

2026 HIIUMAA



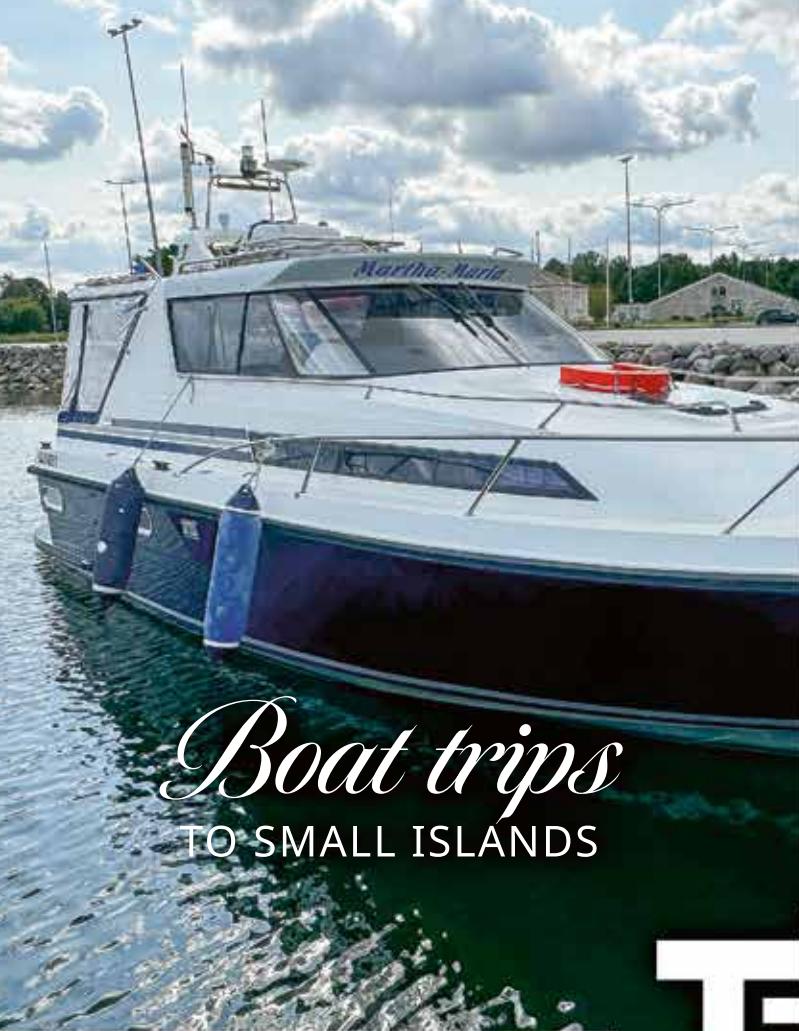
*With love from
Hiiumaa*

Lighthouses

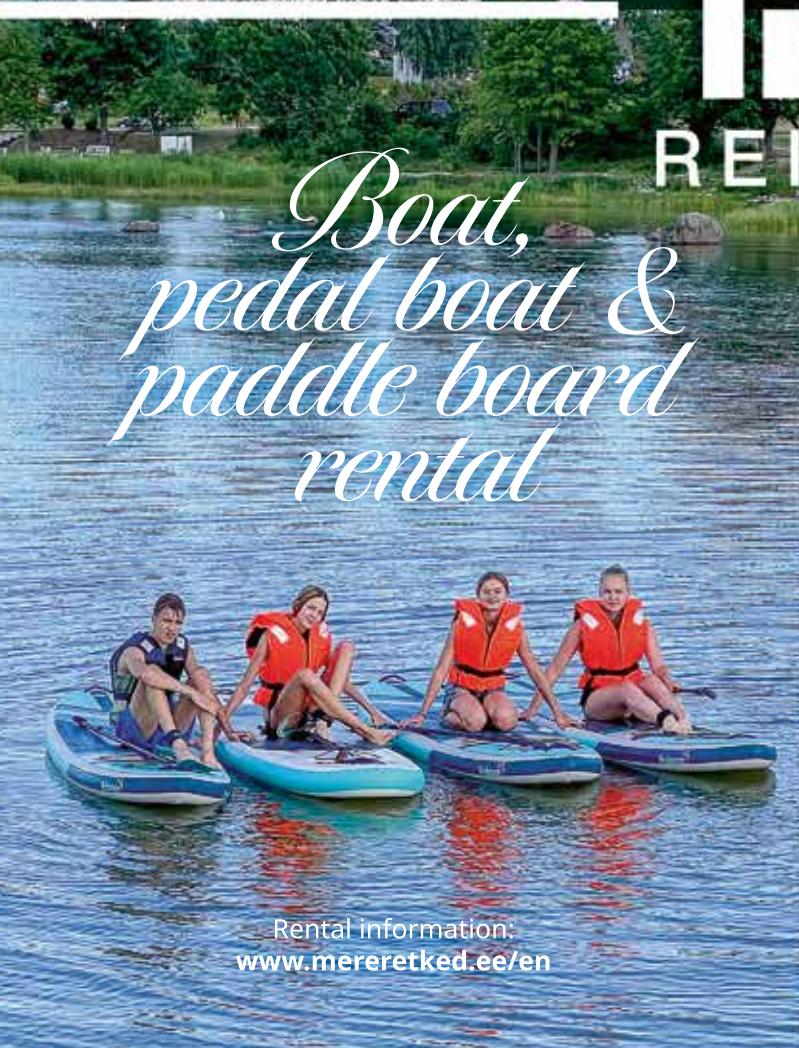
FOREST BATHING

ISLAND RETREAT

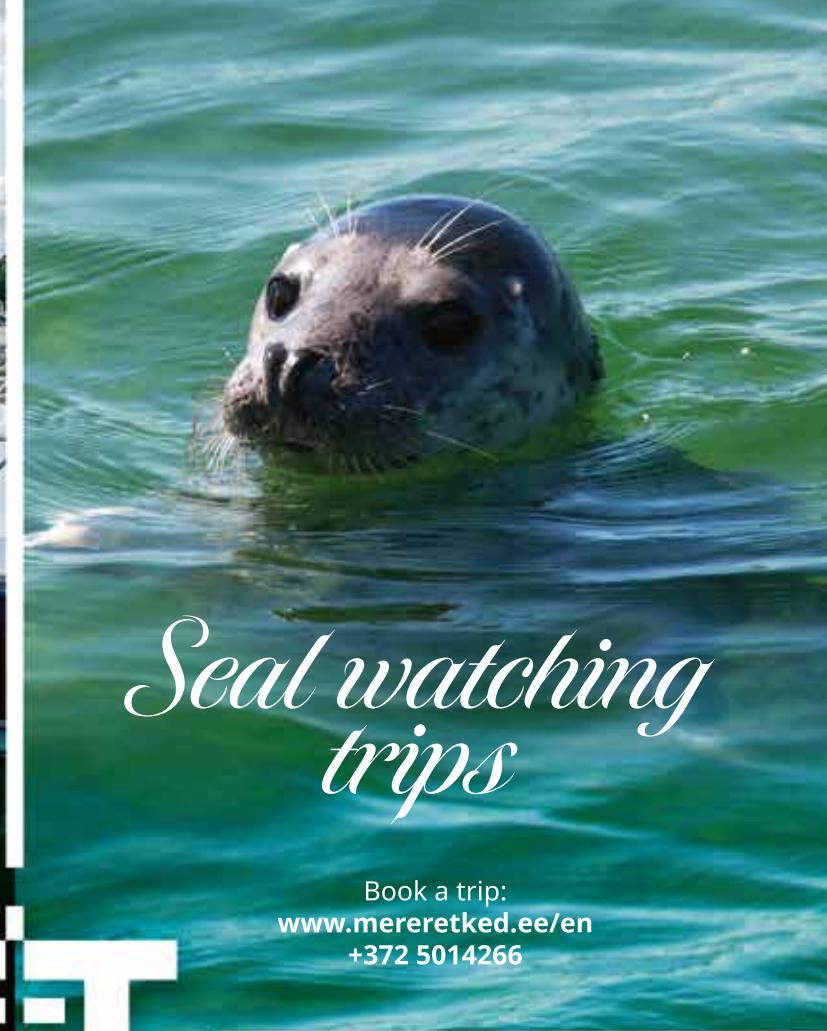
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Friends of Hiiumaa

Have you ever stopped to think about how to win friends and influence people? Dale Carnegie pretty much wrote the book on the subject close to 100 years ago, and there's not a whole lot that needs to be added to his suggestions.

Put simply, the tactics can be summed up as: be positive, make an effort but be yourself, and understand what matters to other people, where their interests lie.

Those general principles aren't too different from how you should go about helping a destination, such as an island, make as many friends as possible.

I find that Hiiumaa is one of the best recent examples of how a relatively small place in fact realized its potential thanks to good - not overblown but sensitive – marketing.

Today the island is still itself. It hasn't had to sell its soul for tourists, it hasn't become one giant spa or gone the same path of its bigger island neighbour to the south, Saaremaa. It has clearly been able to highlight its advantages – tranquillity, rest and relaxation, and culture.

When we published our first special issue devoted to Hiiumaa, I remember an exchange I had with one local cultural figure who turned down the offer to become a contributor, saying that they weren't sure tourism would be good for Hiiumaa.

I believe that today, both of us can now affirm that thanks to tourism, Hiiumaa has gained many good friends.

TIIT PRUULI

EDITOR IN CHIEF OF GO TRAVEL MAGAZINE

Hiiumaa has led me to encounters with many interesting people. Above all, the *hiidlased* (the islanders themselves), but also mainland-based friends of the island and holiday-makers, and colleagues (from Canada to South Korea). Some are luminaries of art, literature and music; others are less acclaimed but simply good people worth knowing. You'll get acquainted with some of them in these pages. What they have in common is they all tell stories of Hiiumaa that speak of the island with love.

Say Hiiumaa and you think "sea". Wind, surf, seagulls, ships, harbours, lighthouses... This year, Hiiumaa is celebrating the Year of Lighthouses, which gets an additional international dimension due to the fact that Hiiumaa is hosting the annual meeting of the European Route of Lighthouses network.

In just a few years, Kõpu, one of the oldest continuously operating lighthouses in the world, will turn 500. In fact, isn't all of Hiiumaa like a lighthouse of sorts? A small community surrounded by the unsparing seas shows the way to cope with hardship while spinning yarns and telling jokes. Even in bad weather, it's possible to stay in a good mood and be happy to be alive.

Molutamine – the Estonian art of appearing to idle while doing anything but wasting time – could be thought of as an application of relativity theory, Hiiumaa-style: harmonizing time and space in the most agreeable way possible.

An increasing number of summertime *hiidlased* and just fans of the island have discovered that it's incredibly pleasant here year round. Besides the peace and quiet in an uncrowded forest or beach, Hiiumaa also offers romance and folk heritage in the other three seasons: music, theatre, art, sports, food and drink.

Come visit the island, fall in love, and send your friends and family a physical or virtual postcard: *With love from Hiiumaa!*

KRISTEL PEIKEL

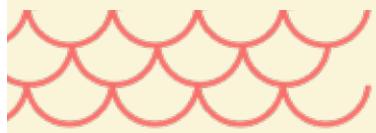
DIRECTOR OF THE HIIUMAA TOURISM CLUSTER



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#Kassari Puhkekakeskus #Vetsi Talli Puhkeküla #Resto Lest & Lammas #Hiiu Õlle Koda





GO Hiiumaa 2026

Official publication of
the Hiiumaa tourism cluster

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Hiiumaa
Development
Centre

HIIU LEHT



HIIUMAA
· Giant by Nature ·



Biosphere Reserve

Don't forget to idle!

TEXT: STINA EILSEN

29 January is the Day of Fruitful Idling on Hiiumaa, and also commemorates the birth anniversary of naturalist Fred Jüssi. We inquired about the best locations for idling on the island and asked people connected to Hiiumaa what they thought of fruitful idling.

ANGELICA UDEKÜLL

HEAD CHEF AND
HIIUMAA AMBASSADOR

In all bare-bones honesty, Hiiumaa is precisely the perfect place for idling, where time has a different dimension, and seems to slip into a slower speed as soon as you drive on to the ferry, the anchor gear is raised and the prow swings around to point toward Heltermaa.



I'm sure that everyone with ties to Hiiumaa has their own happy place on the island, somewhere to enjoy peace and quiet. For me, it's Kõpu Peninsula and the shore of Mardihansu Bay, where sky and sea melt into one on the horizon and where for the most part you won't encounter another living soul besides birds or deer. It's where I recharge, where sometimes I find myself walking in my dreams.

By the way, have you ever heard how *hiidlased* describe a situation where they're racing against the clock? Ah, *I won't make it anyway...*

INDREK IBRUS

MEDIA RESEARCHER
AND SUMMERTIME
HIIUMAA RESIDENT

In the big picture, all of Hiiumaa is a very suitable place for idling. But at the end of last summer, I discovered that a very good place for meditative downtime was among the dunes on Ristna Beach at sunset.



MAIT VAIK

WRITER AND MUSICIAN

When you come down to it, the best place for fruitful idling on Hiiumaa is your own yard, where you don't need to do anything. Hiiumaa folk are lazy as mud, unlike inhabitants of neighbouring Saaremaa, who are a busy bunch, forever bustling and selling – they have to try to pawn everything off on all visitors from wooden spoons to home brew, to the accompaniment of accordion music. But when a tourist goes and asks a *hiidlane* to sell them a potato or two, they'll say they don't have anything to sell, but look, the garden is over there, go and dig one up. They won't take your money. The *hiidlane* just sits back contentedly and waits calmly. Knowing that not doing anything also means you won't do any harm gives confidence that an even better place awaits after you kick off.

RAIMOND KALJULAID

POLITICIAN AND SUMMERTIME
HIIUMAA RESIDENT

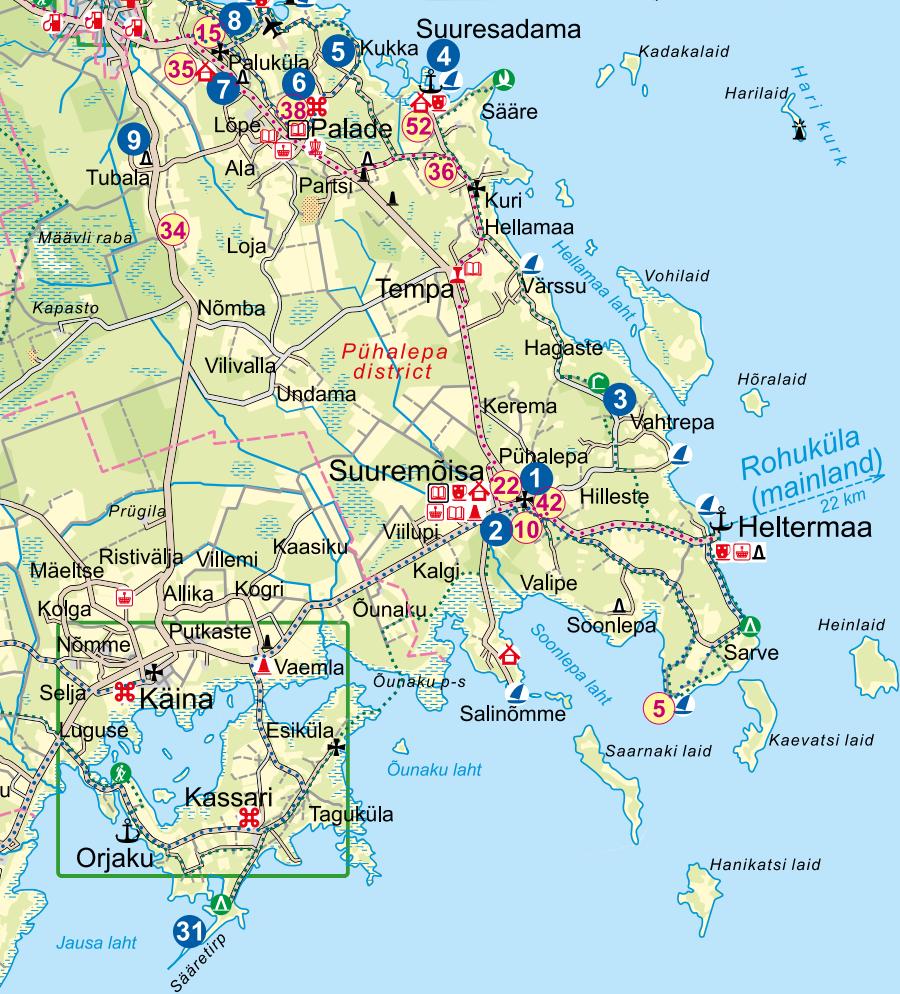
I have to admit that I'm not a big idler and I find it challenging just to be meditative and not actively engaged in activities. But if I had to give advice to a visitor to Hiiumaa, I would recommend driving here with bikes on your car. You can leave the car near the summertime shop in Kõpu and continue on two wheels to the lighthouse. From there, you can wend your way to Ristna Lighthouse on a variety of roads, make a stop at the KalanaÄÄR restaurant and return via Kaleste and Kõpu villages. I very often cycle in that area and the forests and beaches of Kõpu Peninsula are unparalleled in beauty in all of Estonia.



Sights on the map

- 1 Pühalepa church; Contract Stones
- 2 Suuremõisa mansion and park
- 3 Kallaste limestone exposure
- 4 Storehouse in Suursadama harbour
- 5 Kukka boulder
- 6 Soera farm museum; Exhibition of rocks
- 7 Kärdla meteorite crater model
- 8 Helmerseni boulders
- 9 Tubala stake; boulder
- 10 Hiiumaa museum, Long House
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- 18 Ristna lighthouse
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- 20 Location of ancient Hüti glassworks manufactory
- 21 Vanajõe valley
- 22 Mänspe chapel
- 23 Sõru harbour; museum; Sea Centre
- 24 Emmaste church
- 25 Harju windmill
- 26 Kuriste church
- 27 Hiiumaa museum, R.Tobias house museum
- 28 Windtower Experience; Käina church ruins
- 29 Orjaku birdwatching tower, nature trail
- 30 Orjaku harbour, i-point, Village House
- 31 Sääretirp peninsula
- 32 Hiiumaa museum, Kassari museum house
- 33 Kassari chapel
- 34 Vaemla wool factory museum





0 1 2 3 4 5 km

- Eurovelo cycling route
- local cycling route
- RMK hiking route
- hiking/study trail
- campsite
- campfire site
- forest hut
- rest stop

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Hiiumaa's lighthouse-themed year

blazes a path for others

TEXT: KRISTEL PEIKEL

Continuing the tradition of a theme for each year, 2026 is devoted to lighthouses.

For offshore regions, navigation is both a vital skill and an important economic sector. The people of Hiiumaa have been valued sailors and captains since time immemorial. Locally, shipbuilding, fishing and exporting timber to the mainland brought in income. The last of these fields actually resulted in a unique type of ship – the Hiiumaa *halulaev*, a coastal firewood boat.

Hiiumaa's coastline is 325 kilometres long, with about 200 smaller islands around the main island. Shipping lanes here are shallow and ridden with shoals, so safe navigation requires a thorough knowledge of the region and careful study of nautical charts and seamarks.

