Mustavuori is Helsinki’s best preserved First World War fortification entity. At the top of the rock are paved cannon roads and trenches which are now home to trees. The fortification works were left incomplete and there are mounds of stone shards dotted around the area. At the top of the rock is the largest, 30-metre long cave, which in actual fact is a tunnel, with two entrances. On the western slope are two more caves hollowed out of the bedrock. Above these caves, on the top of the mountain, a breathtakingly narrow gorge seven metres deep has been dug into the bedrock, with a width of only a little over a metre in places. The structures are protected under the Antiquities Act, and Mustavuori is a nationally valuable built environment site.

There have never been any permanent settlements on Mustavuori, but in the trenches there was a hut village built for the forest men until the start of the 21st century.

On the eastern side of Mustavuori there was a limestone quarry as early as in the 18th century. The quarry pit in the south-east corner has been filled with water and turned into a pond.

Make sure to take care when moving about close to the gorge-like fortifications. A torch will come in handy when looking around the caves. On the cave floors there can sometimes be puddles of water.

Mustavuori

Fortress treasures

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Vuosaarenhuippu

Enchanted grove

Mustavuori is part of the national Herb-Rich Forest Conservation Programme and is a Natura 2000 area. Visitors can move about freely in the fortification area at the northern end of Mustavuori. During the period 1 April – 15 July the recreation paths in the nature reserve founded in 1987 in the centre of the area must be used. During snowy winters a 2.4 km trail is maintained in the southern part of Mustavuori.

A naturally rich range of species

In the forest there can be found rich, deep forests, whilst the higher slopes are for dominated by conifers and deciduous shrubs. The lemmings, deer, martens, and foxes have already disappeared. The park features small-belled forsythia.

The area's bedrock is also distinctive in its flora. The bedrock is quartz-feldspar gneiss, along with nutritious limestone and amphibolite. The fortification works freed up more lime for the plants that favour it when the rock was smashed. Wall lettuce and herb-Robert can be found in the shadow of the excavations. Sticky catchfly and tower mustard grow on the exposed rock.

In the early summer the grove's foliage sings with a sounds of wood warblers, icterine warblers, and Eurasian blackcaps. The forests have been allowed to develop in their natural states. In these virgin forests the rare red-breasted flycatcher warbles its simple tune and in the thickets the hazel grouse whistles. Deadwood plays host to rare pycnoporellus fulgens, antrodia pulvinascens and antrodiella americana.

On top of Mustavuori is a rugged, bright pine forest and several swampy depressions.

The following activities are permitted in the area

• Picking berries and mushrooms
• Moving about in the fortification area in the northern part of Mustavuori, and looking at the caves and fortifications
• Walking a dog on a lead

The following activities are prohibited in the area

• Making fires
• Moving about in the nature reserves marked on the map, other than by the path routes between 1 April and 15 July
• Altering the fortifications by, for example, digging or moving stones. The fortifications are protected by law as ancient monuments.

Connections and services

Next to Mustavuori, beside Itäväylä, there are bus stops from where you can take buses 93, 841 and 870 from Itäkeskus. Northern Helsinki's crosstown route 78 links Malmi and Vuosaari, passing by the south of Mustavuori on Niinisaarentie.

The best groves and caves can be found easily by starting from the parking area on the western side of Mustavuori and continuing along west to Itäväylä. There are no signposts in Mustavuori.

Literature:

The groves of Mustavuori are varied. The demanding species growing in the lush deciduous groves include dog's mercury, yellow anemone, and Solomons seal.

Dark caves and displays of colour from anemones

Mustavuori is the most prized lush grove in the Helsinki Metropolitan Region. Wood anemone, common hepatica and yellow anemones flower around mothers' day, all putting on their best show. The bedrock in the centre of Mustavuori features First World War era trenches and three large excavated caves.

Mustavuori is connected in the west to the rural Porvarinlahti nature area. In the south-east a dumping ground for excavation and building material has been transformed into the grand Vuosaarenhuippu, a high, landscaped, fell-like recreational area.

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