



Estonia
Positively surprising.

South Estonia

Naturally Yours

A guide for nature lovers



Lõuna-Eesti Turism





Additional Information

www.visittartu.com
turism.valgamaa.ee
www.viljandimaa.ee/turismiinfo
www.polvamaa.ee
eng.otepaa.ee
www.visitvoru.ee
www.setomaa.ee
www.jogevamaa.ee

Nearest Airports:

Tartu, Tallinn, Riga, Helsinki



Greetings to all who love nature!

The hospitable people of southern Estonia extend a warm invitation to all nature lovers. We invite you to enjoy the unique rolling hills, lakes and rivers with flood waters, untouched bogs and swamps, primeval forests, animals and birds – everything that makes South Estonian nature superbly diverse. Here you will find plenty of opportunities for hiking, for pursuing active hobbies and for participation in competition sports. There are over forty nature reserves in South Estonia and more than 125 hiking, nature and jogging tracks. The local rivers and lakes provide you with plentiful opportunities for trips on water by canoe, kayak, a raft, a boat, a trawling net boat or a barge. It is impossible to even come close to mentioning all the interesting and thrilling events available – golf, archery, cycling, fishing, horse riding, safaris, team games and hunting trips are but a part of the activities that you can practice in South Estonia! And what is particularly pleasing to visitors – thanks to the relatively small size of South Estonia, even a couple of days of travel can accommodate an astonishing variety of nature experiences and diverse activities. See you soon!

South Estonia is already waiting for you!



Wandering along the unique rolling hills

The flat plains of Estonia give way to ancient valleys and hills beginning from Viljandi towards the south. From the ruins of Viljandi Order Castle opens a wide view of the beautiful lake deep in the valley below, which has been compared with Switzerland. The scenery is also unique because of numerous outcrops of red sandstone, the nearest of which is also located in Viljandi.

Võru County located South of Viljandi stands out by its varied terrain, diverse landscape, fast changing communities, a relatively continental climate and a settled way of life formed in terms of centuries, clearly different from the rest of Estonia. In Võru County, you have a rare opportunity to enjoy the rolling hills that you cannot see anywhere else.

At the highest point of the Baltic States, Suur Munamägi, a wonderful view opens onto South Estonian nature for over a 50 km radius – in the tower on the top of the hill you are 346.7 meters above sea level. From the tower you can also see the domes of Petseri monastery and Lake Pskov behind the Russian border. In Haanja Upland, the highest area of Estonia, the Haanja Nature Park, 18% of the area of which is 250 m above sea level, certainly deserves a visit.

TARTU COUNTY



Primeval valley of Rõuge



Loodi Hell



Lake Viljandi

PÕLVA COUNTY

VÕRU COUNTY

Karula
National Park

Võrumäe
Suur Munamägi
Rõuge
Haanja
Nature Park



Vällamäe Nature Trail



Energy Farm

Be sure to visit!

The deepest lake of Estonia **Rõuge Suurjärv** (38 m) located in Haanja Nature Park and before the ice age formed the 10 km-long **primeval valley of Rõuge**.

Loodi hell – the most important tourist attraction of Paistu primeval valley nearby Viljandi is a 23 m wide and 15 m high large sandstone outcrop, to which leads a trail from Paistu reservoir offering a wide choice of hiking experience.

Estonia is one of the richest countries with forest cover in the world – the forest covers nearly one half of our land. Worth a visit are the nature houses and natural hiking trails of the State Forest Management Centre (RMK) in different counties of southern Estonia.

We recommend!

When driving from Tartu to Põlva or to Võru, we recommend the **Postal Road** – a former trade and war road with a distinguished and exciting history where the horses of the rulers of Sweden, Russia and Poland, galloped through the beautiful landscapes. Along the road are a variety of tavern sites and postal stations.

For hikers in Viljandi County, we recommend the 12 km long hiking trail around **Viljandi Lake**. Every year on May 1st, sports enthusiasts can participate in a race around Lake.

Out of the many hiking trails in South Estonia, one of the most exciting is the **Vällamäe Nature Trail** in Haanja Nature Park, which runs from the foothill of the second highest hill in Estonia – Vällamäe – to its top. The hill slopes are very steep in places; at the foot is located a hiking house, where you can relax and admire the primeval nature.

Energy Farm in Viljandi County offers hikes with guides experienced with **herbs** and creates adventures on well used health paths.



Hiking in wild bogs

Estonia is an extraordinarily marshy land – approximately 22% of Estonian land is covered by 7000 bogs; in total, there are more than 165 000 swamps, home to bog landscapes which are no longer found elsewhere in Europe! At times the bogs contain up to a 7 m thick layer of peat, you can admire the largest bog in Estonia in the model area of Soomaa National Park, which is included in the international PAN Parks network celebrating wild nature.

Soomaa, with plenty of rivers, is also famous for its spring flood waters – high water flowing into the forests and grasslands may also flood the roads, disrupting the connection of people with the outer world. During the largest high waters, the floods have reached up to 175 m². The time of large high waters in Soomaa is also referred to as the “fifth season”.

