



Seurasaari is one of the most popular open air sites. It's especially favoured by people wishing to get away from it all. A long wooden bridge leads onto the island, where you will find an extensive "open air museum": a collection of vernacular styles of Finnish wooden architecture. Massive spruce-trees by the pathways reinforce the feeling of Finnish national identity. You will also find pleasant coastal scenery on the approach to the island at nearby Meilahti with its old, spacious villas, an arboretum, the President Urho Kekkonen Museum and the residence of the incumbent Finnish president.

### How to get there

Bus 24, which leaves from Erottaja every 20 minutes, takes you to the foot of the bridge onto the island (the terminus). Tram 4 and buses 14 and 18 go from the city centre and pass along Paciuksenkatu Street, close to the island. The bridge onto the island is always open; a charge is levied only for the midsummer festivities. Motoring and cycling are prohibited on the island.

The various buildings which make up the museum are open from 1 Jun to 31 Aug 11am-5pm, Wednesdays till 7pm. From 15 May to 31 May and from 1 to 15 Sept. the buildings are open Mon-Fri from 9am-3pm, Sat and Sun 11am-5pm. Entrance to the museum buildings costs 5 € for adults, 4 € for pensioners and students; free entrance for under-18's. You can buy a brochure (in Finnish or English) from a kiosk on the island. For further information ☎ 4050 9660 in summer, ☎ 40 50 9574 in winter.  
<http://www.nba.fi/fi/seurasaari>

Lots of people go to Seurasaari to feed the squirrels and birds. Even back in the 1930's, tame squirrels lived on the island, probably the first ones in Helsinki. Whenever there is open water under the bridge leading onto the island, you may see mallards, but also mute swans, Canada geese and tufted ducks. Oystercatchers and great crested grebe nest nearby. In spring, you will hardly fail to hear the insistent hammering of the lesser spotted woodpeckers which nest on Seurasaari and along nearby shores. The duck-ponds dug out on the southern part of the island are good places to observe bats on summer nights. A spinner may land pike or pike-perch from the rocky promontories



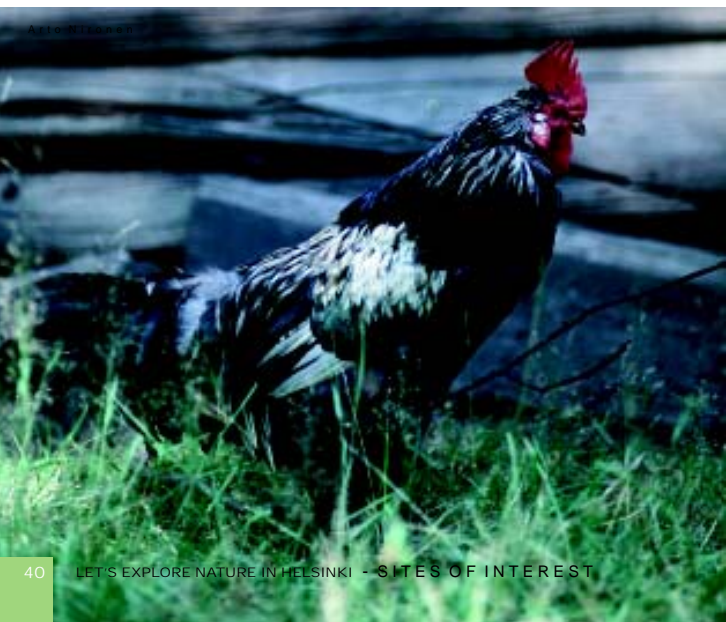


Heikinniementie Road, is a colony of hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*). This plant, a rarity in Finland, found its way here at the end of the second world war, when a German baggage-train was held up nearby. Here the plant remains as a living symbol of a past military alliance, a modest reminder of a horses' feeding place by the home of Finland's future presidents.

## History

Seurasaari was established as a national park for the workers in 1890. Its name, which translates roughly as 'Social' or 'Meeting-place Island', reflects this purpose. The construction of the paths, the bridge, steam-boat jetty and the plantings were sponsored by the Helsinki Liquor Company, which set out to improve the lot of poor people rather than make large profits. On the island the common people were allowed things that were not seemly in the downtown parks frequented by the gentlefolk: bonfires, hammocks - and lounging around. Towards the end of the 19th century there were two free dance floors, but they had to be demolished because of the incessant fighting! Right at the outset the park's fixtures included cells with double log walls for drunks to cool down in. Nowadays, dancing on the dance floor is in again, and the Midsummer festivities are especially popular with families.

The open-air museum demonstrating Finnish vernacular architecture was built during the 1910's. The originator of the undertaking was the folklorist A.O. Heikel, whose grave is on Seurasaari. There are presently more than 80 buildings from various parts of the country. The oldest is the church, which dates back to the 17th century. The other buildings are from the 18th and 19th centuries. There are also some amazing buildings from our hunting culture: a bear-proof meat store and cabins of backwood dwellers.



Arto Niemi

On the west side of the bridge is the small island of Pukkisaari with a cluster of buildings representing the Iron Age. You approach the isle by a wooden causeway. The buildings are open from 15 to 31 May and from 1 to 15 September daily from 12am to 3pm and from 1 June to 31 August daily 12am to 5pm.

<http://www.sommelo.hai.fi/>

Seurasaari has a nudist beach, for which there is an entrance charge.

Arto Nironen





















