

# HAAPSALU LÄÄNEMAA

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**HAAPSALU**  
A.D.1279

Läänemaa – your safe haven

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## A WALK IN HAAPSALU

The Episcopal castle (19), which is one of the best-preserved castles in Estonia, is a good place to start a walking tour in Haapsalu. Since the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century up to the year 1559 it served as the centre of the Diocese of West Estonia and the islands. The castle yard is surrounded by an 803-metre wall. The oldest parts of the castle, the Small Castle and the Cathedral with its excellent acoustics, date back to 1270s. A figure of a lady appears in the window of the baptistery at the full moon in August. According to the legend the White Lady in the wall is a girl who had violated the rules of the abbey. From the Watch Tower of the castle one can enjoy the best view to the town and its surroundings. The castle offers a lot of entertainment, from the museum, the open-air cinema and the café to various concerts and performances.

The square in front of the castle was once a market place. Here start all the oldest streets of Haapsalu. On the Square stands the former Town Hall (17), built in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, where at the present the Läänemaa Museum is located. Just behind the museum there stands the town church - St. John's Church (16). It was rebuilt from an old warehouse in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and it differs from the others because of its north-south position. A five-metre stone altar (1630) and a wooden pulpit (1707) are worth everybody's attention. The floor in front of the altar is covered with memorial slabs.

The walking tour continues along Linda Street. On the corner of Linda and Rüütli Streets there stands a house where according to a legend the Russian Czar Peter the Great had stopped in 1715 and which still, along the other legends connected with the Emperor, live in the memory of the citizens of Haapsalu.

A small yellow house near Peter's House is a childhood home of Ilon Wikland. Ilon Wikland has become

famous for the illustrations of Astrid Lindgren's more than 30 books. The artist spent her summers with her grandparents in Haapsalu until she fled to Sweden in 1944, being only 14 years old. Next to Ilon Wikland's childhood home there stands the church of Mary Magdalene (13), at the opening of which tsar Aleksander I was present.

Turning towards the sea we reach to Big Promenade, which until the WW II was the centre of summer life of Haapsalu. Promenade, which starts from the once most important beach - African Beach, was founded in the sea in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A memorial to the Estonian first professional composer Rudolf Tobias (12) (1873-1918), and a sundial (11), both created by our own sculptor Roman Haavamägi, stand on Promenade. In 1898, Kuursaal (10) and open-air band stand were completed on the Promenade. Today, Kuursaal is a summer restaurant that beside delicious cuisine offers a lot of entertainment to all its visitors. Not far from the Kuursaal stand a statue of the founder of the first spa in Haapsalu, Carl Abraham Hunnius (9) (1797-1851). Being a local county doctor, he was the first to notice that local people treated themselves with the sea mud to ease the health problems. He started a research and in 1825 he initiated the building of the first spa in Haapsalu.

Big Promenade flows into Chocolate Promenade that ends at the Bench of Peter Tchaikovsky (6). The location of the bench had been the composer's favourite place to admire the sunset in 1867 when he spent his summer in Haapsalu.

The memorial bench is near the Haapsalu Rehabilitation Centre (8). Across the street stands one of the three spas in Haapsalu - the recreation centre Laine (7). In front of it, on the shore of Väike Viik, stands a sculpture "A Stick Breaker" created by Juhan Raudsepp, symbolizing a healed man. Going along Sadama Street we pass the former spa building and arrive at the Museum of Coastal Swedes (2). Before the WW II

Haapsalu was the capital of Estonian Swedes.

When we come back to Väike Viik, we can continue our tour along the sea shore walkway. On the opposite side of the bay we notice the memorial dedicated to composer Cyrillus Kreek (4) (1889-1963) in front of his home which has been turned into his home museum. We pass Bernhard Laipmann's memorial. He was a speaker representing peasants in arguments with landlords in 1905 and earned capital punishment for that. From Väike Viik the tour takes us to Ehte Street and goes on along Wiedemann Street.

The street got its name after linguist Ferdinand Johann Wiedemann (1805-1887) who used to live there. In the same street, in the yard of Children's Library, is located a playground called Ilon's Garden, named after Ilon Wikland. On the wall of the building we can read the name of Aleksandr Gortchakov, the Russian Foreign Minister and State Secretary (born in 1798). It is thought to be his birthplace. We pass the building of Wiedemann High School (21) which has given education since the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century. The oldest part of the school building dates back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century and newest part was built in 1928. A few years ago the school got the extension, the most modern sports hall in Haapsalu.

At the end of the street the eye catches the sea again and the walk continues along Õhtu Kallas. On the embankment there is a monument and the park dedicated to the local poet Ernst Enno (35). From here we can see one of the pearls of Haapsalu - the Railway Station (42). The station was completed in 1907 and was built specially for the Emperor's family. The Railway Station is one of the most beautiful ones in Estonia and its covered platform was the longest (216 metres) in North Europe at the time of its completion. At present it locates the Estonian Railway Museum. From here you can turn back to Jaama Street and the town centre or walk to the forest and beach of Paralepa (32). Here you can't miss the newest spa Fra Mare (33).

## DEAR VISITOR,

Welcome to Läänemaa and Haapsalu, to the most romantic seaside area with its virgin nature, where the old legends and rich historical heritage meet the present.

Haapsalu is full of surprises. It might receive you as a cosy resort town, attract you into the castle park, surrounded by the Middle Age walls, take you for a walk along the footsteps of Russian tsar Peter I, show you the culture sights connected with Estonian Swedes or take you back to your childhood, into the world of Astrid Lindgren's stories. Ilon Wikland, the artist and the illustrator of most of Astrid Lindgren's books, has painted her childhood in Haapsalu into Lindgren's books. You can see the drawings of picturesque wooden buildings, the castle wall and the railway station which are the exact replicas of the real ones. Ronja, the Robber's Daughter, fought her fights in the same castle which you can see while visiting the castle park. You can visit Ilon's

Wonderland, the branch of Läänemaa Museum which was opened in 2006 to introduce you the works of Ilon Wikland. You can luxuriate in the last century peer society resort town; enjoy world standard classical music in the biggest one-nave church in the Nordic countries or experience special atmosphere of concerts and performances inside the walls of the old powerful castle. Young people appreciate the fact that Haapsalu is one of the sunniest places with the warmest sea water in Estonia. It looks as if passionately glowing hearts warm it up.

It is easy to fall in love with Haapsalu. The quiet winding streets which end up at the sea, the old town with its wooden houses, adorned with wooden lace, the mysterious White Lady on the chapel window in moonlit August nights keep the visitors spellbound. Writers, artists, composers and musicians from Estonia as well as from different parts of the world have discovered Haapsalu for themselves and have left their recognizable impact on the cultural life

of the town and are still creating something new on the daily basis.

Sandy beaches, coastal and wooded meadows of Läänemaa fascinate people who enjoy solitude and beauty of nature. The rich bird sanctuary in Matsalu attracts birdwatchers from all over the world, for here is the biggest and the most diverse nesting and stopping area for migratory birds in Europe. The mossy pine forests of Läänemaa offer fresh air for lungs and basketfuls of berries or mushrooms. Treasures of old churches and manors of Läänemaa yearn for history loves.

Läänemaa is also known as a former home area of Estonian Swedes. From the 13<sup>th</sup> century up to the year 1944 one could hear mostly Swedish spoken in Noarootsi and Vormsi. The presence of Estonian Swedes can still be felt, especially noticeably in Vormsi, where the graveyard boasts the biggest collection of circular crosses in the world.





## Legend of the White Lady

During the full moon nights in August, a shadow of a lady appears on the window of the baptismal chapel of the castle - White Lady. According to the legend, one of the canons dressed his beloved girl in men's clothes and brought her into the castle, although this was strictly forbidden. The girl became one of the choir boys and her beautiful voice drew attention. Her secret was soon discovered and she was walled up alive. Like she pro-

mised, she appears on the castle window every August during full moon nights.

