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CULINARY CURiosities ON THE ISLANDS

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WHAT A STORY!
Welcome!

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

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 Mõnnuste 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 Bellinghausen, 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 man 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, stroll 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.

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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VISIT SAAREMAA

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Really really liked this restaurant! Fabulous pizzas, good for vegetarians as well. Lovely surroundings and great service. No wonder it's in the top 100 restaurants of Estonia!
- David S

Authentic Italian food, lovely atmosphere. You always find something new on a menu besides traditional Italian. Try the local craft beer!
- Georgi V

Lossi 11, Kuressaare www.castello.ee
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 Sõrve.

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 farm of Nõmme in the village of Iide in Sõrve. 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 Sõrve.

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 Frissell, 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 Mattisen, 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?

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 ő 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.}
Sea, Fire, Iron and Blood

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.

Militant Viking Era

In the annals of our millenium-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 captures 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 clothing 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.

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 once came to a halt, now becomes tangible and visible. Was it a looting raid by some young Viking King or Viking Prince of Mälaren that once came to a halt, now becomes tangible and visible. Are these stories about our heroic and dignified past. You just need to pick them up.

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, Dano-English and Norwegian sagas. Saaremaa, Eystyla 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.

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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.

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The Viking theme park offers fun activities for everyone. 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 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.

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.

SAAREMAA MUSEEUM

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:

1 Lossi/hoov, Kuressaare
Info: www.saaremaamuseum.ee
www.facebook.com/kuressaarecastle
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MIHKLI TALUMUSEUM (Vikki küla, Kihelkonna)

www.visitsaaremaa.ee 21
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 gulfner 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?

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 SAAREMAA SINCE 2013
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.
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.
JOHAN SPA – a gem in the centre of the old town

Johan strikes the eye with its special architectural and interior design, largely inspired by the landscapes of Saaremaa. Lots of natural interior features create a highly cozy 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’s great spa? The pools and saunas of the spa 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 Päiksel 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 Saaremaa from the outdoor Jacuzzi. What more could you ask for!

JAHRKÜNNIK – 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 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, Maedla 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 Saaremaa 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?

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 and success makes a perfect image of a spa! The spa and sauna centre practices 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 stylist 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.

RÜÜTLI & MERI – centres of water attractions and active recreation

Mieri and Rüütli are located on a beautiful seaside promenade, close to the marina and the Kuressaare Castle Park. A wide variety of services and peaceful atmosphere make them great holiday centres for families as well as for friends. Rüütli 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 12-metre long sliding pipe at Rüütli 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 suburbs 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!
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 (Near 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 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.

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

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

In Saaremaa Parish

**HOTEL SAAREMAA – cozy, 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.

On Muhu island

**PADASTE SPA – a wellbeing oasis in an ancient manor park**

Padaste SPA aspires to harmonize all six senses. The mission of the spa that is located in the breathtakingly beautiful manor park of Padaste, 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 Padaste spa and you first sense of peace. The relaxing procedures at Padaste are all based on the centuries-old local tradition of applying herbs. All herbs have been picked in the countryside of Muhu Island.

Padaste 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 Padaste 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 sunbed, 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 Padaste famous worldwide.

On Muuh island

Enjoy dreamlike moments in the middle of Muuh wildlife at

**PADASTE SPA – a wellbeing oasis in an ancient manor park**

The chef and his team from Padaste create incomparable flavours.

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

The sea that gets deep only slowly makes the sea perfect for the families with young children.
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 practicing 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 Koogi 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 Sõrve 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 last year’s Merspaevad. I think Merspaevad is definitely the magic 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 DJs 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.
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?

Today the main street of Kuressaare, Tallinn 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 (Lossi = 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 Wochener- 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 closely. 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 merrymaking 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 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 Resource. 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.

**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
Lööne Koda at the beginning of the 20th century

Under Campenhauen this house, the property of Lööne landlord Güldenstubbe, 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.

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.

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.

