



Discover the hidden treasures of Lake Saimaa – Saimaa UNESCO Global Geopark

Geology is a growing trend in nature tourism. Globally geoparks are very popular operating models in tourism. A Geopark is an area with clear boundaries that has scientifically or scenically significant geological sites. In addition to geology, Geoparks also have interesting natural sites and historic attractions. Geoparks operate under the protection of UNESCO. From the point of view of tourist attractions, Geopark areas can be compared to national parks and UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The goal of Geoparks is to develop the economy of the area sustainably through geotourism.

Saimaa Geopark had UNESCO Global Geopark status in spring 2021. Geology, biodiversity and the interaction between humans and nature play a central role in this region. The goal of Saimaa Geopark is to show off this unique area with its geology, nature and human life – to local residents as well as guests. It wants to boost nature tourism and economy in a sustainable way by increasing public recognition of the area and by supporting local entrepreneurship.

The reasons for visiting these places are as diverse as the locations themselves. From Lappeenranta, climate capital of Finland, to the Imatrankoski rapids and the vivid Puumala in the heart of the Geopark to the urban flair of Mikkeli – you can discover unique geological, architectural and archeological sites wherever you go.

An interplay of human life and nature

Not only geological processes but also human influences have affected the region over the centuries. From the first settlement until today, the waters of Saimaa have acted as the most important transport route. The Saimaa Canal offers an aquatic connection to the Gulf of Finland. Conversely, water has a deep impact on the lives of the locals: cities and small villages were built near the water. Meanwhile, bridges and ferries connect the residents of the fragmented archipelago.

Saimaa Geopark Partners:

Salpalinjan Hovi

<https://salpalinjanhovi.com>

Saimaan palju & Saimaa Naturally

<https://www.saimaanpalju.fi>

<http://www.saimaanaturally.com>

Villa Lummelahti

<https://www.villalummelahti.fi>



A biodiversity that needs protection

Completing the rich geological and cultural heritage, Saimaa is home to an exceptional wildlife and to endemic species that cannot be found anywhere else in the world. The most important species to protect is the Saimaa ringed seal of which little more than 300 specimens are left. The landlocked salmon and the Arctic char are two of the most critically endangered fish species. Today, the biodiversity of Saimaa is preserved through several conservation programmes.

Of course, you should not miss exploring Saimaa Geopark actively, whether on a hiking or biking tour or on a boat trip. This way, you will get to know the area intensively and discover the secrets of this distinctive natural and cultural landscape.

MEMBER MUNICIPALITIES

Lappeenranta

Savitaipale

Imatra

Taipalsaari

Ruokolahti

Sulkava

Juva

Puumala

Mikkeli