



Credit: Visit Finland

# THE 'WHY' BEHIND FINNISH HAPPINESS

Hosted Autumn Tour in Finland  
September 1-14, 2023



**fine by nature**

IMMERSIVE TRAVEL EXPERIENCES

# Slow Travel Experience

## 14 days/13 nights

fine by nature offers un-hurried, low-impact experiences combined with connection to people who live in the communities you visit. We have based our operation on the concept of 'slow movement'. We believe in travelling more slowly and seeing what's around you; immersing yourself in the local landscape, the history, the culture, the food and the people. With us your journey becomes a moment to relax, rather than it being a stressful interlude between tourist attractions.

Come with us and find out why Finns are the happiest people in the world! Finland has been named the World's happiest country for the fifth year in a row, in an annual UN-sponsored index, The World Happiness Report. The report, now in its 10th year, is based on people's own assessment of their happiness, as well as economic and social data. It assigns a happiness score on a scale of zero to ten. As well as a personal sense of wellbeing, based on Gallup polls in each country, the happiness score takes account of GDP, social support, personal freedom and levels of corruption.

Finland with its vast forests and lakes is also known for its well-functioning public services, social support, ever present saunas, widespread trust in authority and low levels of crime and inequality - and these are the things that make Finns happy. The whole 'happiness thing' has been a bit perplexing for Finns, though, as we would describe ourselves as quiet and prone to melancholy, and admittedly eye public displays of joyfulness with suspicion. But this report does not measure the width of your smile but instead records how secure and content you feel in your life.

Join us on this unique tour designed and escorted by the owner of fine by nature, by Leila Myllymäki-Hay. Leila has intimate knowledge of Finland, her second home country, and her love for the destination shines through in every detail of this tour full of exclusive experiences.

During September the foliage and ground covers are starting to change into colourful displays. It is also harvest season which means we will be spoilt with an abundance of fresh produce like berries, mushrooms & vegetables. And if we are lucky, we might also get a glimpse of the Northern Lights on our travels.

This beautifully executed tour provides you with a true sense of place and access to unique experiences, genuine authenticity and local immersion. This is a small group tour designed for only 11 guests so if the itinerary appeals to you, do send us your expression of interest form soonest possible to secure your spot!



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Credit: Visit Finland/Mikko Huotari

## Our Tour Itinerary

Friday  
September 1, 2023

### Welcome to Finland

Tonight we gather for a welcome drink & dinner at Restaurant Nolla. Nolla offers creative dishes guided by the best local and organic seasonal ingredients. Nolla is Finnish for 'zero' and the idea of Nolla was born out of a desire to serve great food without compromising sustainability.

Saturday  
September 2, 2023

### Explore Helsinki

After breakfast we meet our local guide for a walking tour around the City Center. We learn about the eclectic mixture of architectural styles that have influenced the creation of this liveable city. We pay visit to Oodi Library that has become a second living room for the locals. Rest of the day free to explore the many interesting sights in Helsinki.

Sunday  
September 3, 2023

### Artisan Crafts & Creations

This morning we head out to the countryside and visit the Fiskars Artisan Village. We have a guided tour with visits to artisans' studios with some free time for you to explore and shop. We enjoy a delicious lunch at a restaurant housed in an old copper smithy that captures the spirit of the Fiskars Village - contemporary style and design against a historical backdrop.

Monday  
September 4, 2023

After lunch we pay a visit to the former knife factory that now houses Fiskars Brewery, Noita Winery and Ägräs Distillery. After a short tour we enjoy a guided tasting experience. Return to Helsinki in late afternoon. Rest of the day free.

## Urban Living

After breakfast we visit a private home to find out how everyday Finns live. After the home visit we walk to a near-by allotment garden to experience a green oasis amongst the apartment buildings. We continue our tour to Kalasatama district to learn about the Smart City -program. City of Helsinki has transformed one of its previous industrial districts, Kalasatama, into a smart city with sustainable urban infrastructure and services. After visiting Kalasatama we continue to another residential district, Arabianranta, filled with history, modern-day amenities, design, industry, science and art - all in sweet harmony with nature and outdoor activities. After lunch at a local cafe we visit Iittala & Arabia Design Centre to learn about the history of Finnish ceramic art and glass design. After the visit we hop on a tram and travel back to our hotel. Tonight we enjoy dinner at our hotel restaurant specialising in foods from Lapland made with the purest ingredients such as game, reindeer, mushrooms, lichen and birch leaves.