GOOD MOOD FOOD
Cosy courtyard summer cafe

b e s t  b r e a k f a s t s  –  d e l i c i o u s  l u n c h e s  –  h e a l t h y  c a k e s

GOOD MOOD FOOD
Cosy courtyard summer cafe

INTERESTING FACT
Kuressaare is the sunniest town in Estonia.

Kuressaare is the sunniest town in Estonia.
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 Kõhelkonna have won international recognition. Be adventurous and follow a maritime route to the neighbouring island Hiiumaa or to the vibrant small islands of Abruka, Vilsandi, Ruhnu.
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.

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 Southern 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 the same expedition, being most probably the first man in the history of mankind, solid land in the South Antarctic 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. (Bellinghausen’s travelogue was translated into English only in 1947).

The results of Bellinghausen’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 Bellinghausen’s expedition. Unfortunately, the circumstances were politically charged and the rest of the world did not take their arguments very seriously.

Bellinghausen 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 Bellinghausen 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 Bellinghausen, 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.

FACTS OF INTEREST

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

The ship was built in Holland in 1984 and it sailed on the Mediterranean 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 circumnavigated 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 Bellinghausen.

Follow Bellinghausen’s route on Facebook and Instagram, keyword ‘Antarktika200’. The expected arrival time of the expedition is January.
The Island of Abruka, Miracle behind the Sea

TEXT: KADI ALLER AKA ISLAND-CRAZY | PHOTOS: PRIT NOÖGEN, MEERA ROOSTALU

The 8.8 square kilometres make the Island of Abruka 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. Visiting small islands is a nice change, an excellent opportunity to break up the routine and look at your life from a new perspective.

A Crane Shaped Island

Disembarking at the Port of Abruka 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 Abruka 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.

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 northern tip. 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. Abruka 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 and Linnuranna (no visitors 15.04–31.07) and Linnuranna (no visitors 01.02–31.08) and Linnuranna (no visitors 01.02–31.08) and Linnuranna (no visitors 01.02–31.08).

The charmed and pampered Abruka will receive you 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 Abruka 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.

Charming Village Atmosphere

The charm and pain of Abruka 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, songbirds are the main attraction of Abruka.

IN TAKE THE TIME OUT CAFE

The cozy cafe at the Port of Abruka is called Vite Ang 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 served from local produce: fish is caught by the women who keep the cafe, meat and eggs come from the local farmers.

The inhabitants 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 Abruka 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 Agro, from the word abrikas meaning a shallow, wet spot on a meadow or a marsh ‘ or Low German ab roh() meaning away from reed or away from Roomassaare that used to be covered with reeds.

The engagement of an island as a result of the fall of a giant crane into the sea. The diamond-shaped Abruka 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.
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, virile creature was lovely and prone to mischief, like breaking wall 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 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 (ST)orm etc.

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

- Local fahery, local homemade Boatsman craftbeer. Officers gin, Mermaid elder, Viking Aas shot and authentic drinks 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 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 breathe in the salty air of the sea.

Sailing Ship Hoppet
A Pearl of Estonian Maritime History

VISIT SAAREMAA

46
Come to the island, make your way over the waves!

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.

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 Tehran. 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 birthplace 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 Kübas-saare, 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.
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, Abuka 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.

Maritime Sports Society members and the orchestra on the boats. In the background Lootoo 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. 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.

Koivastu – 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 350m 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.

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 Hall 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.

Kurella – 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 350m 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.

Kõtura – 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.

Roomassaare – 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 – 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 Aburak 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, Naava and Salme river ports, on the West coast at Lõmalu and Papiissaare harbours and don’t miss the northernmost port of Saaremaa at Stela 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 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 Saare light-house on the horizon warmed my heart...” said Meelis Saarlaid, captain of the Estonian expedition sailboat Admiral Bellingshausen, sharing his thoughts on seafarings, just before crossing the Atlantic on his way to Antarctica in October 2019. A seaman. An islander. |
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 truly found your safe haven after all this seafarings?"

