

South Coast



The southern coast of Finland extends west and east from Helsinki in two roughly equal stretches: one ending in a finger of land jutting into the Baltic towards Sweden, the other coming up short at the Russian border. For much of Finland's history it was the arena for these two powers to flex their muscles at each other, and this coastline, with its important harbours and fortresses, saw a good share of the action.

To this day the coastal settlements are a curious mixture. Kotka, an important industrial port, is near Hamina, whose quaint citadel shape gives it the feel of a quiet military museum. Hanko, on a peninsula, boasts luxurious tsarist villas, but was the scene of desperate fighting against the Russians in WWII. Nearby, you could be forgiven for thinking that the only artillery some of the peaceful Swedish-speaking seaside towns have ever seen is the starting gun for the annual regatta.

The whole coastline is a cartographer's nightmare. Speckled with thousands of islands and islets in a series of archipelagos, it is popular yachting territory and accessible by cruises from all the main towns along this coast.

The most enchanting places to visit on the south coast perhaps sound like unlikely attractions. A series of historic ironworks have been converted into beautiful rural retreats, with millstreams sparkling alongside the forge buildings, which these days are anything from museums to design shops. In the west, Fiskars and Fagervik stand out, while in the east, little Ruotsinpyhtää is equally beguiling.

This stretch of coast is the Finnish section of the Kuninkaantie, or King's Rd, a marked tourist route extending from Bergen in Norway to St Petersburg.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Staying overnight in one of Hanko's charming **Russian villas** (p102)
- Spending a summer evening at the **Mill Restaurant** (p106) in Ruotsinpyhtää
- Exploring the fascinating old ironworks at **Fiskars** (p99), where Finland's industrial age meets contemporary design
- Fly-fishing at the **Tsar's Imperial Fishing Lodge** (p110) at Langinkoski, near Kotka, or walking in the surrounding nature reserve
- Boating around the islands of Ekenäs **Archipelago National Park** (p99) or its equivalent near Kotka, the **Eastern Gulf** (p109)



History

In medieval times Sweden began exerting its influence in southwestern Finland and the signing of the Peace of Pähkinäsaari, an important peace treaty, with the rulers of Novgorod in 1323 established a border near St Petersburg that allowed for centuries of peaceful development along this coastline.

Extensive conflicts over the centuries with Russia and other Baltic powers led to various changes of the border zone and the fortification of many towns along the coast. Sweden lost part of the coast in the early 18th century, regained it again, only to lose the whole of Finland to Russia in 1809. Hanko became a popular place for the Russian aristocracy in summer, and the tsar fished at Kotka. Then came the Winter War and the Continuation War, which saw heavy fighting in the whole area. See p30 for more details.

Activities

The whole of the south coast is a boaters' paradise, with enormous numbers of islets forming chains of archipelagos. Nearly all towns offer summer cruises, good guest harbour facilities and the opportunity to charter a boat so you can find your own uninhabited spot. Alternatively, you might just fancy messing about in a hired canoe or rowboat; this can be done pretty much everywhere.

Fishing is popular here, as in many parts of Finland. The tsar did his casting on the Kymijoki river just north of Kotka. The sizeable Lohjanjärvi by the town of Lohja is a good venue for ice-fishing in winter and lake sports in summer.

The region is also good for cycling, with several marked routes along the Kuninkaantie (tourist route from Bergen to St Petersburg) both west and east from Helsinki.

Language

The south coast has a high number of Swedish speakers, who outnumber Finnish speakers in towns such as Ekenäs. This stretch of coastline is also popular with Swedish holidaymakers in summer, so it's one part of the country where you'll hear mostly Swedish spoken at that time of year.

Self-Catering Accommodation

The tourist offices and websites of most of the towns listed in this chapter have details of cottages available for rental. Another useful organization is **Suomen Eteläkarjen** (☎ 019-212 9200; www.southfinland.com) who have a portfolio of cottages in several south coast locations.

WEST OF HELSINKI

LOHJA

☎ 019 / pop 36, 218

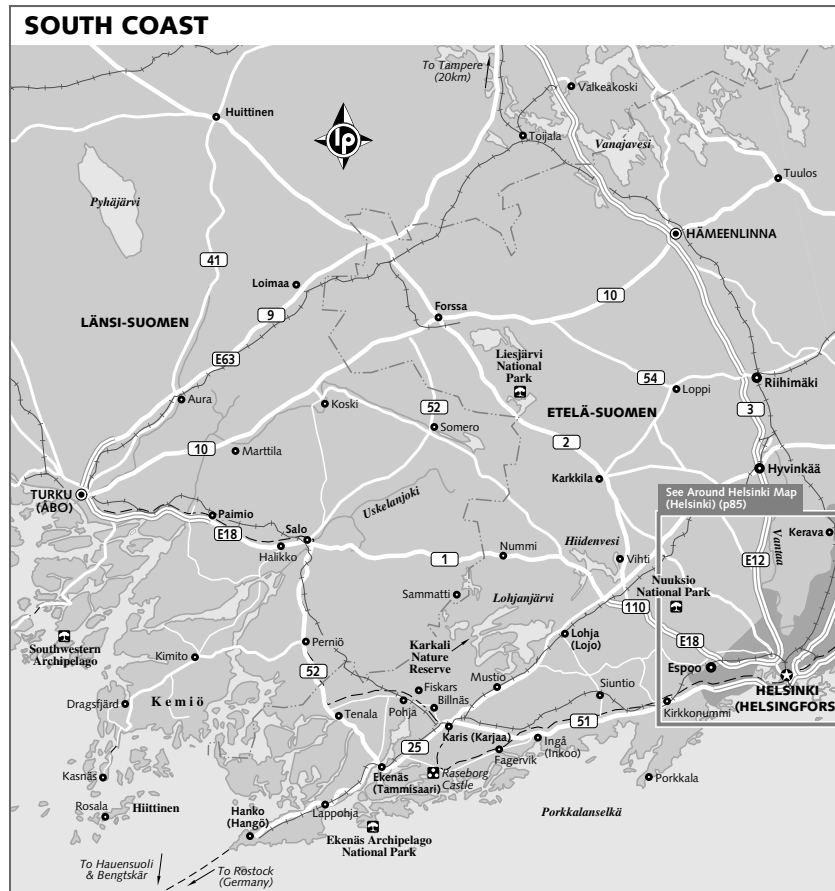
The peaceful and friendly inland town of Lohja (Swedish: Lojo) is on the shores of Lohjanjärvi, by far the biggest lake in this southern segment of Finland. An easy day-trip from Helsinki, Lohja's well worth visiting, especially if you have a car and can explore the lakeside and the surrounding area – the stamping ground of Elias Lönnrot, compiler of the *Kalevala* epic.

Lohja, now within commuting distance from Helsinki, traditionally earned its living from two things: mining and apple-growing. Finland's oldest known iron-mining works were here, and it continues to be an important limestone extraction centre. The lime, so coveted by the building industry, also serves to enrich the soil for the growth of apples.

The **tourist office** (☎ 369 1309; www.lohja.fi; Karstuntie 4; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-1.30pm Sat Jun-Aug, 9am-3pm Mon-Fri Sep-May) is near the main road junction in the centre of town. It has free Internet access. Buses stop at the station three blocks south of the tourist office on Laurinkatu.

Sights & Activities

The **Tytyri Mine Museum** (☎ 020-455 3945; admission €8; ☎ 11am-6pm daily Jun-Aug, noon-4pm Sat & Sun Sep-May) is an authentic limestone mine well worth visiting. An excellent descent into the bowels of the earth in a funicular takes you to the wide spaces below, where there are good information panels in English. Here, as elsewhere in Finland, new mine shafts were painted with tar to keep out devils. The deepest shaft measures 384m and is used to test elevators. The highlight of the visit is a short sound-and-light presentation looking into an awesomely large quarried cavern. It's cold



in the mine, so take a jacket. The museum is 500m north of the town centre, past the tourist office.

Lohja's church, **Pyhän Laurin Kirkko** (☎ 9am-4pm May-mid-Aug, 10am-3pm mid-Aug-Apr) is in the heart of town. It has a great wooden bell-tower and some of the finest murals (not strictly frescoes) in the region. Rustic and charming in style, they sequentially depict stories from both Testaments and date from the early 16th century.

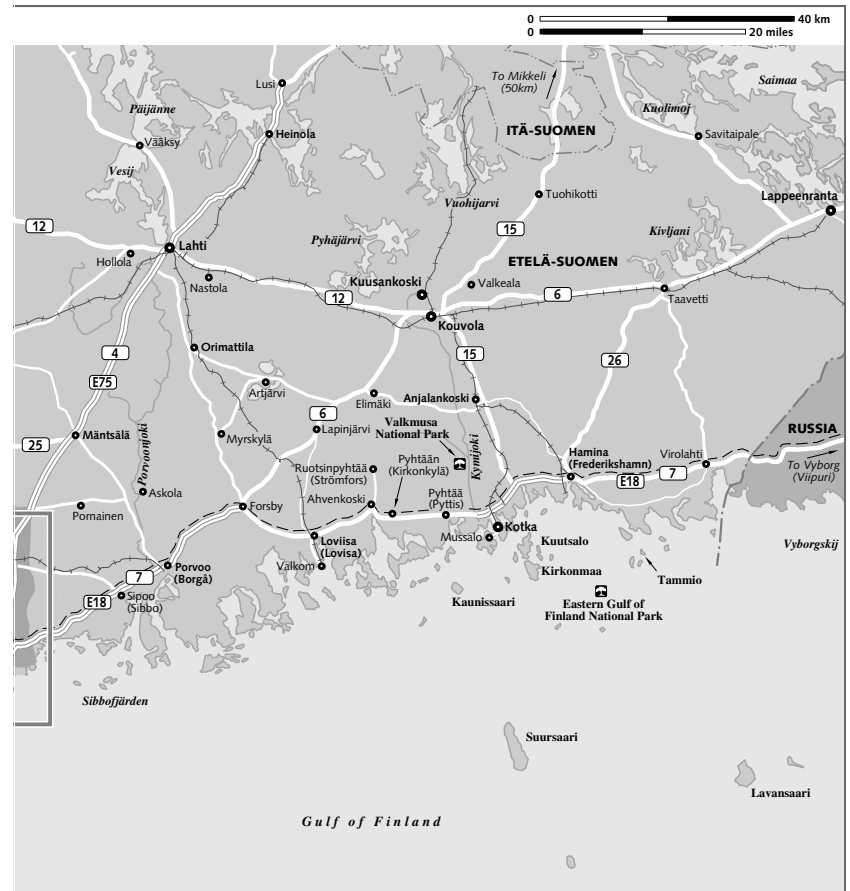
The **Lohja Museum** (☎ 369 4204; Iso-Pappila; admission €3.50; ☎ noon-4pm Tue-Sun, noon-7pm Wed) is a likeable little place with a collection of common household objects from different periods. Other buildings recreate a school-house and a cowherd's cottage; there's also

an impressive range of horse-drawn carriages, including an old-style hearse. Every summer there's a different special exhibition on an aspect of local history.