## Legend of the King's Room

In 1351, the King of Sweden, Magnus Smek arrived to Haapsalu to meet with the local bishop. Fancy rooms were prepared for him, but suddenly there was one obstacle: the king was accompanied by the queen. The rules

of the abbey, however, did not allow women's feet to enter the castle. The canons started to wrestle with the rules and finally found a solution: when the royal couple arrived, the queen was seated into the portable chair and was carried in. Thus the feet of the queen did not actually enter the monastery.



## HAAPSALU – THE TOWN FROM THE MIDDLE AGES

Medieval Haapsalu was a town of bishops, clergymen, merchants, warriors, craftsmen, fishermen and seafarers. The heart of the era – the old Episcopal castle – sprawls in the centre, surrounded by the net of streets dating back to the starting point of the town; by the wooden houses adorned with the wooden lace, dating back to the beginning of the last century, and by the modern town centre. A couple of times a year a part of present-day citizens of Haapsalu open their wardrobes to put on their medieval clothes made for the family members and spend a day or two in the castle area, following the customs and the rhythm of medieval Haapsalu.

Haapsalu was founded on a strip of land that was formed of many islets only a few hundred years ago. Since the 13<sup>th</sup> century the land around Haapsalu has risen nearly 3 metres. It is supposed that HAAPSALU as the name means the isle of boat, i.e. the place where the Estonians had a boat harbour. The first traces of any settlement here date back to the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century and the activity of the first settlers was certainly connected with the harbour.

In 1279, when the Dome Church was

ready and the construction of the small castle was nicely developing, the bishop confirmed the foundation of the town. Differently from other towns of similar age, Haapsalu can prove its bylaw with a historic document which was given out by Hermann I (Buxhövdén), the bishop of Saare-Lääne Bishopric. During the next 3 centuries Haapsalu was the centre of Saare-Lääne Bishopric. In spite of numerous fires and looting raids, the Episcopal castle with the biggest one-nave church in the Nordic countries and with a small castle attached to it, still stands here to remind us of the bygone times. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century a spectacular round baptismal chapel, which now may only be found in Italy, was built to the Dome Church. Just here, in the middle window of the chapel, the White Lady appears in August.

At the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, during the reign of Bishop John IV Kievel (1515-1527), the castle was made more spacious. A round stone wall together with a big cannon tower at the gate was completed around the yard. The square in front of the castle became the centre of the town where the streets ran towards the sea and the harbour. That medieval net of streets has undergone almost no changes at all. In 1775 the Town Hall was built on one side of the square.

In the Livonian War, which started in 1558, the castle was seriously damaged and the reign of bishops r fire

ended. The Swedes built their own earth bastions, ramparts and vaulted passages, which are really unique in the Baltic, inside the castle walls. However, the castle lost its political and economic importance. In 1628 the town and the castle were bought by De la Gardie Family. They intended to rebuild the Small Castle into a modern Renaissance castle. The 1688-year fire interfered with their good intentions and the castle remained in ruins. Only the Dome Church was restored. The church bells were taken to the Watch Tower because the old bell tower had burnt down.

The greatest legend and secret of Estonia is hidden in the castle – the mysterious and bewitching White Lady of Haapsalu shows herself on the window of the baptismal tower in August nights at full moon.

The castle museum is located in the west wing of the chapel building. In the watch tower, which offers a magnificent view to the town, we can see two big bells, which chime the time at every hour. In 1950 one of the bells was thrown out by some vandals but the bell was so heavy that it sank deep into the ground and they could not get it out. In summer the terrace of the castle is used for a restaurant. The atrium and the courtyard are used for open-air events all through the summer. Every year, in the first week of July, an old-music festival is held at the Dome Church, in August at the full moon the legend of White Lady is reawakened.





## Haapsalu Shawl

During the last century, Haapsalu lace-trimmed shawl became one of the best known symbols of Haapsalu. High society ladies valued the shawls that were so fine that could be pulled through a ring.

Traditional Haapsalu shawl is square and has three parts: a center piece with fine pattern and trimming and separately knitted lace that is then

sewn to the shawl. Wooden knitting needles number 3 or 4 and only the finest wool is used, preferably lamb wool. Finished shawl is washed softly in the warm soap water, rinsed and immediately framed with medium tension.

The skills and traditions of knitting Haapsalu shawl have been carried on by the local masters. Today the fine shawls can be purchased from local souvenir shops and galleries. Knitting

itself can be learned at the handcraft studio. The Crown Prince of Sweden, the Queen Silvia of Sweden and movie star Greta Garbo have all received a shawl that was specially designed for them.



## HAAPSALU – A RESORT TOWN

The atmosphere of this last-century high-society resort can be felt even today. The old flamboyant wooden-lace houses, a beautiful Promenade and the quiet pace of life tell us about centuries-old experience of mud treatment as well as about love of centuries-old high society. People still adorn themselves with a last-century fashion hit – a fluffy shawl of Haapsalu, the quality measure of which is a ring the shawl has to go through.

The discovery of Physician Carl Abraham Hunnius about the curing character of the local sea mud took off the building of mud spas which, in turn, caused the arrival of Russian royalty and members of high society in Haapsalu. The first mud spa was completed by 1825 and it was soon followed by the next three. A wooden-laced Kuursaal and a spectacular waterside walk, Promenade, were soon ready, beautified by sculptor Haavamägi's gorgeous sculptures. Thanks to the support of tsar Nikolai II, the railway from Tallinn to Haapsalu was completed by

1905, and a year later the station with the longest (216 m) roof-covered platform in Europe. Today the Railway Museum in the station building reminds us of the old days of railroad traffic. Kuursaal together with an open-air stand, main Promenade and African Beach were once and are still the centre of summer life in Haapsalu. Kuursaal locates a restaurant to remind us bygone days. An summer evenings we can enjoy music and dance to it, during the day the rose garden around the building is full of sweet aroma of various roses. A proud swan family in the sea near Promenade is always ready to accept treats from visitors.

Since the end of reign of Nikolai I most of Russian tsars up to Nikolai II have spent their summers and had mud baths in Haapsalu. In addition to royalty the town has hosted Pyotr Tchaikovsky (1867), artist Nikolai Roerich (1880, 1910), Professor Nikolai Pirogov (1853), polar explorer Eduard von Toll (1898), etc. While sitting on Tchaikovsky bench we can listen to music – the bench performs the fragment from the composer's VI Symphony, where one motive has been probably taken from Estonian folk song "Kallis Mari" (Dear Mary). One part of Tchaikovsky's

first opera "Vojevod" and a cycle for instruments "Mälestusi Haapsalust" (Reminiscences of Haapsalu) were written in Haapsalu. During his last visit to Haapsalu Nikolai Roerich painted his wellknown pictures – "Behind the Seas there are Big Countries" and "Varangian Motive".

The footsteps of Russian tsars in Haapsalu could be found already in 1715 when Peter I visited Haapsalu to find a military harbour for his fleet. His visit left behind a lot of different legends. In the third week of July there is a chance to meet Peter I and his big entourage walking in the streets of Haapsalu. The SEE Theatre has decided to perform all the legends.

Many Estonian state and culture activists, among them Aino Kallas, Friedebert Tuglas, Villem Grünthal-Ridala, Oskar Luts, etc. spent their summers in Haapsalu during the period of the first Estonian Republic. Today Haapsalu is a favourite place for holidaymakers and health patients throughout a year. The health centres Laine and Fra Mare offer a lot of nursing procedures as well as mud treatment. Various other nursing and relaxing procedures have gained a lot of popularity.







## HAAPSALU - TOWN OF CULTURE

The dignified history of Haapsalu, the mystery of the quiet streets running into the sea, the tight calendar of annual events and the exciting society attract more and more new people to the town. At first it allures them back more often and then to stay forever.