Tuesday  
September 5, 2023

## Journey to Lakeland

After breakfast transfer to Helsinki Railway Station for a 2.5-hour journey to the Finnish Lakeland district. Finland has about 188,000 lakes and you will be enjoying a few days by the largest of them all, Lake Saimaa. Upon arrival in Mikkeli we travel to Kenkävero, an old vicarage surrounded by beautiful gardens. We learn about the history of this unique place followed by lunch at the restaurant. You have time to visit a local artisan's studio/shop and Kenkävero's own store filled with local delicacies and design items before we continue our tour.



Fiskars Artisan Village

Credit: Visit Finland/Julia Kivela



Credit: Visit Finland/Elina Sirparanta

Our local guide takes us on a short guided walking tour in Mikkeli. During the Winter War and Continuation War in the 1940s Mikkeli was Field Marshal Mannerheim's centre of operations, and consequently some of the finest military museums in Finland are located here. We will have guided visits to the Headquarters Museum and the Muisti Center of War & Peace. We then continue by bus to Sahanlahti Resort for dinner. Sahanlahti is famous for its cuisine and is one of the 'Saimaa Gastronomy' destinations for authentic local food.

After dinner a short drive to Puumala and across with a car ferry to Island of Niinisaari. We will spend the next three nights here in cosy private lakeside cottages complete with your own sauna & row boat.

Wednesday  
September 6, 2023

## Wild Foods & Slow Boating

Enjoy breakfast at leisure in your cottage by the lake. After breakfast we head out to our Wild Food Experience. Our hosts, Asta & Ilkka, welcome us and transport us by an old fishing boat to their island location. Upon arrival we enjoy a short walk around the island and forage for some berries and mushrooms along the way. You can watch Ilkka prepare a delicious 4-course-lunch on the fire using best seasonal ingredients from the surrounding nature. Asta & Ilkka grow most of the ingredients themselves, pick mushrooms and berries in the forests; the fish is caught nearby and the rest of the ingredients come from local producers. After lunch a boat ride back to the mainland and bus transfer back to your cottage in late afternoon.



Credit: Jonne Vaahtera



Credit: Jonne Vaahtera



Credit: Asta Aalto

Thursday  
September 7, 2023

The rest of the day is for relaxing. Take your row boat out, cast a line or go for a walk around the island. You can also hire a bicycle should you want to explore further. Afterwards heat the sauna (with some assistance from locals) and have a refreshing swim in the clean waters of Lake Saimaa. Ingredients for dinner will be delivered to your cottage so you can grill some sausages and enjoy fresh salads - just like the Finns do at their summer houses. Savour the tranquility. We think you will be sleeping soundly tonight.

## Pie Making & Local Delicacies

Wake up with the birds and enjoy your breakfast admiring the serene lake views. After breakfast we head to the main house where our hostess Paula will guide us through the art of baking Karelian Pies, a traditional delicacy made with her old family recipe. We enjoy lunch including your labour of love (self made Karelian pies) after the workshop.

Afternoon free for exploring the island, bicycle rides, fishing or just relaxing in your cottage. Time to heat that sauna again!

In the evening we enjoy dinner prepared by our hostess in the main restaurant. Restaurant Niinipuu is located in an old stone barn and is known for its delicious food prepared with local seasonal ingredients. Enjoy your last night in the lakeside cottage.

Friday  
September 8, 2023

## Forests, Wildlife & History

Early morning departure for a full day of exploration! Our tour takes us first to one of the most scenic regions of Finland.

Punkaharju esker ridge has attracted visitors for over two hundred years due to the natural beauty of its landscape. It is one of Finland's national landscapes and the beautiful lake views seen between its majestic pines are still the biggest attraction of the area.



Credit: Paula Okkola

Our first visit is to Finnish Forest Museum Lusto. The Lusto building is a representative of Finnish 20th century modern architecture. The original Lusto building is, as its Finnish name implies, round like a tree's annual growth ring. Lusto's exhibitions and collections provide an interesting insight into the significance of forests in the life of Finns. The relationship between man and the forest in Finland is unique – the forest lives in us. After a guided visit at the museum we head out to explore the esker ridge area with our guide. We learn about the cultural and natural history of the area while admiring the stunningly beautiful views over lakes Puruvesi and Pihlajavesi.