There are some good nature trails around Lohja; the tourist office has maps and details. The lake is an obvious focus for sports: in summer there's canoeing and fishing, in winter ice-fishing and snowmobile safaris. Contact the tourist office for operators' details.

AROUND LOHJA

The shores of the lake in the area around Lohja are dotted with apple orchards. The tourist office has a booklet locating the orchards that produce their own apple and



berry wines; one of the nicest is **Alitalo** (☎ 349 120; Pietiläntie 138), on Lohjansaari, which has a café and gentle farm animals for younger children.

Twenty-three kilometres west of Lohja, and 5km north of the village of Sammatti, just off Rd 104, is **Paikkarin Torppa** (☎ 356 659; admission €2.50; ☎ 11am-5pm mid-May-Aug). This pretty old wooden cottage was the birthplace of Elias Lönnrot, the compiler of the *Kalevala*. It has a large number of objects from his life, including his own *kantele* (Karelian stringed instrument). The setting (flowery meadows by a lake) is tempting picnic territory. There are many other sights on the Lönnrot 'trail' in this area.

Sleeping

Lohja is an easy day-trip from the capital, but there are a few sleeping options.

Hotelli Lohja (☎ 33221; www.personal.inet.fi/yri/tys/hotellilohja; Laurinkatu 34; s/d €92/111, weekends & summer €69/89; ☎) Just across from the bus station, this hotel is Lohja's smartest option. Rooms are furnished cosily and there's friendly service.

Matkakoti Linnakangas (☎ 324 488; www.linnakangas.com; Kauppakatu 3; s/d €32/45, d with bath €50; ☎) This comfortable and well-equipped guesthouse is in the centre of town, and has a variety of homely rooms with fridge, TV and toilet. Most rooms share a shower, while some have their own microwave; there's also a simple kitchen for guests' use.

Haikari Camping (☎ 0400 618 828; Haikarinkatu 4; s/d tent sites €10-13; ☽ Jun-Aug) This campsite is right on the lakeshore 2km southwest of town. There are kitchen facilities and a sauna, but no cabins. Next door is a summer restaurant with a great terraced garden.

Eating & Drinking

Lohja's eating choices are limited, but it boasts two memorable pubs.

Kahvila Liisa (☎ 312 581; Laurinkatu 61; ☽ 10am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat) In a pretty yellow wooden building, this café has a little outdoor terrace where you can enjoy tasty *karjalanpiirakka* (rice-filled savoury pastry) and excellent quiche. In the same building is a shop, Tuulentupa, selling attractive handicrafts and souvenirs.

Caballo Bayo (☎ 312 899; Kauppakatu 8; mains €7-20; ☽ lunch & dinner) This upstairs restaurant is one of Lohja's best and does a range of Spanish and Tex-Mex dishes. There's a charming wooden rooftop terrace, perfect at sunset. The grilled fresh fish is a favourite at €12.70.

Opus K (☎ 0500 476 632; Kauppakatu 6; ☽ 3pm-1am Tue-Thu, 4pm-2am Fri, noon-2am Sat) One of Finland's best pubs, it feels like a bibliophile's living room – lined floor to ceiling with books, which you can browse through while relaxing on the comfy chairs and sofas. Ask the owner to recommend a beer; he's always got something great on tap from an obscure Finnish microbrewery!

Kaljaasi (☎ 040-522 6612; ☽ weekends from May-end June, then daily until mid-Aug) This bar doesn't have an address, because it's on a floating platform way out in the middle of the lake and only reachable by boat! It's a stupendous spot to sit and drink. You can hire or charter boats in Lohja (ask the tourist office), or they'll pick you up from Virkkala, a village 7km southwest of town for €10 each way.

Getting There & Away

There are buses that run hourly from Helsinki to Lohja (€8.40, one hour). There are also buses from Lohja to Salo and Turku, and to Ekenäs and Hanko on the south coast.

INGÅ

☎ 019 / pop 5152

Ingå (Finnish: Inkoo) is a tiny, attractive and predominantly Swedish-speaking seaside town. There's a little marina, with a

library and café, a pottery workshop, and not much else, apart from the church.

St Nicholas Church (☽ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri year-round, also 9am-6pm Sat & Sun May-Aug) was founded in the 13th century. There are beautiful frescoes over the altar, but most striking is the Dance of Death frieze opposite the entrance door. In this frieze, grinning Reapers escort various members of society to the afterlife; all are equal in death. Across the river is **Ingå Gammelgård**, the local museum.

About 8km west of Ingå is **Fagervik Ironworks** (☎ 295 151; Rd 105), one of the most attractive *bruks* (early ironworks precinct) in Finland. It was established in 1646 and helped to develop the region before anyone had thought of tourism. The Russian army destroyed the area during the Great Northern War in the 1720s, but the factory was later rebuilt before ultimately closing in 1902. The site, perfect for a bit of light strolling, features an 18th-century wooden church beautifully located by a lake, a privately owned manor, two restored blacksmith forges, the remnants of an orangery, and a resident ghost, the enigmatic Blue Lady. There's a café and an exhibition of the history of the ironworks

Ingå is southwest of Helsinki on road 51. There are several daily bus connections.

EKENÄS

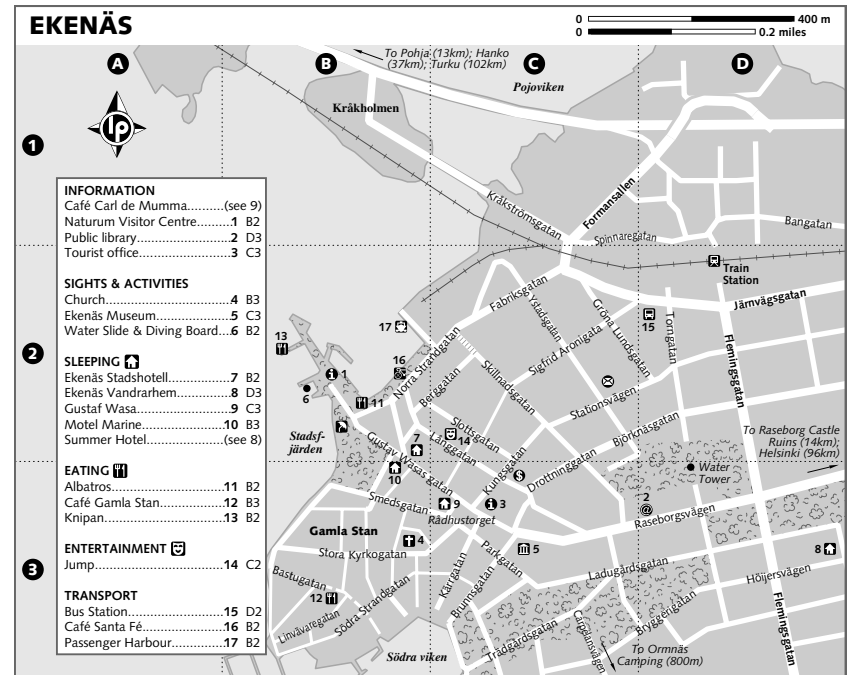
☎ 019 / pop 14,521

The seaside town of Ekenäs (Finnish: Tammissaari) is a quiet resort, popular with Finnish and Swedish holidaymakers and families. It's relaxed and elegant, with avenues of wooden buildings, particularly in its well-preserved Old Town, which is delightful. Mostly Swedish-speaking, it makes a restful stop and a good place to explore parts of the adjacent Ekenäs Archipelago National Park.

It's one of Finland's oldest towns – King Gustav Vasa conceived of it in 1546 as a trading port to rival Tallinn in Estonia. The idea failed, and many local business people were soon forcibly transferred to the newly founded Helsinki. These days it makes its livelihood from tourism and fishing, and there is an army base on the edge of town.

Information

Café Carl de Mumma (☎ 241 4640; Rådhusorget; ☽ 9am-5pm) Café and bakery with Internet terminals.



Naturum Visitor Centre (☎ 241 1198; ☽ 10am-8pm May-Aug) Detailed information on Ekenäs Archipelago National Park, including a free slide show and ecoexhibits.

Public library (☎ 263 2700; Raseborgsvägen 6-8; ☽ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) Has free Internet terminals.

Tourist office (☎ 263 2100; www.ekenas.fi; Rådhusorget; ☽ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat summer, 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri autumn-spring) Friendly with free Internet terminal. Offers information for the entire southwest region.

Sights & Activities

The well-preserved **Gamla Stan** (Old Town) features wooden houses from the late 18th and early 19th centuries. They line narrow streets that are named after hatters, comb-makers and other artisans who once worked in the precinct. Some buildings contain artisans' shops, which are open in summer. The oldest buildings are on Linvävaregatan. Most of the buildings in Gamla Stan are named after types of fish, as this area was originally a small fishing village.

The stone **church** (☽ 10am-6pm May-Aug), in Gamla Stan has a tower that can be seen

from most parts of town. It was built between 1651 and 1680, damaged in the fire of 1821, and renovated in 1990.

