from Tallinn to Kuressaare takes about 4 hours incl.ferry.
 Buy tickets >
www.tpilet.ee
www.bussipilet.ee

BY CAR & BY FERRY

Ferries to Saaremaa depart from the Port of Virtsu, West Estonia. Tallinn-Port of Virtsu 135 km, about 1.45 hours drive. Riga- Port of Virtsu 256 km, about 3.5 hours drive. There is regular ferry traffic between the Port of Virtsu and the Port of Kuivastu, in the summer 2 trips every hour (every 30 minutes), other times of the year about 20 departures per 24 hours. The trip takes 27 minutes. Distance between the Port of Kuivastu and Kuressaare is 76 km, about 50 min drive.
 Buy ferry tickets here >
www.praamid.ee

BY CAR ON THE ICE ROAD

In a cold winter you can drive across the sea to the mainland and to Hiiumaa on the ice road. Information on the opening and condition of the ice roads >
www.mnt.ee/et/tee/jaateed

BY YAHT

Saaremaa is a popular place for yachting. Find your favourite marina on the website >
www.sadamaregister.ee

STOCKHOLM

HELSINKI

TALLINN

VIRTUSU

TARTU

PÄRNU

SAAREMAA
KURESSAARE

FROM SWEDEN TO SAAREMAA

New flight connection between Stockholm and Kuressaare will launch in spring.

FROM FINLAND TO SAAREMAA

Finnair flies between Tallinn and Helsinki and Tallink sails between Helsinki and Tallinn 7 times a day.
www.finnair.com
www.tallink.ee

FROM SAAREMAA TO HIIMUMAA

There is ferry traffic between Saaremaa and Hiiumaa. Ferry departs from the Port of Triigi, about 45 kilometres from Kuressaare, time of travel: about 40 min.
 Buy ferry tickets here > www.veeteed.com

FROM SAAREMAA TO SMALLER ISLANDS

Saaremaa is directly connected with the islands of Aburka, Vilsandi and Ruhnu.
 Look for more information >
www.visitsaaremaa.ee/avasta/saaremaa-javaikeasaared



Share your impressions with us **#visitsaaremaa**

FREE GUIDED TOURS

In the summer months the guides of Saaremaa run free city tours weekly. Guided tours take place on Saturdays with the starting point at the Town Hall. Ask for more information at the Tourist Information Centre.

FIND US FROM HERE:



www.visitsaaremaa.ee

visit_saaremaa
 Visit Saaremaa

SAAREMAA OPERA FESTIVAL

July 21st – 26th 2020

TUE 21.07 | 20.00
 Gioachino Rossini
„LA DONNA DEL LAGO“

WED 22.07 | 20.00
 Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
„THE MAGIC FLUTE“

THU 23.07 | 20.00
 Gaetano Donizetti
„LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR“
23.07 | 23.30
Midnight puppetry opera
„STØV/DUST“
 Sew Flunk Fury Wit (Denmark)

FRI 24.07 | 20.00
 Giacomo Puccini
„MADAMA BUTTERFLY“
24.07 | 23.00
OPERA ROYAL

SAT 25.07 | 20.00
OPERA GALA
25.07 | 23.00
OPERA ROYAL

SUN 26.07 | 14.00
JUNIOR GALA
Family musical „JUKU“
 Author Raimo Kangro, libretto by Leelo Tungal



Guest Theatre **Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb**, Chief Conductor **Marcello Mottadelli**



More information: saaremaaopera.com
 Tickets: piletimaailm.com



visit
saaremaa

SAAREMAA CALENDAR & MUHU OF EVENTS

2020

MARCH

NOM festival

05-08.03
nomfestival.ee

Bubbles Wine Festival

07.03
nomfestival.ee/mullifestival-2020



FEBRUARY

Zafa fest –

International Festival of Oriental Dances

06-09.02
zafafest.eu

INTERESTING FACT

On Sundays in the summer, concerts Kuressaare Summer Music are held on Kuressaare Park open-air stage.

