



City of Helsinki

Duckboards to Lammassaari

From Vanhankaupunginkoski rapids it is easy to reach the nature trail in Pornaistenniemi grove. In front of the bird watching tower is a bird hide from where you can watch Eurasian coots up close. Sometimes you can catch a flash of a water rail or Eurasian bittern, both of which like to stay hidden.

The duckboards lead to the bird watching tower on Lammassaari. From 1993 an old grazing meadow has been restored in front of it. The meadow is home to the Eastern Finncattle, which originate in eastern Finland. Species that nest in the meadow include the common redshank, meadow pipit and western yellow wagtail, as well as the even yellower citrine wagtail, a great rarity hailing from the east.

Lammassaari has been leased by Raittiusyhdistys Koitto since 1904. At the top of the island is a sturdy log assembly house, Pohjolan pirtti (Pohjola Cabin). Lammassaari is an old working class summer hut area, similar to Kivinokka.

Heading in a better direction

This El Dorado of birds has been drawing in ornithologists since the 1830s, when bird painter Magnus von Wright began taking hikes here.

Contamination of the water resulted in the loss of a large proportion of the island's abundance of birds in the 1960s and 70s. The water quality has improved in recent decades, and benthic fauna, aquatic plant and water bird populations have recovered. Over the last 30 years lots of new bird species have begun nesting in the area. The whooper swan nested here for the first time in 2014. However, the nutrients and murkiness of the clay brought by the river Vantaanjoki are still impeding the spread of aquatic plants.

Wide-spread management work is underway to protect the plant and bird populations in the area. Restoration of the coastal pastures has produced good results.

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> Housing and environment >
Nature and green areas

The following activities are permitted in the area

- Walking and skiing on the ice, even in the nature reserve
- Walking in the summer hut areas
- Boating, except in the nature reserve, the borders of which are marked by yellow buoys. The speed limit is 10 km/h
- Picking berries and mushrooms
- Fishing in areas other than the nature reserve, Vanhankaupunginkoski rapids and their backwaters are special areas where separate permits are also required for angling
- Walking a dog on a lead. There is a dog park in Pornaistenniemi
- The best spot for swimming is Kivinokka beach

The following activities are prohibited in the area

- Moving about within the nature reserve when the water is not frozen, except on the duckboard routes and paths
- Fishing and boating in the nature reserve
- Walking on Viikki's fields when the ground is not frozen
- Using motor vehicles on the hiking trails or ice
- Making fires
- Letting dogs off the lead

Bird paradise

Through the ages 300 bird species have been spotted in Vanhankaupunginlahti, which is the highest number of bird species spotted in one location in Finland. In the 2000s 125 bird species have nested in the area, of which around 20 are irregular nesters.

Amongst water birds, the most abundant species are the mallard, great crested grebe, common goldeneye and mute swan. Small numbers of northern shoveller, garganey, gadwall and Eurasian teal also nest in the area. Species that are found abundantly amongst the reeds include the sedge warbler, Eurasian reed warbler and common reed bunting. The reeds are also home to the lively long-tailed bearded reedling, which arrived in the area in the 1990s.

Around ten lesser spotted woodpecker pairs nest in the coastal common alder groves. Inhabitants of the coastal shrubs include the thrush nightingale, common rose-finch, marsh warbler and Blyth's reed warbler.

Nesting birds of prey include the tawny owl, long-eared owl, Eurasian hobby and northern goshawk. All of our bird of prey species can be seen in Viikki during the migratory period.

A roaring heron colony

The grey heron began to nest on the little island of Loppi (Klobben in Swedish) in 2006. Nowadays the tops of the common alders contain the nests of around thirty heron pairs. They arrive to their nests built of twigs in early spring. The young leave the nest in July. Your best chances of seeing herons are before the leaves arrive on the trees, with Purolahti and the rocks at Mölylä providing particularly good spots in the morning sun. In the evenings the colony can be seen from Lammassaari bird watching tower in ideal lighting. In the still air the roar and gacking noises carry from the colony.