Lighthouses show the way and warn

Hiiumaa has seven lighthouses and 25 simpler navigational lights (*tulepaak* in Estonian) that aren't full-fledged lighthouses. That's a total of 32 permanent seamarks that blink at night. In addition, there's both a lighthouse and navigational light on Harilaid, a small uninhabited island just west of Vormsi. It's anyone's guess how many floating seamarks – buoys and daymarks – there may be in the waters around the island. It's probably in the hundreds and constantly fluctuating, as seasonal marks are retrieved in winter, and occasionally new ones are installed. Many of the floating marks are equipped with a light, and on clear nights, sailors say the seas are lit up like a Christmas tree.

Lighthouses, of course, have two main functions. Some indicate the safe route through a tight or dangerous passage, or the entry into port. Others warn of shoals, rocks and other hazards – no-go areas for ships. Some lighthouses are standalone towers – take Kõpu, Ristna and Tahkuna – or they can form chains, where two marks are along a straight line when viewed from the vessel.

EVERY LIGHTHOUSE HAS ITS LIGHT

A lighthouse and a *tulepaak* have a similar function; only the size and structure are different. The former have interior areas, while the latter lack rooms and are equipped with a ladder for tending to the light.

Every lighthouse's beacon has a unique blinking pattern to keep seafarers from confusing them with other marks. Nautical charts provide information on the direction of the beam, the colour of the light, the number of blinks, the duration of the "on" and "off" phases. In the same way, the exterior forms of the lighthouses are different so captains of ships can make a positive visual identification.

Anchored lightships have also been used, vessels with a light for other ships to navigate by. Other buildings on shore were also used – church spires, castles and fortresses. Sometimes larger natural features – boulders, hills or tall trees – function as landmarks.

In the olden days, ships had reason to fear shore wreckers who would come to the "rescue" when a ship ran aground. Historically, common law held that if a ship's masts were erect, the cargo remained the property of the owner. If the masts were down, the ship and its contents were fair game. The wreckers therefore made sure that the stays that held the masts up were sliced through first.

According to legend, Hiiumaa's most notorious wrecker in the late 17th century was an aristocrat, Otto Reinhold Ludwig von Ungern-Sternberg. This unscrupulous individual – the Count of Ungru and owner of Kõrgesaare, Putkaste, Suuremõisa and Partsi manors, allegedly earned vast fortunes by having false signals lighted on the beach at night. When ships took the bait, and ran aground on the rocks of Hiiu shoal, they fell prey to Ungern-Sternberg and his henchmen.

WHY THE YEAR OF LIGHTHOUSES IS SO IMPORTANT

In our age of GPS, AIS, DSC, Starlink, drones, self-piloted ships, artificial intelligence and other technologies, do we still need compasses, maps and stone lighthouses? Wouldn't it be cheaper to set up a metal cell-tower-like structure and put an LED on top of it? Nope – lighthouses are still needed, and not only if the power or wireless communications go down but because of their symbolic and cultural qualities.



Lighthouses are invaluable architectural and cultural monuments, which symbolize the identity of Estonia's coastal people as it has developed over the centuries. Kõpu Lighthouse, the symbol of Hiiumaa, is turning 495 years old next year, making it one of the world's oldest operating lighthouses. Kõpu is open to visitors and the old-time ambience is palpable on the winding climb up the stairs to the top.

While maintenance and repairs overseen by historians and heritage conservation authorities are indeed more expensive than caring for a metal mast, lighthouses have today become important tourism destinations because of their storehouse of intangible value.

THE EUROPEAN LIGHTHOUSE NETWORK

And it's to all this that the men and women of Hiiumaa want to draw attention. We've found sympathetic ears in many other countries. Hiiumaa was one of the founding members of the European Route of Lighthouses established in Brussels in 2023. There are now nine countries participating. Hiiumaa has the honour to host the annual meeting next summer. An agency that promotes development on Hiiumaa published a calendar introducing both the lighthouses and the smaller navigational lights. Also planned: a number of exhibitions, including Light in France, a philatelic exhibition featuring Hiiumaa lighthouses, and an exhibition in Hiiumaa Museum's Long House. There's also a theatre performance at Tahkuna Lighthouse and Hiiumaa's first Lighthouse Run, where the route links up the three primary lighthouses Tahkuna, Kõpu and Ristna. November will see the opening of an installation at Ristna Lighthouse. For more information on the Year of Lighthouses, visit www.hiiumaa.ee/tuletornideaasta. ■

Kõpu Lighthouse – a monument to science

TEXT: INDREK LAOS, ARCHITECT, MEMBER OF THE ESTONIAN ASSOCIATION OF ARCHITECTS
WWW.RISTNAEIFFEL.EE

Along with Genoa's Lanterna, the Torre de Hércules, Hook Lighthouse at Hook Head and the Cordouan Lighthouse, Kõpu has secured a place among the world's oldest lighthouses in continuous service.

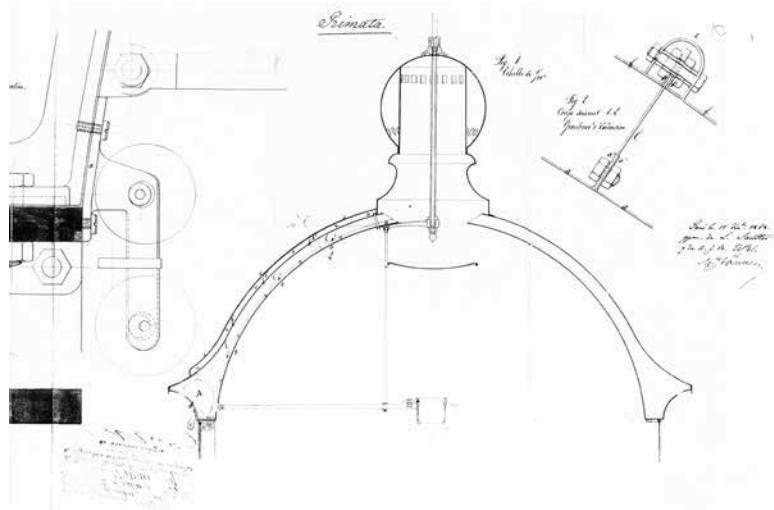
As a building, it is as old as science – i.e., the first systematic attempts to explain the origins of the universe – and has stood for five centuries of continuous scientific advances. This is no mysterious pylon, erected for some long-forgotten needs, but can be seen as memory in physical form, the sum total of humankind's strivings and knowledge accumulated over the centuries.

If 1531 is considered to be the year of construction, Kõpu Lighthouse will turn 495 in 2026. Originally a daymark, the

lighthouse was fitted with a permanent beacon in 1649, when Estonia came under Swedish rule following the Peace of Westphalia. The idea to build the lighthouse originated from Hanseatic merchants in 1503; however, the turn-of-the-century Estonian navigator and officer Johan Mey has recounted that a signal fire would be lighted on Kõpu's Tornimäe promontory before the first daymark was built:

Mey writes: "The old folk still tell how there used to be a fire where the old Kõpu lighthouse now stands (built during the Swedish era). There a great bonfire would be made; a pair of men hauled wood for the fire all night long and made sure it would burn continuously; if the ship being awaited, for which the fire was built, was still considered to be some distance from the coast, straw would be cast into the fire every half hour, which would flare up and be visible from far off (*Laevandus*, 1920/3-4, p. 34)

Ever since it was built, Kõpu Lighthouse has seen constant change. Over the centuries, innovative technical designs have been utilized. The original open flame was replaced with catoptric reflectors in 1804. In 1860, a dioptric Fresnel apparatus made by the French company Henry-Lepaute was introduced, later to be replaced by a more powerful rotating optical apparatus mounted on a mercury bath – made by Sautter, Harlé & Cie and purchased at the 1900 Exposition universelle in Paris.

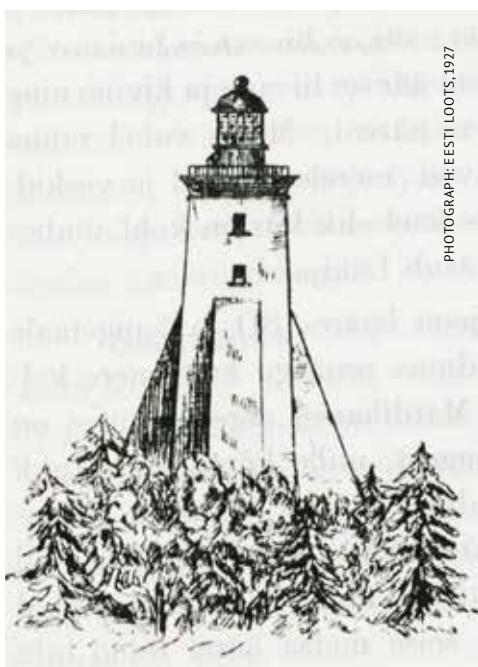


PHOTOGRAPH: ARCHIVES INPI

This rotating mechanism, first adopted for the Nice Observatory, was one of many inventions of Gustave Eiffel and, fitted with a novel metal dome, was also put to use in Kõpu Lighthouse. Trained as a chemist, Eiffel was well aware of the problem of electrolytic corrosion to which various metals, particularly iron and copper, were susceptible in damp environments. On 15 December 1868, he registered an improvement to a patent for metal lighthouses, submitted with Sautter the previous month:

"Annex 2 to patent no. 83080, for the construction of metal towers for lighthouses, issued for 15 years, on the basis of application by Messrs Sautter and Eiffel in Paris on 15 December 1868: The proposals contained in this annex include improvements to the structure of the lantern surrounding the lighthouse's light-emitting apparatus – viz., its dome. Ordinarily such domes are made from an iron structure clad with copper plates and topped by a ventilation cowl in various shapes. In our invention, we have completely abandoned the iron frame and replaced it with a dome formed of a double copper skin, stiffened by a series of vertical copper ribs." (Brevet 1BB83080. Archives INPI)

So, what is the year of construction of Kõpu Lighthouse? Is it 1531, when the first phase of construction of the daymark was completed; 1649, when the first flame was lighted at the top of the lighthouse; 1903, when it was fitted with the Eiffel dome; or 2020, when the lighthouse was furnished with a modern LED light, one of the most powerful of its era and enshrining the historical rotating light beam? What is certain is that this part of our heritage took shape incrementally, moulded by the knowledge and advances of different eras, becoming in effect a monument to science that illuminates the world. ■



PHOTOGRAPH: EESTI LOOTS, 1927

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* lighthouse was first lit

** altitude of the light

A year in the life of Hiiumaa

Here, things don't always run according to a calendar or clock; life on the islands depends on the sea and wind. If you want to really feel the local pulse, you have to take your foot off the gas. Hiiumaa natives say "jo vaadab" – sort of a non-committal "we'll see" – and do things when the right time is at hand. What's certain is that Saturday is sauna night any time of year, and a bath broom for a stimulating massage and wry humour are always part of the sauna experience.



PHOTOGRAPH: PRUDU SAART

SOME YEARS IT DOESN'T SNOW

Once the Christmastime feasting is over, ice boaters start sharpening their blades. If you see iceboats on the ice, go up to them and ask – maybe you can get a short ride! In some winters, Kassari Bay is covered by ice by early January, sometimes it takes longer. Global warming hasn't made the ice conditions any better. There are cold snaps, but the sea water is warmer and there are also more storms that break up the ice.

To mark the 29 January birth anniversary of the late naturalist and writer Fred Jüssi, who had ties to Hiiumaa, locals observe a day of idling and also invite others to take time out and not be so busy, whether they're indoors, outdoors, in the woods or on the beach, Fred himself spent time in the woods in all seasons and Hiiumaa certainly lends itself to that.

On Estonian Independence Day, 24 February, the men put on neckties, the women fasten stamped metal ornaments on their folk costume skirts and everyone gathers on the steps of Reigi Parsonage to sing the anthem; the event open to the public. Hiiumaa makes a good family holiday destination during school half term, with a cosy feel – as if you've travelled to granny's house.

In winter, Hiiumaa is a great place for forest bathing, a modern Japanese invention known as *shinrin-yoku* – leisurely immersion in a forest landscape. The sea is cold, of course, but it also has a moderating effect on the island's climate, particularly on Köpu peninsula, which is a great area for winter walks.

SPRING ARRIVES WITH COWSLIPS AND POETRY

As the daily arc of the sun tilts higher, the whole island comes out of hibernation. Some tend to their greenhouses or tidy up their garden beds and perennial borders; others start building.

For restaurant week, eateries come up with new imaginative menus where fresh local greens and herbs are sure to be featured. There's plenty of culinary experiences to be enjoyed by visitors from the mainland. During this period, fields of anemones are in bloom.

When the meadows are green, the cowslip celebration begins on Hiiumaa. Incidentally, it isn't allowed to gather this flower from the wild in Finland (even though it isn't considered endangered). But on Hiiumaa, cowslips are put in vases and used for herbal tea. The roadsides are a riot of yellow.

In early May, the first sailing competition is held. A couple weeks before, the ports come alive with polishing and painting of hulls. This time of year is also the latest that sheep can be shorn before they start getting hot. Surfers, on the other hand, are a less calendar-dependent breed; they just put on a better insulated wetsuit whenever the wind is blowing from a favourable direction.



Once the trees are in leaf, it's time for garfish. Orjaku hosts the festival devoted to this species of fish, and a competition of who can catch the most. Those not inclined to try their luck themselves can enjoy a cultural programme at the harbour. It's a lively scene.

At the literature festival during the white nights of summer, poems can be read and heard recited. The more diligent islanders get a little haymaking in around this time, but it's more romantic to gather two distinct types of wild strawberries out on the clearcuts.

THE SUMMER'S MOST EAGERLY AWAITED VISITOR IS THE SUN!

On Hiiumaa, the St. John's Eve celebrations in late June are a big family-oriented affair and the aroma of sizzling grills wafts to neighbouring islands. A seal watching boat makes several departures a day and policemen are busy on the roads with sobriety checks. In July 2026, Fishermen's Day will be particularly festive: Dago yacht club founded at a onetime famous fishing kolkhoz, Hiiu Kalur, turns 50.

In early August, tables are set in yards and white tablecloths billow in the breeze as all over the island, pop-up cafes open in homes.

If the coffee crawl seems too intense, it's always possible to repair to the forest – just a few strides off the path and you'll be in the thick of ripening blueberries and mushrooms. It's worth trying different saunas as well: ones built into buses and other inventive and unique bathing facilities descend on the island for a festival.

The sea yields up flounder toward the end of the summer, the smoking ovens are stoked again, farmers harvest grain and sunbathers try to catch the last rays.

PHOTOGRAPH: PRIIDU SAART



A BUMPER CROP OF LATE-SEASON SQUASH

September is a time for harvesting the last of the summer's bounty from fields, gardens, orchards and forests, and Hiiumaa's championships in home canning begin. Doors should be locked at night, but it's not what you think – overly generous neighbours might otherwise drop off an unsolicited delivery of surplus late-season produce. The warm and colourful autumn nights bring a bittersweetness, yet preparations are afoot for grand celebration – the maple tree's birthday is in autumn!

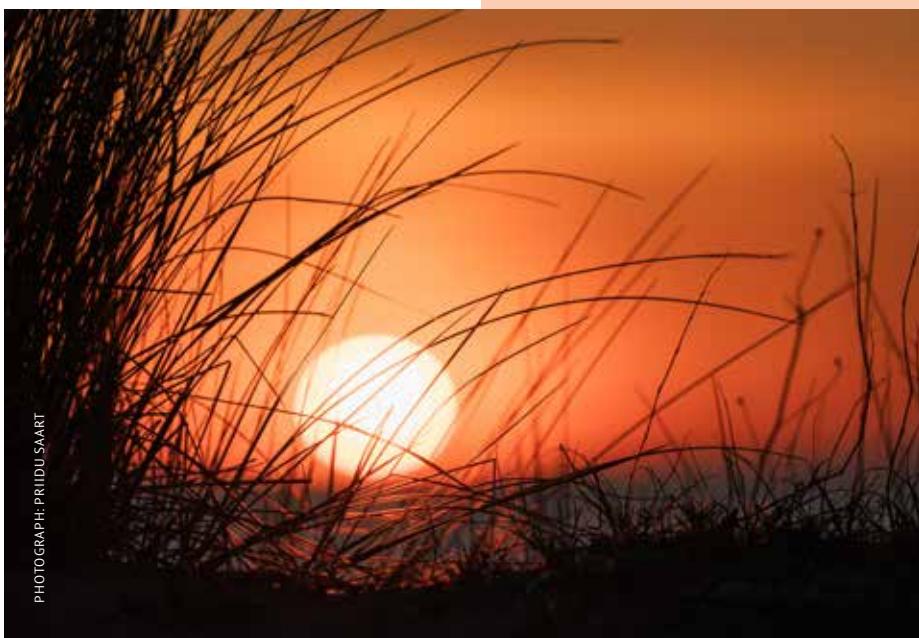
As the nights get longer, Hiiumaa hosts a big people's rally race that draws many spectators.

Darkness is especially valued in Hiiumaa in November – namely, Hiiumaa folk invite mainlanders so they could get some proper rest and relaxation before the Christmas bustle. November is the best month for sleeping and Hiiumaa is the best place for it. The St. Martin's and St. Catherine's Day door-to-door "beggars" are always worth experiencing and there's no need to forlornly wait at home for them to show up. You can go out on the streets and try to home in on where the singing and merriment is coming from.

The beaches and hiking trails are, as always, open as winter's grip becomes stronger, and if snow is in the forecast, there will be illuminated skiing trails. The sports centre offers tennis courts, or you can just go and take a walk by the sea. And just let the time pass sweetly without doing much of anything.

On glögg cafe day, mulled wine warms the body and spirit. And menfolk who move at a slower rhythm can rejoice: *how great that I didn't rush to take down the Christmas decorations when the missus said to; we'll need 'em again soon enough!* ■

PHOTOGRAPH: PRIIDU SAART





“**HIIUMAA DESERVES RECOGNITION AS A BUCKET-LIST DESTINATION.**

Eva and Sonny

On the shores of Mardihansu Bay on Hiiumaa, entrepreneurs Eva Maran and Sonny Aswani have built something unprecedented in the entire Baltic Sea region: a wellness and relaxation centre called Eha Retriit.

TEXT: JAANO MARTIN OTS

“A wellness retreat isn’t just a luxury hotel with an attached spa. You can get a massage anywhere in the world, but Eha is a complex with a holistic approach to care: it encompasses nature and the seasons, stories from local folklore, an opportunity to walk barefoot on grass or beach sand or stargaze in solitude. In winter, guests bathe in the natural darkness and silence. Exquisitely designed suites, balanced, healthful dishes cooked up by a Michelin green star chef, saunas, pools and other top-of-the-line spa services are naturally part of the package,” says Sonny.

THE HEART SAID ‘YES’

Eva has ties to Hiiumaa on her grandfather’s side – he lived in Emmaste. But she herself first visited the island about 10 years ago, at a friend’s urging. As soon as she boarded the ferry in Rohuküla, it felt like she was travelling to another world, and that feeling has yet to fade. Just two years after that initial trip, she bought a house on the island.

Sonny, who is originally from Singapore, chuckles as he mentions that the population density of his own island nation is 9000 per km² while Estonia’s is 30. “I felt even that was too much. Hiiumaa’s nine people per square kilometre is just right for me.”

Eva recalls that while combing the world for places to switch off and recharge, they visited many top-flight establishments. At one luxurious retreat in India, inspiration struck: why not create something similar in Estonia? “Having spent many summers on Hiiumaa and as much time as possible here in winter, too, my heart said this was a special place – the right place!”

