

Lappeenranta

South Karelia · Finland

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Lappeenranta is a lakeside city in South Karelia, on the southern shore of Lake Saimaa, Finland's largest lake. The Russian border is about 30 km away. The city is small and easy to cover on foot, with a historic fortress above a busy summer harbour.

It suits a relaxed trip of two or three days. Come in summer for the water, the long evenings and the harbour terraces. Come in winter for skating and cross-country skiing. The city also works well as a base for the Saimaa lake region.

When to visit

Summer is the main season. Days are mild and very long, and lake cruises and harbour terraces are open. Winters are cold and dark, with snow for many months. Spring and autumn are quiet and often wet.

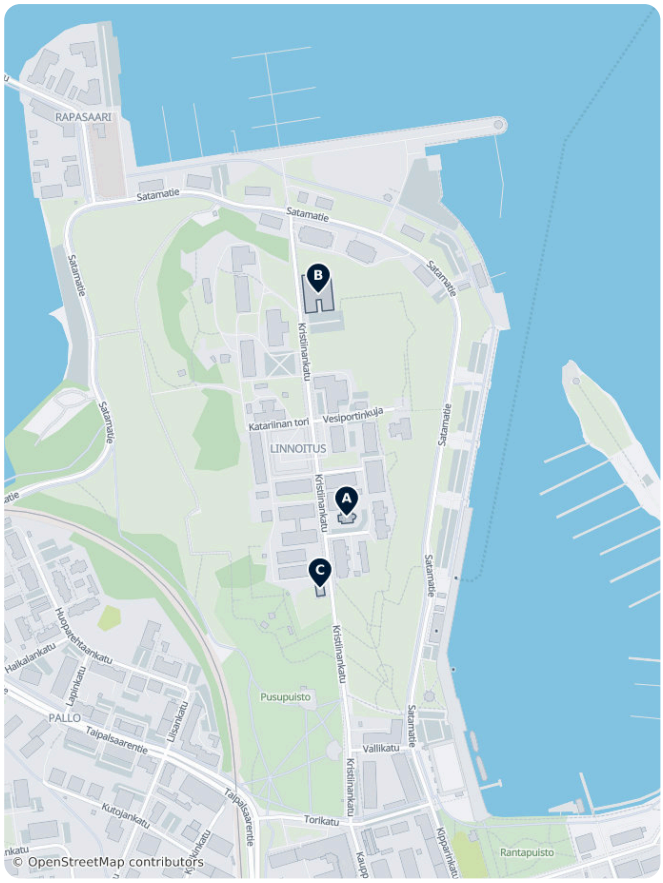
The biggest annual event is the Night of the Fortress festival in early August. It fills the fortress and harbour with music and events. The large sand sculpture at the harbour is a summer attraction.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Poor Poor for sightseeing	-7° / 1° Feels like -12°	-12° / -28°	14 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
February	Poor Poor for sightseeing	-6° / 1° Feels like -11°	-12° / -26°	12 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
March	Poor Poor for sightseeing	-1° / 6° Feels like -6°	-7° / -18°	Dry air · Calm winds
April	Poor Poor for sightseeing	7° / 15° Feels like 3°	0° / -6°	Dry air · Calm winds
May	Fair Fair for sightseeing	14° / 22° Feels like 11°	6° / -1°	12 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
June	Good Good for sightseeing	18° / 25°	11° / 6°	14 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
July	Good Good for sightseeing	21° / 27°	14° / 10°	17 rainy days · Calm winds
August	Good Good for sightseeing	20° / 25°	13° / 9°	15 rainy days · Calm winds
September	Fair Fair for sightseeing	14° / 20°	8° / 3°	13 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
October	Poor Poor for sightseeing	7° / 13° Feels like 3°	3° / -4°	15 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
November	Poor Poor for sightseeing	0° / 7° Feels like -4°	-4° / -14°	14 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
December	Poor Poor for sightseeing	-4° / 3° Feels like -9°	-9° / -21°	15 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds

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

Top sights

- The Linnoitus fortress district is the original old town of Lappeenranta. The Swedes built it in stages between 1721 and 1743. Today it has cafés, craft shops, artist workshops, museums and parks. The A Pokrovan kirkko from 1785 is the oldest Orthodox church in Finland.
- The harbour and the Lake Saimaa waterfront are the summer centre of the city. Saimaa is Finland's largest lake. The harbour has live music on many summer days, and some cruise boats leave from it. Myllysaari, across the harbour, has a sandy beach. From June to September the area becomes a small funfair. In winter the lake is used for saunas and ice bathing.
- B Museum of South Karelia sits at the northern tip of the fortress, in early-19th-century limestone artillery storehouses. It tells the story of South Karelia and the Viipuri area that Finland lost after the Second World War. A restored scale model of Viipuri is the best-known exhibit.
- C Cavalry Museum is at the southern tip of the fortress, in a former Russian guardhouse from 1772. It shows the history of Finnish cavalry.
- A new sandcastle is built at the harbour each summer. It is called the biggest in Finland.



