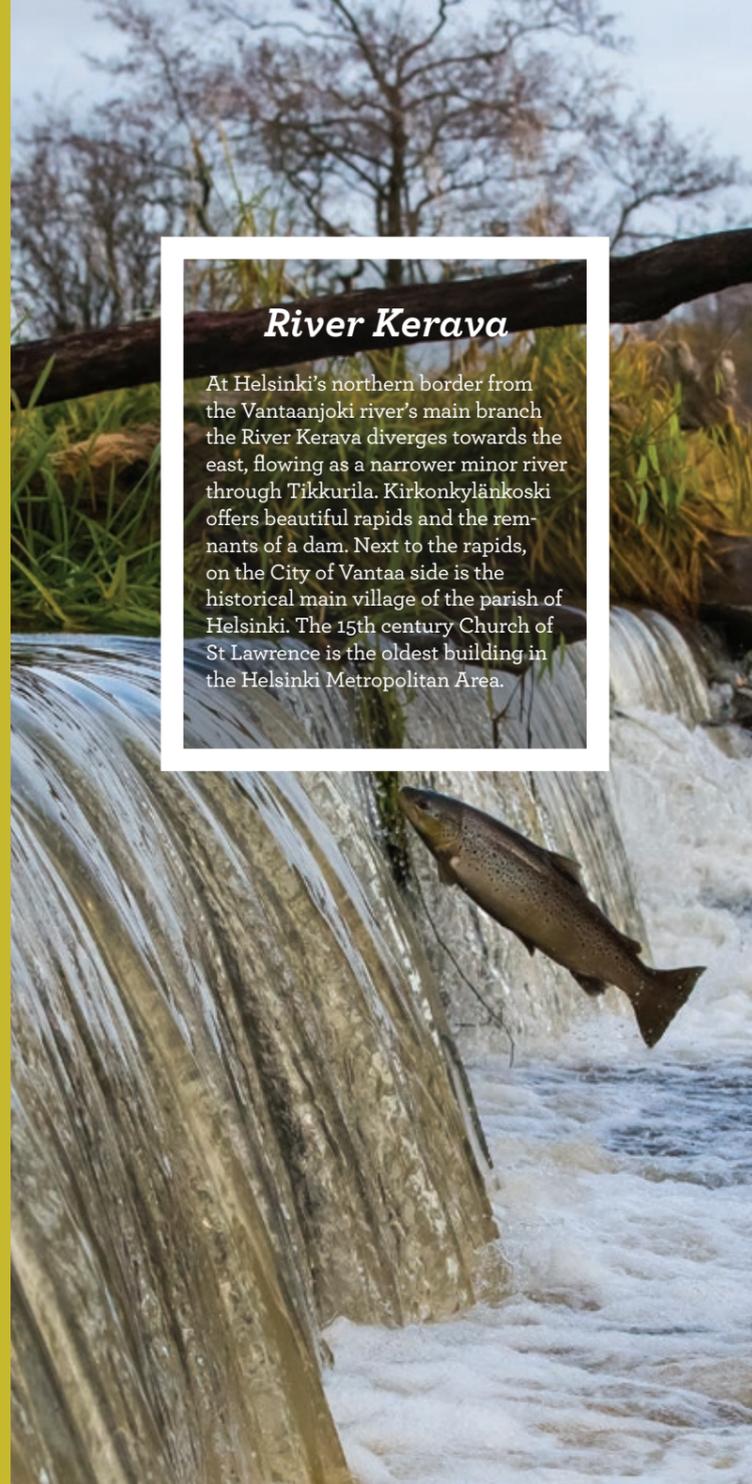




City of Helsinki

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River Kerava

At Helsinki's northern border from the Vantaanjoki river's main branch the River Kerava diverges towards the east, flowing as a narrower minor river through Tikkurila. Kirkonkylänkoski offers beautiful rapids and the remnants of a dam. Next to the rapids, on the City of Vantaa side is the historical main village of the parish of Helsinki. The 15th century Church of St Lawrence is the oldest building in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area.