HIIUMAA PROVED THE BEST OF 80 PLACES

The duo turned to partners with extensive experience in the hospitality and wellness field for a comprehensive study of 80 locations around the world. Ten of the destinations were shortlisted and got an in-depth look. All of the key aspects were mapped: natural scenery, access, logistics, culture, local food ingredients and much else. Among finalists like Te Aroha on New Zealand’s north island and Fogo Island in Canada, it turned out Hiiumaa either possessed all the necessary attributes or they could be easily arranged. Unlike many of the competitors, Hiiumaa can be reached in 5–6 hours of travel from most European cities. Kärdla Airport, which is about half an hour from Eha, is a major advantage – guests can fly a regularly scheduled route from Tallinn or a charter from Helsinki or Riga.

“There’s so much nature here. It’s sparsely populated, but there’s a special energy. Darkness and emptiness are incredible assets; it’s increasingly hard to find them in many places in the world. We adapt to nature’s rhythms – in summer, the days are long, while in winter you can focus on sleeping. The fact that we’re so close to local life is a major edge. We’re in the middle of a national park and we’ll keep that aspect unspoiled. We’re not going to build a marina or helicopter pad because we don’t want to disturb the peace in this area,” said Sonny.

POPULAR EVEN BEFORE THE GRAND OPENING

Eva says Eha has been received well in the international world of wellness retreats. “The feedback from trade fairs and presentations has been extraordinarily good. The unique argument behind our concept is authenticity – staying true to local quality. As for wellness, customers like the fact that Eha’s services revolve around local people, organic food, and Hiiumaa’s traditions and nature. We use local timber, stone and roof thatch as construction materials. The builders were from the island. It was a non-negotiable condition right from the beginning that the house should have a greenhouse. We also have a vegetable garden. Eha’s chef de cuisine works with local farmers, mushroom and berry gatherers, and fishermen. We try to promote Hiiumaa foodstuffs and cooking methods to our guests as much as we can. Fermented foods have met with great interest.”

Suites at Eha aren’t available for one-night bookings on Airbnb. Wellness packages – retreats – come in three, five and seven-day lengths, and prospective guests are asked what kinds of procedures and activities they are looking for. According to global market research, Eha positions itself at a medium price point compared to similar top of the line wellness retreats.

“I’ve been called crazy,” says Sonny. “But we’re not doing this for the money. We want to do something good for the long term for Hiiumaa and Estonia and they deserve the recognition as destinations. Estonia has done much good for me in my life and I want to give back,” says Sonny. He adds, winking: “My idea for Eha’s marketing slogan was, ‘Try us and you’ll get to know us!’”

Eha is Eva and Sonny’s quintessentially Hiiumaa-style answer to a perfect destination for someone looking to disappear for a time to find themselves again. ■

PHOTOGRAPH: PRIVATE COLLECTION



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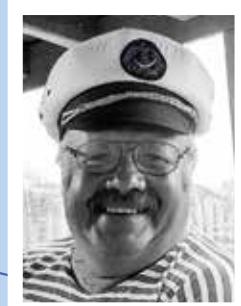
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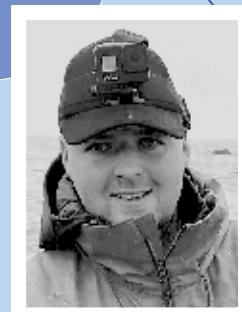


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ARNE KULI

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arne357@gmail.com
seal watching trips
boat trips out of Salinõmme Harbour

*I*deas for a stunning Hiiumaa wedding

TEXT: PIRET EESMAA



PHOTOGRAPH: KERLI SOSI

A WEDDING AT SOONLEPA MANOR FARM

A juniper-lined drive leads to a stone farmhouse with a spacious yard. In August, pale purple chicory flowers bloom against the dark green background. The building is surrounded by coastal meadows typical of the Sarve peninsula – wildflowers, juniper clusters, impressive trees, and the sea just a short walk away.

Organizing a wedding on Hiiumaa is no more expensive or complicated than on mainland Estonia. In fact, a wedding on the island can feel just as exotic for the couple and their guests as getting married in Italy. So say siblings, event planners, and Hiiumaa natives Merily and Taago Heinmaa.

An Estonian summer always requires several backup plans: one for sunshine, one for rain, and one for a storm. Merily recalls a Hiiumaa wedding day that began with a storm warning. Some guests and half the band were stuck in Rohuküla harbour waiting for the ferry, while those who arrived were anxious about lightning and rain. The ceremony was planned outdoors. It was a local fisherman, Endel, who calmed everyone down by saying, “Everything will be fine; right at the time of the ceremony the weather will settle.” And so it did. When the couple said their “I do’s,” the raindrops left on the grass sparkled in beautiful sunlight.

Teele Rehe, a Hiiumaa native wedding photographer, is always delighted when she gets to photograph weddings on her home island. One of her first assignments took place at an old farmhouse in Jausa. The ceremony was held under ancient birch trees. “Exactly my vibe,” Teele says. Quite possibly, if that wedding hadn’t been “so her,” she might never have become a wedding photographer at all.

Hiiumaa is an ideal wedding location for nature lovers and for couples dreaming of a manor wedding. Here are a few ideas inspired by Merily, Taago, and Teele’s experiences.

The barn has old-world charm and is well known in summer as a theatre venue. Merily and Taago have organised multiple weddings here. One summer wedding showcased everything that makes Estonian summers famous – wind, storm, rain, hail, cold, warmth, clouds, and a stunning sunset. The reception was held inside the protective stone barn, decorated with strings of lights, candles, wildflower bouquets, floral garlands, and white tablecloths, creating a cosy and festive atmosphere. The couple later described the feeling as “overflowing happiness.”

A SECRET CEREMONY IN TAHKUNA

One of Teele's most unforgettable wedding shoots was with a couple who wanted to marry entirely alone and in total secrecy. The photographer and the required registry official were the only ones who knew. This added a sense of secret fraternity and quiet giggling mischief. The couple had travelled from Võru to get married on Hiiumaa. They had also gotten engaged at the Tahkuna lighthouse. Everything was simple, but warm and heartfelt. After exchanging rings, the three of them walked along the seaside and through the forest, and the photographer had the groom pick a bouquet of wildflowers for the bride, resulting in photographs full of sincere love and joy.

PHOTOGRAPH: TEELE REHE



EXCHANGING RINGS ON A SAILING SHIP

Another special experience was a ceremony aboard the old fishing sailboat *Lisette*. Captain Marek Rätsep says such events do happen on this vessel from the last century. The two-masted wooden ship makes regular summer trips and offers shorter cruises as well. The intimate wedding Teele photographed aboard *Lisette* took place at Orjaku harbour, known as one of the most beautiful small harbours in the world. For the occasion, the railings were decorated with garlands of roses. After the ceremony, the celebration continued in the harbour's community hall. Marek notes that *Lisette* has even taken newlyweds out to sea to celebrate.

PHOTOGRAPH: TEELE REHE

A CEREMONY IN THE HEART OF NATURE

On Hiiumaa you can say your vows deep in the forest or right by the sea. Taago and his bride had a fairy-tale woodland wedding – a surprise arranged for them. Tall pines, a soft moss carpet, lanterns with flickering candles, fabric ribbons fluttering in the breeze. As the bride walked in, Sten-Olle Moldau played Pärt Uusberg's "*Õhtu ilu*" on guitar, and the forest filled with thick mist.

PHOTOGRAPH: REENE RISTALU

The main celebration later took place in a boathouse by the sea, with the woodland theme carried through even to the wedding cake.

Merily and Taago have also organised a tent wedding right on Kalana beach. They rarely say no to a dream. And they never say no when someone wants to get married on a Hiiumaa beach. It was on these shores that their imagination came alive, later shaping their event-planning style.

For those dreaming of a nature ceremony, the "stones of eternal agreement" in Pühalepa village are another magical location: a mysterious pile of heavy rocks whose origin is still unknown. One theory is that it is an ancient sacred site. And if any vow deserves to be "eternal," it is marriage, isn't it?



PHOTOGRAPH: MARI PUJK

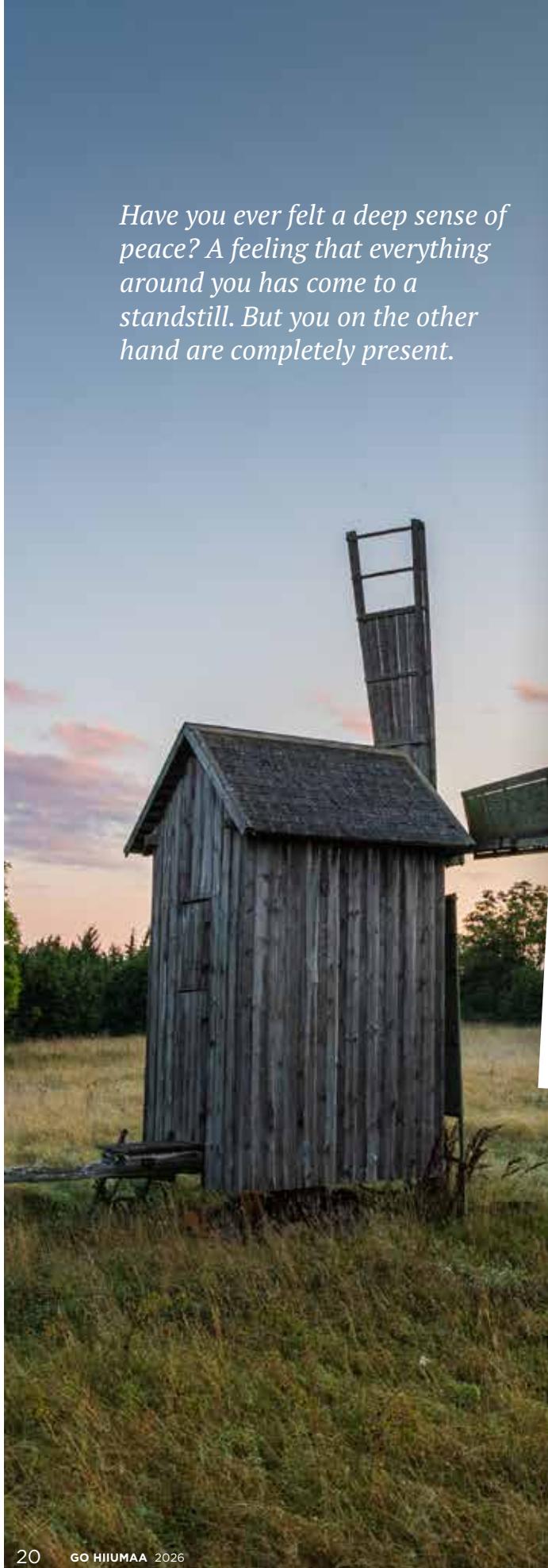
A GRAND MANOR WEDDING IN SUUREMÖISA

With its beautiful gardens and 18th-century manor house, Suuremõisa is perfect for both indoor and outdoor weddings. Helina and Tarmo were married here in 2014, shortly after the manor's interior restoration was completed. The elegant yet cosy atmosphere helped them decide. But the real reason was the bride's Hiiumaa-born mother, who suggested the idea at a time when weddings at Suuremõisa were not yet common. The couple loved it instantly.

For Tarmo, who is from Tartu, Hiiumaa was the only place where he could imagine proposing to Helina and later marrying her. The couple had already converted their Tartu friends into fans of Hiiumaa, so guests were delighted to travel to the island for the wedding. Suuremõisa offered both a chance to showcase Hiiumaa's history and a practical solution: one of the island's largest halls, convenient accommodation in the vocational school dormitory, minimal decorating needs, golden evening sunlight on the manor stairs, and summer strolls accompanied by the deafening song of nightingales.

THE WEDDING PROCESSION TRADITION

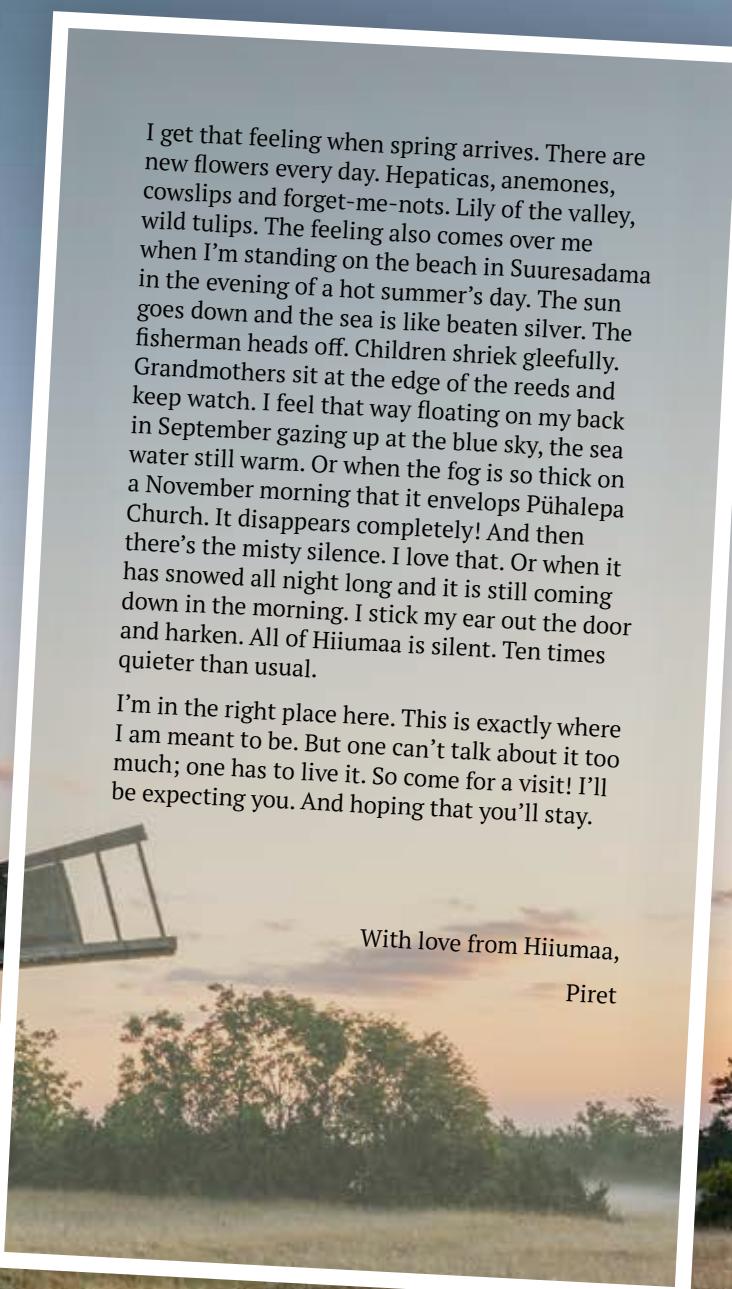
On Hiiumaa it is traditional for the wedding convoy to stop briefly at Ristimägi, where a cross is made from whatever is at hand to mark the union. Legend says that two wedding processions once met there and collided – one person from each couple died, and the surviving bride and groom married each other on the spot and celebrated with a grand feast. ■



Have you ever felt a deep sense of peace? A feeling that everything around you has come to a standstill. But you on the other hand are completely present.

I get that feeling when spring arrives. There are new flowers every day. Hepaticas, anemones, cowslips and forget-me-nots. Lily of the valley, wild tulips. The feeling also comes over me when I'm standing on the beach in Suuresadama in the evening of a hot summer's day. The sun goes down and the sea is like beaten silver. The fisherman heads off. Children shriek gleefully. Grandmothers sit at the edge of the reeds and keep watch. I feel that way floating on my back in September gazing up at the blue sky, the sea water still warm. Or when the fog is so thick on a November morning that it envelops Pühalepa Church. It disappears completely! And then there's the misty silence. I love that. Or when it has snowed all night long and it is still coming down in the morning. I stick my ear out the door and harken. All of Hiiumaa is silent. Ten times quieter than usual.

I'm in the right place here. This is exactly where I am meant to be. But one can't talk about it too much; one has to live it. So come for a visit! I'll be expecting you. And hoping that you'll stay.



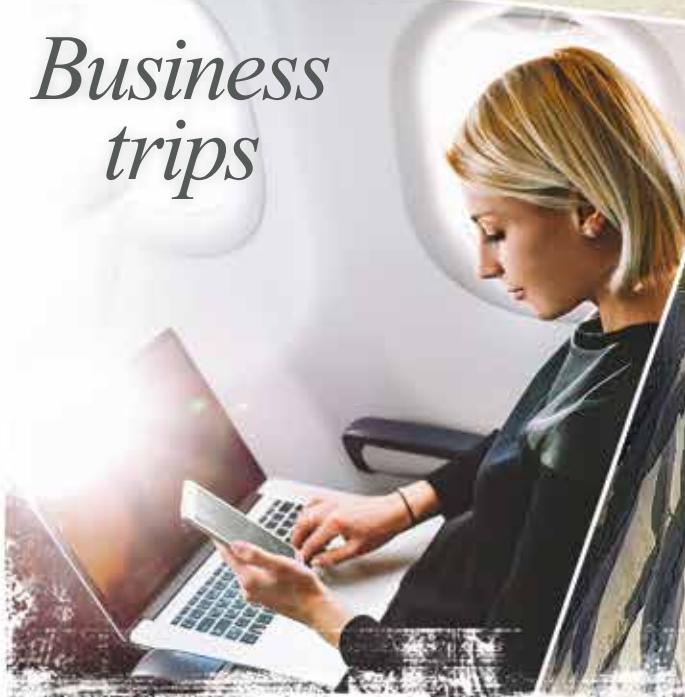
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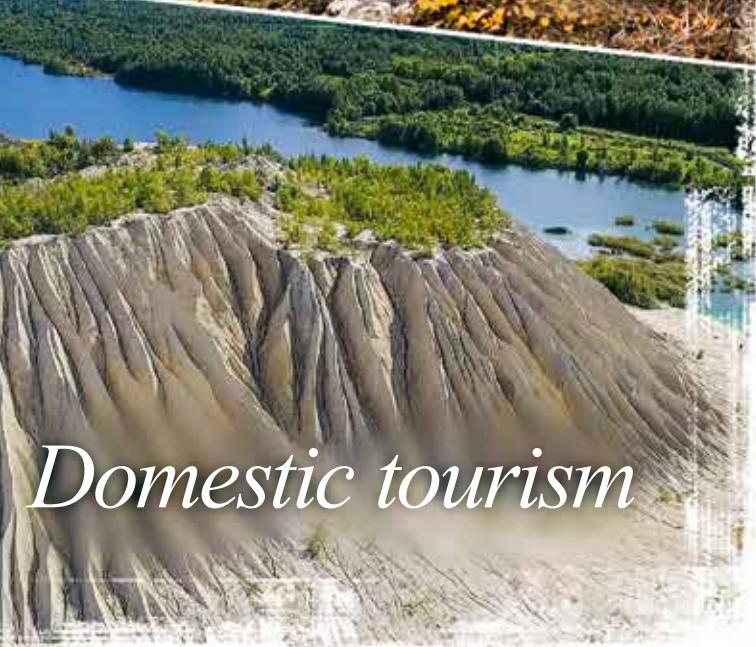
Vacation getaway



Business trips



Adventure travel



Domestic tourism



Adrenaline and silence

A new branch of the RMK hiking trail has been opened in Hiiumaa, offering the opportunity to explore the island's beautiful nature by bicycle.