APRIL

St. George's Night's Signal Lights

22.04

MAY

Vintage and Retro-Culture Day

02.05
vintage tallinn.ee

Kuressaare City Race
03.05



Kuressaare City Birthday Party
08.05

Night at the Museum
16.05
muuseumioo.ee

Gardening and Flower Festival
22-23.05
saartruu.ee

Kuressaare Street Festival
30.05
kuressaarefestival.ee

Garage Sale in Kuressaare
31.05



JUNE

52th Saare County Song Festival "Teel"/"On the Road"
6.06

Midsummer Night Bonfires
all over Saaremaa
20-24.06



JULY

Kuressaare Castle Festival
03-04.07
saaremaamuuseum.ee

Open Gardens of the Islands
05.07

Music Festival Juu Jääb
2.-5.07
Muhu Muusikatalu

Kihelkonna Festival of Sacred Music
10-12.07

Eput Pae. Ilu elab/ Beauty is Alive
11.07

Parasummer 2020
11-18.07
parasummer.com/et



I Land Sound
16-19.07
ilandsound.ee

Enduro GP Estonia
(Enduro World Cup stage)
17-19.07
endurogp.org

Mustjala Music Festival
17-19.07
mustjalafestival.ee

Open Farm Days
18-19.07
avatudtalud.ee

Saaremaa Opera Festival
21-26.07
saaremaaopera.com

Mototoober
24-26.07

Muhu Cafés Day
26.07

INTERESTING FACT

Folk Dancing in the centre of Kuressaare on Thursdays in summer



Ultima Thule Marathon
22.08
ultimathulemarathon.com

Kaarma Night Song Festival
19.08

Ruhnu Rahu Festival
21-23.08
ruhnrahu.ee

International Viking Market at Salme
21-23.08
salmeviking.wordpress.com

Night of Ancient Lights on Beaches and Harbours of Saaremaa
29.08
muinastuled.ee



AUGUST

Kuressaare Gin Festival
01.08
gin.ee

Kärla Triip
06.08

Kuressaare Maritime Festival
01-08.08
merepaevad.ee

Ethno Music Festival (S)Torm
7.-8.08
Abruksa island purjelaevad.ee



SEPTEMBER

Saaremaa Food Festival
03-13.09
saaremaatoidufestival.ee

Kuressaare Street Picnic
05.09
visitsaaremaa.ee/tanavapiknik

Karujärve Cycling Marathon
12.09
karutervis.ee



OCTOBER

Saaremaa Rally
09-10.10
saaremaarally.ee

Saaremaa Three-Day Race
16-18.10
saaremaajooks.ee



NOVEMBER

Kuressaare Cultural Centre 10th Day of Photographs
14.11

Animafestival
23-24.11



DECEMBER

Christmas Markets & Concerts
See all events:
syndmused.saaremaavald.ee/et

There is something exciting happening all the time on islands - find yours to enjoy! The fact time goes slower in here gives a magical touch for every experience!




Welcome to
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- ★ 20 years of experience

15. MAY - 15. SEPTEMBER
EVERY DAY **10.00-18.00**



Laasu talu, Nautse küla,
94728 Muhu, Saaremaa

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www.vanatoa.ee
[#Vanatoa](https://www.instagram.com/vanatoa)
info@vanatoa.ee

ATTENTION!



Here you will find the products and services
that were made in the unspoiled environment
of Saaremaa, by the islanders themselves.

The largest display of authentic products
is available on the ground floor of
Auriga Centre in Kuressaare

pood.ehtne.ee





Kuressaare

- Kuressaare raekoda / Kuressaare Town Hall
- Vaekoda / Weighing house
- Endine tuletõrjedepoo / Former firefighting depot
- Laurentiuse kirik / St Laurence Lutheran Church
- Turg / Market
- Tuuleveski / Windmill
- Apostlik Oigeusu Nikolai kirik / St Nicholas Orthodox Church
- Linnapark / Town park
- Kuurhoone / Resort club (Kursal)
- Kuressaare piiskoplinnus / Kuressaare fortress
- Skulptuur Suur Tõll ja Piret / Sculpture Suur Tõll and Piret
- Kuressaare sadam / Kuressaare harbour
- Golfväljak / Golf course
- Aavikute majamuuseum / Aavik's house museum
- Kudjape kalmistu / Kudjape Cemetery
- Tervisepark / Health park
- Roomassaare sadam / Roomassaare harbour
- Thule Koda / House of Thule
- Keskaja elamuskus Arcebald / Medieval Activity Centre Archebald