We can spend time in Haapsalu in different ways. We can have a look at the Haapsalu Railway Museum, the Castle Museum, the Museum of Estonian Swedes and the Läänemaa Museum. In summer we can enjoy the beach and in cold weather the spas and the water centre. Tennis courts, a golf course, fitness centres and a

bowling hall are ready for sport lovers. A lot of galleries and artist studios on or near the main street, among them Ilon's Wonderland and Evald Okas' Museum, are open to art lovers. We can enter the workshops and learn how to weave on the handlooms or find out the secret of knitting of the world-famous Haapsalu shawls.

The two theatres of Haapsalu – the Randlane and the SEE Theatre – offer to us their rich performance menus. Kuursaal, the Castle yard and the culture centre are the places where different concerts and performances take place. On summer evenings it is interesting to visit small cafes along the main street and have a look at the bustling night life.

Every year a lot of culturally minded people come to Haapsalu to participate

in high level festivals of old music, international glass workshops, concerts of Promenade Symphonic Orchestra, a theatrical walk with Peter I, string instrument festivals "Violin Plays", the White Lady Days, a day of Haapsalu shawl, the days of August blues and the medieval festival Solemnitas Hapsaliensis.

It is true that Haapsalu and Läänemaa attract people – many Estonian artists, musicians and writers have moved here. Here we can find the museums of the most well-known Estonian artist Evald Okas. Fashion designer Liivia Leshkin and her husband Siggie have chosen Haapsalu for their home. Their studios welcome everybody. Artist Epp-Maria Kokamägi and writer Mihkel Muut and other well-known people of culture love to spend their summers in Haapsalu.





## TAEBLA

Taebala Parish is located in the centre of Läänemaa. It is the only one who can boast with hill slopes and a ski-jump hill of Palivere. There are several favourite places for culture lovers, like Ants

Laikmaa House-museum in Kadarpik Village, Kuliste meadow for bonfire nights and popular parties an natural steps for singing and an old oak tree, the site of an old stronghold of Hallimägi and the Koela Farm-museum. Palivere manor and the park are also worth seeing.

## RISTI

Risti Parish is at the crossroads and it is a gate to Läänemaa and the islands. Beautiful nature and open bogs, which stretch to the main road, have become favourite places to lots of nature lovers.



## A TOUR TO SOUTH-LÄÄNEMAA

The southern tour in Läänemaa will take us, first of all from Haapsalu towards Risti and from there to Lihula and Virtsu and then back to Haapsalu through Martina and Ridala. Just before Taebala a signpost directs us to turn right, to the house-museum of Estonian artist Ants Laikmaa (1). During summertime its yard is a favourite picnic place. In 1932 the artist moved to Taebala where he started to build a house which had to express his ideals as an artist and to be in a style of ethno-romanticism. In 1942 the artist was buried in the 7-hectare park which he himself had designed and completed. The trees which the artist planted still grow. The nine oaks, planted by his visiting friends (Marie Under, Friedebert Tuglas, Gustav Suits, etc.), form a beautiful alley in this bio diverse park.

Going on along Tallinn Road and having passed Taebala, we can notice a steeple of Lääne-Nigula Church (2). Quite near the church there is the Koela Farm Museum (3), which introduces us into a farm household and displays some old household equipment.

While continuing the way towards Tallinn, our eye might catch a post with colourful ribbons (4) tied to it. On top of the post there is a stork nest. The ribbons have been tied to the post by newly weds on their wedding day to have good luck with babies. The higher the ribbon, the more babies might be expected in the family.

When turning in at Risti (5), we can see a peculiar memorial dedicated to about 3000 people who were deported to Siberia from West Estonia. The cross, which was made from rails, was named "Rails Remember".

Off Haapsalu-Tallinn Road, near Risti we can admire Marimetsa bog (6) which stretches as far as our eyes can reach. This protected area is one of the oldest and most fully formed open bogs with its well-developed system of bog pools in Estonia. Birds like Montagu's harriers, buzzards and golden eagle nest in the bog. The bog edges are the places of courtship display for black grouse and wood grouse. Several rare plants like dark-red helleborines, bog myrtles and fen orchids grow here. To get to the beginning of the track in the bog, we have to go along Risti-Virtsu Road and turn in at Rõuma. The bog has been equipped with a 5.5-kilometre- long wooden path, bird watching towers and information boards.

At the 12<sup>th</sup> kilometre on Rist-Virtsu Road we can have a glimpse at a former stronghold of Koluvere (7). The first stronghold was probably founded by the Lode Family, who was a bishop's vassal, in the 13<sup>th</sup>



## KULLAMAA

Kullamaa is a place of long cultural history. Today the old culture of brass bands, choral music and song festivals is still alive here. The pastors of Kullamaa had a vital role in the development

of the Estonian language. Several people, crucial in Estonian culture, were born or brought up here, like the first Estonian professional composer Rudolf Tobias (1837-1918) and Gustav Hirsch (1828-1907), who became a personal physician for the last Russian tsars Aleksander III and Nikolai II.



century. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century a quadrangular turret stronghold, during the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries a convent-like building and in the 16<sup>th</sup> century a round canon tower were attached to the main stronghold. During St. George's Rebellion (1343) the rebellious peasants besieged the stronghold of Koluvere. In 1439 the stronghold was made into one of the residences of Saare-Lääne bishop. The stronghold had an important role to play in the Livonian War (1558-1583) when there were battles with rebellious peasants and later on between Polish, Swedish and Russian armies. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, during the lifetime of the Lövens, the stronghold was converted into a manor complex. In 1771 Russian Empress Catherine II bought the castle and gave it to his lover Duke Grigori Orlov. In 1780 the Princess of Württemberg Augusta Carolina was banished by Catherine II to live in Koluvere. Her presence in Koluvere and

her death on 16 September 1788 is still veiled with secrecy. At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Russian tsar Paul I gave the castle complex to field marshal Buxhoevden and it was in the family possession until 1917. Later the complex was used as a boys' colony and as a nursing home. Now it is a private property.

Our tour takes us from Koluvere to Kullamaa (8), where the oldest building is the church built in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Being initially without a steeple and a choir room, this one-nave church has been rebuilt several times. Inside the church there are some items which are worth paying attention to: the Renaissance pulpit (1626), the baroque-style triumphal arch of Golgotha group (1682) and the epitaph (1628) to pastor Heinrich Göseken, who was the first to record the rules for the Estonian language. In the floor of the church there are 5 tombstones

dating back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the grave of the Princess of Württemberg. In the graveyard, near the church, there is the oldest Estonian circular cross with the engravings "1621" and "Sitta Kodt Matz". According to a legend Matz had had the habit of walking along the village roads, picking up horse manure which he used to fertilize his fields. His fields gave a good crop of rye and he became a rich man.

The people in Kullamaa know that somewhere there had really been a farm which belonged to Sita Koti Mats. Some philologists of the Swedish language claim, however, that on the stone there are the Swedish words in the dialect of Estonian-Swedes, meaning RIP Matz. Just beside the graveyard there is Rohumäe stronghold with an area of 2000 m<sup>2</sup> from 11-12<sup>th</sup> century.



## LIHULA

Lihula is the centre of South-Läänemaa, both historically and today. With the population of about 1500 inhabitants, Lihula is the second largest town in Läänemaa. The biggest part of the bird sanctuary of Läänemaa is located in Lihula Parish – in Matsalu National Park, which brings bird-watchers here from all over the world. It is also an attraction for lovers of canoeing and nature.



Going on along Risti-Virtsu Road we reach the Kasari River (9), which is the longest in Läänemaa (112km). Kasari alluvial meadow (4000 ha) is the largest open meadow in Europe and is flooded in springtime, so thousands of swans, geese and ducks stop here. The old bridge (1904) was recently restored and it was the longest ferroconcrete bridge in the world at its completion time (308m long and 7 m wide).