TEXT: HIIU LEHT

The RMK Hiiumaa cycling route follows existing roads and tracks, connecting the island's scenic locations and established rest areas into a unified network for movement in nature. The length of the cycling route is 250 kilometres, but if you make a detour to Sõru harbour, the distance adds up to 275 kilometres.

The goal was not to create an entirely new route, but to offer an alternative to the existing hiking trail, which starts at Heltermaa and ends in Sarve, with one branch heading towards Saaremaa.

Trail architect **Alari Remmelgas** spent three months, in addition to preparatory mapping, to create an alternative route suitable for mountain bikes. "Ideally, I would have made even more forest trails and landscapes accessible to cyclists, but environmental conditions set their limits," Remmelgas said about the route, which runs both through natural landscapes and along smaller roads.

In addition to nature conservation restrictions, agreements had to be made in several places to cross private land, and this was not always successful.

The cycling route has its own markings – signposts with a cyclist symbol – which do not duplicate the existing green-and-white markers painted on trees, as those are intended for hikers. According to Aili Küttim, head of RMK's Western Estonia visitor management department, the decision to create a cycling route was made because there is great interest in cycling on the island. "Since the Hiiumaa branch of the RMK hiking trail opened four years ago between Heltermaa–Ristna–Sarve is not intended for cycling along its entire length, we decided to create a separate route for cyclists," Küttim explains.



PHOTOGRAPH: PRIVATE COLLECTION

HIIUMAA NATURE RANGER AHTO KASE
INTRODUCING A NEW BIKE TRAIL.

The route is signposted in one direction only – the cycling trail starts at Heltermaa harbour and leads across the island toward Kärdla. The start and end points of the cycling route are, as on the hiking trail, about three kilometres apart. The trail makes a loop around the island and ends at the Sarve camping area, from where the route back to the harbour is already visible.

Although the hiking trail (234 km) and the cycling trail (250 km) partly follow the same route, they also have several separate sections. The best aid for navigation is the Google Maps route downloadable from the RMK website, which helps cyclists to follow the correct path.

Information boards that allow cyclists to determine their location on the map and see where the hiking and cycling trails diverge are located in six places: Heltermaa harbour, Ränkaja campfire site, Ristna visitor centre, Kaleste camping area, Leemeti forest hut, and Sarve camping area.

Part of the route also runs through protected areas, where travel is allowed only on marked roads and trails and with permission from the Environmental Board. This applies only to bicycles, not motor vehicles. Observant cyclists will also notice that in some protected areas the route follows private roads where travel is allowed from sunrise to sunset.

The new cycling route was created in cooperation between RMK, the Environmental Board, and Hiiumaa cycling enthusiast Alari Remmelgas. The feedback he has heard has been positive: the route offers experiences and variety. “I’ve ridden the route in stages many times – some parts more, some less. For me, the most memorable sections are the forest trails on the Kõpu peninsula and around Leemeti, which also cater to adrenaline seekers. If you really want to, it is possible to ride the route in a single day, but that won’t leave much room for enjoyment,” Remmelgas says, recommending that cyclists in good shape opt for a two-day ride instead. ■

REMMELGAS’S RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The route gives a good overview of the diverse landscapes of Hiiumaa.
- Traveling alone in silence along a forest trail is a striking experience, especially since we’re usually surrounded by the noise of traffic.
- The most challenging sections are the Tahkuna and Kõpu peninsulas, where the route partly follows narrower forest paths and includes sandy stretches.
- The rest of the route is certainly manageable for families with children.
- The Hiiumaa cycling route is primarily intended for mountain bikes or, at most, gravel bikes, as the trail includes asphalt, gravel roads, forest paths and sandy sections.
- Bring a smart device to follow the route (if you’re unsure of the trail direction) or load a GPX file into your bike computer.



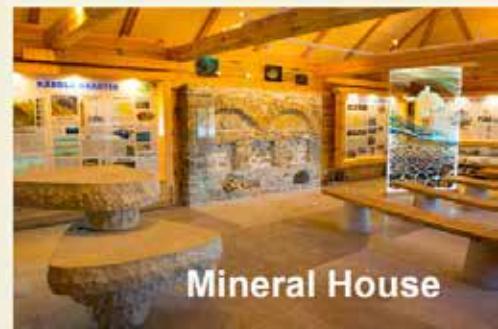
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PHOTOGRAPH: PRIVATE COLLECTION

Head chef Peeter Pihel

TEXT: STINA EILSEN

“

**THE
MENUS ARE
CO-CRAFTED
BY NATURE.**

Chef Peeter Pihel gives a sneak preview of what the island's new wellness retreat's menu will be like and talks about his sources of inspiration.

What's your connection to Hiiumaa and what inspires you the most here?

I've always been drawn to working far from the din of the city – in the middle of quiet and limitations. I've experienced that at Pädaste Manor on the island of Muhu and in Fäviken, a former restaurant up in northern Sweden. That sort of environment provides a blank page for your work: limitations turn into freedom and your thoughts become clearer. It's exactly that challenge that brings me to Hiiumaa. Hiiumaa's nature is also inspiring because it's unspoiled, harsh and friendly at the same time. The island's vibe is one of immediate warmth, playful tranquility and then there's the locals' unique sense of humour – something that I can relate to, being an islander myself. It's actually healing.

What about the role of chef at Eha Retriit spoke to you the most? Did you accept the offer immediately or have to give it some thought?

I was most drawn to the opportunity to create something with genuine island soul and an essential quality – a place where food, move-

PRAISE FOR PEETER PIHEL

Sustainable food culture proponent Peeter Pihel is a top chef from Saaremaa who has featured on The Best Chef list for several years in a row.

Pihel was the co-founder of Fotografiska Tallinn, the house restaurant of the Tallinn branch of the photography museum and cultural hub, which enshrines sustainable gastronomic principles and won a Michelin Guide Green Star in both 2022 and 2023.

Besides experience in other restaurants in Estonia and around the world, he was the chef de cuisine of Pädaste Manor's restaurant, Alexander (2007-2015), and sous chef Fäviken in Jämtland, Sweden (2015-2018), which won two Michelin stars during his tenure.

He was the host of the TV programmes "Tuhlid ja trühvlid" (roughly Taters and Truffles) and "Peetri köök" (Peter's Kitchen) and the author of the book *Minu kodu maa ja meri. Eesti* (My home land and sea, Estonia).

ment, silence and communing with nature form a whole.

The concept of Eha is to be bold and yet cosy and intimate: a world-class retreat with roots deep in Hiiumaa's soil.

So yeah, I said "yes" pretty quickly. I already knew that I wanted to create something in just this environment – the project said "yes" for me.

What philosophy will the menu reflect? Also, do you have any red lines that you won't compromise on?

Locally sourced ingredients are a must, and I will definitely draw on techniques that have sustained Hiiumaa through countless generations: traditional food smoking, fermentation, slow-roasting, air-drying and curing.

I'll let nature establish the rhythm; that provides the best contour.

Eha also has its own garden, which means that we'll have a space for experimenting and growing additional flavours. I don't want to import anything fancy that feels forced, I want to let the ingredients speak for themselves. The

focus will clearly be on local and natural: woodlands and orchards, fields, small farms, preservation methods. We'll use what the island offers – in a pure, honest form, in tune with the seasons.

The flavours will have a Nordic character, but the accents will be contemporary. Everything will flow logically from what preceded it: the seasons, harvests and fruits of foraging outings will have a bigger hand in determining the menu than any trend.

What do you see as the biggest challenge facing this endeavour on Hiiumaa? And conversely, what does Hiiumaa have that other places don't?

Logistics are a challenge, naturally. I hope our guests will understand that they have arrived on the edge of the world, to an amazing periphery. We can't, nor do we want to, serve up all elements of international gourmet cuisine; that isn't the goal. The goal is quality that is rooted in local authenticity.

But what Hiiumaa is, is something that can't be found elsewhere. The spaciousness of nature, the quality of the silence and people's warm self-awareness creates

an atmosphere that can't be reproduced.

Does this role mean that you plan to put down roots for a longer term in Hiiumaa? What do you imagine the rhythms of your life and work will be like?

The exact rhythm will take shape in the course of the work, but I will definitely need a place of my own on Hiiumaa – a little hideaway.

Is there a small ritual without which a day on the island wouldn't seem complete to you?

Running is a ritual for me. I know the routes in Tallinn like the back of my hand, and in Hiiumaa I really want to discover new roads and forest paths. Running gives the day a structured beginning and clears my head.

Is the rhythm of life on Hiiumaa compatible with your outlook on life?

The island pace of life – a little slower, more mindful, flowing – is tailor-made for me. The island gives you time: to think, to create, to be present. I come from an island background myself and know that rhythm well.



PHOTOGRAPH: PRIVATE COLLECTION

What is the best place on Hiiumaa for just doing nothing but just sweetly idling?

I have yet to find that one special place. But to be honest, the search for it is actually part of the productive downtime. ■

An advertisement for Lavendlitalu Hiiumaa. The top half shows a woman with long blonde hair, wearing a white blouse and a dark skirt, hugging a large, light-colored teddy bear. They are standing in a field of lavender flowers. In the background, there are trees with autumn-colored leaves. The text 'LAVENDLITALU HIIUMAA' is written in large, light blue letters across the top. The bottom half of the ad contains event details and contact information.

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Time travel through the stomach

TEXT: HIIU LEHT

WHAT TO EAT ON HIIUMAA IF YOU WANT SOMETHING DIFFERENT FROM MAINLAND FARE?

Käkisupp is still one of the best-known traditional Hiiumaa dishes. An old-fashioned recipe for making *käkisupp* goes like this: fatty salted pork – often just pork fat – is browned with onions. Then enough barley flour is added so that, once cooled, the mixture can be rolled by hand into *käkid* – larger than typical dumplings and more like a patty. These are boiled in hot water. The *käkid* thicken the cooking water, resulting in a soup-like liquid (called *viu*). If any *käkid* are left over after eating the soup, they can be eaten the next morning or cold with a side of bread.

The hostesses of Mihkli Farm Museum certainly know how to make *käkisupp*. “When visitors on museum tours order *käkisupp*, we have to tweak it a bit to suit modern tastes. For example, the *käkid* need to be made smaller, about the size of a *klimp*,” they say, referring to a bite-size dumpling. Local cooks recommend not overdoing the fat and using broth instead of plain water for the liquid. There should be plenty of onion – it gives good flavour – and instead of browning in fat, some prefer butter. A well-known maven of Hiiumaa traditional food, **Öie Laksberg**,

suggests adding a spoonful of sour cream to each serving to make it even better.

The garfish, known locally as *tuulehaug* or *tuulekala*, arrives once a year, in May when it swims through the Danish Straits into the Baltic Sea, mainly to spawn near the shores of Hiiumaa. What makes it special – and even scary for mainlanders – are its green bones. “Well, that’s because they catch them with electricity,” a Hiiumaa local jokes. In the old days, garfish was more of a poor man’s food, but today it has become a signature fish of Hiiumaa, celebrated for the last 15 years at the Tuulekala Festival. Garfish has many merits: because of its low fat content, it suits weight-watchers, its green bones are easy to see when eating, and it does not carry tapeworms harmful to humans.

“Garfish is caught with fish traps, nets, or by trolling,” explains festival organizer **Tuuli Tammla**, head of the NGO Hiiukala. “The trolling competition is one of the most exciting and passion-stirring parts of the Tuulekala Festival.”

Garfish can be eaten in many ways: when marinated it sets nicely and is especially delicious,

and smoked garfish is among people’s favourites. If you don’t know what else to do, just fry it in a pan. Since fresh garfish can be caught only in May, it’s suitable for drying or freezing for storage. During the season, fresh garfish can be bought at the Kala ja Vörk fish shop in Kärdla and, of course, from local fishermen at the harbours.

NOSTALGIA ON A PLATE

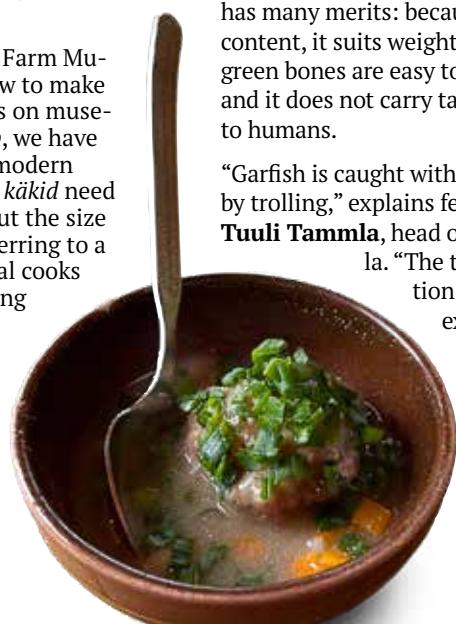
If you ask Hiiumaa locals for food recommendations, one of the first names you’ll hear is Sõnajala cafeteria, known for dishes like *leivasupp* (a bread porridge dessert). *Leivasupp* is one of Sõnajala’s most iconic desserts and has been on the menu since 1998.

Owner **Aimar Hansen** says that making



leivasupp does take some time. “Yesterday I soaked the bread, today I boiled it, added jam and spices. Now I’m waiting an hour to an hour and a half for it to cool, then it goes into the mixer. I add raisins, and it’s done,” Aimar sums up the process of preparing this dessert that brings back childhood memories for many. Aimar uses three kinds of bread for the dish: dark whole-grain bread with seeds, black rye bread, and Hiiumaa bread. “Hiiumaa bread gives the strongest flavour, while the whole-grain bread makes the dessert distinctive,” he says. When the *leivasupp* whips up properly, its volume increases, and according to Aimar, one pot yields 25 servings. It is served with sour cream. “It’s a classic dish you won’t find in many places and one that takes a fair bit of work,” Aimar notes, adding that people usually don’t bother making it at home just for themselves.

The *leivasupp* at Sõnajala was singled out for praise by former US ambassador George Kent during his visit to Hiiumaa. ■





EST. HIIUMAA 1850
PRUULIKODA

A SIP OF HIIUMAA

Hiiumaa Puulikoja Resto is a cozy restaurant right in the heart of Kärdla, on Vabaduse Street, which is open every day. The à la carte menu focuses on both local and foreign food and lunch offers are available every weekday from 12-15.

Our team takes care of both a delicious menu and a cozy atmosphere, so that Your experience on the island is as special and memorable as possible.



Good food and best beer in
Hiiumaa Pruulikoja Resto



Brewing beer has always been in an honor in Hiiumaa. A proper Hiiumaa beer should not be too strong, so that the drinker does not get drunk too quickly, nor too light, so that the taste seems a bit watery. Good beer was always the kind that "keeps you going". Our beers are simple. When creating them, we have bottled the beauty of Hiiumaa's nature, its peace and quiet.

VABADUSE 15, KÄRDLA
+372 5887 1200



KALANA YACHT HARBOUR

+372 5300 6343

30 berths - 2 camping car places
restaurant - depth 3,0 m
max LOA 24 m - max width 6 m

KÄRDLA MARINA

+372 5666 2514

88 berths - 15 camping car places
2 restaurants - depth 3,0 m
max LOA 24 m - max width 10 m

HIIUMAA HARBOURS

KÄRDLA • ORJAKU • SÕRU • KALANA

ORJAKU HARBOUR

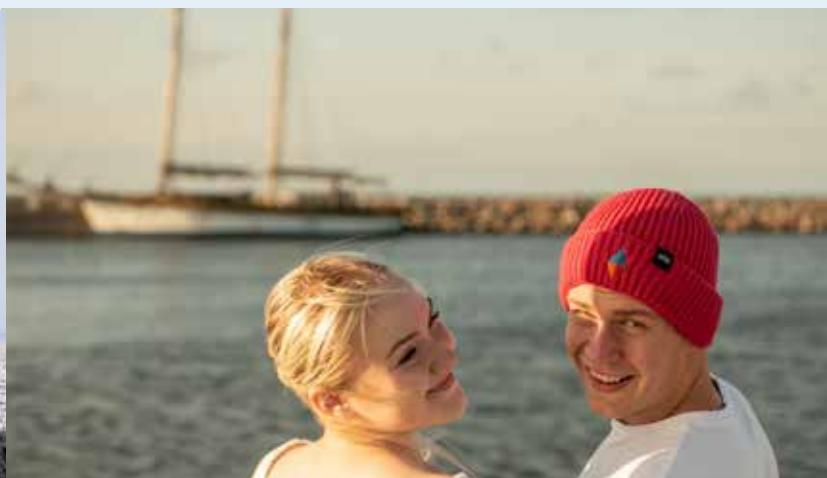
+372 5345 5059

75 berths - 5 camping car places
restaurant - depth 2,7 m
max LOA 24 m - max width 10 m

SÕRU YACHT HARBOUR

+372 514 5206

45 berths - 5 camping car places
restaurant - depth 3,0 m
max LOA 24 m - max width 6 m



Rauno Zubko

A native of the village of Kolga in Käina municipality, the folk dancer, choreographer, dance instructor and dance festival organizer Rauno Zubko started dancing under the tutelage of Helgi Taelma of the Killukese dance troupe. He doesn't intend to hang up his shoes anytime soon.

For Rauno, folk costume is not just a costume to wear during performance, nor is it a work uniform. Similarly, his Hiiumaa heritage is more than just archival material to draw inspiration from for art or research.

"For me, folk costume is an all-purpose formal wear, and I wear it to functions outside of my line of work. It's the showiest tier of formal wear, and white-tie comes only second. In that sense, the Year of the Folk Costume on Hiiumaa is a very praiseworthy endeavour, as it has helped us reach people, bring them this little bit of our culture – one that is actually so rich and grand and so, so varied. Folk costume is becoming increasingly popular, and it's key to get it front and centre not only on Hiiumaa but overall. When people want to wear the costume of their home parish, that's a little piece of your tradition and roots. Even if you keep the folk costume in your closet most of the time and only put them on for the song or dance festival, it's still a grand thing that you have this knowledge in store about our origin, history and traditions.

"Hiiumaa's heritage is rich but it does have some gaps in it. In my work, I've dug into the past and at least in the sense of dances, Hiiumaa is perhaps not as well endowed as other parts of Estonia as not many dances survived into modernity. Maybe the church or other phenomena took their toll. But the ones that are extant are very distinctive. The "Hiiu Waltz", for example. But back when it was part of the living tradition, it was undoubtedly not the way

TEXT: JAANO MARTIN OTS

PHOTOGRAPH: KRISTEL PEIKEL



“IN THE HIERARCHY OF FORMAL WEAR, FOLK COSTUME RANKS ABOVE THREE-PIECE SUITS.

we know it today. Culture is something living and breathing. The way in which culture varies the most is language. If I visit my aunt in Palade, who speaks the Hiiu dialect, I fall into the same cadences myself. Fortunately, the Hiiu language variety has been documented in writing so it can't 'escape' from us anymore. I really hope that we will still have Hiiumaa dialect as a *living* language for at least a few more decades."

Rauno admits that Hiiumaa has always been part of his identity. "At choreography school, I was the 'Hiiumaa boy'. The ones from Pärnu, Tartu and others were not called by their hometown, but where I'm from is enough of a different world that people pick up on it. My non-Estonian-sounding family name is from a Ukrainian grandfather, who I never met. My grandmother's roots are on Hiiumaa, though, and it's always good to return to the island. There's no place more relaxing for me. My dream is that if I'm ever finished with my busy work, I will move back to Hiiumaa."