Thanks to the diverse nature and the peculiar culture of suspension bridges and dugout boats, Soomaa national park is popular with Sunday hikers, as well as with travelers who are more experienced nature enthusiasts. On the trail of Lemmjõe Keelemets you can admire an old alluvial forest long lost from Europe. On the Ingatsi trail you can walk along the wooden paths to the highest – 8 m high – bog ridge of Europe – to Kuresoo. Near the Visitor Centre you will see beaver tracks and you will have the opportunity to see traces of beaver activity. Beautiful experiences are offered by the wooded meadows in spring time.





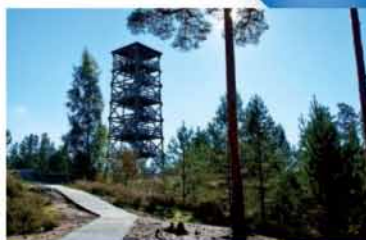
Soomaa National Park



Alam-Pedja Nature Reserve



Flood Forest



Karula National Park



Ingatsi Hiking Trail



Luhasso Log House

Be sure to visit!

In Tartu County are remarkable marsh landscapes in two major nature reserves of European wide importance – **Emajõe Suursoo and Alam-Pedja nature reserves.**

Luhasso bog in Võru County Haanja highland is a natural bog characteristic of South Estonia that has preserved its natural state. Wet fen and bog parts are covered with board trails.

In excitingly diverse **Karula National Park**, fields of meadows and farmland alternate with woods, lakes, bogs and swamps.

We recommend!

In the Soomaa Visitor Center you can learn about both wild nature and the cultural history of the surrounding areas. Local entrepreneurship has to this day helped to preserve the unique cultural phenomenon of Soomaa – **manufacturing of dugout boats.**

As Soomaa (Swamp land) has many rivers, the region has begun to be called a River land, and if you would like to get acquainted with the peculiarities of this wild region, **canoeing** is the best way.

In the South Estonian bogs you can experience adventures also in the winter – you can go **snowshoe hiking**, i.e. hike with the help of tennis racquet shaped aids attached to the feet. Snow-shoes allow you to move freely along the fluffy snow drifts and bog lakes, to hike to where you would otherwise not be able to go on foot.

Both Soomaa National Park and Lake Võrtsjärv have merited the title of Destination of Excellence in the European reputed tourism competition EDEN.



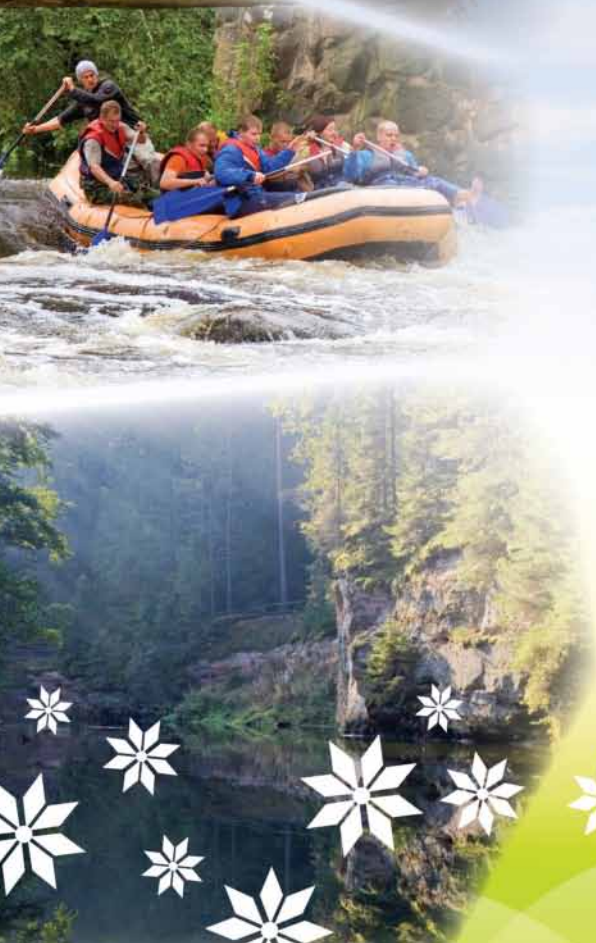
Adventures on lakes and rivers

Estonia's most beautiful river Emajõgi has historically been an important waterway linking the Lake Võrtsjärv and the fifth largest lake in Europe, Lake Peipsi. As early as in the 14th century, barges arrived in Tartu from Russia along Emajõgi, laden with furs, wax, honey, and hemp. The memory of the unique barges of Lake Peipsi has not yet faded. During the summer season you can ride on the river Emajõgi; in addition to the small river boats, there is also the Peipsi barge, built using ancient building techniques.