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Layout and map: Mainostoimisto RED, 2016

Fishing in the rapids

Vanhankaupunginkoski rapids is Helsinki's most important fishing spot. Scoop net fishing for whitefish is popular in the autumn. Thousands of trout travel up the river to spawn in the Vantaanjoki. Smelt, vimba bream and European river lamprey spawn in the rapids during the spring. In the middle of the summer zander trollers gather at Vanhankaupunginselkä. The most abundant fish that are caught in Vanhankaupunginlahti are the common bream, pike and zander. The fish stocks are diverse, featuring the European eel, tench, crucian carp, ide and burbot. Species that are introduced into the waters include asp and carp.

Birds that fish in the bay include the impressive osprey and Caspian tern, with its rough call, both of which nest further out in the sea area.

Experience
Helsinki Nature!

Viikki

Viikki

A hike to
Vanhankaupunginlahti



Diverse Vanhankaupunginlahti

Vanhankaupunginlahti is Helsinki's bird paradise. The sea bay with its decomposing matter consists of a number of different wet habitats: alder swamps, coastal meadows, small reeded ponds, dense endless reed beds, and shallow water areas. The shore features recreation paths, bird watching towers, beautiful bedrock areas, old forests and the fields of Viikki.

By metro to the forest

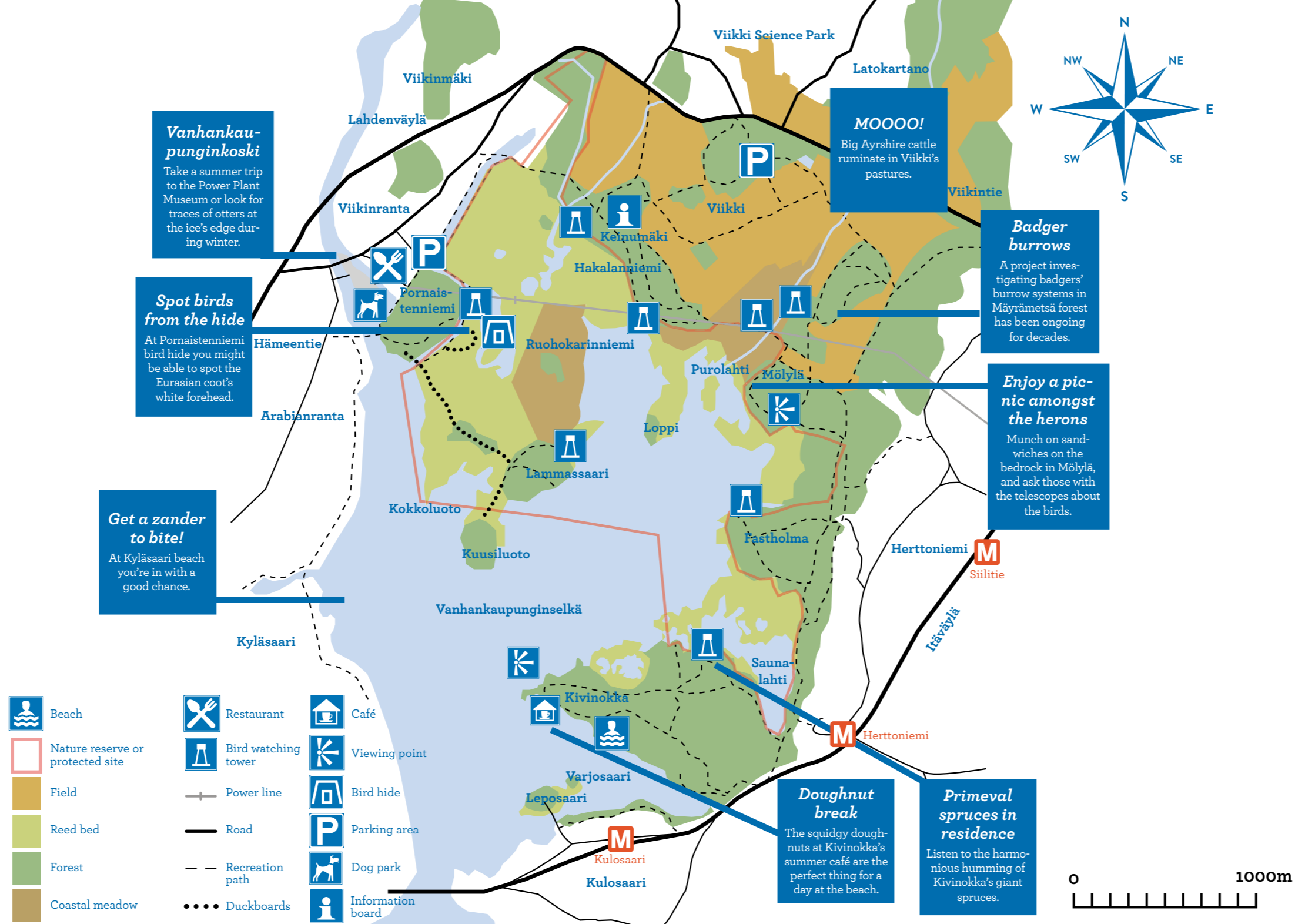
On the eastern coast of the bay, next to Herttoniemi, are three forested peninsulas: Kivinokka, Fastholma and Mölylä, and the bedrock areas on the shores offer the perfect spot to get a view of Vanhankaupunginlahti. The best way to get there is from Herttoniemi or Siilitie metro stations.