Following the same road, we can see a church, built in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. We have reached Kirbla (10). According to a legend people had not come to an agreement about the building site of a new church and asked for a sign from above. Suddenly a black cloud rose over the sky and a powerful clap of thunder discharged just above the hill. It stopped as suddenly as it had started. Having taken it as a sign from above, people hurried to the hill and saw that the lightning had shattered a sacrificial stone as big as a sauna building. The place was then chosen for the new St. Nicholas Church. The hill of Kirbla is a limestone terrace, which is so common in Läänemaa. A good view to the biggest part of the meadow opens from here.

When we go on along Virtsu-Tallinn Road, we can see another stronghold and the second biggest town in Läänemaa – Lihula (11). The place was first mentioned as Leal (Lihula) in 1211, when it was the centre of ancient Läänemaa.

Lihula was made into a centre of Estonian bishopric by Archbishop Albert, who resided in Riga. The stronghold of ancient Estonians had already been at that place but it was conquered by Swedes in 1220. That event was followed by the next attack on August 8 of the same year. In the attack 500 Swedes were killed by the warriors from Ösel Island. In 1228 Lihula was the first centre of Saare-Lääne Diocese. A new stronghold of stone was built (1238-1242) instead of the former Estonian stronghold. It is one of the most unique defence facilities in the Baltic States – the builders made the modern ideas of building and the old foundation of Estonian stronghold match. The rooms inside the stronghold were divided between Saare-Lääne Diocese and the Livonian Order and that might be one of the reasons why the bishop decided to move the centre to Old-Pärnu in the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. During the Livonian War (1558-1583) the stronghold changed hands many times (Danes, Swedes, Germans, Russians). After the war the stronghold and the settlement around it lost their importance.

Lihula manor was founded for a bishop and the Order in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The present-day Classicistic mansion was built by the Wistinghausens in 1840. Lihula manor locates a museum which displays the items history and archaeological findings of the town, a tourist info centre and a travel agency, specializing on ecotourism. Here you can get information

about ecotourism of the whole Estonia. On the mound of the stronghold there is a choir stand and at the other side stands a culture house (1989). The centre of the town along the main street (Tallinn Road) is a good example of a 19<sup>th</sup> century rural town, where wooden houses with high gable or hipped end roofs prevail. Both Elizabeth Church (1876-78) and the former Jaan's Inn on the main street are also worth seeing.

Going on towards Virtsu we reach Karuse Church (12) which was built as a one-nave stronghold church in the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. A Gotland-style baptismal stone is worth special attention because it is as old as the church. The pulpit was made in 1697. The provincial master of the Livonian Order Otto von Lutterberg was probably buried in this church. In 1270 Lithuanians organised an extensive war campaign to Saaremaa. When they were returning with bulky loot, the Order forces attacked them on the sea ice near Karuse and their master was killed in the battle. A trapeze-shape grave plate, which depicts an armed warrior, is thought to be Lutterberg's grave stone. In the graveyard there are three more trapeze-shape grave plates. One of them is called the grave of the King of Karuse.

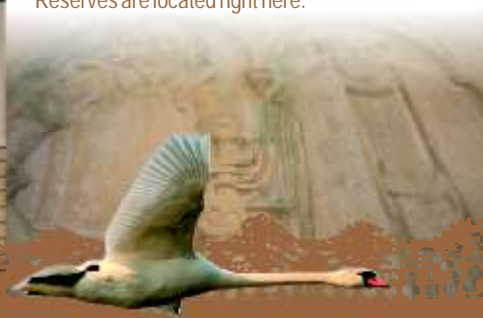
At Karuse the road turns towards Vaila. In Linnuse Village, on the drumlin, there is Vaila earthen (13). Its yard was once surrounded by a 2-3-metre defence rampart, the outer side of which was joined to





## HANILA

Hanila Parish has attracted a lot of culture activists to stay or to spend their summers here. From here there is a gate to Saaremaa and Muhumaa. The parish offers beautiful sights of medieval churches and varied nature. Puhtu-Laelatu and Nehatu Nature Reserves are located right here.



8-9-metre-high slope of the drumlin. The manor complex (14) in the centre of Vatta deserves attention. The manor, which was owned by Otto von Rosen in 1807, is one of the staliest manors in Lääne-maa. A triumphal frieze in grey tones, which decorates the hall, and the grotto-like master's bedroom in a former casing chimney, with wall paintings of exotic plants, is really unique. Vatta Basic School and the local library work in the main building. The oval front yard is surrounded by a crescent-shape storehouse and stables. According to a legend the landlord had had a bet with the owner of the neighbouring manor. He promised to build a house whose one corner would not be seen from the other end. Indeed, he built a crescent.

When we return back to Risti-Virtsu Road, we can see Hanila Village (15) with its church and museum only some hundred metres from the road. It is said that the church, which was founded in the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, hides a goose immured by the master builders. That's why the place name is Hanila (Goose = Est. "hani"). Original double windows of Paul's Church have survived and the triumphal arch is unusually narrow and high. There are 13 rare trapeze-shape grave plates in the church. Near the church, in the former schoolhouse, we can visit the local museum.

Going on towards Virtsu, we reach Puhtu-Laelatu protection area, which form

an entity with a nearby Nehatu protection area. The area covers the coastal territory near Virtsu and is rich in birds, diverse in nature and landscape, with various species of grassland, forests and marshes. The coastline is long.

In Virtsu there is a harbour (16) and ferries take us to the island of Saaremaa and Muhumaa. In the Middle Ages the place belonged to the Uexküll Family, who, in 1430, built a square vassal stronghold on the coast. We can see only the ruins of it there.

Going back to the direction of Lihula, we can notice 2000-year-old stone barrows (17) near Russian Orthodox Church at Kõmsi. One of the barrows was left open after archaeological excavations and the other was reconstructed. The open barrow consists of about 20 tumuli, the older and bigger ones lying in the centre of the barrow. The most valuable findings were the adornments that come from the upper course of the Volga-Oka River.

Going from Kõmsi towards Kukerand (18) or turning off from Risti-Virtsu Road at the signpost, we reach Salevere Salumägi (19). Salumägi is an esker, about 20 metres above sea level. Its south-western side is a steep limestone wall. The archaeologists recently discovered the marks of stronghold, which was probably in use in the first millennium B.C. Today Salumägi is covered with oak

and mixed forests, rich in species. Below the steep cliff there is a rare nemoral forest. The biggest land snail enjoys its habitat here. The cliff crevices offer a good wintering shelter for grass snakes, adders and blindworms. The sacred spring water, which flows out of the cliff, is a good remedy for eyes and rejuvenates its user. There is a 1.5-kilometre-long trail in Salevere Salumägi.

The centre of Matsalu National Park (20) is situated at Penijõe, about three kilometres from Lihula. Matsalu National Park was established to protect the diverse bird kingdom of small islets and of reed beds, coastal and wooded meadows of Matsalu as well as to retain favourable nesting, feeding, moulting and stopping places for migratory birds. 275 species of birds have been registered in Matsalu, 162 of them nest there regularly.

In 2000 Penijõe Manor was renovated for the centre of the national park. The museum in the building introduces to us the nature of the area. For the visitors there are watch towers and nature trails in the park. That is what you can see from different towers and platforms:

Kloostri (a): Flooded plains of the Kasari River

Penijõe (b): Reed beds  
Suitsu (21m high) (c): Matsalu forest, reed beds, coastal meadows

Keemu (d): Matsalu Bay, islands, reed beds

## MARTNA

Unique farm theatre offers its summer performances at Sauaigu in Martna Parish. Here there is the only bird watching tower accessible to handicapped people. Those who love history might find it exciting to drop in at Suure-Lähtru and Keskvere Manor and Martna Church.



Rannajõe (with a ramp) (e): Flood meadows

Haeska (f): Matsalu Bay, coastal meadows rich in birds

Kiideva (g): Matsalu Bay

Jugassaare (h): Islands north of Puise Peninsula

We become closer friends with nature while walking along the nature trails of Penijõe and Salevere Salumägi or along the study trails of coastal meadows at Näärikivid or along the flora study trails at Keemu. The best time for birdwatchers would certainly be migration periods of spring and autumn.