Our tour continues to Savonlinna where we enjoy lunch. Mr Juha 'Norppa' Taskinen will join us for lunch and share his passion (and a presentation) for the endangered Saimaa Ringed Seal which only lives in Lake Saimaa in Finland. With only about 420–430 individuals now in the wild, the Saimaa Ringed Seal is one of the most endangered seals in the world. Juha first spotted a Saimaa Ringed Seal in 1979 when it was thought to be extinct. This was the beginning of his lifelong work to save the species. His work and documentation of the seals' life have made him the ultimate Saimaa Ringed Seal expert in the World.

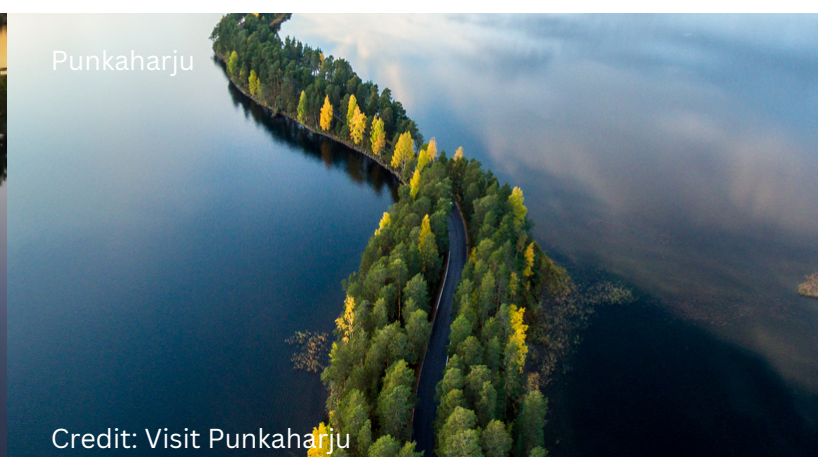
After lunch we continue by foot to Olavinlinna Castle, a 15th-century three-tower castle and the origin of a thousand stories and the site of numerous battles.

We continue our tour to Joensuu and check-in at a cosy boutique hotel, our home for the next three nights. Joensuu is located in the North Karelia province, a unique melting point of eastern and western cultures and religions. The originality and distinctiveness of Karelian culture can be seen here in everyday life. Dinner tonight will be enjoyed at Restaurant Kielo. Chefs in Kielo Restaurant cherish traditional Karelian cooking methods bringing them into the modern life. They use the best local seasonal ingredients and believe that by favouring traditions and local food they can offer their guests the best possible culinary experience.



Olavinlinna Castle

Credit: Museovirasto



Punkaharju

Credit: Visit Punkaharju

Saturday  
September 9, 2023

## Handicrafts & Traditions

Today we enjoy a guided walking tour around Joensuu followed by a visit to the local museum of cultural history. Karelians are known for their beautiful handicrafts and after a guided museum tour we will try our hands on weaving a traditional ribbon. We end our tour at Taitokortteli, a cultural centre for craft enthusiasts. This is your free time to visit their beautiful shop filled with local crafts and enjoy lunch at the cafe on the premises.

In late afternoon our driver takes us to the art residence of Sari Kaasinen, founder of the internationally renowned Finnish folk ensemble, "Värttinä". During our visit our hostess Sari tells us about Finnish and Karelian folk music and teaches us the basics of playing the five-string kantele. A kantele or kannel is a traditional Finnish and Karelian plucked string instrument (chordophone) that belongs to the south east Baltic box zither family. After our lesson we enjoy dinner with Sari and then head back to our hotel.

Sunday  
September 10, 2023

## Finnish Soul Landscape

After breakfast we travel to Koli National Park where we have a guided walk. The view over Lake Pielinen from the top of Ukko-Koli hill in the national park is Finland's most loved national landscape, and has inspired many Finnish artists. The era of national romanticism particularly highlighted the importance of this landscape. Painters such as Akseli Gallen-Kallela and Eero Järnefelt traveled, with great effort, throughout the country and brought these landscapes into the national consciousness. Finnish writers like Runeberg and Topelius enthused about the beauty of the region in their works. After our walk we enjoy lunch with beautiful views over Lake Pielinen. We return to our hotel in the afternoon. Hotel sauna is reserved for us so how about a relaxing sauna before heading out for dinner in town (free time).