Our big mission in life is to find the peace of mind. We should find hope that a peaceful little place will bring peace: you move to it at least a fraction before the final, eternal silence. It is pointless to make it a mission. Our 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?

"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 the childhood I was trying to build a salboat 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 more around the globe, I would have said, "You are crazy."

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.

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.

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.

What does the sea sound like, what is tone of the wild call like, that the sea(mad) men speak about? What may feel silver-white to me, can make another person falling asleep. And wondering what I am going to do when waking up?

Going to bed when I feel sleepy and waking up when I no longer feel sleepy. I like living in the middle of the silence and the sounds of everything – the sea, the sky, the stars. Suddenly everything makes sense.

The sea is probably not just an immeasurable water range but it helps to survive – "the plan seem to be there."

And when sailing toward home?

What makes your days as good as gold and as white as silver?

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What does a seaman think about on the sea?

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What or who is the sea god?

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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 Abruka 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 LAND

Photo: Valmar Voolaid
The nature of Saaremaa touches the soul

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.

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!

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.

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 must 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.

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.

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

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

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

All islanders are gatherers to some extent. Bathrooms 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 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.

**Let the party continue!**

The way events are organized on the life of Illuik 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 unspoilt nature as much as it does genuine emotion.

Kuressaare Maritime Festival (Mere-paevad) 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 (Tanaufestival) 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:**

Saaremaa has been a part of UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme since 1990.

**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 experience, 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 treasures 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, unbelievably 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.

**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.

**Green Saaremaa**

**Text: Narsa Kõivmaa**

**Photos: Margit Kõivma, Priit Suur, Jandi Sound, Indrek Kasevalu**

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.

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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.

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.

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.

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

Best-known sites of power on the islands:
- Toomalõuka Village Sliding Stone
- Kangema Spring
- Kalsi Pühajõgi (Sacred River)
- Puhetu Spring
- Täri Lime Tree at Liiküla
- Liivi Village Sacred Grove
- Võska Silmaduvoor (Eye Spring)
- Panga Cliff
- Rämmi Oak Tree
- Samula Sacred Grove
- Kärla Pühajõgi
- Õdra Sacred Grove

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

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 Rännimõõt oak at Rannaküla and the Tari lime tree at Liiküla are the two ancient sacred trees in Saaremaa which have really appealed to me. Rännimõõt is just by Orissaare-Leisi road, towering above it, telling us the numerous ghost stories that are associated with it. The 400-year-old Tari 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.

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Springs
Several sacred, healing springs flow across Saaremaa – Odalätsi, Pühatu, and Aniste 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.

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 Silmaallikas. Upon arriving at Üügu Cliff, take a walk on the picturesque trail through the mysterious Kitsekambri (Goat Chamber) and Sokutau (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.

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, woolly yarn or silver coins as tokens of gratitude or an oath.

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 15 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.

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

This cozy 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, some come with a hot tub in the room centre. Heated massages are performed by Thai masseuses.

Enjoy a plentiful breakfast in the dining hall or on the sunny terrace near your Indie-cater 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 hall is made for celebrating birthdays, weddings and other events.

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

See you in Saaremaa!
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.

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 long – 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.

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.

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

Paradise for Bird Lovers

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

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.
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!

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 rare 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.

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

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 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.

5. The whole South coast from Tuhumardi to the Tip of Stöve Cape
   Saaremaa probably has the most interesting bird kingdom of Estonia, including bird-friendly beaches, especially at the Tip of Stöve Cape and in Rahusta Nature Reserve. The Peninsula of Stöve has the most favourable location from the point of view of the autumn migration.
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.
John Mathieson and Maria Tamander enjoying their autumn break in their (country) home.

An igloo sauna on the beach.

John Mathieson
and Maria Tamander
enjoying their
(n country) home.

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 and Maria have settled in this house. The landlady 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.

"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 farm was not easy 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 beachscape with stone fences and groves, a pretty yard with newly-erected buildings, even the stone fences were knocked over or used for building the walls of the seaside bunkers."

"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.

"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.

"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.

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Persistence Leads to Purpose

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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," says 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.