RAUNO ZUBKO ON HOW TIME PASSES ON HIIUMAA

Hiiumaa isn't a place you can just pop into for a moment - you have to spend time there, just be, let yourself be carried, borne away. When you make the shift from the mainland pace, you'll need time to recalibrate your soul's rhythm. Because the island lives in its own time; it flows differently - time stretches and unfolds. You can just flow, breathe, be... You might go out to listen to birdsong for a moment and discover yourself in the same spot hours later.

Rauno currently has his hands full. He's artistic director and dance instructor at the Pääsuke folk dance association, and serves as choreographer for various theatre and concert projects. He's also involved in the next dance festival's (five years from now) organizing committee. Hiiumaa is where he unplugs and recharges.

What worries him though is that the Hiiumaa segment of the song and dance festival procession gets shorter each time. He vows to address the issue and declares that he is always ready to contribute his time at any hour.

"The first thing you have to do though is lay down good soil. Nurturing a song and dance festival movement is a question of mentality. The school system has laid great emphasis on sports, which is great because healthy living is important. But our heritage, song and dance are just as important. I'm always ready to help out if a school feels that they need someone to promote these fields." ■

If you're waiting in line at a shop, people chat with each other, and that, too, has to be accepted as part of one's transition to island life.

I think the time shift is the factor that draws me most to Hiiumaa. When I arrive on Hiiumaa, I know I have to have many days to just be and breathe, because when I come from the mainland rhythms and get to the island, the transition takes a bit of time. And that is the best holiday there is. You can't beat Hiiumaa time and mere existence when it comes to relaxation.



PHOTOGRAPH: PRIVATE COLLECTION

Risto Vaidla

Hiumaa is a place where it feels that time passes slower. Does the “Hiumaa mindset” give you a special perspective on life or peace of mind?

I really sense the tranquillity of Hiumaa strongly when I have just returned from the island. That's when I feel I'm still in a slower rhythm, in harmony with nature. I sometimes sense that particular perspective in a feeling of simplicity or in the ability to let things go and not take everything too seriously.

Do you have a specific place that you simply must visit when you come to the island, or a tradition that makes you feel you're back home?

The instant when I feel I am back home comes when my foot makes landfall on

A talented actor from Kärdla, Risto is known for his roles at the Estonian Youth theatre and popular films. The pace of his life may be faster in the theatre in the capital city, but his roots are unmistakably on Hiumaa.

the island or when I drive off the ferry. That's a special moment – I get that sense of peace you get from being home. The first thing I do is go to my parents and grandparents and once I've hugged my family, I take a moment to sense the island's essence, breathe and get into sync with its rhythm.

We have a spring in our yard. That's one ritual I can't do without: every day I drink spring water, wash my face and hands, let it seep into my pores, breathe in deep – I receive the essence of Hiumaa.

What's the most powerful smell or fragrance of Hiumaa that takes you back to your childhood? Does it sometimes influence your mood today?

It's not easy to convey the strongest

“I DRINK SPRING WATER EVERY DAY I'M ON HIUMAA.

TEXT: RENE SATSI

Hiumaa smell in words. But it has to do with the purity and freshness characteristic of this place, whether it's on the seashore or in the forest. The strongest smell is that of the old semi-smoke sauna in my grandfather's backyard. There's no other such smell. It's a meeting place more than 120 years old, my ancestors frequented it, and it continues to emanate a special energy and spirit. My whole life story ties in with it.

People from Hiumaa are often known for their dry humour and colourful use of language. Have you ever intentionally employed a Hiumaa accent or humour in any of your acting roles?

In the summer of 2025, we introduced *A Yankee's Adventures on Hiumaa* on the stage at Viscosa Culture Factory, under the direction of Mait Joorits. I was happy to try out the Hiumaa dialect a little bit. That was the first role that was specifically designed for the stage so that I could dabble in a dialect. In general, I like trying how the lines in my parts work in the singsong Hiumaa cadences – it gives me fresh insight into my lines, but I generally don't do that in front of others.

You're an acclaimed actor on the Tallinn stages. Have you ever considered moving permanently back to Hiumaa. If you did, how do you see yourself contributing to life on the island?

I don't currently see any possibility of moving back to Hiumaa. The capital city keeps me so busy with work and engagements that it isn't conceivable right now. But I could spend a third of my life on Hiumaa; there I could be in sync with nature. I'm very fortunate in that my life partner Anna loves Hiumaa and we both recognize that it would be a good place for us to live when we get older. In one way or another, I already now contribute to cultural life in Hiumaa and I would explore ways of promoting it if I was here full-time. ■



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PHOTOGRAPH: PRIVATE COLLECTION

“*WHEN FLYING
AT NIGHT,
STEER BY THE
LIGHT OF KÕPU
LIGHTHOUSE.*

Tõnis Lepp

TEXT: JAANO MARTIN OTS

A pilot, owner and flight instructor at the Nordic Aviation Academy as well as keyboard virtuoso, Tõnis Lepp was born and bred in Võrumaa, the county furthest from the sea. He visited Hiiumaa for the first time in 1988 and realized straight away that this simply had to be the site of his future home.

“When you’ve grown up in hill and lake country, you might not realize that you were actually born with a longing for the sea. I was 10 when I saw the sea for the first time. I didn’t realize yet that I had this sort of bug, the sea bug. So first I learned to fly.

“On my first visit to the island at a relative’s birthday, I heard some reports about what properties were for sale and where. I bought a farm in Emmaste, in Tilga Village. I flew there, and gave locals rides in my plane, the plane was parked for three nights behind the house. Then I thought to myself, why have a summer home in the middle of Hiiumaa, where it isn’t possible to go out to sea. I might as well have bought a farm in Paide in the middle of the country where there’s better transport connections and less distance to travel.

A SEASIDE PROPERTY ON A WINDY BEACH

“When two seaside plots of land went on sale, I felt my excitement build. One huge tract of land was in Jausa and the other was in Haldi. The latter was impossible to access; there wasn’t a road. The coast there was reeds, while the shoreline was brush and mud. I had an ATV at that time in my life, I got the coordinates and found the place. There were no other bids at the auction. Of course, I knew the old adage that a wise man builds their house away from the sea, but I wanted that property. And so I bought it. It was quite a feeling to know that I had a place on Hiiumaa by the sea. No matter that I could only get to it in summer, in dry weather and there was no car access.”

He had to build the road access himself. “I dug a ditch and used the soil from it to build the road. The first time I drove there, it seemed the problem had been solved.”

Hiiumaa wasn’t easy to tame. Water flooded everything and turned firm ground to mush. It took hundreds of loads of gravel and soil and a drainage ditch to remedy the situation. The ditch was extended to become the entrance for the harbour. He also constructed a stone wall to block the influx of ridge ice.

A CAPRICIOUS SEA AND FRIENDLY NATIVES

“Harbours and roads are similar in the sense that both require an excavator. I got to know many Hiiumaa people during this period, practically became friends. I learned that ‘I’ll stop by this week’ was as precise as it gets here. I sat at home and waited each and every day for the guy to come, but it turned out that no one is in a rush on Hiiumaa. Everything is give or take a few days. If they don’t get around to it one week, then they’ll show up the next week. But sometimes they show up earlier.

The road and harbour were completed but Hiiumaa had one more surprise in store: the great floods

of January 2005. Only one structure survived – the outhouse, which Tõnis found several hundred metres away. Everything else was smashed and underwater, and the storm surge left huge floes of ice all across the yard. He built everything up again. Now he has not only a jetty but a helicopter landing pad.

“Some sense kicked in for this southern Estonian country boy -- I noticed there were many stones by the sea. I stacked them into a wall. Not for aesthetics but to break up the bigger ice floes before they reached the house. I’ve become a very avid weather tracker. I see when water is rising from the camera images. A low pressure system and wind from the west mean a surge of water into the yard. Surveyors told me the house is only 1.6 m above sea level. Every autumn, I move things higher in the shed and the house. It’s a shame, of course, when the water damages possessions. But on the other hand, it’s all fun. My floor is still uninsulated -- if water enters the structure it can drain just as well.”

Another natural phenomenon in Hiiumaa that surprised the Võru County native – the wind.

“I’m a coastal fisherman and hunter. It’s obvious that if you live in a place like this, you will rely on the sea and forest for food. But I don’t go out to sea in stormy weather. I don’t know which one is more dispiriting – the wind or rain. If it’s really blowing, I have no desire to go outdoors, I go inside. Of course, I don’t produce all of my food, I haven’t become a potato or grain grower. Hiiumaa soil isn’t the same as in Võru County. If you want to be a producer here, you have to import soil from southern Estonia. I do have a small garden, onions, dill and other herbs. But no orchard. Maybe it’s the wind from the beach that keeps fruit trees from growing here.

PRAISE FOR THE HIIUMAA CHARACTER

Tõnis has come to know the people of Hiiumaa and their mentality better by hunting and fishing with them. “I’m not a stranger anymore to them, but I also accept the fact that I’m a guest here. I respect every islander. People from southern Estonia find it hard to understand the Hiiumaa folk – when they’re joking and when they’re serious. But I’ve learned one thing: they remember everything you’ve ever said or done. Southerners,



they forget it right away, you can say what you want and the next day is like it never happened. But not here.

“In my eyes, the essence of a Hiiumaa person is that they are extremely patient in the face of adversity. Conciliatory would be just as good a word, but you have to add their tenacious quality as well – like junipers. Life is harsher than it is inland. If the ferry is cancelled today, well, maybe tomorrow will work out, and if it’s unable to sail tomorrow, maybe the day after, and if still no dice, we’ll manage somehow. That wouldn’t be thinkable in southern Estonia. The ship has to go right on schedule.”

“I’ve enjoyed the process of becoming steeped in that characteristic Hiiumaa calmness. I have southern Estonian blood in my veins but each time I set foot on the ferry, I breathe in deeply – now calm and enjoyment begin. I enjoy every moment on the island.”

SEEN FROM THE AIR, HIIUMAA LOOKS LIKE ONE BIG FOREST

Lepp has flown over Hiiumaa plenty of times, both in planes and helicopters, landing in many locations. Once, on a particularly busy day, he arrived for a funeral in the helicopter, and landed next to the cemetery. He notes that human activity on Hiiumaa is concentrated along the coast. Seen from the air, he says, the sands of Kaibaldi and Tihu Lake stand out, but the interior is one big unbroken expanse of bog and woodland.

“Flying on a clear night from Tallinn to Hiiumaa, you’ll immediately see the light of Kõpu Lighthouse when you’ve reached cruising altitude. Make a beeline for it, and look for a place to land only once you’re closer.” ■





Kadri Tikerpuu

*Culture producer
Kadri Tikerpuu considers
herself 100% Hiiumaa.*

My father Kaarel was a native *hiidlase*, with roots in the Käina area. My mother was born in exile in Siberia. While she would always say anyone not actually born on the island couldn't be considered a native, actually my mother did so much for Hiiumaa and was arguably more of an islander than many natives," says Kadri. Today the life of Vilma Tikerpuu, who died in 2023, is commemorated by a memorial bench on Hausma Beach looking out at the sea. "Mother would have

really liked it," says Kadri. "She was a big cold-water swimming aficionado, and even got a decoration from the president of Estonia for it."

Kadri says she could go on and on about what Hiiumaa has given her. For instance, an open mind. Friends. Fishing trips with classmates in the spring. The feeling that everyone knows one another and everyone helps one another.

She resolves to give the island back as much as she can. "I work in the culture organizing sector, so I can generate added value for Hiiumaa through my work."

"In Estonia, everyone has their own idea about what Hiiumaa is. To people from the mainland or foreigners, it's a holiday

destination. But for *hiidlased* it's always home. For me, it's home, too, although I live in Tallinn as well. I travel to Hiiumaa often, but as the spirit moves me, with no set schedule as to what day I will go. I have friends in Kärdla I can always drop in on without even knocking."

"Of course, I take Hiiumaa with me wherever I go. The way Hiiumaa people interact with each other is more informal; we use the familiar form of 'you' with each other. I've imported that simpler, more sincere, everyman style to the mainland, which may strike some as almost too forward. But I'm not really at home with an academic manner of speaking. In general, Hiiumaa folk have this sort of slightly childlike openness. And, they won't leave a stranger on the street but will offer them a place to stay on the couch if need be."

As the organizer of Nargenfestival, the Arvo Pärt Festival and many other cultural events, Kadri works with Estonian conductor Tõnu Kaljuste on a daily basis. "In September, when Arvo celebrates his birthday, I always make sure I include one concert on Hiiumaa as well. In 2023, Enn Kunila and Arne Mikk invited me to organize the 150th birth anniversary festivities for composer Rudolf Tobias, a famous *hiidlane* of the past – a great honour. Last year, I helped with organizing the 60th birthday concert for Erkki-Sven Tüür in Kärdla Church. These are my skills, what I'm good at and what I can offer to make life on the island more cultured."

Five years ago, Kadri began organizing concerts at Kärdla Church to mark the second Sunday of Advent.

"During the Christmas season, the Hiiumaa natives living on the mainland return to the island. I wondered what the people not fond of pubs and discotheques might do as far as meeting up with friends. I knew that Ott Lepland, who's also from Hiiumaa, was staying at his grandmother's. I told him: please come and sing at our concert," Kadri says about the beginning of the tradition. At the 2025 Christmas concert, Koit Toome, a major Estonian pop star known from Eurovision and the musical stage, performed to a packed house.

"Even though I don't live full-time on Hiiumaa, I always carry it in my heart. If I can somehow give back through my skills and my work, well, that's the least I can do." ■



Robin Valtin

Robin was born and raised in Kärdla. He's a big Youtuber, played volleyball at higher than an amateur level, and has produced travel shows, among other showrunning roles.

TEXT: RENE SATSI

“ HIIUMAA RITUALS - TENNIS AND SAUNA.

What would you like your name to be associated with?

I'd like it to be associated with production of memorable travel shows and videos. I feel we've created some good things.

I played lots of sports, mainly volleyball and football. After the last year of basic school, 9th grade, I faced the choice of enrolling in a sports-focused upper secondary school or to see how my football prospects fared while pursuing a conventional educational path. I did well in the sports school, I got an offer from the top-tier Estonian Meistriliiga, to play in Tartu. I attended Audentes in the 10th and 11th grade. For the 12th grade, the last year of upper secondary school, I was in Tartu, simultaneously playing volleyball in the Meistriliiga. After that, though, sports became secondary, and I took a job in Tallinn. My everyday life continues to be based in Tallinn.

Would you ever want to move back to Hiiumaa for good?

I see how much my brother is enjoying life on Hiiumaa. My personal and professional life keeps me in Tallinn, but I don't rule out going back to Hiiumaa at some point when I have kids. I'm currently 28, so there's time. My father, my brother and his family, and my grandfather and grandmother live on Hiiumaa and I visit often.

What do you feel when you get to the island?

Big emotions. I take the ferry on Friday, knowing that I'll have three pleasant days there after I arrive. I get to my home, fire up the sauna. I leave the fast pace of life of Tallinn behind: the traffic, having to get somewhere. Everyone in my family plays tennis, and we'll do both doubles and singles.

Do you have any rituals in Hiiumaa?

We have a new sports facility on the island, with superb conditions. Before hitting the sauna, we often go play tennis. Maybe that can be considered a ritual?

Any personal recommendations for visitors to Hiiumaa?

I'd advise tourists to go fishing in addition to enjoying the beaches. It isn't hard to find someone to accompany you and show you where the best fishing is. I'm not the best person to recommend tourism attractions like Rebastemäe nature trail, since you can take walks anywhere. But go fishing on Hiiumaa – it's quite an experience! You can catch pike almost any time of year.

What survives in a Hiiumaa person's character even after a long stint living on the mainland?

You can't shake off the Hiiu sense of humour. Black humour is good! Through playing sports, I have also brought emotional temperament with me from Hiiumaa. I talk a lot and am emotional. I think sports ingrained it in me.

Can you relate some episode from your younger days on Hiiumaa?

A bunch of us went sailing. It was a nice summer day. It was someone else's boat that was entrusted to us. The wind shifted, the boom swung across the boat. One of my friends was struck on the head by it and went down. Sailing coach Ott Epner was shouting from the shore, my friend was lying in the bottom of the boat. I laughed. I was 13.

Do you have any big dreams?

Well, I've never been a big dreamer. You have to have ideas you want to accomplish and you have to stay on top of them and be stubborn so the things you come up with in your head go the way you want. You proceed calmly, and finally life will take you where you want to go. ■

Time a- — plenty

TEKST: ROBERTA LAAS



One day, while swimming through the ocean of the internet, I bumped into a new term: urgency culture. Therapists around the world complain that in recent years a large share of their patients seem to be suffering from this very urgency.

Or rather, they come in complaining mainly about anxiety, but once the conversation unfolds on the soft sofa, with the expensive clock ticking, it turns out the reason for their anxiety is simple: they've got ants in their pants.

The trouble with being in a constant hurry is that the moment someone sends a message, drops an email in your inbox, when social media chirps with importance and Facebook's icon flashes, when a work task pops into your head at midnight, and in general – there's *no time* to lose!

KEEPING TIME

I like living in Kassari because there's really nothing very urgent here. Hiiumaa is like an oasis in an overstimulated world. And time here is still kept the old-fashioned way – by nature. Even during the busiest season, spring.

First, as the early-spring sun climbs higher, we collectively begin sniffing around the bushes, almost subconsciously: ARE THEY HERE ALREADY? Are there any snowdrops yet?

This sparks something close to excitement, and the one who finds the first snowdrops practically earns the honour of officially declaring the spring season open. The bare alder woods begin to turn purple, the birch tops reddish-brown.

Once the spring snowflakes poke out as well, spring has truly taken off, and hope grows that winter really will come to an end this year too.

Then comes – not April – but the era of squills, crocuses, and liverworts. And not quietly, but with the sort of excitement that makes you announce it loudly to the neighbours while walking through the village – did you know time has gotten *this* far already?!

“It’s liverwort season,” sighs the neighbour woman. “Can you imagine – one year I slept through the whole liverwort season!”

Such a terrible sin earns you rather disapproving looks on our island.

Next on the timekeeping stage appear

dandelions, tulips, and daffodils – “with a bang!” as the neighbour from up the hill puts it. And then the most sacred time on the whole island finally arrives: lilac season.

“Lilac season” also means childhood, warmth, the first brave swims, and a brief, golden standstill in time. The island is still empty and quiet then, but the nights are already bright and short. Only the tourism cluster of our feathered friends is bustling. Suddenly the lilacs bloom, and this is one of the most important milestones of the entire year – something like that moment at a feast when the table is set, the cloth still gleaming white, all dishes clean and in place, but no guests have arrived yet. It’s totally idyllic.

URGENCY

“Oh dear,” sighs Aino*. “Didn’t get any raking done today, just didn’t feel like it. Tomorrow’s a new day.”

“Say, will this little night frost harm the phlox? I was thinking of planting them today,” I ask absent-mindedly, already drifting onto some other topic.

“What’s the big hurry now?” Aino asks, eyeing me – the runaway city girl – with a calm look. “There’s time!”