The fish of the Vantaanjoki



Sea trout

The trout travels up to Vantaa to spawn in its gravel beds, which were built to protect the trout and were overhauled recently. Many of the trout were not born in the river, but were introduced by the authorities, and these trout have had their adipose fin removed, i.e. the small fin at the end of the back is missing. Fish which have not been introduced by the authorities, i.e. which have the adipose fin, must – according to fishing regulations – be released. The sea trout is classified as a very endangered species.



Vimba bream

The vimba bream, a member of the cyprinidae family, is a migratory fish which arrives at the mouth of the Vantaanjoki and travels into the river itself in May. In the past they were fished by scoop net fishing and consumed as salted fish.

European chub

The European chub lives in the Vantaanjoki and in the sea around the mouth of the river. It can grow to be two kilos and it will snap up lures and flies.



Gudgeon

The Vantaanjoki gudgeon is known by the slang name kivari, adapted from the Finnish name for the eelpout (kivinilka). The gudgeon is a small fish of the cyprinidae family, which lives in clayey flowing waters and is often found jutting out from the river bed.



European eel

European eels are introduced into the water systems of the Vantaanjoki by the authorities. Nowadays they are an endangered migratory fish. They only spawn in the Sargasso Sea in the Atlantic. They travel up the river and inland waters to grow, so that they can return to the Atlantic. The European eel is our longest-living fish, with some living as long as 70 years.



European river lamprey

The European river lamprey travels up to Vanhankaupunginkoski in the autumn, before spending the winter in and around the rocks of the rapids. The common merganser fishes for the European river lamprey in the rapids from time to time in the winter. Spawning takes place in May, and after spawning the European river lamprey die.

Finland's 26th largest river

The Vantaanjoki stretches 100 kilometres. The top of its main branch lies next to Riihimäki in Lake Lallujärvi, 111 metres above sea level. The river's catchment area covers 1,685 square kilometres and it is Finland's 26th longest river. The catchment area is home to approximately 1.1 million people, and from that perspective it is our 'largest' river.

The variation in the Vantaanjoki's flow rate can be best seen where there are rapids. The variation is great and the changes occur fast. During dry periods the rapids gurgle gently between the rocks. When the flow is low, the water is clear in colour. At its lowest the flow rate is only about one cubic metre of water per second. During flood season the flow rate can be up to 200 cubic metres of water per second. During these periods the rocks lie under the roaring surge. After snowy winters in April and during rainy periods floods can raise the water level by as much as a couple of metres. When this happens the water becomes a murky brown-grey as clay matter is washed into the river from riverside fields. The river washes the rain water into the sea because there are no lakes to store water alongside the river, and the clay soil alongside the river does not hold water.

The Vantaanjoki freezes over every winter. After a mild winter the river ice melts and disappears unnoticed on the spot. The violent breaking up of the ice on the river after a harsh winter is an impressive but transient event, with large blocks of ice swooshing and smashing into the Vanhankaupunginkoski rapids. The ice blocks' adventure along the river's lower reaches usually only lasts a day or two.

History

The Vantaanjoki is an ancient passage bringing together the inner land and the sea. Along its banks lived sailors who went to trade in Tallinn, long before Helsinki was founded. The river's trout lured fishermen from as far away as Estonia; in the 14th century Estonian monks from Padise Abbey fished here and quarrelled with the locals about fishing rights.

Along the river shops and sawmills were built, with the river used to float timber. During the winters there was a road for horses along the ice, and ice was taken from the river for summer storages. In the summer steam boats travelled the river. The waste water from industry and settlements polluted the river heavily, and due to the contamination the river reached its poorest state ever in the 1960s. The quality of the water in the Vantaanjoki is satisfactory nowadays.

The people of Helsinki drank water from the Vantaanjoki from 1876 to 1982. Vanhakaupunki water treatment plant is now a museum.



Text: Eero Haapanen

Photographs: Eero Haapanen, Petteri Hautamaa, Juha Syväranta Helsinki City Museum

*Illustrations: Sakke Yrjölä
Mainostoimisto RED, 2016*

Experience Helsinki Nature!