The main building of the **Ekenäs Museum** (☎ 020-775 2240; Gustav Wasas gatan 11; admission €2; ☽ 11am-5pm summer), built in 1802, depicts how a wealthy artisan family in the 1800s would have lived. Other buildings have temporary exhibitions of modern art and photography, and permanent displays on local history, including a re-creation of a fishing village.

Bicycles can be hired from the **marina** (☎ 241 1790) or Café Santa Fé. Rent rowing boats (€10/20 per half/full day) and bikes (€10 per day) at **Ormnäs Camping** (☎ 241 4434).

Tours

The former steamship **M/S Sunnan II** (☎ 241 1850; www.surfnet.fi/saaristoristeilyt) offers archipelago cruises daily in summer, departing from the passenger harbour. Cruises range from two hours (€10) to six hours (€45), and sometimes include meals.

The **M/S Panda** (☎ 0400 468 512) sails on Saturdays in July and August to the island of Rodjan (€15, three hours), and on Sundays

to Jussarö (€20, five hours). Both departures are from North Harbour at 1pm.

Sleeping

The tourist office has details of numerous weekly cottage rentals or overnight home-stay accommodation in Ekenäs and the surrounding area.

Ekenäs Vandrarhem (☎ 241 6393; ekenas@vandrarhem.inet.fi; Höjersvägen 10; dm from €12.50, s/d €22/29; ☎ reception 3-9pm mid-May–mid-Aug; 📞 ☒) An HI-affiliated summer hostel, this place offers tidy, modern apartment-style rooms (four rooms share a kitchen and bathroom). Breakfast is an extra €4.50 and sheets are €3.50 if you need them. There's a sauna and a laundry. On the same site is a **summer hotel** (s/d €32/49). The apartments are the same, but breakfast and bed linen are included.

Ekenäs Stadshotell (☎ 241 3131; www.stadshotell.nu; Norra Strandgatan 1; s/d €67/87; 📞 ☒) This place is a little dated but still the top hotel in town – rates include breakfast and sauna. It's got a seaside-resort feel being very close to the beach and to most of the action. It's also pretty family-friendly. All double rooms have balconies, and suites are a fairly good deal at €114. The restaurant also has some great duck and game dishes.

Gustaf Wasa (☎ 241 3020; www.gustaf-wasa.nu; Rådhusorget; s/d from €68/86; ☎) With just 10 rooms, this is a small hotel overlooking the market square. The rooms are modern, with comfortable furnishings and small bathrooms. Breakfast is included. Rates drop by about 20% in winter. There's also a cottage available to rent in summer.

Motel Marine (☎ 241 3833; www.motelmarine.fi; Kammakaregatan 4-6; s €45-80, d €65-100; 📞 ☒ ☎) This is a shabby-looking weatherboard complex, but the rooms are OK and vary in price and quality. Some of them have a simple kitchen and there's also an apartment with a private sauna. It's very close to the beach and has a pretty laissez-faire management style. Breakfast is included.

Ormnäs Camping (☎ 241 4434; www.ek-camping.com; sites per person/tent €6.50/11, 2-/4-person cottages €29/47; ☎ May-Sep) At the seaside, 1km from the town centre, this camping ground is next to Ramsholmen Nature Park. There's a café, and bikes (€10 per day) and boats (€20 per day) can be rented here. The reception is only open until 6pm, so if you need a cottage, arrive before then.

Eating

There are several good cafés and restaurants around the main square, Rådhusorget, including pizzerias and Chinese restaurants. Café Carl de Mumma is a bakery and café serving inexpensive sandwiches, cakes and pastries.

Knipan (☎ 241 1169; mains €17-22; ☎ 11am-midnight Mon-Fri, noon-midnight Sat & Sun May–mid-Sep) Knipan, in the old wooden building erected in the harbour in 1867 (see Entertainment following for details), is the best summer restaurant in town. There's an excellent à la carte menu with such temptations as tournedos and salmon, and there's also a substantial lunch buffet (€10.30/17.20 with/without hot dishes). The little terrace, with water lapping all around, is a great spot.

Café Gamla Stan (☎ 241 5656; Bastugatan 5; ☎ 11am-6pm May, 11am-8pm Jun-Aug) This is a beautiful garden café in the Old Town. The small house is a bit hard to find and has just a few seats in the creeper-swathed garden, but is worth the effort. There's also a craft shop and live music in the garden during summer.

Albatros (☎ 241 2848; Stallörsparken; pasta €10-13, steaks €16-20; ☎ 10am-midnight May-Aug) By the harbour, this does a booming business in takeaway hamburgers, hot dogs and ice cream during summer. It also has a restaurant and fine sheltered terrace right opposite the kids' playground and beach, so you can keep an eye on them. They have DJs on some summer evenings.

Entertainment

Jump (☎ 246 1676; Långgatan 14) This is the main nightclub in town, and pretty lively in summer. DJs mostly play crowd-pleasers, recent hits and pop classics, to keep everyone happy.

Knipan (see Eating) becomes a dance club at night; this means elegant ballroom-style Finnish tangos and foxtrots. It was built on poles over the water because local laws allowed only one bar on town ground. There's live music on summer evenings and a floating beer terrace.

Getting There & Away

Ekenäs is 96km southwest of Helsinki on road 25. There are five to seven buses a day from Helsinki (€13.70, 1½ hours), Turku

(€16.20, two hours) or Hanko (€8.70, 30 minutes).

Trains to Ekenäs coming from Helsinki and Turku go via Karis (Finnish: Karjaa) where a change is required. Seven to nine daily trains run from Helsinki (€16.70, 1½ hours) and Turku (€19, 1½ hours), both continuing on to Hanko. Some connections from Ekenäs to Karis involve a railbus.

AROUND EKENÄS

Raseborg Castle

The Raseborg Castle ruins (Finnish: Raasepori), dating from the late 14th century, are extremely impressive, perched on a rock and towering over a grassy sward. The castle was of great strategic importance in the 15th century, when it protected the trading town of Tuna. Karl Knutsson Bonde, three times king of Sweden, was one of its most prominent residents. By the mid-16th century, Raseborg's importance had declined, and it was unoccupied for more than 300 years. The castle features in a famous Finnish children's ditty.

The **castle** (☎ 234 015; admission €1; ☎ 10am-8pm) is 14km east of Ekenäs, and about 2km west of the wonderfully-named village of Snappertuna. It's signposted Slottsruiner/Linnanrauniot off the main road. You buy your tickets at the café (which does excellent *korvapuusti* – cinnamon rolls). You won't find a great deal of explanatory stuff, but it's great to climb up and down the levels, and patrol the ramparts; this is a proper fortress, with no soft edges. There are free tours from mid-May to August at weekends at 3pm. During July there are evening concerts at Raseborg; contact the Ekenäs tourist office for details. There are occasional buses to Snappertuna from Ekenäs or Karis.

The HI-affiliated **Snappertuna Youth Hostel** (☎ 019-234 180; Kyrköväg 129; dm/d €17/28; 📞 ☒), in the village, is a quiet alternative to staying in Ekenäs. There are two simple cottages sleeping up to four each, as well as a kitchen.

Ekenäs Archipelago National Park

The beautiful archipelago that surrounds Ekenäs includes a scattering of some 1300 islands, 50 sq km of which is national park. The best way to visit the park is by boat from Ekenäs harbour.

If you visit the island of Älgö, you can see the old fishing house, use the cooking facilities or stay overnight at the camping ground. There are also camping grounds on the islands of Fladalandet and Modermagan. Visit the Naturum Visitor Centre in Ekenäs for more information about the park.

There are various cruises (see Tours p97) that visit some of the islands in the archipelago, but to really explore it, you'll need your own boat. Charter boats include the **M/S Kennedy** (☎ 0400 470 751) and **M/S Johanna** (☎ 0400 541 9480).

FISKARS

☎ 019 /pop about 200

Northeast of Ekenäs along road 111 is the village of Pohja, the centre of an area known for its historic ironworks. Several small *bruk* villages in this area can be visited in a day, but the most outstanding by far is Fiskars (Swedish: Fiskari), a beautiful riverside village where the old brick buildings have been transformed into shops, galleries, design studios and cafés. During the last few years, Fiskars has gained a reputation as a centre of modern Finnish art and design, creating an absorbing mix of the old and the new.

The *bruk* was first established on the Fiskars River in 1649, and the village grew up around it. The works mainly produced farming equipment, chiefly ploughs – more than a million horse-ploughs came out of here in the 19th century. In 1816 the mansion that housed the owner of the *bruk* was built, and this is still the centrepiece of the village. A number of other buildings were designed by German architect Carl Engel. Although manufacturing operations have long since moved on, the Fiskars Company still produces its world-famous scissors and cutlery, which can be purchased in the village.

There's a **tourist information office** (☎ 277 7504; www.fiskarsvillage.net; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat May-end Aug) located in the workers' tenement buildings, near the distinctive clock-tower building.

Sights

The best way to see Fiskars is on foot, starting from the western (Pohja) end, with the river on your right. The first building on the left is the **assembly hall**, built in 1896

as a public hall. Just beyond and opposite, encircled by a stream, is the **granary** (1902), which now hosts various art, design and history exhibitions. Behind it is the **copper Forge** (1818), with more exhibition space, a glass studio and a good restaurant with a riverside terrace. Continuing along the road, you pass the **stone house**, the mansion originally occupied by factory owner John Julin, the old **mill**, and the distinctive **dock-tower building**. It now houses shops, galleries and a café. Where the road forks is the marketplace with stalls, a café and terrace in summer. Continuing along the unpaved road towards Degersjöjärvi, you pass more workers' housing and what remains of Fiskars ironworks.

Near the lake is **Fiskars Museum** (☎ 237 013; admission €2.50; ☎ 11am-4pm May-Sep, 1-4pm Sat & Sun Oct-Mar), which explains the fascinating local history of the ironworks and village. Every season there is a different exhibition, as well as a special one at Christmas.

Throughout the village are numerous design and craft shops, generally open in summer from 11am to 6pm, and at weekends during the rest of the year. The village website www.fiskarsvillage.net has a full listing.

Sleeping & Eating

Fiskars can be visited as a day trip from Helsinki, or anywhere in this section, but it also has a hotel and some boutique B&B accommodation.