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What to experience

- Take a lake cruise from the harbour in summer. Boats go to other places on Lake Saimaa.
- Join the Night of the Fortress festival in early August.
- Sit on a harbour terrace on a summer evening and listen to live music.
- Skate or ski on cross-country trails in winter, when the lake and parks freeze.
- Watch a home game of the SaiPa ice hockey team in the winter season.

Day trips

Lappeenranta works well as a base for short trips in the region.

- Imatra, about 40 km north-east, is known for the Imatrankoski rapids and the Art Nouveau State Hotel from 1903. The rapids are dammed, and a free summer show opens the gates. Buses also run from Lappeenranta.
- Rauha is a spa area on the Saimaa shore beside Imatra. Its two spas have more than 20 pools and several saunas.
- Ylämaa, about 30 km south, is a small village known for its local gem stone, spectrolite. It has a jewellery museum that is open in summer.
- Savonlinna lies farther north on the Saimaa lakes and has a famous medieval castle.
- Vyborg in Russia was once a popular day trip. The land border has been closed since late 2023 and is still closed until further notice. Check the Border Guard.

Where to explore

- Imatra is the nearest town of interest, with the rapids, the State Hotel and lakeside parks.
- Helsinki is the main gateway. Kotka and Savonlinna are other regional towns.

Getting there

- **By train**: VR trains run from Helsinki in about 2 hours. The station is in the centre. Book at VR.
- **By bus**: Direct coaches run from Helsinki, Kouvola, Kotka, Imatra and other towns. The bus station is next to the railway station.
- **By air**: Lappeenranta Airport is 2.5 km south-west of the centre, with bus 4 outside the terminal. Service is limited: a few charter flights and, at times, a Ryanair route to Milan Bergamo. Check the airport site. Most visitors fly into Helsinki and take the train.
- **From Russia**: The land border crossings between Finland and Russia have been closed since 2023. Check the Finnish Border Guard before making any plan that involves the border.

Getting around

- **On foot**: The centre, the fortress and the harbour are close together and easy to walk.
- **Bus**: City buses accept contactless payment by bank card or phone on board. See the Visit Lappeenranta site for local information.
- **Cycling**: Bike share is available. Distances in the centre are short.
- **Taxi**: Taxis are available in the centre and at the station.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

High

The centre, the fortress and the harbour are close together.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Moderate

Distances are short and bike share is available.

Driving

- **Is a car worth it?** Not for the centre, which is compact. A car helps for Imatra and the lake shores.
- **Winter**: Winter tyres are required when conditions call for them, generally from 1 November to 31 March. Rental cars are normally fitted for the season.

Food & drink

Look for the fried meat pies of Lappeenranta, called vety and atomi. They are sold at the market square and the harbour. Karelian pies with rice filling are a local staple across South Karelia.

For a meal, the harbour terraces are the best area in summer. The cafés inside the fortress are good for coffee and cakes.

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

Lappeenranta is a very safe city. Petty crime is rare. Tap water is safe to drink.

In winter, do not walk on lake ice unless the route is marked and the ice has been checked. Dress for cold and ice from November to March.

History

Queen Christina of Sweden gave the town its charter in 1649. In the 1720s Sweden built a fortress here to guard the new border with Russia. Russian forces won the Battle of Villmanstrand in 1741. Sweden then gave the area to Russia, and it stayed under Russian rule until Finland became independent in 1917.

Today the fortress holds the museums and the Orthodox Pokrovan kirkko. The Museum of South Karelia keeps the memory of Viipuri and the Karelian lands that Finland lost after the Second World War.