On the shore of Saunalahti in Kivinokka is the area's most impressive collection of old spruces. Dozens of great crested grebe colonies nest in front of Kivinokka. Nowadays the reeds have closed Saunalahti off into a pond, which is home to plenty of watermilfoil, fennel pondweed and other aquatic plants. From late summer gadwalls, Eurasian wigeons, aythya diving ducks and Eurasian coots gather in the pond.

Protection

Vanhankaupunginlahti is Helsinki's biggest nature reserve. A number of parts were protected in 1959, 1962 and 1987. In 2005 the nature reserve area was expanded to include Saunalahti. The nature reserve is part of the European Union's Natura 2000 network, and the EU has funded conservation work for the area. In 2015 Mölylä forest and Pornaistenniemi coastal grove were added to the nature reserve. Including these areas, the nature reserve encompasses almost 350 hectares.

Literature: Markku Mikkola-Roos and Rauno Yrjölä (eds), Viikki. Helsingin Vanhankaupunginlahden historiaa ja luontoa [Viikki. The History and Nature of Helsinki's Vanhankaupunginlahti] Tammi 2000.



Vanhankau-punginkoski
Take a summer trip to the Power Plant Museum or look for traces of otters at the ice's edge during winter.

Spot birds from the hide
At Pornaistenniemi bird hide you might be able to spot the Eurasian coot's white forehead.

Get a zander to bite!
At Kyläsaari beach you're in with a good chance.

MOOOO!
Big Ayrshire cattle ruminates in Viikki's pastures.

Badger burrows
A project investigating badgers' burrow systems in Mäyrämetsä forest has been ongoing for decades.

Enjoy a picnic amongst the herons
Munch on sandwiches on the bedrock in Mölylä, and ask those with the telescopes about the birds.

Doughnut break
The squidgy doughnuts at Kivinokka's summer café are the perfect thing for a day at the beach.

Primeval spruces in residence
Listen to the harmonious humming of Kivinokka's giant spruces.

A fox? Maybe not...
In the winter finding mammals and traces of them is at its easiest. However during this period Viikki's badgers go into hibernation in their burrows in Mäyrämetsä forest. The roe deer settled in Viikki in 2010. Now there are a dozen or so roe deer. The cloven hoof prints can be seen alongside the paths. During the summer the roe deer are often hidden amongst the vegetation. Stoats, foxes and raccoon dogs leave tracks all over the ice and beaches. The otter's footprints are easy to find in the winter along the edges of the unfrozen areas of the Vanhankaupunginkoski rapids. Pine martens live in the forest areas in the east. European water voles and Eurasian water shrews can be spotted diving into the ditches in Viikki's fields.



Viikki's birds

Citrine wagtail
Its yellow head is the citrine wagtail's distinguishing feature. This rare bird nests in Lammassaari's grazing meadow every year.



Eurasian bittern
The Eurasian bittern uses its beak to spear fish and frogs, as well as small mammals and young birds on occasion.

Water rail

The cry it makes, similar to the squeal of a pig, is often a giveaway of the water rail's whereabouts. With a bit of luck, this prowler can be spotted from Pornaistenniemi's bird hides.



Common pochard
In the late summer the common pochard can be spotted diving in Saunalahti.

Lesser spotted woodpecker

The lesser spotted woodpecker is only the size of a great tit.