Villiruusu/Wildrose B&B (☎ 237 033; villiruusu@kolumbus.fi; Långdalintie 3; s/d €50/65; (P) ☒) This is a lovely guesthouse in a beautifully decorated wooden building. The two rooms are blissfully comfortable, one romantically kitted out in royal blue, the other in florals; they share a bathroom. If a family or group books both rooms, they get the whole upper floor at their disposal. The whole feeling is like being in one of those beautiful houses in an Ingmar Bergman film – minus the introspection of course! The breakfast is excellent. There's free use of bicycles and a rowboat on the lake nearby.

Fiskars Wårdshus (☎ 276 6510; warssy@wards.hus.inet.fi; s/d from €120/150; (P) ☒) This noble old building was erected in 1836 and is the most luxurious place to stay in Fiskars. The 15 newly-renovated rooms don't quite evoke the building's history

but are undeniably comfortable, with beautiful modern fittings made from pine and elm by local craftsmen. There's also an excellent à la carte restaurant with a great terrace.

Restaurant Kuparipaja (☎ 237 045; mains €12-20; ☎ lunch & dinner) This is a good à la carte restaurant (try the bison and moose sausages if you're in carnivore mode), in one of the old copper forge buildings, as well as a café-bar dispensing filled rolls, pasta dishes and a salad buffet. There's a charming terrace overhanging the river. The lunch buffet is €16.

In the clock-tower building, **Café Antique** (☎ 237 275; ☎ 11am-6pm May-Sep) has books and is a good spot for coffee and a light meal. There's also a café set up at the market square over summer.

HANKO

☎ 019 / pop 9905

Hanko (Swedish: Hangö), on a long sandy peninsula, blossomed as a spa town in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when it was a glamorous retreat for Russian nobles, tsars and artists. The grand seaside villas built by these wealthy summer visitors are now the town's star attraction – locals refer to them as 'the old ladies', as each has been given a woman's name. Many now operate as guesthouses; they are Finland's most unique accommodation and very popular with tourists in summer. The row of restaurants by the marina is a memorable and beautiful spot to eat in summer, with great outdoor tables and intimate interiors.

History

Even before Hanko, the southernmost town in Finland, was founded in 1874, the peninsula was an important anchorage. Hanko has also been a major point of departure from Finland. Between 1881 and 1931, about 250,000 Finns left for the USA and Canada via the Hanko docks.

At the end of the Winter War, the March 1940 peace treaty with Russia required Finland to cede to them the Hanko peninsula as a naval base. The Russians moved in with a garrison of 30,000 and constructed a huge network of fortifications. After several bloody naval engagements, Hanko eventually was abandoned in December 1941, having been isolated from the Russian

frontlines. The citizens of Hanko returned to their damaged town the next spring.

Orientation

The East Harbour is the centre of the town's activity in summer, the West Harbour handling only commercial traffic. Russian villas are on Appelgrentie, east of East Harbour. Most things are within walking distance of the adjacent bus and train stations.

Information

Park Café (☎ 248 6182; Appelgrentie 11; ☎ May-Sep) Has a free Internet terminal.

Public library (☎ 220 3380; Vuorikatu 3-5; ☎ 11am-7pm Mon-Wed, 11am-3pm Thu, 9am-3pm Fri, also 11am-2pm Sat in winter) Has several Internet terminals.

Tourist office (☎ 220 3411; www.hanko.fi; Raati-huoneentori 5; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri Sep-May, 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun Jun-Jul, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun Aug) In the town hall building.

Sights & Activities

Take a lift to the top of the 50m landmark **water tower** (admission €1; ☎ noon-6pm Jun-Jul, 1-3pm Aug) on Vartiouvuori Hill for an excellent view across town and out to sea. The nearby neo-Gothic **Hanko Church** (☎ noon-6pm Jul-early Aug, 1-3pm rest of Aug), built in 1892, was damaged in WWII but has been thoroughly renovated.

Hanko Museum (☎ 220 3228; Nycanderinkatu 4; adult/child €2/0.50; ☎ 11am-4pm Tue-Sun & 6-7pm Thu mid-May-Aug, shorter hr winter) is the town museum housed in the brick-and-stone building near East Harbour, with a smattering of local (especially military) history and changing exhibitions.

Hanko is quite an artistic community, and there are some half a dozen **art galleries** scattered around town, including changing exhibitions in the **town hall**. The tourist office has details of current exhibitions.

Hanko has 30km of sandy beaches. The beach from Merikatu to the Casino is the best – it even has Victorian-style changing boxes. The next beach, behind the tennis courts, is especially good for kids, with a playground, monitors and a rotary swing in the bay.

Where Bulevardi meets the beach is the **Monument of Liberty**, commemorating the landing of liberating German forces in 1918. The monument was taken down after WWII, but re-erected in 1960 with new text.

Bicycles are ideal for exploring the parkland and Russian villas east of the town centre – a ride or walk out to Neljän Tuulen Tupa on Little Pine Island is a good excursion. Bikes can be hired at **SunFun Hanko** (☎ 248 6699; www.sunfun.fi) at the East Harbour, **Café Plage** (☎ 248 2776) or **Paul Feldt's bicycle shop** (☎ 248 1860; Tarhakatu 4) in the town centre. SunFun also rents mopeds, rowboats, canoes and water-skiing gear.

At **Tennisranta**, just beyond the Casino, there are eight outdoor tennis courts available to rent.

EAST OF HANKO

Twenty kilometres east of Hanko, and just off the Ekenäs highway, the **Front Museum** (☎ 244 3068; adult/child €3/1; ☎ 11.30am-6.30pm May-mid-Sep) covers Finland's wartime involvement, specifically relating to this battlefield. There are original trenches, some foundations, a scattering of artillery and an extensive tent exhibition. Although a serious subject, the use of shop dummies gives the exhibition a mildly comic aspect.

Cruises

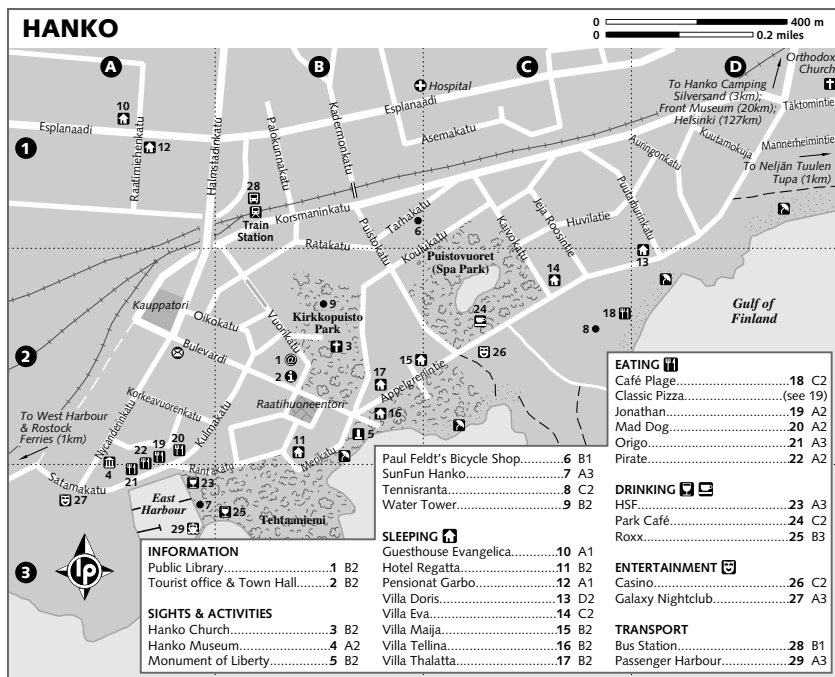
The most interesting short cruise from Hanko is the 1½-hour trip to Hauensuoli. The **M/S Marina** (☎ 0400 536 930; www.hk-service.fi; fare €15) or **SunFun Charter** (☎ 248 6699) departs from East Harbour daily from May to August at 1pm and includes commentary in English, Finnish and Swedish.

From mid-June to the end of August, several boats offer day cruises to the island of Bengtskär (p104), all departing from East Harbour. The cruises include lunch and entrance to the island. **M/S Summersea** (☎ 0400 536 930; www.hk-service.fi; adult/child €46/19) sails at 10.30am, with an extra departure at 2pm in July. **M/S Anna** (☎ 469 2500; adult/child €46/20) departs at 11am. **M/Y Marilyn** (☎ 040-728 9539; per person €48, or without lunch €42) operates from July to mid-August, departing at 10am. The cruises last between four and a half (the Marilyn) and seven (the Anna) hours.

All cruises should be booked in advance with the company or the tourist office.

Festivals & Events

Since Hanko claims to have Finland's largest marina, it's hardly surprising that the most important annual event is the **Hanko Regatta** in which more than 200 boats compete. The



regatta takes place on the first weekend of July, attracts thousands of spectators and has a real carnival atmosphere.

Sleeping

Accommodation can be tight in the summer months, so book ahead. Prices go up during the regatta.

GUESTHOUSES & HOTELS

Pensionat Garbo (☎ 040-542 1732; fax 248 7897; Esplanadi 84; s/d/family €30/65/100; (P) ☒) This quirky place is essentially a shrine to the golden age of celluloid kitsch; each room commemorates a particular Hollywood star. It has an outdoor barbecue and kitchen facilities, as well as a beautiful breakfast salon. The helpful owner also has a cottage outside Hanko available for weekly rental.

Guesthouse Evangelica (☎ 248 6923; www.evangelica.net; Esplanadi 61; s/d from €32/51, with bathroom €46/64; (P) ☒) Diagonally opposite Pensionat Garbo is this guesthouse. Part of a school complex, but open year-round, there are two buildings. The newer wing has rooms with clean, cute bathrooms, Aalto furniture

and a crisp Nordic feel. The older wing has rooms with shared bathrooms, which are also good-value. There are kitchenettes for guests' use, and breakfast is available.

