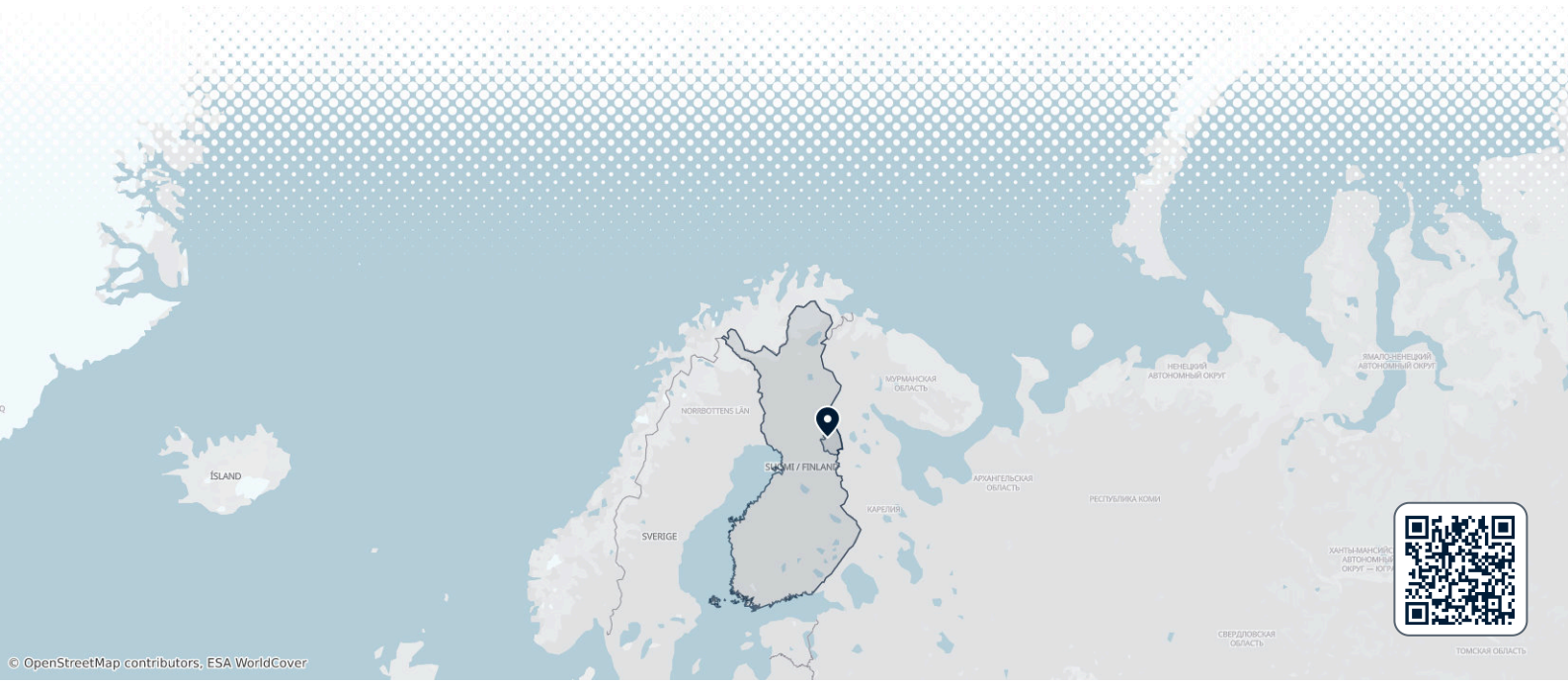


Kuusamo

North Ostrobothnia · Finland

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Kuusamo is a small town in northeastern Finland, close to the Russian border. It is the base for one of Finland's biggest winter and nature destinations. The town itself is quiet and practical. The main reasons to come are in the surrounding forest, rivers and fells.

Winter brings skiing at Ruka, snowmobile and husky trips, and dark skies for northern lights. Summer and early autumn bring hiking, canoeing, rafting and the autumn colours. The Karhunkierros trail and Oulanka National Park are the main draw. Plan a car or pre-booked transfers, because the best sights are spread out.

When to visit

The year has two main seasons. Winter is long, cold and snowy. It suits skiing, sled trips and northern lights on clear nights. Ruka's slopes usually open in October on stored snow. Snow cover is reliable from about December to April. Northern lights are best on clear nights from roughly September to March.

Summer is short and cool, with very light nights around midsummer. It suits hiking and river trips, but July can bring many mosquitoes. Late September gives strong autumn colours on the trails, with the first snow possible. Spring is bright, but trails can be wet.