Vantaanjoki

Vantaanjoki

A trout river and Helsinki's birthplace



Unparalleled Vantaanjoki

The Vantaanjoki is Helsinki's largest freshwater environment. The most impressive rapids can be found at Vanhankaupunginkoski at the river's mouth and at the city's northern border, in the area between Pitkääkoski and Ruutinkoski. A hiking path runs along the shore on either side of the river throughout the entirety of Helsinki.

Rapids sites

Vanhankaupunginkoski rapids, located at the mouth of the river, stretch for 150 metres and the drop is six metres. Vanhankaupunginkoski rapids and their backwaters are the city's best-known fishing spot. In the autumn thousands of trout swim up the river. Whitefish spawn under the rapids.

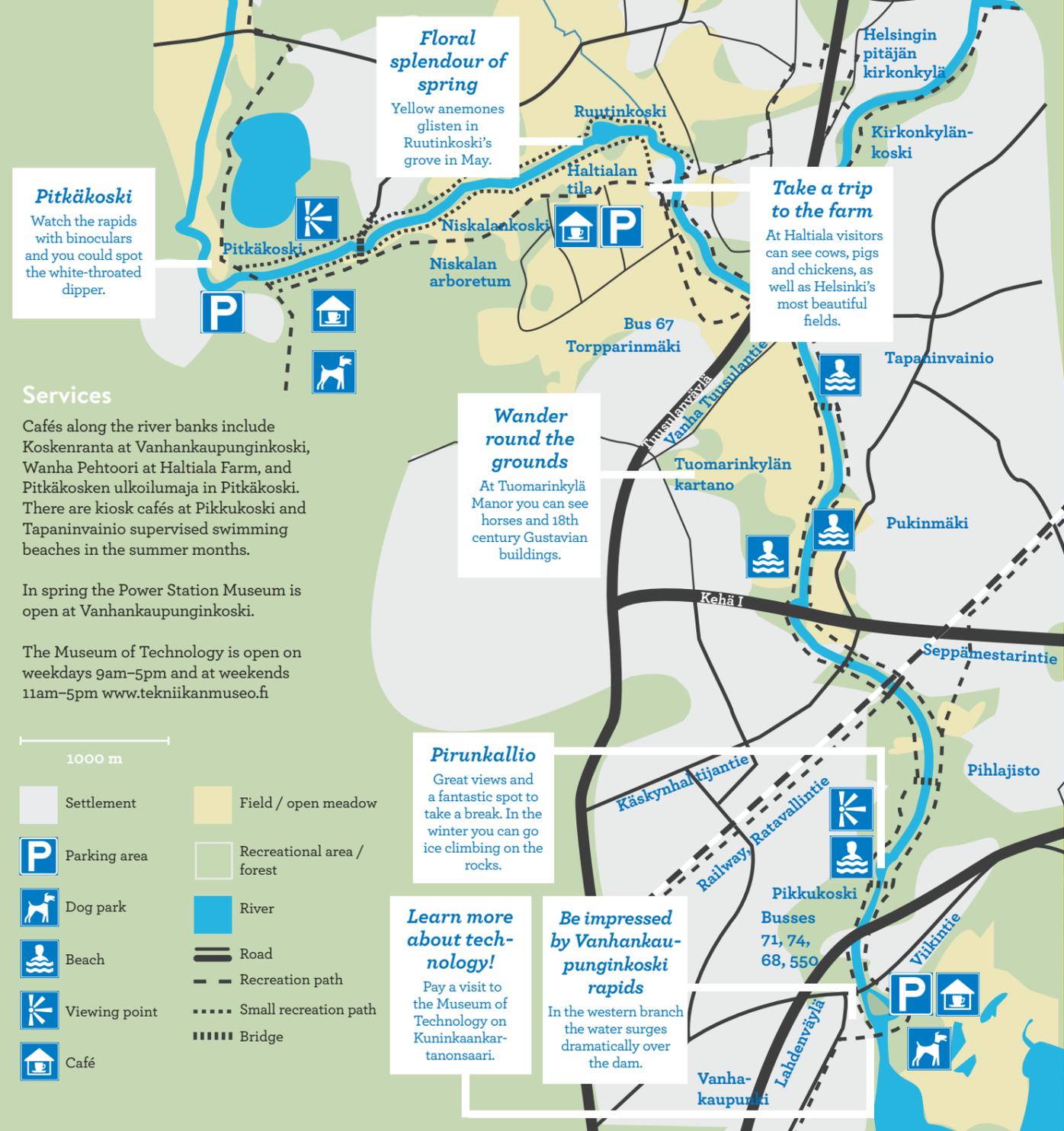
Pitkääkoski rapids, at Helsinki's northern border, cover 1.1 kilometres and the drop is five metres. In keeping with the name (pitkää – long, koski – rapids) Pitkääkoski has the most wilderness-eque atmosphere of anywhere in Helsinki. The tall firs and aspens on the sloped groves of Pitkääkoski, which is a protected area, murmur all around. Hazel bushes grow on the slopes. Areas of small rapids continue through the fields to Ruutinkoski, where the rapids' backwaters broaden out into a small lake. In the coastal groves of the protected Ruutinkoski yellow anemone and gagea bloom in May.