Hotel Regatta (☎ 248 6491; www.surfnet.fi/regatta; Merikatu 1; s €64-80, d €81-115; (P) ☒) The only standard hotel in Hanko, this is a likeable place despite its somewhat shabby exterior. It's popular with tour groups and conferences. Breakfast is included in the rates and there's the obligatory sauna. You'll pay a little more for rooms with sea views. The bar gets pretty rowdy on Saturday nights.

VILLAS

A unique feature of Hanko is its selection of old Russian-style villas that have been meticulously renovated and converted into guesthouses.

Villa Maija (☎ 248 2900; www.villamaija.fi; Appelgrenintie 7; s/d from €76/96, d with shared bathroom €85; ☒ mid-Apr–mid-Oct; (P) ☒) This place, built in 1888, is a real beauty, with stunning French windows opening onto ornate verandahs. There's a big variety of rooms, some of which have sea views and a Jacuzzi, and

there's a great little breakfast terrace and a sauna. Some of the rooms are in a couple of other villas in the same compound.

Villa Doris (☎ 248 1228; Appelgrenintie 23; s/d from €50/72; (P) ☒) A charming *pensionat* dating from 1881, contains old furniture from various decades in all the rooms, which share bathrooms. It's homely and friendly, open all year, and the rates are much cheaper off-season. Breakfast is included.

Villa Tellina (☎ 248 6356; www.tellina.com; Appelgrenintie 2; s/d from €50/75, with bathroom for €60/90; ☒ Jun–mid-Aug; (P) ☒) Right by the beach, this ramshackle place has basic but comfortable rooms with lots of character. The same owners run **Villa Eva** (☎ 248 6356; Kaivokatu 2) and **Villa Thalatta** (☎ 248 6356; Appelgrenintie 1), so there's a huge variety of room types and prices. Best bet for a room during busy periods.

CAMPING

Hanko Camping Silversand (☎ 248 5500; www.lomalitto.fi; Hopeahietikko; tent sites €13.50, 2-person cabin €43-52, 4-person cabin €52-60; 6-8-person cottage €60-76; ☒ Jun-Aug) About 3km northeast of the town centre, this place is set on a long beach. There's also a **motel** (s/d €56/78; ☒ year-round; (P)) and a café and sauna.

Eating

The place to eat is at East Harbour, where a row of quaint red wooden buildings house a cluster of gourmet fish restaurants, all with crowded terraces. There are also cheaper pizza places and a grilli. The only one of these open all year is HSF (see p104).

Jonathan (☎ 248 7742; Satamakatu 15; mains €16-25; ☒ 11am-midnight May-Aug) With a maritime-themed dining room upstairs, and a terrace and bar, this restaurant (named after the seagull) is a good choice. There are small but tasty tapas portions (€3 to €4), snails in delicious garlic butter (€8.20), and great salmon and roast chicken mains. The service is good here. Adjacent and under the same management is **Classic Pizza** with reasonably priced pizzas.

Origo (☎ 248 5023; Satamakatu 7; mains €15-18; ☒ 11am-10pm mid-Apr–mid-Oct) This is a charming place and one of the best fish restaurants. It's certainly the most elegant on this strip, with a candlelit interior; its back bar is open until 3am.

Pirate (☎ 248 3006; Satamakatu 13; mains €8-18; ☒ 11am-1am Easter–mid-Sep) One of the most

popular restaurants here with a dark interior and large terrace. It's a down-to-earth place with gruff service, occasional live music and big portions.

Neljän Tuulen Tupa (House of the Four Winds; ☎ 248 1455; ☒ mid-May–mid-Aug) This place on Little Pine Island, 1.5km east of the town centre, is where folks went to imbibe so-called 'hard tea' (alcohol) during the Finnish prohibition (1919–32). At the time, Field Marshal CGE Mannerheim had his summer cottage on the neighbouring island. He found the merry-making disturbing and solved the problem by buying the whole joint in 1926. He fired the chef, imported tea sets from France and ran the place himself until 1931. Little Pine Island is now connected to the mainland by a bridge and has a beautiful café and summer terrace perched over the water.

Café Plage (☎ 248 2776; Tennisranta; ☒ Jun-Aug) This is a simple café/bar right on the beach and away from the bustle of the harbour area. It does simple food, has minigolf and tennis nearby, and is on the best stretch of sand in the area for children.

For something cheap, **Mad Dog** (☎ 248 3030; Eastern Harbour; ☒ to 1am or later May-Aug) is a grilli and pub with a small terrace. It's a good spot for hamburgers and sandwiches with a beer.

Drinking & Entertainment

Casino (☎ 248 2310; www.hangocasino.fi; Appelgrenintie 10; ☒ May-Aug) The imposing green-and-white casino, between Spa Park and the beach, is a classic seaside venue and Hanko's most famous nightspot. It has plenty of class and charm; there's music, dancing and a roulette table, and the cover charge depends on what's on. The restaurant here is good, with pepper steaks, salmon and the like for €15 to €22.

Park Café (☎ 248 6182; Appelgrenintie 11; ☒ May-Sep) This place, opposite the Casino in Spa Park, is an excellent Belgian café-bar with a casual atmosphere and free Internet access. The terrace, shaded by lofty pines, is a great place to relax.

Galaxy Nightclub (☎ 248 7700; Satamakatu 2; ☒ 10pm-3am Wed-Sun, till 4am Sat) When it gets late, the sophisticated youth of Hanko head here. The DJs are as close to cutting edge as it gets in a Finnish beach resort, with dance music usually prevailing over Europop.

Some good summertime beer terraces include **Roxx** (☎ 248 4393), which often has live music in summer, and the 2nd floor of **HSF** (☎ 248 2264), both at East Harbour. HSF, the sailing club, also has a good restaurant with large windows looking out over the marina.

Getting There & Away

BOAT

The **M/S Franz Höijer** (☎ 241 1850; www.surfnet.fi/saaristoristeilyt) travels between Hanko and Turku (then on to Uusikaupunki the next day) at 10am on Thursdays from mid-May to mid-August. (€12, eight hours one way). From Turku, the boat departs at 10am on Wednesdays, arriving in Hanko at 6pm.

Superfast Ferries has an international service to Rostock in Germany from West-ern Harbour (see p347).

BUS

There are regular (two to six) daily express buses to/from Helsinki (€21.30, 2¼ hours) via Ekenäs (€8.70, 30 minutes).

TRAIN

Seven to nine trains travel daily from Helsinki and Turku to Karis (Finnish: Karjaa) where they are met by connecting trains or buses to Hanko (via Ekenäs). The two-hour ride from Helsinki costs €24.40.

AROUND HANKO

Hauensuoli

The narrow strait between Tullisaari and Kobben, called Hauensuoli (Pike's Gut), is a protected natural harbour where sailing ships from countries around the Baltic Sea used to wait out storms in days of yore. Many of the sailors who passed through here paused to carve their initials or tales of bravery on the rocks, earning Hauensuoli the moniker, 'Guest Book of the Archipelago'. Some 600 rock carvings dating back to the 17th century remain. Hauensuoli can be reached by charter taxi boat or on a cruise from Hanko – see p101.

Bengtskär

Bengtskär is an islet about 25km from Hanko, at the bottom of Finland's south-western archipelago. It's the southernmost inhabited island in Finland, chosen as a lighthouse station in 1906 to protect ships

from the dangerous waters of the archipelago. At 52m the lighthouse is the tallest in Scandinavia, although it was extensively damaged during the Continuation War against the Red Army in 1941. It was restored and opened to the public in 1995 and now has a museum, café, post office and **accommodation** (☎ 02-466 7227). Day cruises to Bengtskär leave from Hanko in summer (see p101), or you can charter boats from Hanko or the village of Rosala on the island of Hiittinen. Also see p199 for cruises to Bengtskär from Turku.

EAST OF HELSINKI

LOVIISA

☎ 019 / pop 7417

Loviisa (Swedish: Lovisa) was named after the Swedish Queen Lovisa Ulrika in 1752, even though there had been a settlement at this harbour site for almost a century before that. Hurriedly fortified by the Swedes when they lost garrison towns (such as Hamina) to the east, Loviisa was finally taken easily by the Russians in 1808.

In the 18th century Loviisa was one of three towns in Finland allowed to engage in foreign trade, and by the 19th century it was a flourishing port and spa town. Loviisa was devastated by fire during the Crimean War (1853–56), so little of the original Old Town remains. These days it's very much a summer resort, when all the attractions are open and boat trips are operating from the marina – skip it out of season.

Information

Library (☎ 555 330; Kuningattarenkatu 24) Free Internet access. It's just north of Mannerheiminkatu – the entrance is via the small park.

Post office (Kuningattarenkatu 13) On the corner of the market square.

Tourist office (www.loviisa.fi) summer office (☎ 555 446; Brandensteininkatu 11B; ☎ 9am–5pm Mon–Fri, 10am–3pm Sat Jun–Aug); town hall (☎ 555 234; Mannerheiminkatu 4; ☎ 9am–4pm Mon–Fri Sep–May) Information at the town hall on the *kauppatori* (market square), or in summer in the cheerful office on the opposite side of the square.

Sights

The very small **Old Town** of Loviisa, just south of Mannerheiminkatu, is what's left of the

wooden buildings following the disastrous fire of 1855. Don't expect another Porvoo, but the narrow streets around **Degerby Gille** restaurant are the quaintest in town, and the restaurant itself is in a building that predates the town (1662).

On the market square, the impressive red-brick neo-Gothic **Loviisa Church** (☎ 10am–6pm mid-May–mid-Aug), built in 1865, is a dominant feature; guides are on hand in summer to give free tours. It was designed by Georg Theodor Chiewitz, who also designed many of the civic buildings in the wake of the blaze.

Loviisa Town Museum (☎ 555 357; Puistokatu 2; admission €2; ☎ 11am–4pm Tue–Sun Jun–Aug, noon–4pm Sun Sep–May, extended hr during exhibitions) is in an old manor house about 200m north of the market square. There are three floors of recently renovated historical exhibits, with details of Loviisa's metalwork industry, as well as period furniture and costumes, and changing local art exhibitions. There's also an exhibition on Jean Sibelius, who used to spend his summers at Sibeliuskenkatu 10. The town's biggest annual event is the **Sibelius Festival** in early June, which features a weekend of concert performances.