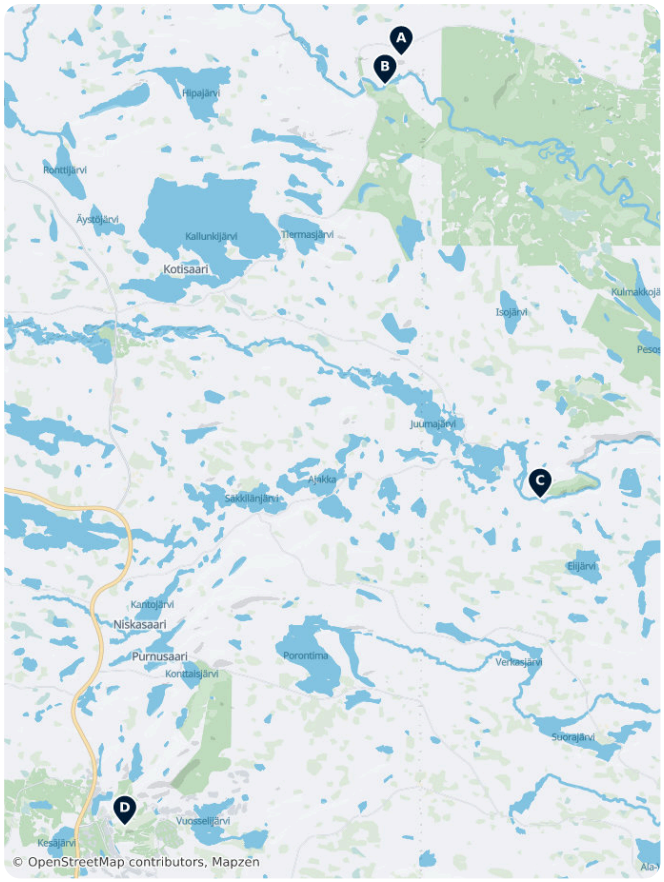
The Nordic skiing World Cup opens the winter season at Ruka. It is the biggest annual event, so book early if you travel then.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Great Great for skiing	-10° / -1° Feels like -16°	-16° / -27°	13 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
February	Great Great for skiing	-10° / 0° Feels like -15°	-16° / -27°	Dry air · Calm winds
March	Great Great for skiing	-5° / 0° Feels like -10°	-11° / -21°	Dry air · Calm winds
April	Great Great for skiing	0° / 7° Feels like -4°	-5° / -14°	13 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
May	Poor Poor for skiing	9° / 18° Feels like 5°	2° / -4°	17 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
June	Fair Fair for hiking	15° / 22°	8° / 2°	17 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
July	Fair Fair for hiking	19° / 24°	11° / 6°	20 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
August	Fair Fair for hiking	16° / 22°	9° / 4°	18 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
September	Fair Fair for hiking	10° / 17°	5° / -1°	16 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
October	Good Good for skiing	2° / 9° Feels like -2°	-1° / -10°	17 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
November	Great Great for skiing	-4° / 2° Feels like -9°	-9° / -18°	14 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
December	Great Great for skiing	-8° / 0° Feels like -13°	-13° / -23°	14 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds

Climate data: NASA POWER (MERRA-2) · 1996–2025

Top sights

- A Oulangan kansallispuisto is the main nature attraction near Kuusamo. It has river canyons, pine forest, marked trails and free wilderness huts. The 80 km Karhunkierros trail crosses it. The 12 km Little Bear's Ring is an easier circular day route.
- B Kiutaköngäs is a set of rapids on the Oulankajoki river inside the park. It is easy to reach on foot and is usually the first stop for day visitors.
- C Jyrävä is a waterfall on the Kitkajoki river, about 9 m high. It is a short walk of about 2 km from Juuma on the Karhunkierros trail. Some parts of the path are steep.
- D Ruka is the fell and ski resort about 25 to 30 km (roughly 30 minutes by car) from Kuusamo town. It has downhill and cross-country skiing in winter. In summer it has hiking and mountain biking.



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What to experience

- **Northern lights**: Watch for the lights on clear, dark nights from autumn to spring. Go away from town lights. Lights are never guaranteed.
- **White-water rafting**: Day trips run on the Kitkajoki river canyon in Oulanka National Park. The season is roughly June to September, and some operators start in May.
- **Husky and reindeer sleds**: Winter safaris leave from Ruka and Kuusamo. They range from short rides to multi-hour trips.
- **Snowmobile tours**: Guided tours run on marked winter routes through the forest.
- **Karhunkierros hiking**: Walk a section of the trail and sleep in a free wilderness hut. High season is from mid-July to late September.
- **Canoeing**: Paddle on the Oulankajoki river in summer.
- **Finnish sauna**: Many cabins and hotels have a sauna. Go in winter, then cool off in the snow or a lake.