In the winter the white-throated dipper can be seen diving into the spots where the ice has melted. Traces of the presences of otters can be seen at the edges of the unfrozen sections. The otters themselves are rarely spotted as they move around primarily at dusk.

Practical links:

Fishing permits:
www.hel.fi/fishing

Canoe rentals Tapaninvainio, Uimarannantie:
www.melontaranta.fi (in Finnish)



What is there to do?

You can swim in the Vantaanjoki not only at the beaches but also at jetties and natural beaches. The river's banks are steep, and it is easier to get down into the water from jetties and constructed beaches. Information about water quality is available for Pikukoski and Tapaninvainio supervised beaches.

Angling in the river is permitted, but angling in the rapids area is prohibited. Trolling and fly-fishing are permitted in the rapids area, provided you are in possession of the appropriate permits. Fishing in the rapids is completely prohibited for the period 11 September – 15 November.

Moving around the Ruutinkoski and Haltiala nature reserves is permitted only on the paths provided.

There is a public grill in the yard of Haltiala farm, which you will need to bring your own wood to use.



Slow-flowing river

For the seven kilometres from the top of Vanhankaupunginkoski all the way to Haltiala the river flows slowly. Flowing at a leisurely pace, the river is reminiscent of a lake and it is not always possible to tell what direction the river is flowing in. Paddling is another way to travel along the river.

Vantaa is home to an abundance of thick shelled river mussels, which are classified as endangered. The Vantaanjoki's main channel is protected as a Natura 2000 area for 59 kilometres because of the presence of these mussels and otters. The mussels, which grow to a size of 5–10 centimetres, live burrowed into the river bed and move very little. All individuals of this species living in flowing water are protected. There are only a couple of dozen thick shelled river mussel sites known in Finland.

The yellow water-lily (also known as Jokisika, or river-pig in Finnish) fills the sides of the Vantaanjoki with its leaves. Arrowhead and flowering rush are other impressive aquatic plants. The river banks are home to the birdcherry thickets of the thrush nightingale, as well as areas of lush groves, where the Eurasian blackcap warbles.

Beside Pikukoski swimming beach is the steep-walled 'Pirunkallio', which offers a view over the area. Rock climbers can enjoy the rock cliffs in winter too, when the wall-face has frozen over with water pumped from the river.

At Tuomarinkylä Manor huge riverbank fields open up. The manor, with its avenue of trees, is an ideal spot for riding. Haltiala's fields extending towards the north form Helsinki's largest expanse of fields. The European goldfinch, common linnet and Eurasian tree sparrow flock to Haltiala's sunflower fields. At Haltiala farm domestic farm animals, Highland cattle and sheep graze on the river banks. To the west of Haltiala farm's fields is a protected arboretum – a park with various different tree species – where exotic trees and shrubs grow. It was founded in the early 20th century by lord of the manor Jacob Kavaleff. Carrying on from the arboretum towards the west are Haltiala's large forest areas, with the first one you will come across being a shady primeval forest which was protected in 1984, where trees that have fallen and are resting against other trees can be heard groaning.