Turning to Haapsalu-Laiküla Road, we reach from Kurevere to Keskvere. Keskvere manor house (21), initially built with a casing chimney and thatched roof, is an 18<sup>th</sup>-century wooden baroque-style building, which reminds us more of a farm house. Actually, it represents the type of manor houses built in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Going on along Haapsalu-Laiküla Road, the signpost shows the way towards Martna (22). St. Martinus Church in Mart-

na was built in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and is unusually wide for a one-nave church. Bishop Johannes III Orgas's, the founder of the church, coat of arms is still above the north portal. The oldest piece of interest inside the church is a baptismal font of Gotlandic design (ab.1500). The reredos was completed in 1700 and the Empire-style pulpit was ready in 1820. The collection of coats of arms from 17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> centuries in Martna Church is the third richest after the Dome and Niguliste Churches in Tallinn. 10 coats of arms have been preserved.

5 kilometres from the centre of Martna stands an early classicist manor house. Suure-Lähtru Manor (23) was built in 1775-1778 by Karl Gustav von Baranoff for his oldest, newly wed son Heinrich. Today the manor is a private property. The owners opened a museum in the building, they arrange concerts, receptions and balls.

We have to turn back to Haapsalu-Laiküla Road to see the signs that direct us to Haeska (24), to the northern coast of

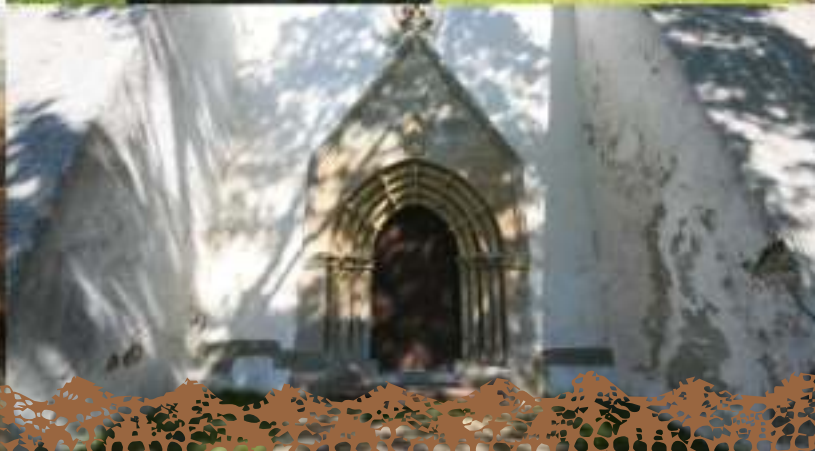
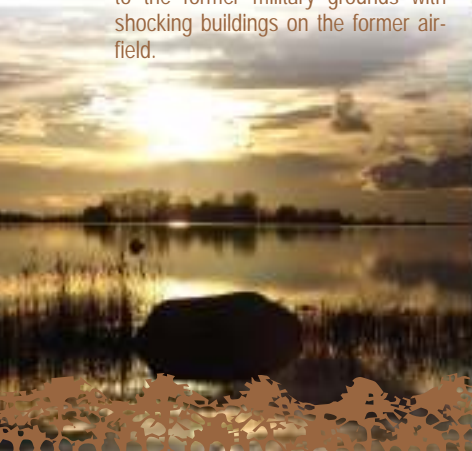
Matsalu Bay. From Haeska watch tower, which is 10 metres high, opens a view to the shallow bay and relatively well preserved coastal meadows. Haeska watch tower has been considered to be the best bird watching tower in North Europe. During the international bird-count competition in 1997, 128 species of birds were counted during 24 hours at Haeska. Haeska manor beside the watch tower was built in classicist style in 1805. However, it has lost its former look due to several reconstructions.

About 10 kilometres from Haapsalu, the road sign shows us the way to Kiideva (26) and Puise (25). Turning right at the road fork, we reach Puise Cape, which separates north-western part of Matsalu Bay from the Väinameri. All the islands near the north-western coast are here and the biggest of them are Tauksi, Krimmi, Laekarahu and Kakrarahu. From Tauksi to the north-west we find Liia and Sõmeri islands. Puise Cape was a favourite fishing place for 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>-century Estonian-Swedes (Vormsi). During the fishing season the fishermen lived in the



## RIDALA

Ridala Parish – once a famous ancient Rotalia or Rotelewich parish – surrounds the town of Haapsalu from all the sides and can be proud of its active village and culture life. The parish stretches as far as the northern coast of Matsalu Bay, which is under nature protection, and offers a lot of pleasant experiences from fascinating churches-palaces and great bird sanctuary to the former military grounds with shocking buildings on the former airfield.



caves, which they had dug in between the stones. Puise and Kiideva are connected with a nature trail, the beginning of which is the protected oak tree at Lõpre. Kiideva is one of the few really genuine fishing villages in Läänemaa where the fishermen's houses are built side by side. The village is divided into two parts: Kiideva village that was formed around the manor (Hoff Kiedepee), and a fishing village on the coast - Kiideva Kalaküla. One of the oldest written records is connected with the name of Kiideva. An Icelandic saga tells a story about King Yngvar's war campaign against Estonian tribes in the year 600. He was killed at Kiideva (at Stein) and was supposedly buried right there near the sea.

When we come back to Haapsalu-Lai-küla Road and turn towards Haapsalu, we soon reach Ridala Mary Magdalene Church (27), which is one of the oldest and most interesting sacramental buildings in Estonia. That 13<sup>th</sup>-century building with its thick walls and narrow windows is a one-nave church similarly to the others of the time. Initially it was also

without a steeple but it was attached in 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century. When usually steeples were connected with the front door, then in Ridala it was built to the side entrance. Due to that fact, the main portal has preserved very well. Above the dolomite Gothic portal, there is a niche with a figure of the patron saint of the church, Mary Magdalene. That small figure is one of the oldest Estonian sculpture figures. The walls of the choir room are covered with fresco fragments. The item inside the church which really should attract our attention is the altar. The communion table is thought to be from the Middle Ages. The reredos in the Baroque style with in abundance of sculptural figures was added in 1678. When in 1995 the altarpiece of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was stolen, a more valuable 17<sup>th</sup> century wood engraving was revealed, depicting the Last Supper. The Group of Triumphal Arch with the crucified Jesus Christ is as old as the altar itself. The pulpit is also from the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The most valuable grave signs in Ridala graveyard are the trapeze-shape stones

with the motives of sun disc and white cedar. They are believed to date back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The two massive stone crosses at the main entrance are also very old.

Ridala was the parish centre of ancient Läänemaa. The place of an ancient stronghold is some kilometres off the church. Archaeologists have discovered 14 ancient villages at Tubrillin, which allows us to think that Ridala was the most densely populated parish centre at the end of old times in Läänemaa. Maybe that is the reason why sometimes the name Rotalia has been used in the meaning of Läänemaa.