In summer most of the action is at **Laivasilta Marina**, 500m southeast of the centre. A cluster of old rust-coloured wooden storehouses now contains galleries, craft shops, cafés and a small maritime museum. Boats to Svartholma Sea Fortress (p106) depart from this marina.

Sleeping & Eating

Helgas Gasthaus (☎ 531 576; Sibeliuskenkatu 6; s/d €25/45; ☎) This place is a simple, small, old-fashioned, family-run guesthouse with a range of rooms and a large, peaceful garden at the back.

Hotel Degerby (☎ 50561; www.degerby.com; Brandensteininkatu 17; s/d €81/95, Sat, Sun & summer €67/80, ste €133; ☎ ☎ ☎) This place, near the market square, is the best of the three hotels in town. The carpeted rooms have comfortable beds and standard facilities. The hotel also has a decent bar as does Styrbord Restaurant (lunch buffet for €7.50).

Casino Camping (☎ 530 244; www.casinocamping.fi; Kapteenintie 1; s/d tent sites €10/12, s/d from €35/60; ☎) lodging all year, camping early Jun–late Aug) This friendly place is in a delightful waterfront spot about 500m south of the marina. As

NUCLEAR POWER

Although Finland was one of the countries most affected by fallout from the 1986 Chernobyl disaster, it continues to use nuclear power, ironically largely in order to reduce dependency on imported energy from Russia. Reducing greenhouse-gas emissions is also an important factor.

There are four operational reactors in Finland, two of which are at the Loviisa complex, 15km from town on the island of Hästholmen. These reactors supply over a quarter of the country's energy needs. In a close and controversial parliamentary vote in 2002, the government approved construction of a fifth reactor, due to begin operation in 2009.

well as camping, there are rooms in two renovated wooden houses, most with bathrooms. Family rooms are also available.

Väherkylä (☎ 531 610; Aleksanterinkatu 2; ☎ 8am–5pm Mon–Fri, 8am–2pm Sat) This popular little bakery/café lures punters in with its wafting spicy aromas. There are a few precarious tables outside, and a spacious interior with quiches, cakes, coffee and a lunch buffet to choose from.

Saltbodan (☎ 532 572; Laivasilta 4; meals €7–16; ☎ lunch & dinner May–Aug) One of a few popular summer cafés and restaurants around the waterfront, Saltbodan serves coffee and snacks in a rustic room or on the terrace. À la carte meals and the €8 lunch buffet are served in a pleasant dining hall.

Degerby Gille (☎ 50561; Sepänkuja 4; ☎ by arrangement) Set in the oldest building in town, this is an enchanting restaurant that is usually only open for group bookings. It's worth inquiring, though, at the Hotel Degerby, as the restaurant is usually open for lunch once a week for the local Rotary Club, and the public can take advantage. There are five separate and charmingly old-fashioned dining rooms.

Getting There & Away

Loviisa is 90km east of Helsinki, reached by motorway E18 or Hwy 7. There are buses at least hourly to/from Helsinki (€16.20, 1½ to two hours), as well as a regular bus service to/from Kotka (€10, 45 minutes) and Porvoo (€9.40, 30 minutes).

AROUND LOVIISA

An interesting short trip is to the **Svartholma Sea Fortress**, on an island 10km from the town centre. It was established in 1748 soon after Sweden lost control of the eastern part of Finland and was intended to defend Finland against further Russian invasion. The fort was destroyed by the British during the Crimean War in 1855, but has since been reconstructed. From June to August boats run daily to the island from Laivasilta Marina (€9 return, 45 minutes). You can also go on **pirate and adventure cruises** (per person €11.50) leaving at 10am, which are aimed specifically at families and kids (English available by request). Guided walking tours of the fortress cost €4. There's a cheery restaurant on the island, which serves a good lunch buffet out of a rowboat.

RUOTSINPYHTÄÄ

☎ 019 / pop 2895

Combining Finland's power struggles of the past and its industrial beginnings, the tiny, peaceful village of Ruotsinpyhtää (Swedish: Strömfors) is a very worthwhile place to visit, and well worth an overnight stop if you fancy a bit of rusticity. The long name means 'Pyhtää of Sweden', as it was here, along the Kymijoki, that the Swedish-Russian border split the town of Pyhtää into two in 1743. The western, oddly-shaped section was Swedish property, while Pyhtää proper was ceded to Russia for some time.

The Kymijoki provided the power that traditionally drove a large ironworks; the old buildings and equipment are preserved. Although you could easily be forgiven for thinking Ruotsinpyhtää is a museum village, it's also a thriving community, thanks to the modern-day factory across the river. The tiny scattering of buildings includes a supermarket, bank (with ATM), library (with Internet access) and cafés.

There's a friendly and lively annual bluegrass festival, **Rootsinpyhtaa** (www.bluegrass.fi), held in early June; it's a lot of fun and the village is the perfect setting.

There's an **information office** (☎ 618 474; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri) at the end of the hostel building; across the little bridge from here, the **Forge Café** (☎ 10am-6pm May-Aug) stocks plenty of brochures and is very generous with information.

SOMETHING SPECIAL

Eating outdoors at a Finnish country restaurant in summer is a memorable experience, and one of the most enchanting places to do it is **Ravintola Ruukinmylly** (☎ 618 693; mains €10-14; ☎ 11am-7pm Mon-Thu, 11am-10pm Fri & Sat). This wonderful place is in a 17th-century former mill on a peaceful pond. In summer the restaurant has a terrace with live music and dancing. The menu includes light meals, wood-fired pizzas and some Finnish specialities – the salmon soup is something to be savoured.

Sights & Activities

Strömfors Ironworks (☎ 10am-6pm Jun–mid-Aug), founded in 1695, is one of the oldest of its kind in Finland. Today it's a picturesque open-air museum of wooden farm and industrial buildings, surrounded by forest, rivers and bridges. The rust-red-and-white wooden buildings reflected in the lake on a clear, windless day are definitely the stuff of postcards. The **Forge Museum** has two sections: one consists of an old smith's workshop and equipment, while the other has the working millwheel. There are often forging demonstrations in summer. Also in the old village are some **craft workshops** such as potters, silversmiths, textile makers and painters. One of the ironworks buildings serves as an **art gallery** in summer.

The beautiful octagonal wooden **church** dates from 1771. It's one of a handful of such-shaped churches in Finland. Its Resurrection altarpiece was painted in 1898 by the young Helene Schjerfbeck. The parish paid very little for the work, as she was unknown at the time; soon after she was to be (and still is) considered one of Finland's greatest painters.

The area is ideal for **canoeing**, and you can rent canoes from the information office or the hostel.

There's also an 8km circular **walking trail** to Kukuljärvi – the information centre has a basic trail map. The trail is well-marked and fairly easy (although there are a couple of roped scrambles); you'll see plenty of birds (species include ravens and capercaillies) and more mosquitoes. The walk starts by the sports ground at the southern entrance to town.

Sleeping & Eating

Finnhostel Krouvinmäki (☎ 618 474, 0400 492 161; fax 618 475; s/d €26/52; ☎ Jun–mid-Aug, reception 8am-4pm Mon-Fri; ☎ (♿)) This is a fabulous place to stay. It's an HI-affiliated hostel in an atmospheric clay-walled building that once served as accommodation for mill workers. The low-doored rooms are spacious and all have two cosy beds (there's one four-person room) and there's a good kitchen with VCR, and a laundry. You can stay outside the season by prior arrangement. The reception is the information office; ring ahead if you are going to arrive outside these hours.

The friendly and helpful Forge Café by the museum is a lovely old place and your best bet for a chat, snacks or a cold beer, while the grill just behind the hostel does tasty pizzas and kebabs.

Getting There & Away

The only buses to the village itself run from Loviisa (€4, 20 minutes, three daily in summer, many more on weekdays September to May). Buses running along the main road (on the Helsinki–Loviisa–Kotka route) can drop you at **Ahvenkoski**, from where it's 5km to Ruotsinpyhtää. A taxi from Loviisa will cost €20 to €25; from Ahvenkoski about €12. Call a cab on ☎ 0400 105 465; it's also easy to hitch from Ahvenkoski.

KOTKA

☎ 05 / pop 54, 759

Kotka has been and remains Finland's most important industrial port, so don't turn up expecting a cluster of wooden houses surrounding bobbing yachts. It has massive pulp factories and large oil tanks but also some redeeming attractions, including a smart new aquarium, an excellent trattoria, a good amount of parkland, and the nearby Imperial Fishing Lodge, where the tsar used to pull on his waders and cast for salmon.

Information

Public library (☎ 212 424; Kirkkokatu 24) Near Kotka Church with a free Internet terminal as well as an Internet café inside.

Tourist office (☎ 234 4424; www.kotka.fi; Keskuskatu 6; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri Sep-May, 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat Jun-Aug) Helpful new tourist office. Has free Internet access.

Sights

MARETARIUM

If you've ever wondered what swims beneath the surface of Finland's many lakes, rivers and seas, the impressive **Maretarium** (☎ 234 4030; www.maretarium.fi; Sapokankatu 2; adult/child €9.50/6; ☎ 10am-8pm mid-May–mid-Aug, 10am-5pm mid-Aug–mid-May, closed late Jan) reveals all in a series of giant fish tanks, each representing a particular body of water; the Baltic tank is open to the air. It's all very informative; the usual suspects are here: perch, salmon, bream, Arctic char and herring, but there are also a few less common visitors such as the lumpsucker and the heinous-looking four-horned sculpin. Though visually not on a par with a tropical aquarium, it's a more educational experience, and there's English labelling, guided tours and a theatre. And if all those fish are making you hungry, the town's best fish restaurant is next door.