Where to explore

- Oulanka National Park is the national park north of town. It is the main nature destination in the area.
- Oulu is the largest city in northern Finland and the nearest big city to the southwest. Many travelers use it as a road or rail gateway.
- Rovaniemi is the capital of Lapland to the northwest. It is a common stop on a longer northern trip.

Getting there

- **By air**: Kuusamo Airport (KAO) is about 6 km northeast of the town centre. Finnair flies daily from Helsinki. More flights from other European cities run in winter. Taxis connect the airport to the town. A pre-booked airport bus serves Ruka. See the airport page: Kuusamo Airport (Finavia).
- **By bus**: Long-distance coaches link Kuusamo with Oulu and Rovaniemi. Services are limited, so check times before you travel. Timetables and tickets: Matkahuolto.
- **By train**: There is no railway in Kuusamo. Travelers can take a train to Oulu or Kemijärvi and continue by bus.
- **By car**: Kuusamo is about 215 km from Oulu, about 190 km from Rovaniemi and about 800 km from Helsinki.
- **To Ruka**: A pre-booked airport bus runs between Kuusamo Airport and Ruka, timed to scheduled flights. Seasonal ski buses run from Oulu (Saturdays, January to April) and from Rovaniemi (February and March). Between Kuusamo town and Ruka the only option is a taxi. Ruka has its own tourism site: Ruka-Kuusamo.

Getting around

- **Public transit**: Local buses are very few. There is no public bus between Kuusamo town and Ruka, only taxis.
- **Taxi**: Taxis connect the airport, town and Ruka. Pre-book for early or late flights.
- **Car**: Sights are roughly 25 to 70 km away. A car is the easiest way to see them.
- **On foot and by bike**: The town centre is small and flat enough to walk. Cycling is practical in summer, and Ruka has mountain bike trails.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

Moderate

The town centre is small and walkable. Sights and Ruka are far apart.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Moderate

Cycling suits summer, with mountain bike trails at Ruka.

Driving

- **Is a car worth it?**: Yes. Sights, trailheads and Ruka are spread out, and public transport is limited.
- **Winter**: Winter tyres are required when winter conditions apply, generally from 1 November to 31 March. Rental cars are normally fitted already. Roads can be icy and dark. Reindeer sometimes cross the road, especially at dusk.
- **Ruka**: The resort is about 25 to 30 km (roughly 30 minutes by car) from Kuusamo town.
- **Parking**: Parking at trailheads and in Ruka village is usually simple. Winter parking at some sights is limited to cleared lots.

Food & drink

Kuusamo cooking uses local reindeer, lake fish and forest berries. Look for sautéed reindeer, whitefish and cloudberry dishes on menus.

Most restaurants are in Kuusamo town centre and in Ruka village. Ruka has the largest choice in the ski season. Some places close or reduce hours in the quiet months, so check before you go.

What to eat & drink

SNACKS & STREET FOOD

Karjalanpiirakka
Thin rye pastry filled with rice porridge, traditionally topped with egg butter.

SWEETS & DESSERTS

Salmiakki
Salty liquorice candy that divides visitors — Finns are devoted to it.

Leipäjuusto
Mild, squeaky "bread cheese", usually served warm with cloudberry jam.

DRINKS

Koskenkorva · Koskenkorva Viina
Finland's best-known grain vodka, often mixed into long drinks like the Lonkero.

SIGNATURE DISHES

Ruisleipä
Dense, dark sourdough rye bread eaten with almost every meal.

Poronkäristys
Sautéed reindeer served with mashed potatoes and lingonberry jam, a Lapland classic.

Kalakukko
Fish and pork baked inside a thick rye-bread crust, a specialty of the Savonia region.

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Safety & health

Kuusamo is very safe for visitors. The main risks are weather and wilderness, not crime.

- **Cold**: Winter temperatures can be very low. Wear layers, a hat and warm boots.
- **Trails**: Weather changes fast. Carry water, a map and a charged phone. Stay on marked paths near rapids and waterfalls, because rocks and wooden steps are slippery.
- **Insects**: Mosquitoes and biting flies are common in summer, especially in July. Bring repellent.
- **Wildlife**: Bears live in the region but are rarely seen. Make noise on trails and keep distance from any animal.
- **Russian border**: The land border crossings to Russia are closed until further notice. Do not try to cross, and obey signs in the border zone. Check the Finnish Border Guard before you travel.
- **Emergencies**: Call 112.
- **Tap water**: Tap water is safe to drink.