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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 Mihkli Farm Museum. In Muhu make sure you visit the village of Sõrve with its long stone fences, the Cliff of Üügu and Muhu St. Catherine’s Church with its pagan tombstones. Seek adventure and explore!
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 specialities that keep calling me back to this 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 Kesslaid 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 Viilandi. 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.

Andrusburg 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.

Arendur’s farm in Muklava is the birthplace of my mother-in-law. There I learnt to enjoy potatoes with a thick sauce, as well as the beer soup, which is a desert by the way. I never really fell at home at Andrus, 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 Andrus 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 Varelaid. 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. Interestingly, 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...
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.

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

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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.

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.

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 Communions are 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.

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< 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.

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

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 prayer 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 cozy. 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.
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. 

**Kuressaare Episcopal Castle**

*Centuries Old Crown Jewel of the Island*

1381

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 capitol 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**

*All Year Round Cradle of Culture*

Tallinna 8, Kuressaare

Kuressaare Cultural Centre is a regular stop on concert tours of popular musicians and more recently, 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.

**Kuressaare Theatre**

*An Outstanding Landmark on the North Coast*

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.

**Triigi Philharmonic**

*An Outstanding Landmark on the North Coast*

Saaremaa, Triigi

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 summer 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.

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**INTERESTING FACT**

Ruhnu wooden church is the oldest recorded wooden building of Estonia, its construction began on 22 November 1645.

**INTERESTING FACT**

Saare KEK is an own growing creative campus

**INTERESTING FACT**

Kuressaare Episcopal Castle (completed in 1497) is the best preserved castle-fortress in the Baltics

**INTERESTING FACT**

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

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**THE BEST PLACES to Enjoy Culture in the Islands**

Text: Hannia Maar Villsaar

Photos: Pille Li Laets, Lies Eerp, Raul Olo, Mari-Liis Nellis, Kristina Vagi

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**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 Ilul and the maritime festival is held on Raalivi Cape, the night-time song festival takes over Kaarma fortress. Jaari 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.

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**INTERESTING FACT**

Estonia’s oldest wooden church is Ruhnu, its construction began in 1227.
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 into 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.

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
Raekivi 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.
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.

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 Joempresa.

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.

The Resort Chair of Saaremaa

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?
10 culinary questions

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 islands’ silverware. The seafood caught by our own hands is an inseparable part of our diet and we cook it in many ways. For that reason the islanders’ eaves are shiny - from the glow of fish scales 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 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.

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.

Why 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!

What are 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.

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Do islanders really put their Christmas tree into a bottle?

It’s weird but very true – last year a local business Lähhentägge 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 Lähhentägge 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 homemade 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!

Why 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: MARIT KÕRIVITS, PRIVATE COLLECTION, PIREU 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!’

Inviting Beaches
About ten kilometers from Kuressaare is Maandanpalli with its wonderful wildlife and its incredible, long coastline which will leave no one cold. Equally magic and awe-inspiring is Störe Peninsula. In Störe you can’t help thinking of those nearly 3000 people who were forced to leave during World War 2. Before the war Störe had been one of the most densely populated areas of Estonia. We have our own beach in Störe. 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 Tuhtara 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.

Kuressaare is so cool that we would honestly like to live there. Flying daily to work in Tallinn moves everyday life miles away from you. Hereby I would like to say, as a bystander, that there is nowhere more than a few hundred meters away from you.

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.

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, Lammanda süügimaja, Säine Paargu Fish Restaurant at the Tip of Störe Cape, Tihametsa smoked fish farm in Naissa 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 Ulme bar together with the children. Ulme bar is probably one of the best party-vacances in the whole northern hemisphere.

Visiting Saaremaa definitely beat the capital. Pure drinking water and peaceful environment would clearly be too expensive but the clean air, like to live there. Flying daily to work in Tallinn is so cool that we would honestly like to live there. Flying daily to work in Tallinn moves everyday life miles away from you.

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

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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 (ratasüll) 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.

