



# Cruising Guide to Finland



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## THE COUNTRY

### The physical conditions

The Finnish coast extends from Tornio at the Swedish frontier at the northernmost point of the Gulf of Bothnia ( $65^{\circ}50'.87N$   $24^{\circ}08'.85E$ ) down the eastern side of the gulf to about  $61^{\circ}N$  and then turns gently SE and E along the northern shore of the Gulf of Finland to the Russian frontier about  $60^{\circ}28'.82N$ ,  $27^{\circ}45'.86'E$ . Fifty miles off the SW corner of the mainland lie the Åland Islands, a semi-autonomous region having a relationship to Finland similar to that of the Channel Islands to the UK. They have their own flag.

Half way down the Gulf of Bothnia lies the Quark, an archipelago lying between Umeå in Sweden and Vaasa in Finland, but otherwise the coast of the gulf is somewhat bleak. The Quark archipelago is on the UNESCO World Heritage List and is an extension of the Swedish High Coast site. From Rauma in the SW, running right round to the Russian frontier and including the Åland Islands, lies a wonderful rocky archipelago of thousands of islands, a veritable paradise of sheltered water for the cruising yachtsman.

In addition, the Saimaa Lakes, lying in the SE of the country, but entered via Russian waters and the Saimaa Canal, offer hundreds of miles of navigable waters for exploration.

The whole area thus described as available to yachtsmen is a glaciated plain covered with forest, lakes and marshes, reminiscent of the Canadian Shield. As seen from the sea, it is an area of great beauty. Mercifully, large towns, about a dozen altogether, are quite far apart but there are many more small places with guest harbours where provisions can be obtained or meals enjoyed ashore. There are hundreds of tiny anchorages or places to moor to the rocks where one may be as quiet or as sociable as one wishes. These nature harbours are one of the region's major attractions.

There are no tides but water levels may change by up to a metre from charted values owing to drift induced by persistent winds or atmospheric pressure changes. The water is brackish. The shores of the Gulf of Finland suffer from an excessive nutrients run-off so, in places, instead of being clear, the water is opaquely green. Nevertheless, it is perfectly safe for swimming. Blue flags fly from the beaches and even Helsinki harbour, in the centre of the city, is certified safe for swimming, although many might think twice about trying it. Towards the end of summer, when the water temperature has risen to 20°C or so, or even 25°C amongst the islands, large areas of algal bloom appear and then one needs to be careful not to swallow it.

Much of the weather comes from the west and so the Finns enjoy the lows after the British and the Scandinavians have finished with them but this pattern is often disturbed in summer by the development of persistent anticyclones over Finland, Russia and the Baltic States. The former produce gentle easterly breezes over the Gulf of Finland; both produce warm sunshine; sometimes the sun is so hot that one cannot walk on deck in bare feet. Squally thunderstorms can occur but otherwise strong winds usually only arrive as expected from weather systems and their associated fronts. Temperatures can often reach 30°C in the eastern Gulf of Finland when high pressure builds. A Finnish expression is that "they live under the sweaty arm of Mother Russia".

In summer the days are long. In June and July it never gets truly dark in the archipelago, which is about 60°N, approximately the same latitude as the Shetland Islands. Evening barbecues ashore are popular with the Finns, who absorb all the sunlight that they can before the long nights of winter set in. Midsummer's Eve is a great national celebration with bonfires and merrymaking. Ships' flags are flown all night and yachts dress overall. In the Swedish-speaking parts, midsummer poles (bigger and greener than English maypoles) are raised. Visiting yachtsmen may have the good fortune to be drawn into the parties. Midsummer's Day is celebrated on the Saturday nearest to the solstice and, of course, Midsummer's Eve is the day before. Both are national public holidays.

The cruising season may be considered to begin in May and to be over by mid-September when the weather starts to deteriorate. The holiday season in Finland extends from Midsummer's Eve until about 10th August and in this period some of the more popular harbours, such as Hanko and Mariehamn, can be crowded. Sailing outside this period is particularly delightful but some of the shops and other facilities in the smaller harbours may be closed.