I don’t even know – suddenly I’m ashamed that I rushed to the flowerbeds so early in April. I suppose it felt like I could be done with winter faster that way, carry all the colds and coughs off to the compost along with the weeds. It felt urgent.

But Hiiumaa’s natural resource is time. If there’s anything you must hurry for, then only to make sure you don’t miss the liverworts or the lilacs.

EPILOGUE

One midsummer day, I walk to visit a neighbour who lives farther away.

Eighty-year-old Leida* stands in her lush, wildly overgrown garden in the middle of a big clump of nettles and grasses, wearing a floral dress, poking around with her walking stick and panting.

“What on earth are you doing?”

“Looking for my cucumber plants!” Leida giggles. “I remember I tossed them somewhere here in spring...”

Then she waves her hand dismissively, goes to sit in front of the house. She’ll get to those urgent things eventually. There’s time a-plenty. ■

*The names (and perhaps a few of the lines) have been changed so the author won’t be exiled back to the mainland on the next ferry for indiscretion.



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“
I DON’T WANT
CASINOS AND
NIGHTCLUBS
IN KALANA.

Enn Randmaa

TEXT: JAANO MARTIN OTS

Hiiumaa's westernmost village, Kalana, is a remote location even for island natives – it's just about an hour's drive from the ferry pier at Heltermaa. That makes the tip of Kõpu peninsula all the more sought-after for part-time islanders looking for peace and tranquility who flee here from Tallinn or big cities in the region. Here under the tall trees by the open sea, hurrying is not a virtue

Built a few years ago, Kalana Marina gave the area a new, maritime dimension. Harbourmaster Enn Randmaa says last year – only the second full season for the marina – two major regattas passed through, bringing a number of curious onlookers, who stayed longer this year. They didn't rush off to the next destination but stayed for a week or two. “There was a foreign couple where the guy was sailing a two-master and his partner had her own single-master – they swore by the separate vessels as a formula for sustainable domestic bliss. One Finnish family spent 10 days in Kalana – true, some of it due to a broken backstay. They enjoyed the peace and quiet and vowed to return.”

AT THE CROSSROADS OF THE GULF OF FINLAND AND THE OPEN BALTIC SEA

Its location makes Kalana a suitable stop for sailors on routes between Finland, mainland Sweden and Gotland, and Tal-

linn. Often they call for one night, just in passing, but after dining at Kalana's Åär restaurant, they decide to stay for a second or third day. Besides the tasty fare served there, a key point for Åär is that no matter how busy it is, hungry walk-ins can always get fed.

Kalana Marina is a meeting point for people of the sea. Sailors love the sea and tend to be drawn to other seafarers and the conversation never runs dry on the wharf: they talk about where they've been, where to go next, and share recommendations and weather reports. Some heard of Kalana from their own home yacht club, while others found it serendipitously while exploring their map app. Enn notes that while Hiiumaa's other marinas are long familiar territory for yachties on the Gulf of Finland, many are still discovering Kalana for the first time.

Enn says Kalana offers plenty of activities as well as downtime, since time passes differently here. “We don't have any casinos and nightclubs and hopefully never will,” says Enn. *In summer, the closest shop is a summer-only outfit in Kõpu and in winter, there's a travelling store operated by Selver that stops here twice a week. The marina rents bikes and you can get a rental car delivered to you from Kärdla, the island's capital. Old fortifications in the area have become a tourist sight, and the famous

Ristna and Kõpu lighthouses are within comfortable cycling distance. Ristna's national forest visitor centre is a convenient place to plan a hike of various lengths, after an extended sailing, seafarers are all too happy to get in some forest walks on solid ground. There's a safe swimming beach with a sand and gravel bottom to the east of the marina, and in good weather it's worth checking out what's known, accurately enough, as the ‘Beach of the Beautiful Stones’ at the end of the cape.”

ENN'S SON SUGGESTS NOT OVERSCHEDULING

The proprietor of Kalana holiday village is Enn's son Raul. When talk turns to the ever-popular topic of native islanders, Raul says that he has lost count of how many generations back his Hiiumaa roots go. The Randmaa family has relatives in Reigi, Kärdla and Vahtrepa, but they're relative newcomers in Kalana. Enn bought a summer property here in the early 1990s when the Russian/former Soviet border guard vacated the western part of the island and he now lives in Kalana year-round. The Randmaa family acquired the holiday village about 10 years ago when an old campground needed a renovation and the then-owner was planning a move to warmer climes. The Randmaa family decided to take over and now manage the facility without taking big risks – basically they contribute labour and time when they have it, only gradually improving and expanding as needed.

The resort can lodge 90 people. It has various hotel-style private rooms, 16 bungalows and a house for six, which is kept heated and in use in winter. The complex is popular with school groups and the first bookings for summer 2026 have already been made. In recent years, Kalana has seen German, French and Swiss motor homes, who value the opportunity to park right by the seashore near forest trails.

Raul recommends taking things easy in Kalana. “The charm of this place is that there's space and quiet. Don't plan too many activities – you'll find that you won't get around to holding every tournament or game because you ended up spending time in nature. The best pastime in Kalana is enjoyment of the scenery and the sea. I think in other places, you don't get the feeling that Mother Nature took time management into her own hands. Kalana's a place where you come once, stay longer than you intended and when you leave, you feel that you should have extended by a few more days.” ■

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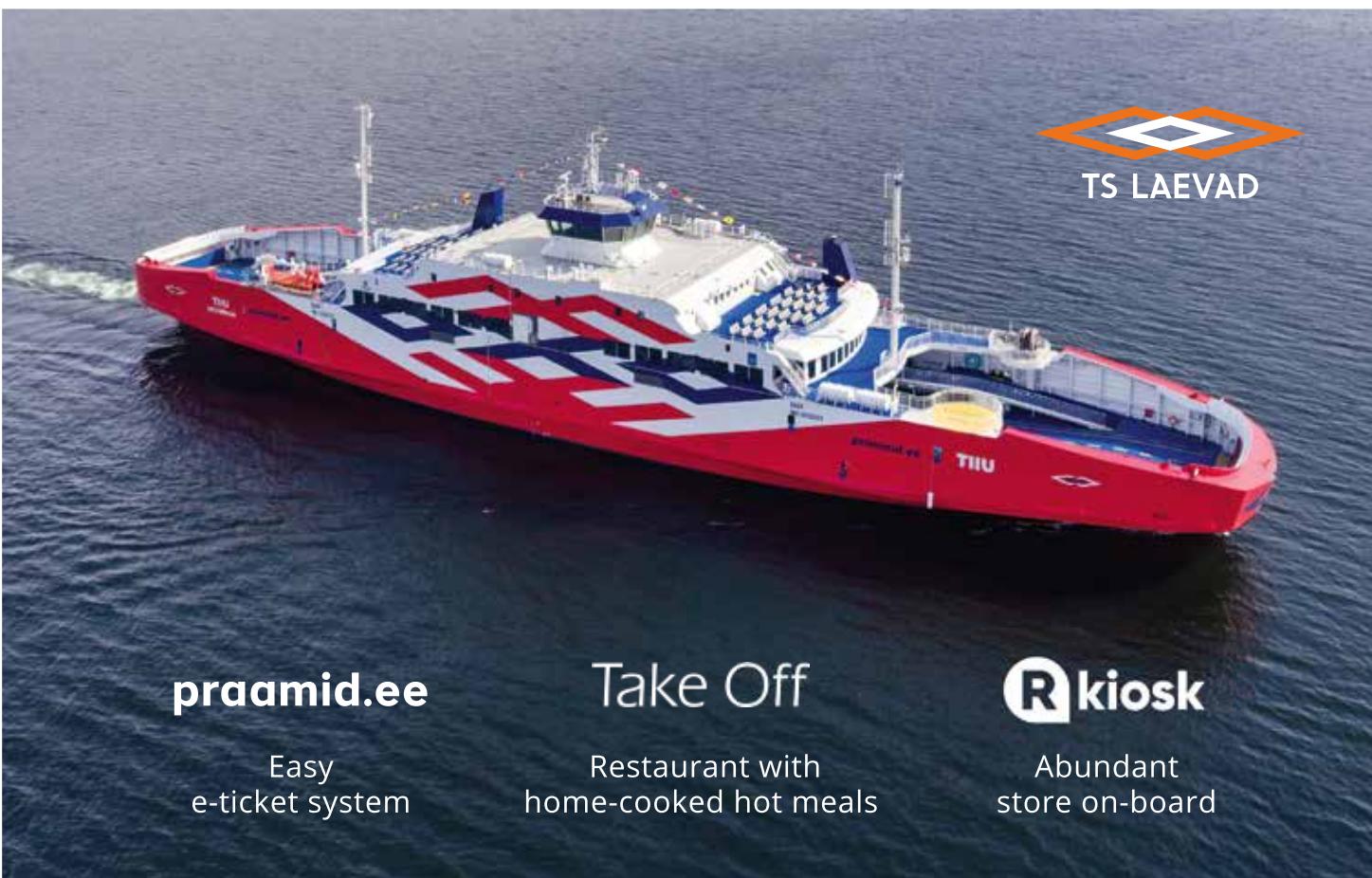


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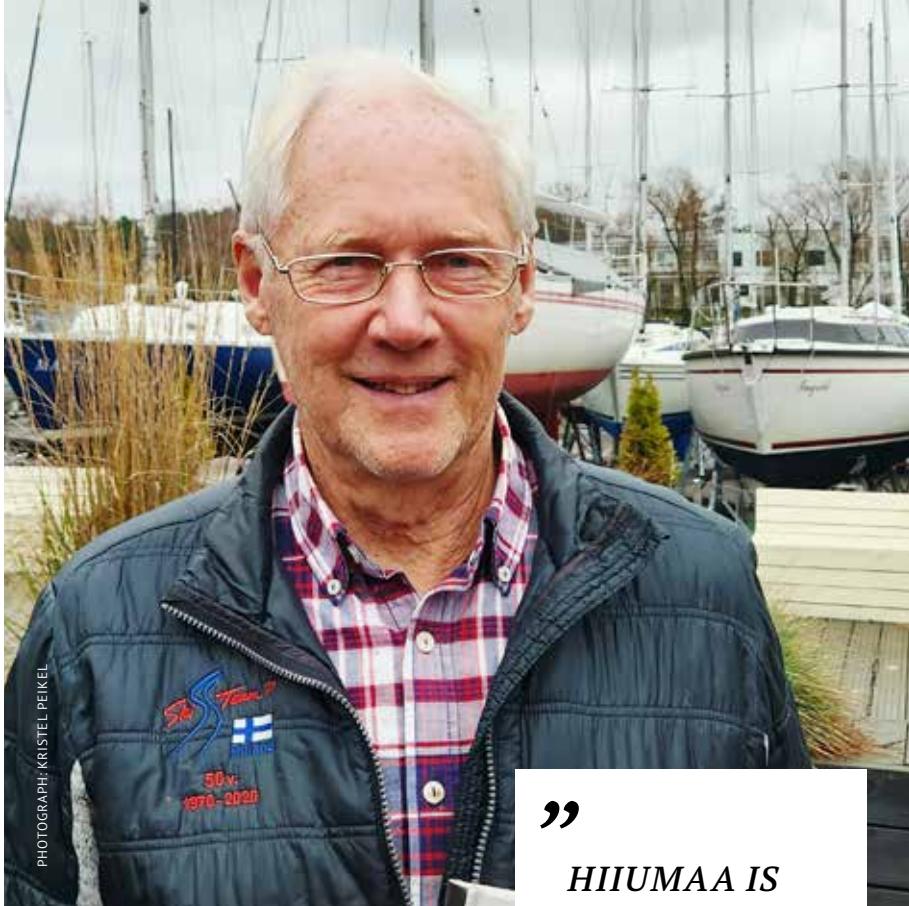
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PHOTOGRAPH: KRISTEL PEKEL

Kalevi Westersund

TEXT: JAANO MARTIN OTS

Estophile and seafarer Kalevi Westersund encourages Finnish amateur sailors to visit Hiumaa in their own vessels or motorboats. With 10 visits to the island under his own belt and having called at every marina deep enough for his smallish sailboat, he looks back:

“The first time I sailed a boat to Hiumaa was in 1991. Our knowledge about Estonia was limited to the beams of light from the border guard’s spotlights, which could be seen dancing in the southern sky from Finland. There was complicated red tape to go through to get permission to sail to Hiumaa, but it was so fascinating. The first time, we travelled along the Finnish

coast from Helsinki to Hanko and then crossed the Gulf of Finland to Lehtma, Estonia. We were sailing in a flotilla of 15 vessels. Estonian waters were so unexplored and exotic-seeming for us, and it felt like we had safety in numbers. At any rate, Soviet warships came out to meet us and escorted us to the harbour in Lehtma.”

HIIUMAA’S MARINAS HAVE COME A LONG WAY

Many Finns have a vivid memory of their first voyages to Hiumaa. Thirty years ago, they weren’t used to seeing sights

”

*HIIUMAA IS
CLOSER TO
HANKO THAN
IT SEEMS.*

like Lehtma’s decrepit pier and dire facilities, yet the harbour also had a bar with incredibly low prices and a sauna – which Westersund says was wonderfully hot. With the sauna platforms bathed in light from a neon street sign, the people looked like ghosts, with surreal blue flesh and dark lips.

Today, of course, sailing in Hiumaa waters has changed completely – Lehtma’s old fishing harbour is no longer in use, and instead many new marinas have opened. Kalevi has taken his boat to every opening ceremony at Hiumaa’s marinas, bringing along other Finnish sailors: “Hiumaa is a up and coming, exciting destination. The grand opening of Kalana Marina was an opportunity to take a round-the-island tour – the ports are spaced perfectly and there’s no need to spend the night anchored at sea!

FRIENDLY ISLANDER AND MUCH TO DISCOVER

Westersund has only praise for the Hiumaa locals: “I’ve met Hiumaa sailors at the Moonsund Regatta and at other Estonian ports, they’re all great personalities. Now when I call at Kärdla, I encounter many familiar boats and faces among the crew members.”

“A great feature in Hiumaa is that something is always going on in the ports. Festivals, concerts and other events. I tell the Finns that any fishermen’s festival on the Estonian islands is always worth checking out. And then there’s the St. John’s Eve bonfires. Finns probably don’t realize how special these family-centred midsummer festivities are in Estonia. You take your kids along and there’s no need to worry about where they are and what they’re up to. The most brutal physical event at Hiumaa midsummer celebrations is the tug-of-war and if anyone gets really drunk there, it’s bound to be a Finn,” he laughs.

He adds that Finns can be slow adopters. “On occasions where I talk about Estonia at Finnish expos and trade shows, the Finns will reply: yes, we’ve visited Estonia – Tallinn, right. Then I tell them about how much potential Hiumaa has and how it’s just a day’s sail from Hanko. I have to explain that when they come to Hiumaa, they should stay at least a few days, get a bike or rent a car and explore the island!” ■



Rain Ventsel

Even by Hiiumaa standards, this centuries-old farm is remote. Many islanders don't even know where the village of Haldreka is. But in Hollywood they probably do – if not the village itself, then at least one of its residents. Rain Ventsel grew up just a couple of kilometres from here, went to schools in Leisu, Emmaste, and Kärdla, has lived and worked in London and Viimsi, and today works as a music supervisor at his own company, Giant Apes Music. For years, Rain worked for other so-called "trailer houses," staying up until three in the morning waiting for orders or questions from Hollywood. Now he takes things more calmly and works at his own islander's pace, following a rhythm that suits him.

TRAILER MUSIC DRAWS PEOPLE TO CINEMA

Rain's company releases music albums that the film industry can use for various projects, and sometimes he works directly for productions. "I help composers create trailer music. Sometimes a composer sends me a piece, and I give advice on what needs to be changed; sometimes I send the composer a brief describing the kind of trailer music they need to write. Sometimes I even sing an idea and then

“

**THERE IS
STILL SILENCE
ON HIIUMAA,
WITHOUT ANY
BACKGROUND
SOUND.**

TEXT: KADRI TAPERSON

we refine it together." Rain explains that trailers have a specific structure designed to draw people to the cinema: there's an immediate conflict, and the music needs to match that structure.

Rain has produced music for Andor (Star Wars) and the Fast & Furious series, as well as for films such as Avatar, Batman, Spiderman, Avengers, Dr. Strange, Dune, Wonder Woman, Tenet, Captain Marvel – altogether several hundred productions.

HIIUMAA SOUNDS AND SILENCE

While it is still possible to find real silence in Hiiumaa – elsewhere you can almost always hear some background noise – internet access here hasn't always been as generous as nowadays. Rain started out with nearly unusable internet and began editing videos at age 10 when playing video games alone became boring. He got into working on film trailers on his own and has stayed with it, because in the film industry it's better to master one narrow field very well. Hiiumaa also offers opportunities to record various natural soundscapes, and Rain plans to incorporate more Hiiumaa sounds into his future work – as far as planning is possible in his field at all.

“THE ONLY OPTION IS TO DO BETTER THAN AI.”

It's not entirely clear why Hollywood is currently producing fewer films than before. Strikes may be one reason, but certainly there is also less work because of AI. Artificial intelligence is used in every stage of film production, and competing with it takes real effort. "The only option is to do better than AI," Rain says, admitting that the future is uncertain. When offering his work to different film projects, there's no guarantee which ones will succeed or even be made, making it difficult to involve additional people.

FAMILY

Rain's partner, Signe, a lawyer, currently works at Bigbank but goes to the office in Tallinn only once a month. Everything else can be done from Haldreka, although in the beginning she had to prove that. "It's easier to focus in the silence here, and it saves time because you don't need to go far for lunch. The only thing you need is a separate workspace – at least a corner – so you can close the door in the evening. I couldn't do my job from the kitchen sofa," Signe says.

Signe is also a high-level ultramarathon runner, and the forest trails of Hiiumaa's sparsely populated areas certainly help. This hobby requires occasional trips to the mainland or even further abroad, but otherwise there's little reason to leave the island unless the animals need a specialist vet – Rain and Signe also have cats and dogs. "We do meet our composers face to face now and then," Rain adds, noting that his company is also part of Eternal Music Group.

VAARIKU FARM

In changing times, a sensible Hiiumaa local always creates a backup plan. Rain and Signe's latest project is the Vaariku Guesthouse, located in the same courtyard as their home. The brand-new website, vaariku.com, shows that the house includes a new music studio and a gym. "People can basically come here to write music, and I don't think there are many observatories in Hiiumaa either," the host says, introducing the expanding property and pointing to the window where you can almost always see the Northern Lights. ■



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Kristjan Lepik

TEXT: STINA EILSEN

The co-founder and CEO of climate-change-fighting startup Arbonics Kristjan Lepik – a summertime Hiiumaa resident – talks about how an international business can be successfully run from the island and how the best ideas come into existence in local forests.

What's your connection to Hiiumaa?

I've been a part-time *hiidlane* for 15 years and I've set the goal of spending two months of every year on Hiiumaa. Most of that time I work remotely. And without fail, our team gathers on Hiiumaa for our "work from a forest" week of strategy sessions in August.

I've travelled to about half of the world and realized that of all the places on earth, this is my favourite place. Probably because of how forests and beaches share space. The seed of the idea to found Arbonics sprouted in Hiiumaa's forests.

What is a work week on Hiiumaa like?