History

During the Winter War in 1939 and 1940, the area was evacuated. In 1940 the eastern part of the municipality, including Paanajärvi, was ceded to the Soviet Union. In 1944, during the Lapland War, the town centre was destroyed. The current Church of the Holy Cross in the town centre was built in 1951 on the site of the old wooden church.

Today tourism around Ruka and the Oulanka area is a main part of the local economy.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Finland at a glance:

CURRENCY
EUR

EMERGENCY
112

ELECTRICITY



Type C / Type F
230 V · 50 Hz

LANGUAGES
Finnish, Swedish

TAP WATER
Safe to drink

Kuusamo Essentials

Kuusamo serves as a gateway to the Arctic wilderness, defined by the rugged terrain of Oulanka National Park and the year-round outdoor hub of Ruka. The region is home to the dramatic Kiutaköngäs rapids and the prehistoric Värikalliot rock paintings, which date back over 4,000 years. Visitors can observe native predators at the Kuusamo Predator Centre or engage with traditional reindeer husbandry. The landscape is characterized by steep fells like Valtavaara and the winding Kitkajoki river, offering a diverse cross-section of Northern Ostrobothnia's natural heritage.





A Oulanka National Park

Oulanka National Park is a national park in the Northern Ostrobothnia and Lapland regions of Finland, covering 270 square kilometres.

93850, Finland (66.37556, 29.33861)



B Rukatunturi

Rukatunturi is a 490 metres high fell and a ski resort in Kuusamo, Finland.

93825, Finland (66.16555, 29.15149)



C Kiutaköngäs

A 100-meter-long series of rapids on the Oulankajoki river, famous for its towering red dolomite cliffs and accessible hiking trails within the national park.

93850, Finland (66.36776, 29.32767)

suomenvesiputoukset.fi/vesiputoukset/suomen-vesiputo...



D Kitkajoki

Kitkajoki or Kitkanjoki is a river of Finland. It begins from the lake Ala-Kitka that is connected to the lake Yli-Kitka in the...

Pieni karhunkierros, Kuusamo, Finland (66.25501, 29.43267)

suomenvesiputoukset.fi/vesiputoukset/suomen-vesiputo...

E Kuusamon suurpetotarha

An animal sanctuary housing rescued Finnish predators, including brown bears, lynx, and foxes. It was founded by Sulo Karjalainen and focuses on wildlife conservation and education.

Keronrannantie 31, 93700 Kuusamo (65.68517, 29.13548)

kuusamon-suurpetokeskus.fi

F Kujala Reindeer Farm

A traditional farm operating since 1860, offering insights into reindeer husbandry through feeding experiences, sled rides, and handicraft workshops.

Kemijärventie 131, 93800 Kuusamo (66.06308, 29.14218)

kujalareindeerfarm.com



G Hossan Värikalliot

One of Finland's largest prehistoric rock painting sites, featuring over 60 figures dating back to the Stone Age, located on a vertical cliff face above Lake Somer.

93780, Finland (65.51432, 29.30259)

Mo–Su Open 24/7

luontoon.fi/varikallio

H Valtavaara

The highest fell in Kuusamo, standing at 492 meters. It features a summit wilderness hut and provides panoramic views along the Karhunkierros hiking trail.

Kuusamo (66.18672, 29.19174)

lu... , +358 205 64 6850;+358 205 64 6870;+358 205 64 6804

I Hannu Hautala Nature Photography Centre

A center dedicated to the work of Hannu Hautala, Finland's most renowned nature photographer, featuring digital exhibitions and a permanent collection of Arctic imagery.

1 Torangintaival, Kuusamo 93600, Finland (65.95563, 29.15846)

hannuhautala.fi

J Pyhän Ristin kirkko

Completed in 1951, this Lutheran church replaced a structure destroyed in WWII. It contains two original bells that were buried to hide them from retreating troops in 1944.

(65.96284, 29.19546)

DATA SOURCES

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- Kiutaköngäs — "Kiutaköngäs rapids at the Oulankajoki river, Oulanka National Park, Kuusamo..." by Apalsola, CC BY-SA 4.0
- Kitkajoki — "Aallokkokoski rapids of Kitkajoki river in Oulanka National Park, Kuusamo..." by /kallu, CC BY-SA 2.0
- Hossan Värikalliot — "Mythological animal with five legs depicted in Värikallio Stone Age rock..." by Ilarius, CC BY-SA 3.0

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