## REGIONS AND HARBOUR INFORMATION

### Turku archipelago

The archipelago can be divided into inner and outer archipelagos, with the outer archipelago consisting mainly of smaller, uninhabited islands. The total surface area is 8,300 square kilometres, of which 2,000 square kilometres is land. The archipelago has a very large number of islands. The exact number depends on the definition of the term "island", as the size of the patches of dry land in the area varies from small rocks peeking out of the water to large islands

with several villages or even small towns. The number of the larger islands of over 1 square kilometre within the Archipelago Sea is 257, whilst the number of smaller isles of over 0.5 ha is about 18,000. If the number of smallest uninhabitable rocks and skerries is accounted, 50,000 is probably a good estimate. The sea is shallow, the average depth is only 23m.

**Naantali 60° 28'.20N 22° 01'.10E**

Popular and crowded holiday resort and home of Moominland. Attractive town with good shops and many holiday boutiques. Terminal for Finnlines ferry to Kapellskär.

**Teersalo (Velkua) 60° 27'.90N 21° 41'.70E**

There are two guest harbours in the Velkua area, in Teersalo and Velkuanmaa. Both harbours offer most services, that boaters need. There are also other services nearby.

**Vaihela Archipelago Hotel and marina (Velkua) 60° 26'.40N 21° 38'.51E**

**Ruissalo (Harkolanlahti) 60° 25'.54N 22° 09'.48E**

This is the Turku Sailing Club which is 5 miles out of town. Take bus into town. (Bus No. 8 from bus-stop No 566). Small marina, clubhouse and restaurant and all usual facilities. 5 guest berths or use berths temporarily vacated whilst members are on holiday.

**Iniö 60° 23'.80N 21° 23'.40E**

Most services. Fuel. Shallow - 2m max. Rather remote. Good walking.

**Röölä (Röödilä) 60° 20'.72N 21° 57'.38E**

Restaurant, laundry, shop, fuel. Open to E and W winds.

**Turku 60° 26'.43N 22° 14'.73E**

Original capital of Finland until replaced by Helsinki. Guest harbour on the banks of the Aura River close to town and all facilities. Wide box moorings, bows to quay. Showers, toilets, sauna, laundry facilities. All facilities of major town. Nearest supermarket across river - use small ferry. Railway. Ferries to Helsinki and Stockholm. Local interest - Turku castle, cathedral. Medieval fair in summer. Many museums. Popular for Tall Ships races.

**Airisto, Stormälö 60° 15'.09N 22° 06'.35E**

Large, popular marina with hotel and all services close by the main route to Turku.

**Kyrkbacken, Nauvo 60° 11'.73N 21° 54'.75E**

Large marina. Crowded in season. Good facilities including pump out terminal on pontoon. Fuel pontoon. Holiday resort with beaches for swimming. Inter-island ferry. Supermarket. Restaurants. Large church. Useful on passage to/from Åland Islands. Shop and restaurant, Easy access. Sheltered. Diesel.

**Elvsö 60° 08'.03N 21° 27'.31E**

No facilities, excellent shelter, beautiful, Individual jetties. Not officially listed.

**Utö 59° 47'.04N 21° 22'.17E**

Formerly occupied by the military. Famous for its lighthouse. A pontoon for visiting yachts has been established by the hotel near the harbour entrance. Stern buoys. Water and electricity. Facilities in the hotel. This location is exposed and can become untenable. Better shelter is available further into the harbour at the ferry jetty. Yachts can berth behind this jetty but must not obstruct the inter-island ferries (which berth on the outside). Black tyres hang from the jetty so fender boards are needed. Toilets a short walk along the road. No water or electricity. Small shop serving small community.

**Jurmo 59° 49'.70N 21° 35'.10E**

Well marked approach and entry. Stern buoy mooring to long pontoon or stern buoys and bows to blocks around the harbour perimeter. Dry closet toilets. BBQ facilities. Small shop. Museum. Handicraft boutique. Inter island ferry and connection to Turku. Interesting walking. Small church next to the settlement.