SAPOKKA WATER PARK

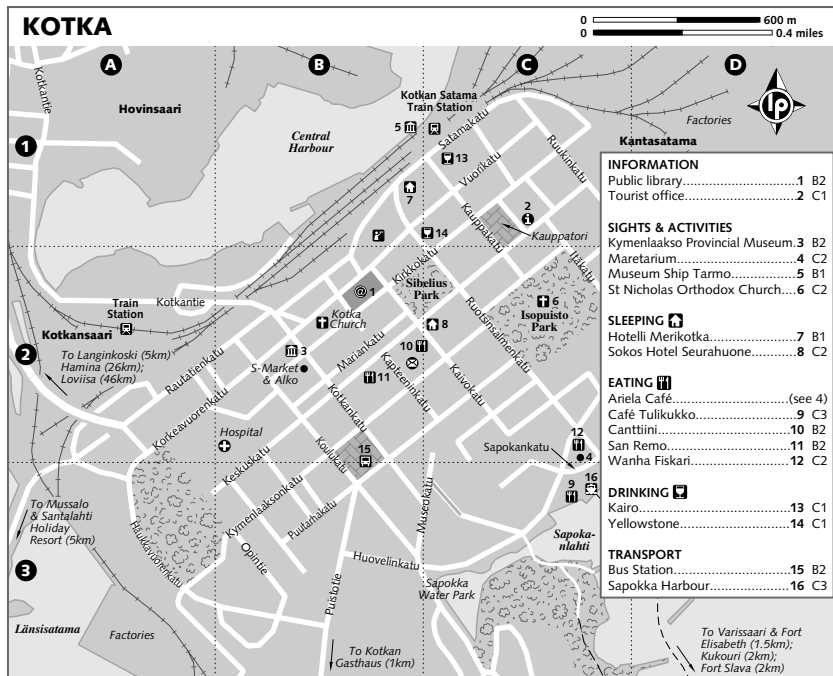
Just south of Sapokka Harbour, this water park is a lovely green oasis with bridges, walking trails, gardens and the **Rose Terrace** garden, which is illuminated every evening. It's the perfect place to escape Kotka's more commercial side.

MUSEUMS & CHURCHES

Kymenlaakso Provincial Museum (Maakuntamuseo; ☎ 234 4438; Kotkankatu 13; admission €2; ☎ noon-6pm Tue-Fri, noon-4pm Sat & Sun) is the atmospherically lit museum of regional history, with exhibits from the Stone Age to the present day.

The world's oldest icebreaker, the **museum-ship Tarmo** (☎ 234 4405; admission €2.50; ☎ mid-May-Aug) is moored at Central Harbour. Built at Newcastle-upon-Tyne in 1907, it once kept Finnish shipping lanes open, and you can now go aboard and explore the cabins, bridge and engine room. In a hall nearby are another pair of vessels; a coastal patrolboat and a lifeboat (admission to both hall and icebreaker €3).

St Nicholas Orthodox Church (☎ noon-3pm Mon-Fri, noon-6pm Sat & Sun Jun-Aug), in Isopuisto Park, was completed in 1801 and is the only building in Kotka to survive the Crimean War (1853–56). It is believed to have been designed by architect Yakov Perini, who also designed the St Petersburg Admiralty.



Activities

Archipelago cruises of all types depart from Sapokka Harbour in summer, along with scheduled ferries to the outlying islands (opposite) – the tourist office has timetables and details.

Several operators offer **white-water rafting** (also called ‘rapids shooting’) on the Kymijoki. A three-hour trip costs around €43/20 per adult/child, including transportation. Contact **Erämys Ky** (☎ 050-320 2559; www.eramys.fi), **Keisarin Kosket Oy** (☎ 05-210 7400; www.keisarinkosket.fi), or book at the tourist office.

Festivals & Events

Kotkan Meripäivät (Kotka Maritime Festival) is held annually in late July or early August. Events include boat racing, concerts, cruises and a market. There’s also an associated wooden boat show.

Sleeping

Sokos Hotel Seurahuone (☎ 020-123 4666; www.sokoshotels.fi; Keskuskatu 21; s/d €100/116, Sat, Sun & summer €84; (P) (X) (Q)) This is very much the

best option in a town where quality accommodation is very thin. It’s right in the thick of the action, opposite the pleasant town park. There are a couple of restaurants and a popular nightclub here.

Santalahahti Holiday Resort (☎ 260 5055; www.santalahahti.fi; tent sites €10, cottage from €55; ☎ May-late Sep) This is a sprawling resort on Mussalo, 5km from central Kotka. The facilities are good and some newer cottages are outstanding. There’s also a small hotel and a restaurant in the same complex, and a golf course next door. There’s no public transport.

Hotelli Merikotka (☎ 215 222; www.hotellimerikotka.fi; Satamakatu 9; s/d €52/72; (X)) This friendly hotel faces Central Harbour, just opposite the Kotkan Satama train stop. The corridors are decked out in bizarre pseudo-cavern plasterwork, but the rooms are fairly standard, and not good value for singles. The breakfast is OK though; it’s served early for contract workers, who make up the majority of guests. There’s a café-bar downstairs, which doubles as a reception in the evenings.

Kotka Gasthaus (☎ 225 0622; Puistotie 24; per person €30; (P) (X)) Catering to oil workers, this is the cheapest place to stay in town, but it’s in a thoroughly depressing area near the refinery. Rooms are basic but decent value; rates include breakfast and sauna.

Eating

San Remo (☎ 212 114; Keskuskatu 29; pizza & pasta €8-10, other mains €11-16; ☎ 11am-10pm Tue-Thu, 11am-11pm Fri & Sat, noon-10pm Sun) This unpretentious but excellent upstairs restaurant was doing Italian food in Kotka long before you could even get a pizza in Helsinki. Run by an Italian-Finnish couple, it’s as authentic and charming a trattoria as you could hope to find, with a great balcony space, Italian wines and Ferrari memorabilia. You come here for the fresh home-made fettuccini. There’s also a café downstairs.

Wanha Fiskari (☎ 218 6585; www.wanhafiskari.fi; Ruotsinsalmenkatu 1; mains €13-24; ☎ lunch & dinner) This is an elegant and pricey restaurant renowned for its Finnish fish specialities such as Baltic herring, perch and salmon (it’s no small irony that the Maretarium was built next door). There are also meat dishes, including reindeer, and a good lunchtime salad buffet.

Cantiini (☎ 214 130; Kaivokatu 15; mains €9-16; ☎ lunch & dinner) Cantiini is popular with locals and dishes up big serves of pasta and Mexican food in a casual atmosphere.

Café Tulikukko (☎ 213 925; Sapokka Harbour) is a good place for coffee and snacks, while the nearby **Ariela Café** (☎ 212 115; Maretarium) is a good lunchtime spot with filled rolls, light meals and a large terrace.

Drinking

Kairo (☎ 212 787; Satamakatu 7; ☎ 11am-11pm Tue, till 1am or later Wed-Sat) This place is something of a legendary old sailors’ pub facing Central Harbour. It’s a beautiful building decked with ships’ flags and saucy paintings, and there’s a large terrace in summer and frequent live music (often traditional Finnish dance). It’s fairly upmarket these days, but still has plenty of character and is easily the best spot in town for a drink.

Yellowstone (☎ 225 0128; Ruotsinsalmenkatu 14) This popular pub has a good outdoor terrace in the centre of town. Attached is the fairly tacky disco/nightclub, Livinstone.

Getting There & Away

There are regular express buses from Helsinki (€21.30, two hours), via Porvoo, Loviisa and Pyhtää. Buses run roughly every half-hour to Hamina (€5, 20 to 45 minutes), 26km to the east.

There are between four and six local trains a day to Kouvola (€7.40, 40 minutes) from where you can catch connecting trains to all major Finnish cities. The trains stop both at Kotka Station, to the northwest of the city centre, and at Kotkan Satama, at the main harbour and very much handier for the centre.

AROUND KOTKA Archipelago Islands

There are several interesting islands off the Kotka coast that make for good day trips during the summer months. There are daily boat connections to each from Sapokka Harbour during this season.

On **Kukouri** is Fort Slava, also called the Fortress of Honour. It was built by Russians in 1794 as part of a chain of fortresses in the Gulf of Finland. Destroyed by the British in 1855, it was partially renovated in the 1990s. There are five ferries daily from early June to mid-August (adult/child return €7/2).

On **Varissaari**, Fort Elisabeth was another of the Russian fortresses built to defend the coast against the Swedes. A fierce naval battle was fought from here in 1789, and the fortress was abandoned in the late 19th century. It is now a popular venue for open-air performances and a favourite picnic spot. There’s also a restaurant here. Ferries leave Kotka hourly between 9am and 9pm from late May to late August (€5 return).

Kaunissaari is the most interesting island, with its own little community. There’s a charming fishing village and a local museum, as well as a camping ground with some cabins. There are one to three regular ferries a day (€7 one way) from late May to late August. There are also evening cruises, with singing and live music, departing on Wednesdays at 7pm (€15) and returning around midnight.

On Kaunissaari is an information centre for the **Eastern Gulf of Finland National Park**, a 60km swathe of over 100 islets beginning just to the south of Kaunissaari. It’s an important breeding ground for many seabirds and a habitat for grey and ringed seals. The

park is best explored with your own boat, but scheduled boats do run from Kotka and Hamina to Ulko-Tammio island, which is part of the park. Here there's another information centre as well as a campsite and nature trail.

Langinkoski

The **Imperial Fishing Lodge** (☎ 228 1050; www.langinkoskimuseo.com; Koskenniskantie 5C; admission €4; ☎ 10am-7pm daily May-Aug, Sat & Sun Sep-Oct) at Langinkoski, 5km north of Kotka on the salmon-heavy Kymijoki, is worth visiting even if you're not interested in the fishing haunts of the wealthy and powerful. The surprisingly simple wooden lodge was built in 1889 for Tsar Alexander III, who visited Langinkoski frequently. Most of the furniture is original, and the rooms look much as they did at the end of the 19th century. On Sundays during summer there are (free) guided tours on the hour between 11am and 4pm.

The riverside forest setting (now a 28-hectare nature reserve) is beautiful, and there are many walking trails to soak up a few hours. **Fly-fishing** is still allowed at Langinkoski, but you will need to get a permit by contacting **Korkeakosken Kalastuskievari** (☎ 05-281 495; Kalakoski) or the tourist office in Kotka. The lodge is not well signposted – turn off road 15 at the signs (on the right if you're coming from Kotka) and drive about 1.5km to the road's end.