Credit: Kielo Restaurant



Monday  
September 11, 2023

## Monks & Mindfulness

Our tour continues today to Kuopio. On the way we make a stop in Heinävesi and visit Valamo Monastery and its Orthodox Brotherhood. The monastery was established in its present location in 1940 however the tradition of the Valamo monastery dates back to 1717. The monastery is a haven not only for wildlife including moose, but also for visitors seeking solitude. We have a guided tour and hear about the history of the monastery and the present day followed by buffet lunch at Restaurant Trapesa on site. After lunch we can (respectfully) observe an Orthodox church service prior to having a tour of the winery where we get acquainted with wine making and taste the monastery's own products in a cozy wine-tasting room. We have a short walk around the cemetery and finish our monastery experience with an afternoon tea. Our journey then continues to Kuopio where we check-in at our hotel in late afternoon. Rest of the day free.

Tuesday  
September 12, 2023

## Local Characters & Culinary Delights

Kuopio, the capital of Northern Savo province is surrounded almost everywhere by Lake Kallavesi combining urban living with beautiful nature. Kuopio was named The Capital of European Gastronomy in 2020-21 so be assured the food here will also be amazing. Our local guide will pick us up from our hotel and take us to the heart of the City, the Market Square. This time of the year the market stalls are brimming with seasonal produce: berries, mushrooms and vegetables. We drop in at the Market Hall before continuing our walk to the Korttelimuseo which consists of a block of eleven old wooden houses. The oldest buildings on the block are from the late 1700s and the youngest from the late 1800s. Their interiors represent living conditions and living styles of different families from the 1800s to the 1930s.



Valamo Monastery

Credit: Visit Finland



Credit: Visit Finland

Wednesday  
September 13, 2023

At the museum there is also a room dedicated to the renowned local author Minna Canth who was also a social activist. She was a formidable figure and an eloquent advocate for women's rights. After her husband's death, Minna became a businesswoman, taking over a draper's shop in Kuopio. This allowed her the financial independence to provide for her family while also participating in the literary and social-activism scenes; her home became a place where intellectuals and artists gathered. Her legacy continues; Minna Canth Day is celebrated annually in Finland on her birthday, March 19.

After the museum visit we continue by bus to Saana for lunch with magnificent views of Lake Kallavesi. We then continue by foot to one of the oldest family businesses in Finland, alcohol and liqueur factory Lignell & Piispanen. On this distillery tour, you'll hear how liqueur and other drinks are made, and learn about the history of Kuopio's oldest commercial house. The tour is followed by a guided tasting where you'll hear about the history and character of the drinks in more detail. Return to hotel by bus.

Tonight's dinner will be enjoyed high up in the sky (over 200m above the Lake Kallavesi), at the Puijo Tower Restaurant, a rotating restaurant with scenic lake views. It takes about 30 minutes to rotate 360 degrees so you are sure to get a good view from all sides.

## Farewell with Cooking School

Free day to explore Kuopio. Visit interesting museums and galleries, shop for gifts or hire a bike or take a boat cruise.

In late afternoon our driver takes us to a local manor house for our Farewell Dinner with a twist. On this 'local food and drink culture' cooking school, everyone can prepare something on the given menu. You will learn how to make drinks from the high-quality products of the Lignell & Piispanen distillery and winery (that we tasted the day before) and get a glimpse of the secrets of the manor's kitchen. The group will be divided in two, one making aperitifs for the group under guidance, the other preparing the entrees. The main course is prepared by the manor's chefs. Afterwards one of the groups will take part in preparing the dessert, while the others make drinks to go with it. After dinner transfer back to our hotel.

Thursday  
September 14, 2023

## Good Bye, Lakeland!

Our time together on this tour has come to an end. After breakfast a short walk to Kuopio Railway Station for your train ride back to Helsinki. Alternatively if you want to continue our Finland exploration, you can join us on our 'Arctic Slow Life Tour' that takes you further North.



**Join us & find your piece of happiness!**

**Bookings & Enquiries**

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Credit: Visit Finland/Vastavalo/Leena Partanen