Shallow Võrtsjärv is Estonia's largest inland body of water where thirty six species of fish have found a home. The lake is also famous as the largest natural eel breeding site, where the glass eels continue their lives, carried from the Sargasso Sea to the coast of England by the currents of the Atlantic Ocean, who have made a giant airplane journey to Estonia. From Valma Port a shallow draft trawling net boat will take you on a fun ride.

To the delight of canoe enthusiasts in Estonia, there are more than 7,000 rivers, the longest of them, Võhandu, offers plenty of opportunities for canoe trips through southern Estonia.

An old saying has it that at least once in a lifetime it is the obligation of each Estonian to go to the sacred natural sites along the banks of Ahja River – in Taevaskoja. Certainly, the recommendation should be listened to by those coming from afar! On the banks of the Ahja River are nearly forty unique sandstone outcrops, whose age can be regarded as close to 400 million years. The largest of them, Suur Taevaskoda, is a beautiful 24 m high natural resonance chamber.





Lake Võrtsjärv trawling net boat



Suur Taevaskoda

Lake
Peipsi



The fishing waters of South
Estonia



Barge Yard



Piusa Caves

Be sure to visit!

The nature reserve area of **Piusa River Valley**, which is one of the most visited tourist sites in South Estonia – the **Piusa Caves** were formed in the 1920's during the mining of glass sand. Piusa Caves are also the biggest wintering area for bats in the Baltics – seven types of bats have been discovered there and the number of specimens could reach nearly 3000.

On the **traditional trawling net boat** of Lake Võrtsjärv there is the opportunity to enjoy the lake views and if notified in advance, taste eel soup or smoked bream.

We recommend!

A nice vacation is offered in southern Estonia with the many **fishing waters** – you can enjoy being alone in early morning on a river or on a lake or ice fish in the winter.

In Tartu, in the **Large and Small Barge Yard** located along the river Emajõgi, you can watch the building of barges. Enthusiasts can monitor shipbuilding from the circular gallery above the construction site and accompanied by the guide of the Barge Yard you will be able to take a tour in the workshops located on the site.

The Lake Museum by Lake Võrtsjärv displays live fish, aquatic plants and bottom feeders in large aquariums, through a microscope you will be able to watch plankton organisms, in addition you can sail on a traditional **trawling net boat** and taste smoked bream.

There are three swimming places in the city of Tartu which offer competition to the swimming places of the warm **Verevi Lake** in Elva.



Resting actively

During the summer season the beautiful South Estonia is a mecca for holidaymakers! Regardless of whether you like light activity or you enjoy watching competitive sports or participating in them – **there is a choice of activities for everyone!**

In addition to hiking on the hiking trails and active recreation on rivers and lakes you will be able to engage in hunting, archery and riding. Sports lovers will find wonderful cycling and roller skating tracks; you can play tennis and golf. Of course, there is no lack of opportunities to go for in extreme sports. And it is by no means an exhaustive list of activities that South Estonia offers!

In particular, there are many possibilities for active holidays in South Estonia in winter time. A place that is worth a visit especially in winter, is the Baltic's best-known center of winter sports and the South Estonian most popular tourist and holiday spot Otepää – a city which bears the title of the winter capital of Estonia.

Thanks to the rolling hills, the special climatic character and a good level of accommodation and sports facilities it is possible in the area to enjoy winter fun from December to April. At your disposal are skiing, slalom and motor sledge tracks, jumping and sledge hills, skating rinks and snow tubing. The international sports community knows Otepää as a venue for stages of World Cup cross-country skiing.



Holstre-Polli Recreation Center



Vitipalu

VILJANDI-
MAA

Holstre-Polli



Lake
Võrts-
järv

TARTU COUNTY

TARTU

Emajõgi

Vellavere

ELVA

Vitipalu

Vapramäe

VALGA COUNTY • OTEPÄÄ



Tartu Marathon



Otepää Adventure Park



Tartu Roller Skate Marathon



Tartu Bicycle Rally

Be sure to visit!

Vapramäe, Vellavere and Vitipalu are three beautiful places in Tartu County, around Elva, which combine a close network of study, hiking and sports trails and recreational sites and regularly organized hiking series.

In Holstre-Polli, the sports and recreation center of Viljandi County, it is possible to ski and skate in the winter season, to hike in summer; also, the roller-skating trails are open. You can take a look at the beautiful landscape from the 25 m high observation tower.

We recommend!

The **Forest Brother Farm**, located by the border of Latvia, offers experiences of unprecedented bunker tourism and the possibility, within the framework of a forest brother raid, to take part in a stage of the history of Estonia together with a visit to a bunker of a forest brother.

A public sports event series with the largest number of participants in Estonia – Tartu Complex Event, which includes **the Tartu Marathon, Tartu Running Marathon, Tartu Bike Rally, and Tartu Bike Marathon**. You can also participate in the Tartu Roller Skate Marathon. Keeping in mind people with a lesser fitness level, shorter distances have been planned at all the events.

Otepää Adventure Park offers innovative, adventurous and experience rich opportunities for spending leisure time for everyone in every season – for children, adults, families, businesses, clubs and groups of friends!



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