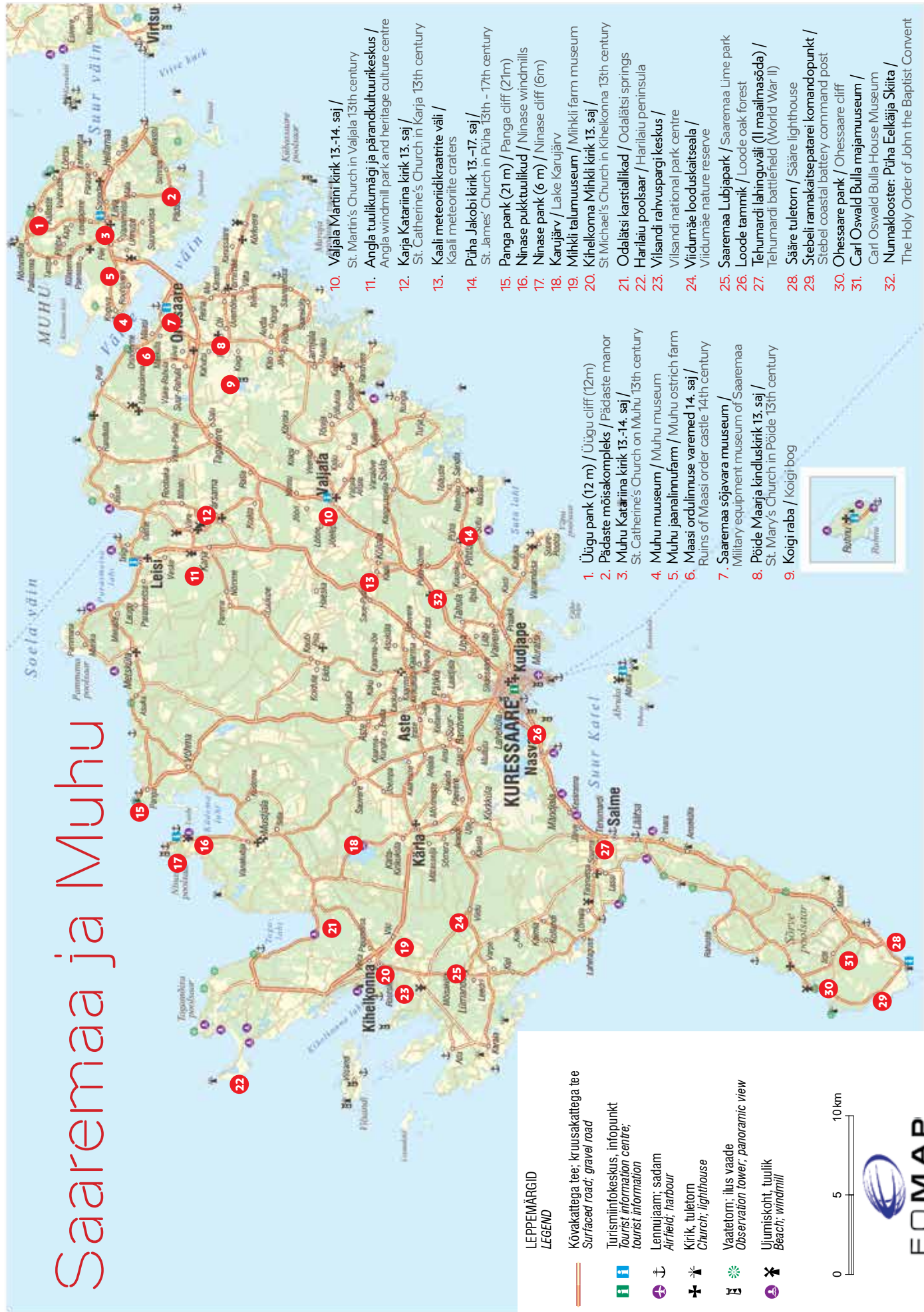
**LEPPEMÄRGID
LEGEND**

- Kõvakattega tee; kruusakattega tee
Surfaced road; gravel road
- Turismiinfokeskus, infopunkt
Tourist information centre; tourist information
- Lennujaam; sadam
Airfield; harbour
- Kirik, tuletorn
Church; lighthouse
- Vaatetorn; ilus vaade
Observation tower; panoramic view
- Ujumiskoht, tuulik
Beach; windmill

0 5 10km

EOMAP

Saaremaa ja Muhu



NATURA SIBERICA

Made from Saaremaa plants

Eurobio Lab is known for its natural, certified cosmetics brands: Natura Siberica, Organic Shop and Dr. Konopka's .

In 2014, Eurobio Lab founded a unique farm in Saaremaa for growing **ecologically pure herbs and berries** in order to make extracts for cosmetic products. Saaremaa is not located in nature's comfort zone. It is dominated by wild winds and the local plants have developed special protective properties for surviving under these harsh conditions. Destiny led us to the XVI century **Tõlluste Manor** in the parish of Püha in the South of Saaremaa. Tõlluste is the birth place of Suur Tõll (Giant Tõll), a mysterious hero of the island. **Eurobio Lab** took responsibility for this piece of history and renovated the manor house, today the HQ of our alternative farm.

Diana, manager of our farm, proudly introduces the untouched nature and life of Saaremaa to travelers: "Look, that is my flock of sheep over there. About a hundred heads altogether. Over there, on the right, are my horses..." Words like this make you realize what living in proper harmony with nature really means. On the farm, in the neighbouring woods and meadows, rosehip, fir, pine, fescue, thyme, hypericum, primrose, nettle, yarrow and Iceland moss grow on the natural landscapes.

Everything that the recipes need, is grown in the garden. The most precious are cornflower petals. Picking is labour-intensive but the factory is willing to pay the price for that. Make a mental note of that! Finally, all that natural treasure is dried by a special method and turned into an extract.

Extracts are sent in barrels to **Eurobio Lab's** factories in Tallinn where the popular cosmetic products are made from the local ingredients. The best thing is that after an educating tour of her "plant kingdom" Diana takes her guests to Sandla village shop, where next to loaves of bread and cartons of milk, there are the fresh products from **Natura Siberica, Organic Shop, Dr. Konopka** and other brands. The selection is no worse than in a fancy shop in Tallinn.



www.naturasiberica.ee



A silver Audi e-tron Sportback is parked on a paved area, plugged into a charging station mounted on a light-colored concrete wall. In the background, a modern building with large glass windows and a flat roof is visible. Several people are standing on a balcony or terrace of the building, looking out. The scene is set during the day with soft lighting.

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www.audi.ee

Average power consumption kWh / 100 km: 26.3-21.6 (WLTP);
23.9-20.6 (NEDC) Average CO₂ emissions in g / km: 0