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 Anna küla, 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.
**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 was 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 Kärka 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 Sõrve 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? 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 Mõhki and Kolga-Jaani, but the island women’s winter headgear was hellishly fanciful. Such winter hats were called zankull and mostly constituted two thick black horns, a furry lambkin edge and a woolen 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 tops of horns would be turned inward. A comment about Mustjala hat says that there ‘the tops of horns were so tightly together that they pick you 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 woolen fabric, blue when in mourning. The code of the lack of red and plenty of blue demonstrating spiritual loss, is predominant in all attires 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?
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

“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.

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 Tiland. 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 the game captivates tens of millions of people, how golf has been played throughout 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.

INTERESTING FACT

Kuressaare is one of the eight European cities of sport for 2020.
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 the 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 complicated the practising circumstances, the better it will be for your progress in the end!

Golf is deceptively easy and endlessly complex...

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 #Houtool 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.”

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!

Green – most closely mowed areas of grass on the course with holes in accordance with the player’s 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.

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). Par also calculates 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.

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 player’s 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.

For rent

Roomassaare Marina, just 4km from the city centre of Kuressaare

Great flavours from local ingredients, a unique sea view and unforgettable sunsets

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The call of the island roads

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 Economic Forum’s roads quality ranking Estonian 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 the road to Ölandsry (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!

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 eagles 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, a few suggestions.

Or alternatively, continue on the main road (10) around 5.5 km, exiting then towards Hiiumaa (road 153). After passing through the village, turn right (road 162) 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 Mõulpala (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!

Freedom, the essence of any road trip!

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.

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.

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

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

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.
TOP 10 SPORTS IN SAAREMAA

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

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

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 – Angerjutusti / Eat Tournament and Kuressaare Cup www.kuressaaretennis.ee

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

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

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/morrekisted-te-guvused-saaremaal

8. Summer & Winter Swimming
Saaremaa’s mild maritime climate makes it possible to swim from Kuressaare old town and they also play on their native island. Beach swimming is popular on Kuressaare beach in summer but also a great venue for various competitions. In the annual Vake 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 motorcycling 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.enduro.org

10. Mölky European Indoor Championship
Do you know what kind of game is mölky? You don’t? Find out in Saaremaa on 14th-15th March at the Mölky 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/

Saaremaa Rally

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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!

Pro tip for cyclists
When Tanel Kanger – 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 France 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 Kanger 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.kanger!
HOW TO GET TO SAAREMAA

SAARE COUNTY

- Number of Population: ca 33,000
- Area: 2,922 km²
- Population Density: 11.5 citizens 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 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 minutes 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 YACHT

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

FROM SAAREMAA TO HIIUMAA

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 minutes.

Buy ferry tickets here: www.veeteed.com

FROM SAAREMAA TO SMALLER ISLANDS

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

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

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

BY CAR & BY FERRY FROM SWEDEN TO SAAREMAA

From Stockholm to Saaremaa you can cross the sea by ferry from Narwik to the Port of Virtsu. The journey from Stockholm to Virtsu takes about 45 hours. You can also drive to the island of Hiiusmaa by car on a special ice road in winter.

Saaremaa-Opera Festival

July 21st – 26th 2020

More information: saaremaaopera.com

Tickets: piletimailm.com

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

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

21.07 | 20.00 Giacchino Rossini „LA DONNA DEL LAGO“
22.07 | 20.00 Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart „THE MAGIC FLUTE“
23.07 | 20.00 Giacomo Puccini „MADAMA BUTTERFLY“
24.07 | 23.00 Opera Royal
25.07 | 20.00 Opera Gala
26.07 | 20.00 Opera Royal

24.07 | 20.00 Giancarlo Pizziolo „LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR“
25.07 | 23.00 Midnight puppetry opera „STOV/DUST“

Sew Punk Fury Wit (Denmark)

26.07 | 14.00 JUNIOR GALA
Family musical “JUKU”
Author Ramu Kangre, Librett by Leisi Tungal

More information: saaremaaopera.com
Tickets: piletimailm.com
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!