I have an interesting method when I need to get clear insight into things – I go walk in

the forest. Not for a few minutes, but for days on end. When I have some thorny problem to solve, I travel to Hiiumaa. Often I don't stick to the paths – the best answers come while bush-whacking through thick undergrowth. I return to the mainland with answers in hand.

Tell us about your strategy sessions in Hiiumaa. Readers will probably be curious about what it's like in practice and how the technological side of things comes off?

Working remotely from Hiiumaa is a question of just doing it. One spring, we were looking for investors, and I set about courting them in a calm frame of mind from Hiiumaa – after all, you can make calls around the world from anywhere, and I did so in an outdoor setting, with pine trees in the background. A number of investors were surprised, but it seemed to me it had a positive influence – our company is all about harnessing forests for the good of the environment.



”

THE BEST BUSINESS IDEAS ARE HATCHED IN HIIUMAA FORESTS.

When we gathered in August for the first time in 2022, there were only six of us, but last summer the number of attendees was close to 30. They came to the furthest point of Hiiumaa from places as far and wide as Brazil, America, Germany, London. Some co-workers asked how we sorted the internet issue, and the Estonians probably didn't know what to make of this question, since after all there's a strong cell network in all corners of Estonia. It's funny to think that just four years ago, the idea was still living in the forest, and today a big international team is working all across Europe.

Do you and your team have any fun traditions on Hiiumaa?

One year, our final celebration coincided with the KalanaÄÄR community's end of season party – our team members still talk about how fun it was to spend time with the whole village in the summer night. They're already starting to look forward to spring, for the return to Hiiumaa. ■

PHOTOGRAPH: PRIVATE COLLECTION

A stone with a hole – a window to the Otherworld?

*Among Hiiumaa's
beloved souvenirs,
adder stones –
pieces of rock
with naturally
occurring holes
– have been
cherished since
ancient times.
They can be found
on the island's
pebble beaches in
several areas.*

Adder stones, also known as hag stones and fairy stones, have captured the attention of coastal people throughout the ages. There is nothing mystical about them in a physical sense but they are quite difficult to find. Historically, they were used in various rituals and for many different purposes. They were believed to be windows or thresholds into the Otherworld. People also thought that these stones could help one see spirits and other supernatural beings exactly as they "truly" are. Adder stones were also worn as amulets: wearing one around the neck was thought to protect against the evil eye. Amulets were also kept beside or above the bed to ward off nightmares.

Adder stones usually form naturally in limestone, which is relatively soft and slowly dissolves in water. Small cracks or fossil traces can gradually develop into rounded holes – especially in environments shaped by waves,

ice, seaweed, and similar forces. Sand also plays a role in this process, helping smooth and enlarge the holes and surface of the stones in areas with strong wave action. As a result, such a stone feels silky smooth in the hand. This "friendly" stone practically invites you to pick it up and let your fingers run across the cool, velvety surface.

Flat stones about 5-7 cm in diameter that have been smoothed by the sea were used by fishermen since ancient times for making nets. They were attached as weights to the lower rope of the fishing net. Natural adder stones were not plentiful. But because limestone is composed of relatively soft material, fishermen could drill holes into it themselves to create stones of the required size. These handmade net stones can occasionally still be found in old farmhouses today. Thus, in addition to beauty, they have cultural and historical value. ■

TEXT: TIIT LEITO



Elder – summer eye candy and power food

TEXT: HELI HAHNDORF

Early June is the peak of the elderflower bloom. These wonderful, delicate white lace-like flowers, as large as wagon wheels and emanating a honey-sweet scent, are as potent as they are beautiful. Hundreds of years ago, the gardener of Hiiu-Suuremõisa Manor planted elder trees in the manor park because it was believed they would protect the estate from evil spirits, witches, lightning, and other misfortune. And the elder has lived up to this task. Suuremõisa Manor has stood strong for centuries.

The black elder with its white flowers is also a potent medicinal plant. Tea made from its blossoms promotes sweating and supports the body's overall resistance. Elderberries are even one of the few natural remedies that help with flu-like symptoms after you have already fallen ill. In addition, elderberries have been found to help with asthma, diabetes, high cholesterol, poor eyesight, nerve disorders, back pain, and inflammation. In folk medicine, various salves and oils were prepared from the flowers to treat both people and animals. Elderflowers, leaves, and bark are also used to treat rheumatism and gout. Elderflower oil is excellent for cosmetic skincare products as well. In aromatherapy, elder promotes a sense of calm and balance. Hiiu local brand Hiiuihuhooldus uses elderflower oil in both its liquid and foaming soaps. ■



THE MANOR'S LUXURIOUS DESSERT – ELDERFLOWER BAKED PUDDING WITH STRAWBERRIES, OAT CRUMBLE, AND FLOWERS

(Serves 10)

Since several magnificent old elder trees grow in the garden of Suuremõisa Manor on Hiiumaa, this dish draws its inspiration from the manor and its history.

Why pudding? Because among old manor-era desserts, there is a particularly rich selection of different puddings. Why elder? Because I am enamoured with the taste of elderflower. Pudding made from elderflowers has a summery, floral flavour nuance. Oat crumble adds texture. Finally, a flurry of edible blossoms is scattered onto the plate – because we certainly deserve this floral abundance. And Hiiumaa strawberries, now in season, pair wonderfully with it.

Baked pudding

- 6 egg yolks
- 1 tsp sugar
- 4 dl heavy cream
- 2 dl elderflower syrup (store-bought)

Oat crumble

- 100 g soft butter
- 100 g brown sugar
- 200 g Hiiu Flour oat flour

To serve

- Strawberries
- Edible flowers

Lightly whisk the egg yolks with the sugar. Heat the cream and elderflower syrup in a small pot until almost boiling. Pour the hot cream mixture in a thin stream into the egg yolk mixture, stirring constantly. Divide the mixture into small heatproof dishes. Place the dishes on a baking tray and pour enough hot water into the tray so it reaches halfway up the sides of the dishes. Cover with foil and bake at 170°C for about 50 minutes, until set but still slightly wobbly. Cool.

Mix together the oat crumble ingredients and bake on a tray until crisp. Serve the puddings with fresh Hiiumaa strawberries and sprinkle with oat crumble and edible flowers.

PHOTOGRAPH: NICOLA GALLONAY



Three simple recipes using elderflower syrup

NON-ALCOHOLIC SUMMER COCKTAIL "HUGO"

Ingredients:

- Ice cubes
- A few mint leaves
- 1 part elderflower syrup
- 3 parts sparkling water
- A few slices of lime

Preparation:

Put ice cubes in a glass. Rub the mint leaves between your fingers to release their aroma and add them to the glass. Pour in the elderflower syrup and sparkling water, add lime slices, and stir. Take a moment, sit in the garden, and enjoy!



SIMPLE DRESSING FOR GREEN SALAD

Ingredients:

- 3 tbsp camelina oil or another oil you like
- 3 tbsp apple cider vinegar
- 3 tbsp elderflower syrup
- A little salt and pepper

Shake all ingredients thoroughly and drizzle over freshly torn green salad. Use whatever nature or your garden currently provides – salad leaves, radishes, cucumber, tomatoes, or spring wild plants: goosefoot, dandelion leaves, cowslip flowers, spruce tips, or chickweed.



ELDERFLOWER CHEESECAKE

(serves 8)

Crust:

- 175 g crushed cookies (digestive biscuits, graham crackers)
- 50 g melted butter

Filling:

- 400 g cream cheese
- 75 ml elderflower syrup
- 2 eggs

Topping:

- 250 ml sour cream
- 3 tbsp elderflower syrup

Preparation:

Mix the crushed cookies with melted butter and press the mixture into the bottom of a 24 cm springform tin. Chill.

Mix all filling ingredients and pour over the cookie-crumb base. Bake at 180°C for 25–30 minutes, until set.

Let the cake cool slightly.

Mix the sour cream with elderflower syrup and gently pour over the cake. Bake at 220°C for another 5–7 minutes, until the surface is slightly dry.

Let cool completely and decorate with fresh elderflowers.



Beautiful handicrafts from the masters of Hiiumaa



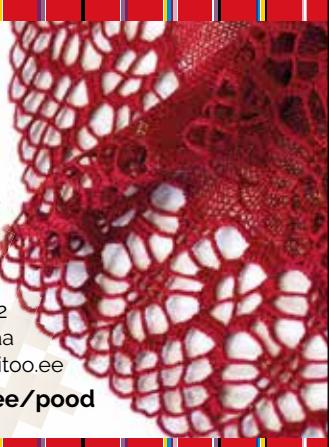
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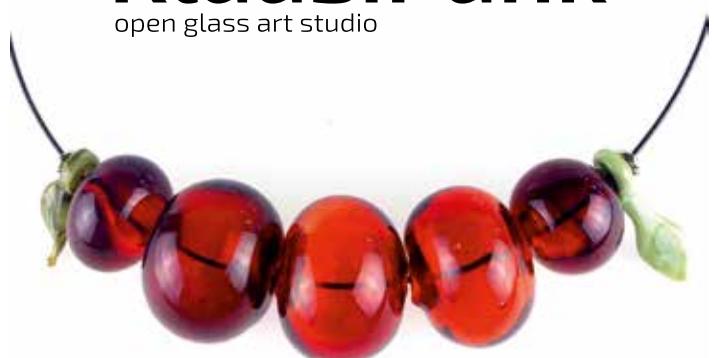


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Reigo Tamm

TEXT: RENE SATSI

”

**MY AUNT MARRIED A
MAN FROM HIIUMAA.
THAT'S WHERE IT
ALL STARTED.**

PHOTOGRAPH: STINA KASE

Reigo Tamm's name is just as evocative on the Estonian culture landscape as his voice is on the national opera stage. This successful classical artist and entertainer's story also ties in with Hiiumaa. Is he still just as smitten with the island today as he was when he was a young boy?

How often can you be found in Hiiumaa?

As often as I find free time. Primarily that tends to be in summer. I've left my heart in Hiiumaa and it's a place where I feel I can really rest up, basically wash my thoughts clean again. As soon as I board the ferry, my cares, chores and other activities are left behind on the mainland. When I disembark on Hiiumaa, I feel like I have a completely new lease on life. They say we leave all our baggage full of worries in Rohuküla.

It sounds like true love...

That's the way it is when you've really grown fond of an island. Hiiimaa is like an attractive spouse that everyone likes. I don't know anyone who doesn't like Hiiumaa. Everyone goes there; it's a separate matter whether they stay longer. At the same time, Ruhnu is nice, Saaremaa is beautiful. Still, it isn't a beauty pageant and I won't say that other places are bad in any way. It's just that if you spend time on Hiiumaa in your tender formative years, the island creeps into your soul. Maybe if I'd spent my childhood on the shores of Lake Peipus, I would be always hankering to get back there. Every person has their own story, their own memories, their own emotions – and mine come through having an aunt who married a man from Hiiumaa. Since Hiiumaa is genuinely beautiful, I'm in love with this good-looking spouse and it's a lifelong love.

Do you only holiday on the island in summer?

In summertime, I am at the service of myself and my children, but if I get an offer of work, I tell them I could consider doing it if it's based in Hiiumaa.

What places on Hiiumaa are worth visiting?

All of Hiiumaa is great and worth discovering. Hiiumaa is more than just Kõpu, Kärdla and Käina. Hiiumaa is much bigger than that. It seems like a small, compact island when seen on a map, but actually if you delve into the different regions, you see there are many of them, and each one has its own vibe. It's all held together by the warm humour and the easy, welcoming feel of the island, the hospitality and open doors.

Do you have any observations that are worth keeping in mind when visiting Hiiumaa?

The thing with the *hiidlased* is, they immediately detect if you're trying to please them. There's no point sucking up to them if you're coming from the mainland and you want to blend in, either during summertime or with an eye to moving here. They will accept you if you are true to yourself, if you let masks drop and don't try to be better than you are, if you don't put on pretences or lie. Be yourself – and if you understand the local humour and can join in, then you're like one of the family.

Are you happy?

When one hassle is over and the next bit of drudgery hasn't started yet, happiness is what's in between. I'm happy on Hiiumaa. ■

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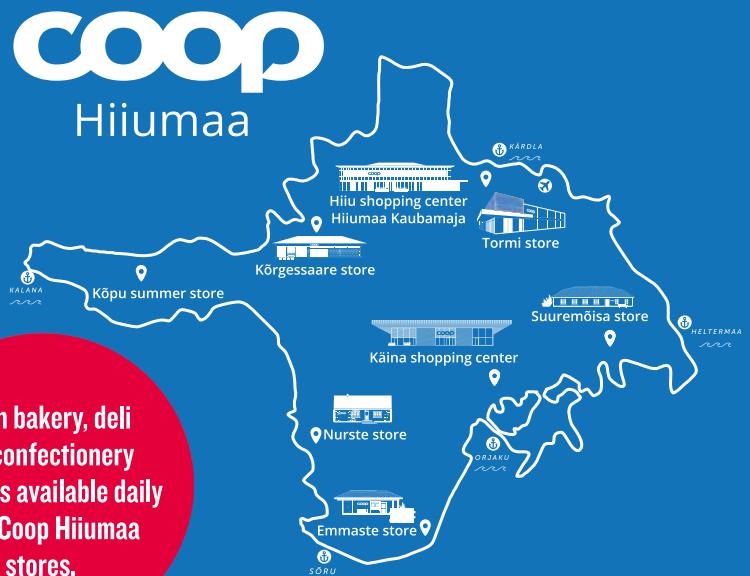
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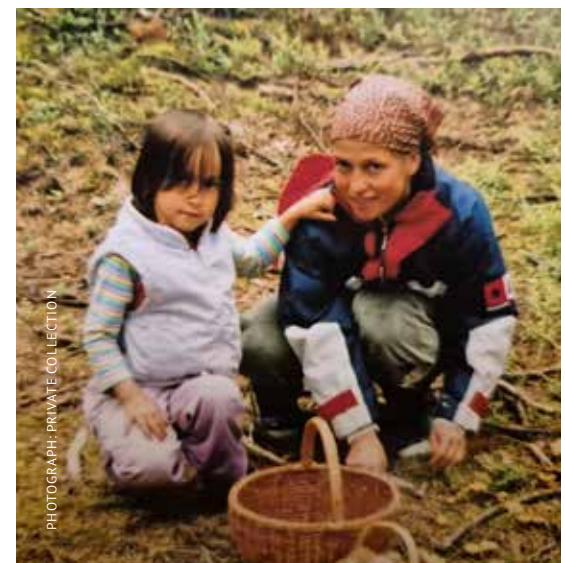
Hiiumaa Kitchen and Bakery hiiumaapagar



“How would I try to explain the nature of Hiiumaa and the character of its people to someone who has never set foot there? I’ve realized it can’t really be articulated. If you haven’t been there, you can’t really understand it. For me, Hiiumaa is a seminal place, it’s a place you can draw powerful inspiration from. I’ve written a lot of music in Kassari, I also shot two music videos for my first album there.” But even more important is the possibility of coming and just being there: “There’s so much natural scenery, people live dispersed on the island and if you want, solitude is easy to find. It’s particularly quiet in winter, I can make a fire in the wood-burning stove and drink tea by the glow of the fire.”

PHOTOGRAPH: PRIVATE COLLECTION

An-Marlen has a high appreciation for Hiiumaa culture. “Hiiumaa folk are friendly, there’s a community spirit that doesn’t really gel in Tallinn despite my large circle of friends there. I have this favourite egg seller in Kassari, I buy from her to take with me to Tallinn, and well, I never leave the island without dark local bread. People always greet you with a broad smile and ask how it’s going. People in the Estonian cultural space are generally more reserved, as we all know, but on Hiiumaa, they’re more open.” An-Marlen is quick to note that she isn’t descended from an original Hiiumaa family, but her grandfather did have a summer home in Kõpu and visited the island for the first time before the age of 2. ■



PHOTOGRAPH: PRIVATE COLLECTION

An-Marlen

Singer Ingel Marlen Mikk, better known by her stage name An-Marlen, considers Hiiumaa her second home and is envious of those who can be on the island when she is out on tour or in the studio on the mainland.

TEXT: JAANO MARTIN OTS

“You’re there! So great, I’d love to be there, too!” she exclaims over the video bridge after hearing that the interviewer is on Hiiumaa. “I was just there. And I realized that making a home on the island is undoubtedly one of my goals in life. When I told my parents that, they were all wide-eyed, but I’m a fervent believer that at some point my professional life will be settled enough that I can spend time on Hiiumaa. I want my kids to be able to run around and experience the kind of childhood I had.”

After winning the TV contest “Your Face Sounds Familiar” in November, she donated the prize money to an animal shelter on Hiiumaa: “I wondered where I might want to donate the money and when I saw them on the list of charities, it was immediately clear. Later it turned out that a cat needed surgery to be able to live pain free and I’m sincerely glad the money went to the right place.” Animals are close to her heart. One of Hiiumaa’s advantages is the amount of empty beach and forest where a dog can run unleashed.

“I know a beach on Hiiumaa that I enjoy in every season. But I won’t divulge the coordinates – the emptiness and tranquility are so special,” An-Marlen chuckles and recommends that visitors choose a swimming place from the wealth of other beaches on Hiiumaa. The one next to the bonfire location in Kassari Village is a good one.



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Tanel Malk

The island tennis club's president says the island's tranquility, scenery and robust community add up to a distinctive location for the sport, one that's appealing to players of all levels.

TEXT: STINA EILSEN

If you were to sum up tennis on Hiiumaa in one sentence for visitors here, what would it be?

The combination of Hiiumaa's calm, small size, unspoiled nature, fresh air and friendly people makes tennis here special.

How did you become a promoter of tennis on the island? What's your connection to the sport and the island?

I was born on Hiiumaa and spent a large part of my life here. It was my kids who got me into tennis when they started taking lessons, and the main figure in tennis back then, Tiiu Masing, invited me to the club and eventually passed the baton to me.

How did tennis itself take root and pick up momentum on the island?

The tennis scene as it is now started when Tiiu moved to Hiiumaa. She was behind the founding of the Hiiumaa Tennis Club in 1988 and the establishment of the current courts in Kärdla. And when the indoor tennis facility was completed a couple years ago, that marked a new boom and increased the number of recreational players.

What is the tennis community on Hiiumaa like today: who's the typical player, how big is it as a sport?

The club has 120 adult members and about 70 kids take lessons. There are actually more players than that. It's a healthy and rewarding hobby that challenges you to keep on getting better.

Let's say a tourist visits Hiiumaa for the first time and wants to play – where should they go and what options do they have?

In summer, they should come out to the tennis club's courts in Kärdla, it's open to visitors from June to August. At other times, the indoor courts at the Hiiumaa Sport Centre are available. Both venues offer equipment rental, they'll put you in touch with coaches and people to play with. Court times should be booked in advance.

What is the biggest draw for you personally about tennis on Hiiumaa?

It's the people who keep the tennis scene vibrant and the tennis players. Without local involvement, the sport would not be what it is today. As said, Hiiumaa's calm environment and unspoiled nature make even tennis something special.

How do the seasons influence tennis and what is the tennis calendar like?

Because of the indoor facility, the seasonal aspect matters less now. It's a busy year-round calendar.

What are the best-known events or traditions for tennis on Hiiumaa – any tournament or other format that a fan could time their trip to Hiiumaa for?

The best-known is the Hiiumaa Open, which has a 30-year history and takes place in July. The Tuulekala Tournament and the Christmastime Jõulumixtuur are also noteworthy, and there are year-round informal tournaments. In summer, we organize a weeklong camp for players of all levels.