## A TOUR TO THE WEST AND THE ISLANDS

The road from Haapsalu to Rohuküla goes through Paralepa forest park and ends in Pullapää (28). Diverse in landscape, the park is suitable for bike trips. The charm of Pullapää was discovered already in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and it



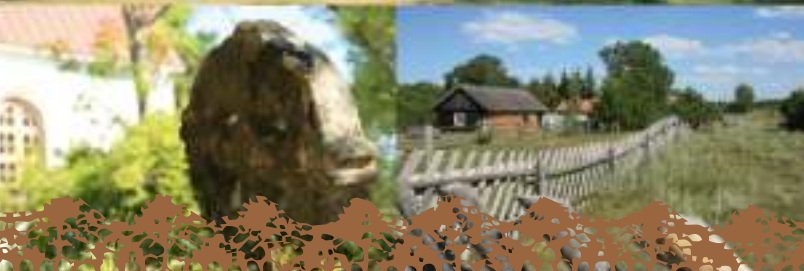


became a favourite picnic place for holidaymakers. A memorial to tsar Aleksander III stands on the cape. People say that the tsar had visited the place to bake potatoes in the fire and to have his favourite drink "imperatorskoye" (equal amounts of vodka and champagne). Pullapää is well suited for shock tourism because of the military facilities left back by the Soviet Army. The foundation of Kiltsi airfield (29) started in 1939, after the agreement of military bases which concluded between Estonia and Russia. The main concrete runway is 2 and a half kilometres long and 40 metres wide. There are 28 hangars for the planes. Within the area of the military base there are the ruins of Kiltsi Manor. The manor was first mentioned in 1323 under the name Alba Curia. The oldest part of the manor dates back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century and was probably a fortress-house. The medieval tower house has been rebuilt several times and the renaissance portal from the 17<sup>th</sup> century was daubed grey by servicemen. The Soviet Army used the manor as a storeroom and it fell in ruins after the fire in 1996.

Magnificent ruins by the road to Rohuküla attract everybody's attention. Ungru Manor (30) was made famous by the Russian tsar Peter I who visited it unexpectedly in 1715. There are many stories about his visit. *One of them tells us that, while sitting at the table, Peter I noticed an empty picture frame above the door. He looked around and found the portrait of Karl XII, apparently, hidden, behind the stove. "Oh yes, my brother Karl!" he shouted. "Now it is your turn to hide behind the stove. Maybe one more battle would have sent me there instead of you."* Saying so, he put the portrait back on the wall. The tsar did not visit the same building, which now is in ruins, but the old main building of the manor which was destroyed. Building of the present castle was started by count Ewald von Ungern-Strenberg. A romantic legend says that his beloved lady had promised to marry him only in case when the castle would look like the one in Merseburg, Germany. This marriage was never arranged because the young woman died and the building was also stopped. Today the ruins of the castle are a private property.

Going on along Rohuküla Road, we reach Rohuküla harbour (31), which was established as a military port before the WWI. Nowadays it is a harbour for the ferries that take passengers to Hiumaa and Vormsi. At the same time it is a harbour for visiting yachts.

It will take three quarters of an hour to cross the sea to the island of Vormsi. Vormsi is the 4<sup>th</sup> largest island in Estonia (93 km<sup>2</sup>), which rose from the sea probably about 1800 years B.C. One legend says that the name Vormsi comes from the name of an Iceland's Viking Orm, the other says that it is the island of snakes (Ormsö in Swedish). The name was first mentioned in the historical documents in 1391. Until 1944 the inhabitants of Vormsi were mainly Estonian Swedes whose ancestors had probably reached the island from South-Finland and the eastern parts of Sweden in 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century. In 1938 about 2600 people lived on the island, but most of them left the island for Sweden during the WW II. Today there are about 330 people on the island. The road on the island forms a number eight



## VORMSI

Vormsi is the biggest island in Lääne-maa where the culture of Estonian Swedes has deeply rooted. We can see the world's biggest collection of circular crosses in the graveyard of the island. Vormsi is colourful – diverse nature, unique flora, original traditions (Olaf's Day) and characteristic buildings. We can find red trash houses in every village (a well-applied recycling system). During the spring migration period tens and thousands of long-tailed ducks and scaups stop in the coastal sea areas, thousands of ducks stop in the backwaters, barnacle geese and snipes make their stop in the coastal meadows. A bike trip is the best way to see this original island.

and the parts of it are called an east and a west circle. The best way to see the island is by bike.

The villages of the east circle have survived better and here you can see, typical to Vormsi, houses with glass balconies. Just before Norrby Village (32) the road turns left towards a lighthouse which was built in 1935. If we look from here over the sea, we can see Noarootsi Peninsula and Ramsi Headland. Of all the villages of the west circle, Diby and Rälby villages (33) are in a better condition. The first inhabitants of Rälby are said to have come from Tallinn (Rälby=Revalby), and it has always been the most wealthy village of Vormsi.

At the crossroads of the west and east circles there stands Vormsi Church (34), dedicated to St. Olav. There are 4 numbers carved on the stone in front of the church: 1219, 1632, 1772, and 1929. They mark the years when the church was reconstructed. The first building had been a wooden one. A new stone church was built in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, which now is

the choir room of the present church. In the ceiling of the altar room there are some old paintings. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century a new square-like one-nave part was attached to the church. The church was looted after the Swedes left for Sweden. The restoration work started in 1980 and on St. Olav's Day (June 29) in 1990 the church was inaugurated.

At the gate of the church yard there is one of the few Estonian monuments of liberty which was standing there all through the Soviet regime. In the graveyard there is the biggest collection of circular crosses in the world. The people of Vormsi started using such crosses in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Going along west circle, we reach Saxby Village (35) which is a well-known place due to the oldest cast-iron lighthouse on Estonian coast. Further we reach Suuremõisa where there are the ruins of a former manor house (Magnushof) and a manor park.

When turning right before Hullo at the end of the west circle, we reach Rumpo area

Peninsula (36). Romp means "tail" in Swedish and the strip of land reaching far into the sea looks like one too. It is a flora protection area because of the two unique plants, Iceland and tundra lichen (the only area in Estonia where it can be found), growing here.

Turning back from Rumpo, we reach the centre of Vormsi. Hullo (37) is one of the wealthiest villages in Vormsi. On the right from the road there stands the Russian Orthodox Church, built in 1889. In the past Hullo was divided into two parts - one for local people and the other for holidaymakers. Pensions for holidaymakers, built in 1930s, and the Temperance Society, built in 1938, are situated by the road. The house has been used as a culture house. The forest path which starts in front of the building takes us to Parunikivi, which is an erratic boulder, bearing the engravings in German which can be connected with the last baron of Vormsi, Baron von Stackelberg.

## NOARROOTSI

The old settlement area of Estonian Swedes surprises the visitors with its bilingual place names, a beautiful sandy beach and a pine tree forest. Swedes arrived to the coastal areas and islands of Estonia in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and, differently from Estonian peasants, the Estonian Swedes lived according to the so called Swedish law and were personally free. They developed their own original culture and their archaic language survived. The descendants of the Swedes, who had to escape because of the war, are discovering this beautiful childhood land of their forefathers and building their summer homes on the regained areas.

## ORU

Oru Parish is the gate to the fabulously beautiful nature of the northern part of Läänemaa. It is the beginning of Silma Nature Reserve, rich in spawning grounds, coastal meadows and bird sanctuary.

## A TOUR IN NORTH-LÄÄNEMAA

In order to get acquainted with the areas of ancient of Estonian Swedes and the northern Läänemaa, we take the route from Haapsalu towards Keila. Very soon we reach Silma Nature Reserve (38) which covers the area of the Back Bay of Haapsalu, its nearest neighbourhood and the coastal areas of Noarootsi Peninsula with its relict lakes. Spawning grounds and coastal meadows, where about 206 kinds of birds nest, among which there are the rare white-tail eagles and fish hawks, add value to this territory. To reach the centre of the nature reserve we have to go as far as Saunja bus stop and from there turn to the village road which takes us straight to the sea.

Going straight on along Keila Road, we reach Linnamäe (39), where we pass one of the oldest substations in Estonia, built in 1927. At Linnamäe we turn towards Noarootsi. There is a track on the right off the road at Jõe bus stop and the absorption area of the river Salajõgi (40) where it disappears into a karst funnel. The 12-kilometre river, getting its source from a salt lake in the small village of Rootsi, just disappears and reappears away ahead. From Salajõe we make for Noarootsi Peninsula and cross the area called the Alland between Noarootsi Peninsula and the mainland. Initially

Noarootsi was an island which, due to the rise of the land (ca 2-3 mm per year), has grown together with the mainland. It is said that at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Peter I had still managed to sail to Haapsalu through that waterway.