You can get almost all the way to Langinkoski on bus 13 or 27. Alternatively, get off at the sign at the **pikavuoro** (express) bus stop and walk 1.2km.

HAMINA

☎ 05 / pop 21,887

With its strict and unusual octagonal plan, you can really feel that Hamina (Swedish: Fredrikshamn) was once a fortress rather than a town. This pleasant harbourside spot, still home to some soldiery, seems a little empty without its garrison, and more preoccupied with invasions of Russian shoppers than the Red Army! The border is just 40km away. With a couple of good museums and a pleasant small-town atmosphere, Hamina makes an intriguing place to stop, and its network of beds in local homes is a good chance to experience Finnish hospitality.

Hamina was founded in 1653, when Finland was part of Sweden. The crumbling fortifications that surround it were begun by panicky Swedes in 1722 after Vyborg fell to Russia. Their fears were justified, but their efforts in vain – shortly afterwards the Russians marched in and took Hamina, too.

Information

Public library (Rautatienkatu 8; ☎ 1-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) Free Internet terminals.

Post office (Maariankatu 4)

Tourist office (www.hamina.fi) main office (☎ 749 2641; Raatihuoneentori 16; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri); summer office (☎ 749 2643; Lipputori (Flagtower), kauppatori; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat & Sun Jun-mid-Aug)

Sights & Activities

Restored 19th-century wooden buildings grace the eight radial streets of Hamina's octagonal town plan. From its centre – Hamina has a more literal centre than most towns, dominated by the 18th-century **town hall** – most sights are a short walk away.

Highlights of Old Hamina include the neoclassical **Hamina Church**, built in 1843 and designed by CL Engel; and directly opposite, behind the town hall, the 1837 **Orthodox Church of Saints Peter & Paul**, thought to have been created by architect Louis Visconti, who designed Napoleon's tomb in France.

Housed in Hamina's oldest building, the **Town Museum** (Kaupunginmuseo; ☎ 749 4193; Kadettikoulunkatu 2; admission €2; ☎ 11am-3pm Wed-Sat, noon-5pm Sun Sep-May, 10am-4pm Tue-Sun Jun-Aug) is the museum of local history. King Gustav III of Sweden and Catherine II (the Great) of Russia held negotiations in one of the rooms in 1783.

Shopkeeper's Museum (Kauppiantalomuseo; ☎ 749 4196; Kasarminkatu 6; ☎ 11am-3pm Wed-Sat, noon-5pm Sun Sep-May, 10am-4pm Tue-Sun Jun-Aug) is a former merchant's store and residence, and has people dressed the part, serving customers with all manner of handmade curios and souvenirs. It's one of the best house museums in Finland. Kasarminkatu was a main shopping street in the 19th century.

Northwest of Old Hamina are remnants of the 18th-century **Hamina Fortress**, including 3km of crumbling stone walls, and the star-shaped bastions, but there really isn't much left to see.

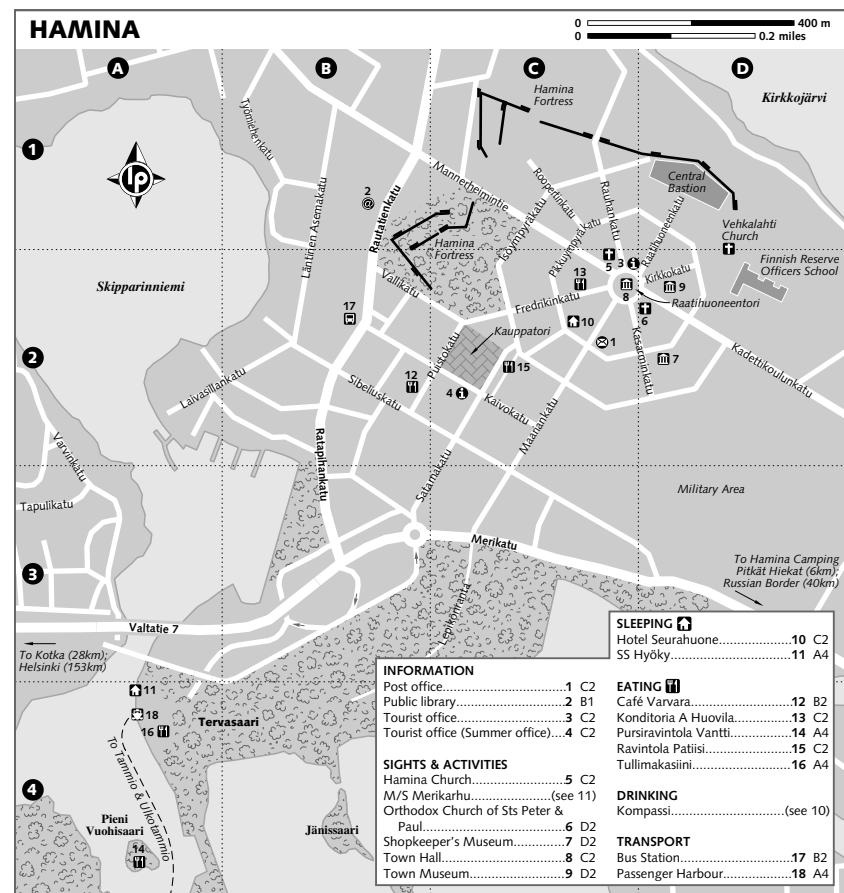
A short walk southwest of the centre at Tervasaari harbour is the bright red former lightship SS Hyöky, a 1912 steamship completed in the same year as the Titanic. It served both Russia and Finland in its colourful career, and was the last coal-burning steamship in commercial use in Scandinavia. During summer it's now a cluttered museum, bar and hotel (p112). Moored alongside is the 1943 icebreaker and tug **M/S Merikarhu**.

Also from Tervasaari there are summer cruises (☎ 228 4648; www.meriset.com) offered to the fishing village on the island of Tammio (€14, three to four hours). Departures are five times a week and schedules vary significantly between mid-May and late

August. You can also reach Ulko-Tammio, an island further south but still within the boundaries of the national park (see p109), on weekends from mid-June to the end of July. The **information office** (☎ 040-594 4171; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat & Sun) at the harbour can provide timetables and sells tickets.

Festivals & Events

Every second (even) year in late July or early August, Hamina celebrates military music during the week-long **Hamina Tattoo** (☎ 749 2633; www.haminatattoo.com). This international event features not only Finnish and Russian military marching bands, but rock, pop, jazz and dance acts.



Sleeping

One of the best options for accommodation in and around Hamina is the local B&B network. These are rooms in private homes, some self-contained, others home-stay, and typically cost €25 to €35 per person. The tourist office can arrange these.

Hotel Seurahuone (☎ 3500 263; Pikkuympyrärätkatu 5; s/d €63/74) This place, in the heart of Old Hamina, is full of old-world ambience, and summer discounts are available. The subterranean Kompassi pub and restaurant is also here.

Hamina Camping Pitkät Hiekat (☎ /fax 345 9183; tent sites €10, 4-6-person cottage €40-65; ☎ daily May-late Aug, Sat & Sun winter) This camping ground, 6km east of Hamina at Vilniemi, has a peaceful lakeside and forest setting, and you can use the rowing boats for free. It has a bar, café, sauna and laundry.

SS Hyökky (☎ 040-763 3757; s/d from €30/40; ☎) In the height of summer you can stay on this historic steamship in the tiny cabins, each with a set of bunks, plus the 'captain's cabin' above deck. It's not for the claustrophobic, but you stay here for the experience; the captain, 'Patu', is a well known local character and will make you feel part of the crew. The ship also has a bar, a cluttered museum and even a tiny sauna (free for guests). Ring ahead to check that it's open for accommodation, though.

Eating & Drinking

Some of the best places to eat are down at Tervasaari Harbour.

Pursiravintola Vantti (☎ 354 1063; mains €12-22; ☎ food 3-9pm Tue-Sat, noon-8pm Sun, bar closes later) This is the place to be found on summer weekends – Pieni Vuohisaari, opposite Tervasaari harbour. There's drinking and dancing to live music in the friendly atmosphere of the yacht club, and good-quality seafood is available. To get to the island,

press the buzzer at the little jetty set up at Tervasaari harbour and a boat will come and pick you up for free.

Tullimakasiini (☎ 344 7470; Tervasaari harbour; mains €11-17; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, lunch only Sun & Mon) A quaint restaurant in an old customs house, it specialises in Finnish fish and meat dishes. It's got a good atmosphere and friendly staff, but try not to coincide with a tour group.

Konditoria A Huovila (☎ 344 0930; Fredrikin-katu 1; ☎ 9.30am-4.30pm) A *pulla's* throw from the central hub, this is one of those lovable traditional cafés in an old wooden house. It's a great place for coffee, cakes and sandwiches, and a welcome refuge in inclement weather.

Café Varvara (☎ 231 1044; Puistokatu 2; ☎ 7am-5pm Mon-Fri, 7.30am-2pm Sat) Just south of the market square, this homely café is a good spot for home-baked buns and cakes, tasty rolls, decent coffee and service with a smile.

Ravintola Patisi (☎ 353 2444; Satamakatu 11; mains €8-15, pizzas €9; ☎ lunch & dinner Wed-Mon) This place has a wide range of reasonably priced pizzas and Italian American-style dishes, as well as a popular 1st-floor covered terrace overlooking the market square.

Kompassi (☎ 350 0266; Pikkuympyrärätkatu 5) In Old Hamina, in the historic Hotel Seurahuone, is a brooding basement pub once used by visiting seafarers. There's regular live music, karaoke and a summer terrace at the side of the hotel.

Getting There & Away

You can reach Hamina by hourly bus from Kotka (€5, 20 to 45 minutes). There are express buses from Helsinki (€25.60, 2¼ hours). Buses pass through Hamina on the way to Vyborg and St Petersburg in Russia. There are no lockers at the bus station, but they'll guard your bags for a fee during business hours.