The Saimaa Canal, opened in 1856, connects the lake to the Gulf of Finland. About half of it runs through Russian territory that Finland leases.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Finland at a glance:

CURRENCY
EUR

EMERGENCY
112

ELECTRICITY

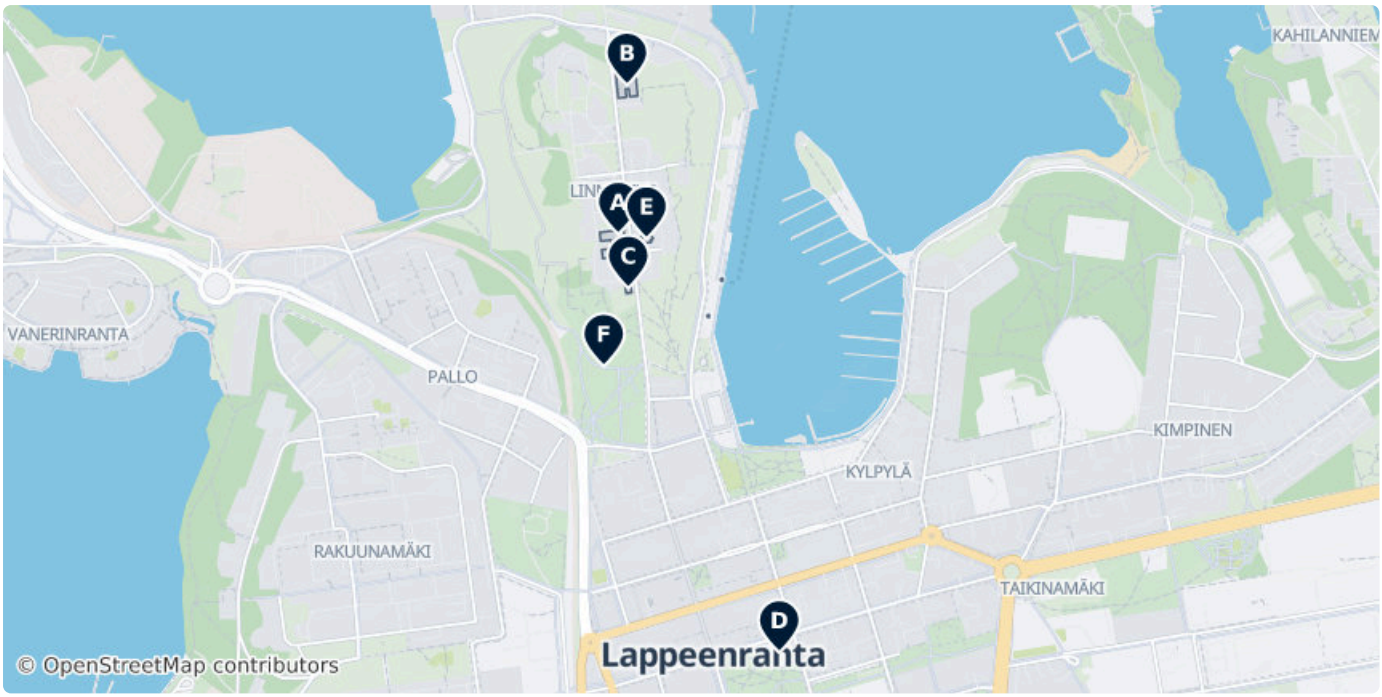


Type C / Type F
230 V · 50 Hz

LANGUAGES
Finnish, Swedish

TAP WATER
Safe to drink

Top sights





A Lappeenranta Art Museum

Kristiinankatu 8, 53900 Lappeenranta, FI
(61.06504, 28.18312)

Mo–Fr	10:00–18:00
Sa–Su	11:00–17:00



B South Karelia Museum

Regional cultural history museum in neo-classical stone buildings from the early 1800s that once served as cannon storehouses in the Lappeenranta fortress.

Kristiinankatu 15, 53900 Lappeenranta
(61.06740, 28.18341)

Mo–Fr	10:00–18:00
Sa–Su	11:00–17:00

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C Cavalry Museum

Military history museum in Lappeenranta's oldest surviving building, a stone guardhouse from 1772, telling the story of the Finnish cavalry from the 16th century to today.

Kristiinankatu 2, 53900 Lappeenranta (61.06418, 28.18345)

Mo–Fr	10:00–18:00
Sa–Su	11:00–17:00

lappeenranta.fi/en/-City-services/Culture-and-sports/Mus...



D Lappeen Marian kirkko

(61.05841, 28.18839)

lappeenrannanseurakunnat.fi



E Pokrovan kirkko

Orthodox church completed in 1785 inside the Lappeenranta fortress, the oldest Orthodox church in Finland still in use.

Pokrovanaukio, 53900 Lappeenranta, Finland (61.06497, 28.18405)



F Pusupuisto

53900, Finland (61.06294, 28.18265)

DATA SOURCES

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