**MARCH**
- NOM festival
  - Dates: 05-08.03 nomfestival.ee
- Bubbles Wine Festival
  - Dates: 07.03 nomfestival.ee/mullifestival-2020

**APRIL**
- St. George’s Night’s Signal Lights
  - Date: 22.04
- Vintage and Retro-Culture Day
  - Date: 02.05 vintageattallinn.ee
- Kuressaare City Race
  - Date: 03.05
- Gardening and Flower Festival
  - Dates: 22-23.05 saartruu.ee

**MAY**
- Kuressaare City Birthday Party
  - Date: 08.05
- Night at the Museum
  - Date: 02.05 museumbii.ee
- Garage Sale in Kuressaare
  - Date: 31.05

**JUNE**
- Folk Dancing in the centre of Kuressaare on Thursdays in summer

**JULY**
- 52th Saare County Song Festival
  - Dates: “Teel”/“On the Road” 06.06
- Midsummer Night Bonfires all over Saaremaa 20-24.06

**SEPTEMBER**
- Saarema Food Festival
  - Dates: 03-15.09 saaremaatoidufestival.ee
- Kuressaare Street Picnic
  - Date: 05.09
  - Website: visitsaaremaa.ee/tanavapiknik

**OCTOBER**
- Saaremaa Rally
  - Dates: 16-18.10 saaremaarally.ee
- Saaremaa Three-Day Race
  - Dates: 16-18.10 saaremaajooks.ee

**NOVEMBER**
- Kuressaare Cultural Centre 10th Day of Photographs
  - Date: 10.11
- Animafestival
  - Dates: 23-24.11

**DECEMBER**
- Christmas Markets & Concerts
  - Website: syndmused.saaremaavald.ee/et

**DECEMBER**

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

**INTERESTING FACT**
- Night of Ancient Lights on Beaches and Harbours of Saaremaa
  - Date: 29.08
  - Website: muinastuled.ee
Welcome to Muhu Ostrichfarm!

- Lots of exotic animals and birds
- A fun place for a whole family
- 20 years of experience

15. MAY - 15. SEPTEMBER
closed on SATURDAYS
10.00-18.00

OHESSAARE WINDMILL & SUMMER CAFÉ
An idyllic seaside summer cafe surrounded by juniper trees

- alternative accommodation in a traditional windmill
- an exhibition and sale of pottery

Oheessaare village, Sõrve peninsula, Saaremaa
Muhujaanalind Muhu 94728 Muhu, Saaremaa
www.saaremaatuulik.ee    I    ohessaare.tuulik
Mall Kivimaa      50 97 311  I        ohessaare@gmail.com  I
Ohessaare küla, Sõrve poolsaar, Saaremaa

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

Vanatoa
TALHOTELL | FARMHOTEL
IDYLLIC FARMHOTEL ON MUHU ISLAND
IN THE PICTURESQUE VILLAGE OF KOGUVA

- Accommodation up to 70 people
- Modern idyllic hotel rooms
- Accommodation in a private farmhouse
- Parties, events, seminars, meetings
- Wide selection of food
- Various saunas & terrapans
- Massages & body treatments
- A lot of opportunities for outdoor activities
- Seas, beach and beautiful sunsets

Oheessaare village, Sõrve peninsula, Saaremaa
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Welcome to

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Ohessaare küla, Sõrve poolsaar, Saaremaa
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 Pühalepa in the South of Saaremaa. Tõlluste is the birth place of Suur Tõll (Great 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, iris, 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.

Eurobio Lab took responsibility for this piece of history and renovated the manor house, today the HQ of our alternative farm.
Charging has never been easier. The first fully electric SUV Audi e-tron Sportback

Audi offers the a powerful, intelligent and comprehensive home charging concept for e-tron. In addition, it is now possible to join one of the largest public charging networks in Europe - Audi e-tron Charging service:

- standardized price packages
- cross-border single contract travel
- over 129,000 charging points across Europe
- Audi connect and myAudi system integration. Read more at www.audi.ee