Going further on, we reach Noarootsi Church and the vicarage (41). Noarootsi St Catharine's Church was built in about 1500 in the late Gothic style. Built of limestone and granite, the church was used as a stronghold in the Middle Ages. Inside the church there are some items worth mentioning, like a baptismal font (ca 1500), a baroque pulpit, and a baroque limestone epitaph to pastor Martin Winter (1630). In the niche near the entrance there is a stone with an autograph of Carl XVI Gustav who visited Noarootsi Church in 1922. The vicarage house, the oldest wooden building in Estonia (17<sup>th</sup> century), stands across the road from the church. Just before Pürksi, the road turns to Saare Manor and to the Lyckholm Museum (42). Saare Manor (established in 1662, in Swedish Lyckholm) had belonged to the Rosen family since the Great Northern War. After the restoration of independence in Estonia, Gustav von Rosen, the son of the last owner bought the manor ruins back. He restored the stables where in 1997 a museum, which introduces the local history, work and consumer items, was opened. After that the 18<sup>th</sup> century main building was put in order. One of Silma nature tracks begins

near the park of Saare manor.

Noarootsi Gymnasium is located in the centre of Noarootsi, in Pürksi (43), where the teaching is closely connected with the Swedish language and the history and culture of the Nordic countries. Noarootsi Gymnasium houses in the oldest building in Pürksi – the manor of Pürksi, built in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In 1920-1943 the Swedish folk high school located in that building. A very rare species in Estonia, the white beech, grows in the manor park. Going further from Pürksi we reach the Eastern village or Österby (44). Österby was the harbour where boat traffic was kept with Haapsalu. In winter, when the ice is thick enough, the ice road is marked across the bay. There is a beach at Österby as well.

Going from Noarootsi towards the north we reach Riguldi. Together with the neighbouring Nõva it forms a natural entity. These parts should arise interest most of all in people who enjoy walking in nature and lying on the beach. Rich in bilberries, cowberries and mushrooms forests and peat land form 70% of the territory. What the holidaymakers appreciate most are the sandy beaches and sand dunes of Riguldi-Nõva. As well as the sea and the forests, the local relict lakes, rivers and boulders are of great interest to nature lovers.

Turning from the road towards Dirhami,





## NÕVA

Nõva Parish in the northern part of Läänemaa with its pine forests full of berries and mushrooms and beautiful beaches is a favourite place for holidaymakers and forest goods lovers. Lovers of surfing have settled cosily in on the sandy beaches of Nõva. Several rare birds nest in the untouched and vast pine forests. Here there is Nõva landscape protection area, Läänemaa Suursoo landscape protection area and Leidisoo Nature Reserve.



we reach Roosta Holiday Village and the beautiful beach (45). A few kilometres from Roosta Holiday Village there is Rooslepa graveyard and a chapel (46). It is said that this stone chapel was built by Mathias Roesler from Rooslepa in 1835, all at his own expense. At that time he was a clerk at Rigulda Manor. Much more famous is the 17<sup>th</sup> century Rooslepa wooden chapel, which was first taken to Sutlepa and then to the Estonian open-air museum in Rocca al Mare. The Swedish crown prince Gustav VI Adolf visited the chapel in 1932 and a stone in the wall with his autograph reminds us of his visit. In ruins Rooslepa Chapel was recently renovated.

Going on from Rooslepa we reach Dirhami (47). Dirhami is the only ice-free harbour in West-Estonia. Tens of thousands of golden eyes and long-tail ducks winter in that ice-free backwater. The headland of Põõsaspea (48) to the east from Dirhami is an essential landmark for migratory birds. From there the birds' migration routes branch off: one part of the birds head for Åland, the other part continues their flight along the coastline of Estonia. On Põõsaspea headland there is an internationally recognised bird watching station. Those who like shock tourism find a lot to discover on the military landscape left behind by the Soviet Army. When the sky is clear, we may be lucky to see the 4.8 km<sup>2</sup> Osmussaar Island (49) (the 14<sup>th</sup> largest in Estonia) either from

Dirhami harbour or Põõsaspea headland. Osmussaar got its Swedish name Odensholm after the Swedish god Odin who, according to a legend, was buried on the island. Before the World War II Osmussaar was inhabited by Estonian Swedes, but 130 people had to leave their homes in the summer of 1940 when a Soviet military base was founded on the island. The underground powerful defence facilities have survived up to the present. The lighthouse (built in 1954) and the ruins of a stone chapel from 1766 are also worth seeing. Here you can see a peculiar 8-metre high steep rocky coast, the biggest Estonian shingle bars and gneiss breccia boulders and well-preserved coastal meadows. The island was deserted for some years, while now a family has settled down to stay. Those who are interested in visiting the island, have to book a boat trip. Near the island in the sea there is Neugrund shallow which is a 540 million-year-old meteorite crater.

A few kilometres from Nõva a signpost shows us the way to Peraküla (50). An old cobblestone road, dating back to the period before the World War I, starts just near the village and it takes us to Allikajärv. There are other small lakes around Peraküla, which are surrounded by average 5-metre-high sand dunes. The Uuejõe Stream, the mouth of which changes constantly, starts from Peraküla bog. Both in the lakes and the stream there grow the white water lily and the cut

sedge, which is rare on the mainland. The private museum founded on Põlluotsa farm in Peraküla is worth visiting. The museum displays all kinds of items necessary in a farm household from different periods.

You can easily find Nõva Church (51) by its steeple. According to a legend, the seamen who had become castaways because of thick fog had promised to build a House of the Lord on the dry land right on the spot where they would reach safe. They heard the song of a cock through the fog and sailing towards that direction they reached the hill where a windmill stood. They built the church on the spot and put the figure of the cock on the roof. The wooden Olav's Church in Nõva was probably built in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It is one of the smallest churches in Estonia. The parchment paintings on the windows, imitating stained glass, probably date back to 1836. The iron crosses in Nõva churchyard are also worth looking at. The beach at Keibu and Liivane Bay is considered to be the best sandy beach in the whole Estonia. The beach is famous for its singing sand, sand dunes and curly birches. Moving from Nõva towards Variku we pass a lake called Veskijärv (52), which was separated from the sea 4500 years ago. At some places the lake is surrounded by ten-metre-high sandy slopes and the sand here can become red-hot in the warm summer sun. In the sand quarry of Veskijärv there lives a rare species of frogs – natterjack toad.

