

Self-guided tours



# Saimaa Lakeland Cycling Tour

The lakeland with almost 14,000 islands

- Cycling through the Lakeland with the help of two bicycle ferries
- Enjoying Finnish nature and savouring all the delicious local specialities
- Lively atmosphere in Lappeenranta marina and the rapids of Imatrankoski
- Punkaharju esker ridge, nature reserve and Finnish Forest Museum Lusto
- Art garden in Parikkala
- Puumala - the Finnish holiday lifestyle
- Savonlinna town, built on islands, and Olavinlinna Castle
- Huuhaanranta beach, over 1 km of golden sand beach

In a country of thousands of lakes, Lake Saimaa is one of the most stunning. We have created a unique cycling experience that takes in all that Lake Saimaa has to offer. This wonderful waterway has the world's longest lakeside coastline of 14,500 kilometres, boasts almost 14,000 islands and is the fourth largest natural freshwater lake in Europe. It's no wonder that the Wall Street Journal lists it as one of the five most beautiful lakes in the world. Here you can find long sandy beaches, that are over 1 km long!

With many local delicacies such as 'muikku' (a freshwater whitefish) and the home of 'lörtsy' (crescent shaped pastries), idyllic lakeside towns with quirky art and the easy-going hospitality of Karelian people, a visit to Lake Saimaa is truly a memorable experience. Not to forget the beautiful fortress town of Lappeenranta, the Imatrankoski rapids and the famous opera festival views of Savonlinna.

## Itinerary (5 days cycling)

**Day 1: Individual arrival to Lappeenranta**

**Day 2: Lappeenranta-Imatra (48 km cycling)**

Cycle past the most important sights of Lappeenranta: the marina, the fortress, and the lake views. See the over 160 years old Saimaa Canal that connects Lake Saimaa to the Gulf of Finland. Visit the Saimaa Canal Museum to learn more about the history of the area. Continue your route to Imatra, a town with a long industrial heritage and a gateway to neighbouring Russia. Overnight at the elegant art nouveau Imatra Valtionhotelli right next to the extraordinary Imatrankoski (Imatra Rapids).

**Day 3: Imatra-Parikkala-Punkaharju (bus transfer + 45 km cycling)**

Start the morning with a transfer to Parikkala, where you can enjoy Finnish contemporary art in one of the most interesting woodland gardens with over 500 humanlike statues. Then start your cycling day towards Punkaharju. Enjoy the most beautiful Finnish lakeside views, as your route runs along a narrow neck of land between the Lake Saimaa. Stop to learn about the Finnish forests in Lusto Forest Museum. Enjoy a night in a summer resort right next to the lake.

**Day 4: Punkaharju-Savonlinna-Puumala (35 km + bus transfer)**

Continue the cycling tour through nature towards Savonlinna. This town is famous for its' opera festival each summer. The Olavinlinna Castle sits on one of the town's many islands. Visit the medieval castle,

walk through the old wooden town, and taste local delicacies at the market square before taking the bus transfer to Puumala. Listed many times among the top three summer resorts in Finland, Puumala offers you a scenic base for two nights.

**Day 5: Puumala Loop Tour (60 km, one ferry)**

The classic tour of Northern part of Saimaa offers a wide variety of landscapes and natural beauty. You can smell and even feel the lake right next to you as you admire the quiet country roads, sandy ridges and narrow passes, a ferry ride and scenic bridges. Pay close attention to the lakeside rocks, you might even spot the endangered Saimaa ringed seal! Enjoy the day, stop for a refreshing swim and return to Sahanlahti Resort for a second night. Do remember to visit the sauna too!

**Day 6: Utula-Kiviniemi-Lappeenranta (bus transfer + 55 km including one ferry)**

The last stage of the tour is the final crossing of Lake Saimaa from east to west and takes you back to Lappeenranta. After a bus transfer you start the cycling from Utula and its' one and only grocery store that is a reminiscent of times gone by. Take a detour to Huuhaanranta, known as the Riviera of Saimaa, which has a crowd free, over 1 km long sandy beach. A gentle stroll and a bike ferry ride make the perfect ending to this wonderful lake tour. You return to Lappeenranta, where you started the tour.

**Day 7:**

Individual departure or extra nights in Lappeenranta.



Juha Kuru, Visit Finland

## Saimaa Lakeland Cycling Tour:

**Total distance:** 250 km

**Level:** Intermediate, some steep up- and downhill

**Including:** A written tour description (PDF) in English/ German/ French, GPX files for navigation, daily luggage transfers, three bus transfers along the route, bike ferry tickets / vouchers accommodation, breakfast

**Rental bikes:** Touring or eBike

**Roads:** Most of the tour runs on tarmac, some short parts are on gravel.

**Terrain:** Some steeper up- and downhill.

## Accommodations (6 nights)

**Lappeenranta** (2) the first and 6th night

**Imatra** (1) the 2nd night

**Punkaharju** (1) the 3rd night,

**Puumala** (2) the 4th and 5th night

