

# Uutela Canal and the Fair Weather Park

Aurinkolahti in Vuosaari is a new, modern seafront residential area for 2,000 people. The Uutela Canal and Fair Weather Park (Kauniinilmanpuisto) located in the area are fine examples of advanced environmental planning. Unlike ordinary canals, the Uutela Canal does not actually lead anywhere; instead, it serves as an impressive and interesting water theme. The canal was completed in 2006 and the Fair Weather Park on its eastern bank in 2007.

The canal is 700 metres and its width varies from 45 to 12 meters. In terms of the height of the water level, the canal is divided into three basins: the southernmost basin is at the sea level whereas the second basin is 4 and the third basin 5 metres above the sea level.

The depth of mid-basin filled with sea water is 1 m while the depth of the actual canal section at the sea level is 2.2 metres. Water is drawn to the highest basin by pump and led via waterfalls to the lowermost basin.



Water is recirculated in order to prevent the water from becoming stale. The natural outlook of the eastern bank is accentuated by a stone field reminiscent of the ancient shoreline and the upper basins by planted areas surrounded by perimeter walls that grow sedges, silvery sedges and water-plantains. On the edge of the basin there grows bushgrass, lyme grass and reed canarygrass.

At the end of the canal, there is a shallow, drop-shaped wading pool with a fountain that invites children to play in the water. The bottom of the pool is made of blue-green oxidized concrete. Four wood-decked arch bridges have been built across the canal. From the drop-shaped pool, the water flows under the Hellesilta Bridge to the lower basin as if in a fish ladder.



The next bridge is romantically named the Waterloo Bridge (Sumujen silta) under which the water cascades down a couple of meters. Probably the most exciting element of the canal is found under this bridge: a corridor leading to the back of the waterfall showing what the world looks like through a water curtain.

On the western bank there are comfortable stairs leading down to the water and the Plaza of Storms (Myrskyjen aukio) flanked by trees forming a geometric pattern. Berths for boats on both sides of the Uutela Bridge, and after the last Fisherman's Bridge (Urheilukalastajansilta) the canal gives access to the sea and the 500-metre long Vuosaari beach, the longest in Helsinki. The nearby Kampela café offers tasty fish soup, snacks and refreshments.



On the eastern bank of the canal there is the Fair Weather Park bordering on the woods. Ideal for sunbathing and relaxation, the park features meadows, rocky slopes, lawns, perennial natural flowers, familiar Finnish trees and the more exotic cherry trees and bushes. The shoreline is further enlivened by jetties intended for relaxation. The three lanes cutting across the park on the eastern side run parallel to the dam and are linked by paths more or less perpendicular to the canal.

A magnificent rock on the seafront adds a natural touch to the Fair Weather Park and offers a nice location for having a lunch or floating boats in the canal. The smooth volcanic rocks were found when the canal was constructed. The rocks show a representative sample of granite stripes in volcanic rock and the abrasion marks left by the glacier that once covered the area. A boulder carried here all the way from Karelia during the Ice Age rests on the top of the rock. The rapakivi granite boulder floated to its present location inside an iceberg across the ancient post-ice-age lake.

The park also features environmental art. The invitational competition held by Helsinki City in 2003 was won by artist **Anne Koskinen** with her entry "Stone", modelled on the boulder in the mid-basin. The piece of work consists of three bronze "imitation" stones placed on the lawn in the park. Aside from being independent works of art, the stones also serve as seats and lookout points along the canal.

The canal and its surroundings were designed by Architects B&M in collaboration with WSP Finland Oy. The plan was based on **Timo Vormala's** winning entry to the 1996 Aurinkolahti design competition.