What's given you the most cheer or cause for pride in the history of tennis in Hiiumaa?

There's been plenty to celebrate, but one of the biggest events was the opening of the indoor tennis facility in 2022, which meant it was possible to play year-round and was a big step forward for the whole community.

How does tennis on the mainland or in other European countries strike you as different? What's the special Hiiumaa ambience?

Every court or facility is slightly different, but Hiiumaa feels like home. Many visitors come back every year, which shows that something is special here.

What's a typical tennis day?

It depends on the season and the activities. The club doesn't have any full-time employees so I often find myself doing court maintenance, umpiring and organizing. The most typical day is where I get my racket and go play with friends.

Looking at the future, what's your next dream or goal for Hiiumaa tennis?

Whenever I see young players with the very good training facilities that they have today, I dream that one of them will be the next Anett Kontaveit or Mark Lajal. ■



”

HIKING IS AN AMAZING WAY OF EXPERIENCING HIIUMAA!

“Photographic artist” would be a good description of what you do. Tell us about your professional activities.

I've had three solo exhibitions and they all debuted in Hiiumaa! The first photography exhibition was called Hiumagic and conveyed the beauty of the local nature and the story of how I became a pihographer. It was nice to bring the exhibition to Tartu Nature House and Alexela Concert Hall for mainlanders to view. The second photography exhibition, “We Are Here”, focused on environmental portraits from Hiiumaa and various species of plants – including lichens and fungi – and animals around us, to show that they, too, are here and share their home with us. Are we good neighbors and do we leave them enough room to live? The core idea of all of the exhibitions is to bring people close to nature and spur them to think about the environment in which we live. And of course to take a moment and reflect on how lucky we have been with nature and what a special place Hiiumaa really is.

Something that makes you especially happy when on Hiiumaa?

Everything related to the sea – the sound of the sea, forest paths, birdsong, wild strawberries and big parasol mushrooms. A dragonfly landing on our shoulder or a bee buzzing at daybreak. These little things are actually often big things. A night sky without light pollution – especially in August, when the stars become visible again. Maple sap in spring. My parents' homegrown tomatoes and raspberries and pressed apple juice in autumn. Empty beaches. And those bits of old-growth forest we still have – a true treasure chest for the soul!

What is “forest bathing”?

Forest bathing is from Japan and involves using the natural environment to bolster health. In general, forest bathing is overseen by people who studied the discipline, but we can all do simple activities in nature to feel better. Sometimes all it takes is to go take a mindful walk in nature and focus on the sights, sounds, smells and tastes around us... Feel the wind blowing and feel grains of sand between your toes. I don't know a better place than Hiiumaa to give your spirit a restful break! ■

Viive-Kai Rebane

TEXT: RENE SATSI

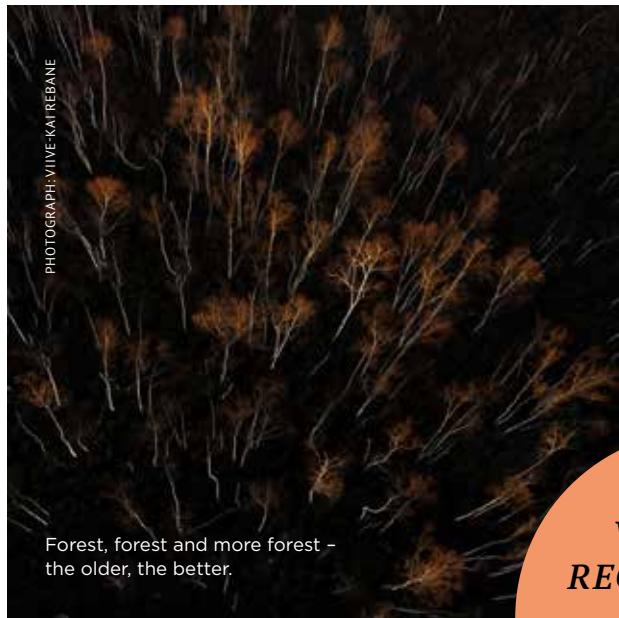
Life has led Viive-Kai out of the big cities and into the embrace of nature and photography. Born, raised and educated in Tallinn and having done a longer stint in the US, the former basketballer found peace in the forests of Hiiumaa.

Put together a sentence that would characterize your journey through sports, nature and photography. Viive-Kai Rebane is...

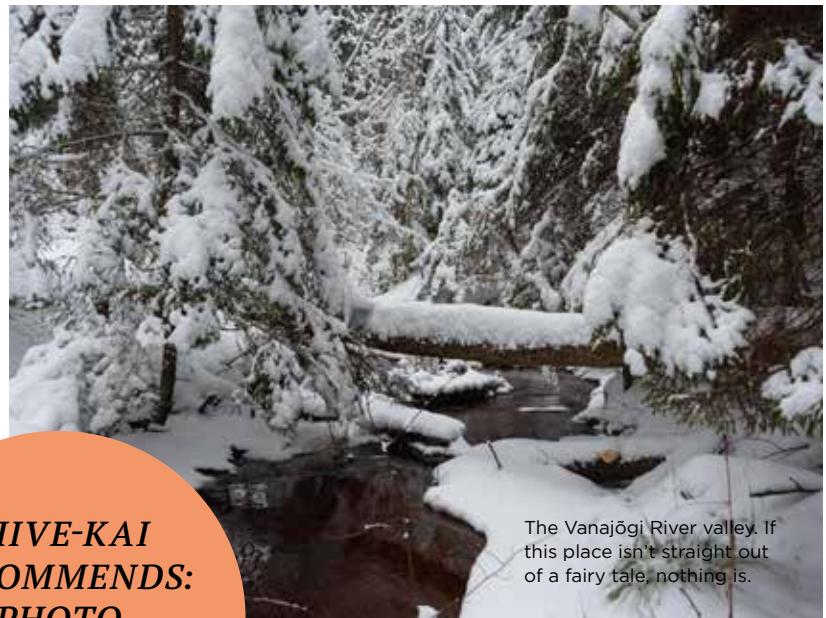
...someone who loves nature and listens to the call of their heart.

You're putting the final touches on becoming a professional tour guide, but you're already accompanying people into the wild now?

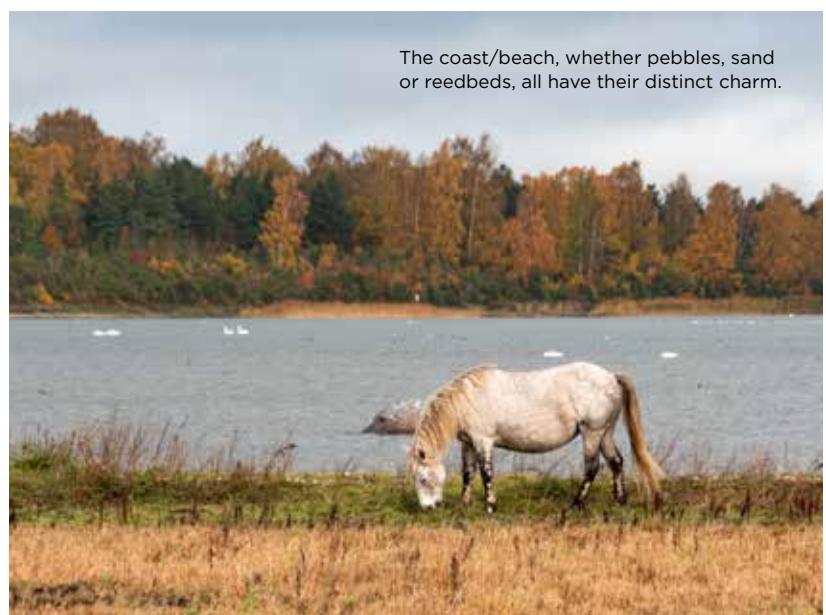
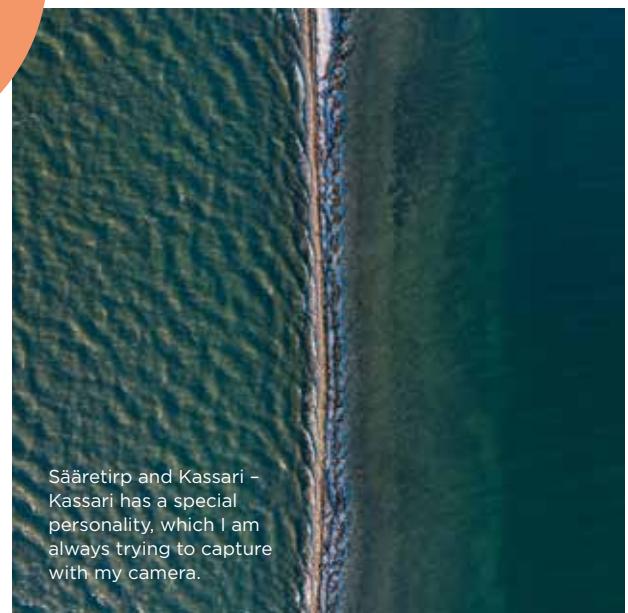
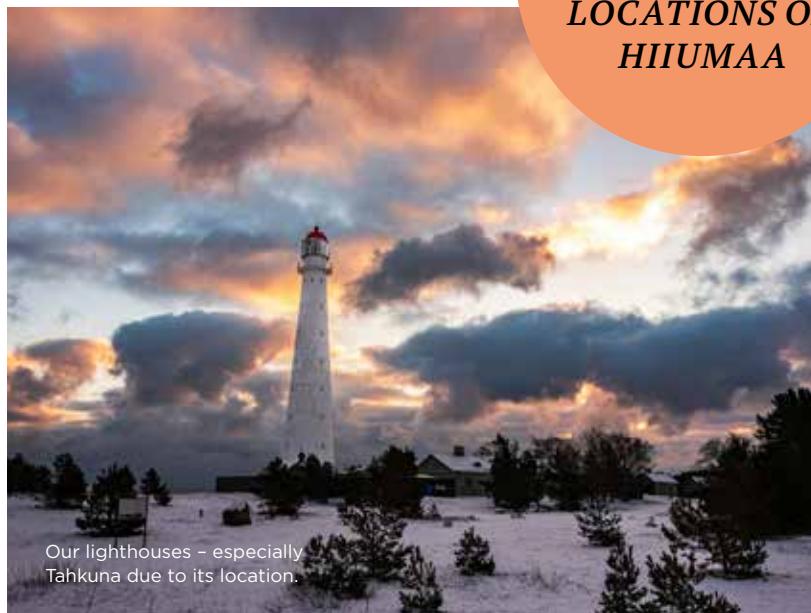
I'm always glad to guide people into the forests and introduce Hiiumaa to them. Our island may seem small, but actually there's so many places that are special and tourists don't always get to. The faster we move, the less we see, so it's great if people have time to spend on forest trails and escape from the human world to nature! Hiking is an amazing way of experiencing Hiiumaa and I'm glad to be a guide for people.



Forest, forest and more forest – the older, the better.



VIIVE-KAI RECOMMENDS: PHOTO LOCATIONS ON HIIUMAA



Happening on Hiiumaa in 2026

ALL HIIUMAA EVENTS:
HIIUMAA.EE/EN/EVENTS



Lighthouses are in the focus this year on Hiiumaa, with a variety of thematic exhibitions, theatre performances and, for the first time, a running event linking lighthouses. The Pop-up Cafe Day and a speciality Glögg Cafe Day are likewise inspired by the island's beacons. For information on the Year of Lighthouses, visit www.hiiumaa.ee/tuletornideaasta

JANUARY

Exhibition of works by members of the adult painting club at Kärdla Culture Centre gallery and colonnade hall

JANUARY 29 Day of Fruitful Idling

JANUARY 30 Estonian Literature Day: Lauri Räpp at Käina Library

JANUARY 30 – FEBRUARY 1 26th Kärdla Cup (international basketball tournament)

FEBRUARY

Exhibition of illustrations by Katri Smittat at the Kärdla Culture Centre gallery and colonnade hall

FEBRUARY 24 National anthem singing on the steps of Reigi Parsonage

MARCH

Exhibition of paintings by Anneli Salumaa at the Kärdla Culture Centre gallery and colonnade hall

APRIL

Exhibition of photographs by Tiit Leito at the Kärdla Culture Centre gallery and colonnade hall

APRIL 10–18 Hiiumaa Restaurant Week (spring)

MAY

Exhibition of paintings by Malle Pahapall at the Kärdla Culture Centre gallery and colonnade hall

MAY 1–3 Hiiumaa Lighthouses Run

MAY 1 Kärdla Day and Kärdla Run

MAY 1 Opening of the exhibitions "Eiffel's domes and Freedom's lighthouses" at Kõpu Lighthouses

MAY 16 Hiiumaa Public Rally Sprint

MAY 16 MuuseumiÖÖ: a special night-time programme at branches of the Hiiumaa Museum

MAY 16 Hiiumaa Spring Fair in Käina

MAY 24 Hiiumaa Song and Dance Day

MAY 29 Hiiumaa Nature Hike

MAY 30 Tuulekala Festival at Orjaku Harbour

JUNE

Exhibition of paintings by Jaanika Roosa at the Kärdla Culture Centre gallery and colonnade hall

JUNE 1 Children's Festival in Kärdla

JUNE 5–7 Hiiumaa Literature Festival

JUNE 5 Hiiumaa Köök ja Pagar food producer pop-up sales day, parking lot of the Konsum store in Tormi

JUNE 12 Hiiumaa Köök ja Pagar food producer pop-up sales day, parking lot of the Konsum store in Tormi

JUNE 18–21 Sõru Jazz Festival

JUNE 19 Barley Dumpling Soup Friday at Mihkli Farm Museum

JUNE 20 Village Dance at Mihkli Farm Museum

JUNE 20–21 Smoke Sauna Days at Mihkli Farm Museum

JUNE 21 Suvesumin: a summer opening event at Viscosa

JUNE 22 Traditional 10 km midsummer run in Kõrgessaare

JUNE 22 St. John's Day bonfire in Kõrgessaare

JUNE 24 St. John's Day bonfire in Kärdla (by Rannapaargu restaurant)

JUNE 26 Hiiumaa Köök ja Pagar food producer pop-up sales day, parking lot of the Konsum store in Tormi

JUNE 27 Birthday of Lavendlitalu (Lavender Farm)

JULY

Exhibition of prints by Heiki Ernits at the Kärdla Culture Centre gallery and colonnade hall

JULY 1 Opening of the exhibition "Genius Loci VII. Teenija. 1714. 1929. 2026" at Reigi Parsonage

JULY 3 Hiiumaa Köök ja Pagar food producer pop-up sales day, parking lot of the Konsum store in Tormi

JULY 8–12 Theatrical production: "Sooster's new school" at Viscosa Culture Factory

JULY 10 Fishers' Day

JULY 10 Opening of the Moonsund regatta and 50th anniversary of the yacht club Dago

JULY 10 Barley Dumpling Soup Friday at Mihkli Farm Museum

JULY 10 Hiiumaa Köök ja Pagar food producer pop-up sales day, parking lot of the Konsum store in Tormi



JULY 11 Summer Crafts and Homemade Goods Fair	
JULY 11 Family day on Lavendlitalu (Lavender Farm)	AUGUST
JULY 16 Tennis tournament on Lavendlitalu (Lavender Farm)	Exhibition of paintings by Jane Tiidelepp at the Kärdla Culture Centre gallery and colonnade hall
JULY 16 Concert in the courtyard of Lavendlitalu (Lavender Farm)	Exhibition "Genius Loci VII. Teenija. 1714. 1929. 2026" at Reigi Parsonage (august 22 is the last day to catch the exhibition)
JULY 17 Barley Dumpling Soup Friday at Mihkli Farm Museum	AUGUST 1 Hiiumaa Pop-Up Cafe Day
JULY 17 Hiiumaa Köök ja Pagar food producer pop-up sales day, parking lot of the Konsum store in Tormi	AUGUST 1 SADU (band) performs at the Kärdla Villaladu venue
JULY 17-19 Hiiu Folk (traditional music festival)	AUGUST 1-2 15th Pühalepa Music Festival
JULY 18 Village Dance at Kassari Museum	AUGUST 1-2 Theatrical production: "A Yankee's Adventures on Hiiumaa" at Viscosa Culture Factory
JULY 18 Old Vehicle Derby	AUGUST 2 Harvest celebration on Lavendlitalu (Lavender Farm)
JULY 23-25 Saund (festival)	AUGUST 7 Barley Dumpling Soup Friday at Mihkli Farm Museum
JULY 23-26 "Mere laul" (Song of the Sea), a theatrical production at Viscosa Culture Factory	AUGUST 7 Hiiumaa Köök ja Pagar food producer pop-up sales day, parking lot of the Konsum store in Tormi
JULY 24 Barley Dumpling Soup Friday at Mihkli Farm Museum	AUGUST 7-8 Oti Regatta
JULY 24 Hiiumaa Köök ja Pagar food producer pop-up sales day, parking lot of the Konsum store in Tormi	AUGUST 8 Luidja Triathlon at Luidja beach and adjoining terrain
JULY 25 Kila-kola Fair in Kärdla	AUGUST 14 Barley Dumpling Soup Friday at Mihkli Farm Museum
JULY 25 Open Farms Day	AUGUST 14 Hiiumaa Köök ja Pagar food producer pop-up sales day, parking lot of the Konsum store in Tormi
JULY 25-26 Smoke Sauna Days at Mihkli Farm Museum	AUGUST 15 Lestafest – flounder festival at Kõrgessaare Harbour
JULY 28-31 Theatrical production: "A Yankee's Adventures on Hiiumaa" at Viscosa Culture Factory	AUGUST 20 Restoration of Independence Day concert at Reigi Church. Tõnis Mägi and Ain Agan
JULY 30-31 Hiiumaa Pop-Up Cafe Day	AUGUST 21-22 Sauna Cup 2026
JULY 31 Hiiumaa Köök ja Pagar food producer pop-up sales day, parking lot of the Konsum store in Tormi	AUGUST 22-23 Smoke Sauna Days at Mihkli Farm Museum
JULY 31 Opening concert of the 15th Pühalepa Music Festival	
SEPTEMBER	
	Exhibition of works by members of the Hiiumaa Loovisikute Vabaühenduse HiK at the Kärdla Culture Centre gallery and colonnade hall
	Indian Summer on Hiiumaa
	Nargenfestival presents an "Arvo Pärt Days" concert in Kärdla Church
	SEPTEMBER 19 Hiiumaa Autumn Fair in Kärdla
	SEPTEMBER 23 Autumnal equinox hike in Kõrgessaare
OCTOBER	
	Exhibition of paintings by Anni Saar at the Kärdla Culture Centre gallery and colonnade hall
	OCTOBER 23-31 Hiiumaa Restaurant Week (autumn)
NOVEMBER	
	A surprise exhibition at the Kärdla Culture Centre gallery and colonnade hall
	NOVEMBER 29 Lighting of the candle for First Sunday of Advent on the central square in Kärdla
DECEMBER	
	Exhibition of works by members of the adult painting club at the Kärdla Culture Centre gallery and colonnade hall
	DECEMBER 5 Hiiumaa's 5th Glögg Pop-up Cafe Day
	DECEMBER 12 Winter Crafts and Home-made Goods Fair
	Post-Christmas calorie burner hike




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