# LÄÄNEMAA

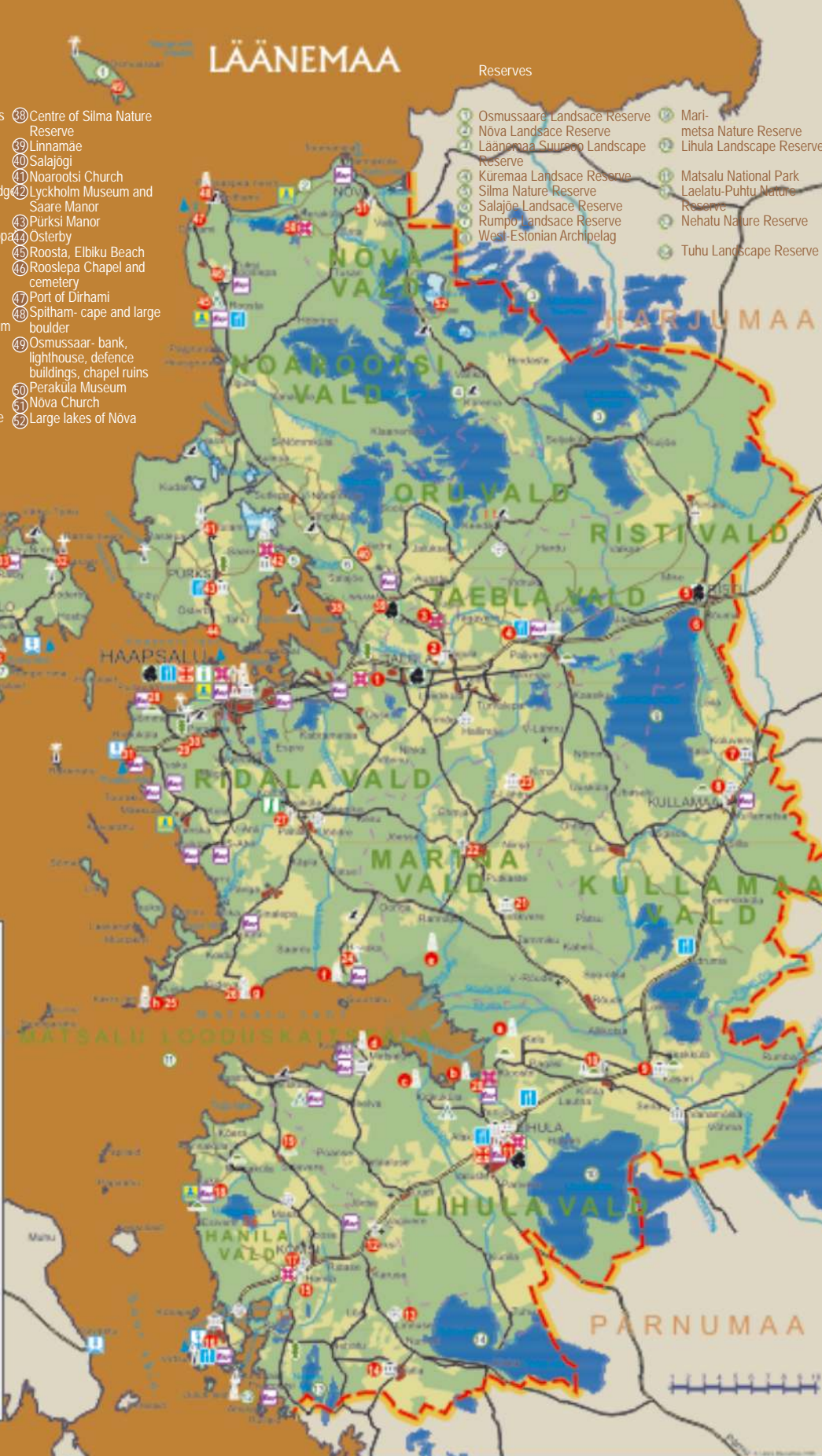
Reserves

- 1 Artist A. Laikmaa House Museum
- 2 Laane-Nigula Church
- 3 Koela Farm Museum
- 4 Post with colourfull ribbons
- 5 Risti memorial
- 6 Marimetsa bog
- 7 Koluvere castle
- 8 Kullamaa Church and hill
- 9 Ancient ferro-concrete bridge of the Kasari riv
- 10 Kirbla Church and cliff
- 11 Ruins of the Lihula Episcopate Castle, manor, park, museum
- 12 Karuse Church
- 13 Vatla earthen
- 14 Vatla manor
- 15 Hanila Church and Museum
- 16 Port of Viirtsu
- 17 Komi stone barrows
- 18 Kukeeranna bank
- 19 Salevere grove hill and fountain
- 20 Centre and museum of the Matsalu National Park
- 21 Keskkvere Manor
- 22 Martna Church
- 23 Suure-Lahtru Manor
- 38 Centre of Silma Nature Reserve
- 39 Linnamae
- 40 Salajogi
- 41 Noarootsi Church
- 42 Lyckholm Museum and of the Saare Manor
- 43 Purksi Manor
- 44 Osterby
- 45 Roosta, Elbiku Beach and cemetery
- 46 Rooslepa Chapel and cemetery
- 47 Port of Dirhami
- 48 Spitham- cape and large boulder
- 49 Osmussaar- bank, lighthouse, defence buildings, chapel ruins
- 50 Perakula Museum
- 51 Nõva Church
- 52 Large lakes of Nõva

- 1 Osmussaare Landsape Reserve
- 2 Nõva Landsape Reserve
- 3 Laanemaa Suurõja Landsape Reserve
- 4 Kuremaa Landsape Reserve
- 5 Silma Nature Reserve
- 6 Salajõge Landsape Reserve
- 7 Rumpõ Landsape Reserve
- 8 West-Estonian Archipelag
- 9 Marimetsa Nature Reserve
- 10 Lihula Landsape Reserve
- 11 Matsalu National Park
- 12 Laelatu-Puhtu Nature Reserve
- 13 Nehatu Nature Reserve
- 14 Tuhu Landsape Reserve

- 24 Haeska
- 25 Puise
- 26 Kiideva museum
- 27 Ridalan Church
- 28 Pullapää
- 29 Former Soviet Army base and aerodrome
- 30 Ungru
- 31 Port of Rohukula
- 32 Norrby lighthouse
- 33 Diby and Rälby
- 34 Vormsi Church
- 35 Saxby
- 36 Rumpõ peninsula
- 37 Hullo

- Reedbed
- Marsh, Bog
- Hospital
- Passanger Port
- Museum
- Strand
- Accommodation
- Catering
- Bank
- Yacht Harbour
- Archeological Monument
- Architectural Monument
- Church
- Lighthouse
- Bird Watching Tower
- Camping Place
- Monument
- Erratic Boulder
- Cliff, Hill
- Ancient Tree





## LÄÄNEMAA – THE LAND OF BIRDS AND VIRGIN NATURE

Läänemaa is a flat juniper area with lots of bays and islands. The richness of the county is in its long history and untouched nature. It can be described as a land of wooded and coastal meadows with rare orchids, a land of coastal juniper areas and reed beds. However, there are some higher spots of interest in Läänemaa as well: the steep limestone coasts of Osmussaare and Kukeranna, Salevere Salumägi, terraces of Kirbla and Pullapää among them. Sandy coasts of Läänemaa are attractive to holidaymakers and the pine forests are to mushroom-picker's liking.

Every birdwatcher knows Matsalu Nationale Park, which is the biggest and, at the same time, the most bio diverse nesting and stopping area for migratory birds in Europe (altogether 250 species).

The history of Läänemaa dates back to the Stone Age when people settled down in the areas that emerged after the sea had receded. We can find exciting stone barrows in Kaseküla and burial mounds in Kömsi and Poanse. Ancient places of strongholds at Vatta, Kullamaa and Hallimägi are impressive.

In the 13<sup>th</sup> century the Swedes inhabited Noarootsi, Osmussaare and the island of Vormsi where, up to the present day, the Swedish place names and culture have survived. The purest culture of Estonian-Swedes can be found in Vormsi and Noarootsi where in winter a visitor can go across the sea along the ice track.

The Episcopal Castle in Haapsalu and the ruins of Lihula Stronghold remind us of the age of bishops. The gems of Läänemaa are the medieval churches. The churches in Ridala, Lääne-Nigula and Kullamaa were already completed in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The country churches at Kirbla, Martna, Noarootsi, Vormsi, Hanila and Karuse also date back to the Middle Ages. By the middle

of the 14<sup>th</sup> century all the important churches in Läänemaa were completed. Locally found and easily processed building material – dolomite – made building of the churches easier. All the older churches were built in the Gothic style, one-nave and initially without a steeple. That kind of style answered the demands of widely spread architecture of Cistercians and Dominicans. There are a lot of legends connected with churches, which came into being largely due to grandeur and mystery of the churches. We can see rare trapeze-shape tomb stones in the graveyards of Ridala and Karuse. The biggest collection of circular crosses can be found in Vormsi graveyard. Manor houses in Keskvere, Suure-Lähtru, Lihula, Vatta, Pürksi and elsewhere are certainly worth seeing.

There are 12 local authorities in Läänemaa and each of them is exciting and attractive in their own way. The centre of Läänemaa is a resort town Haapsalu, where the most famous legend of Estonia has been hidden in the castle walls.

