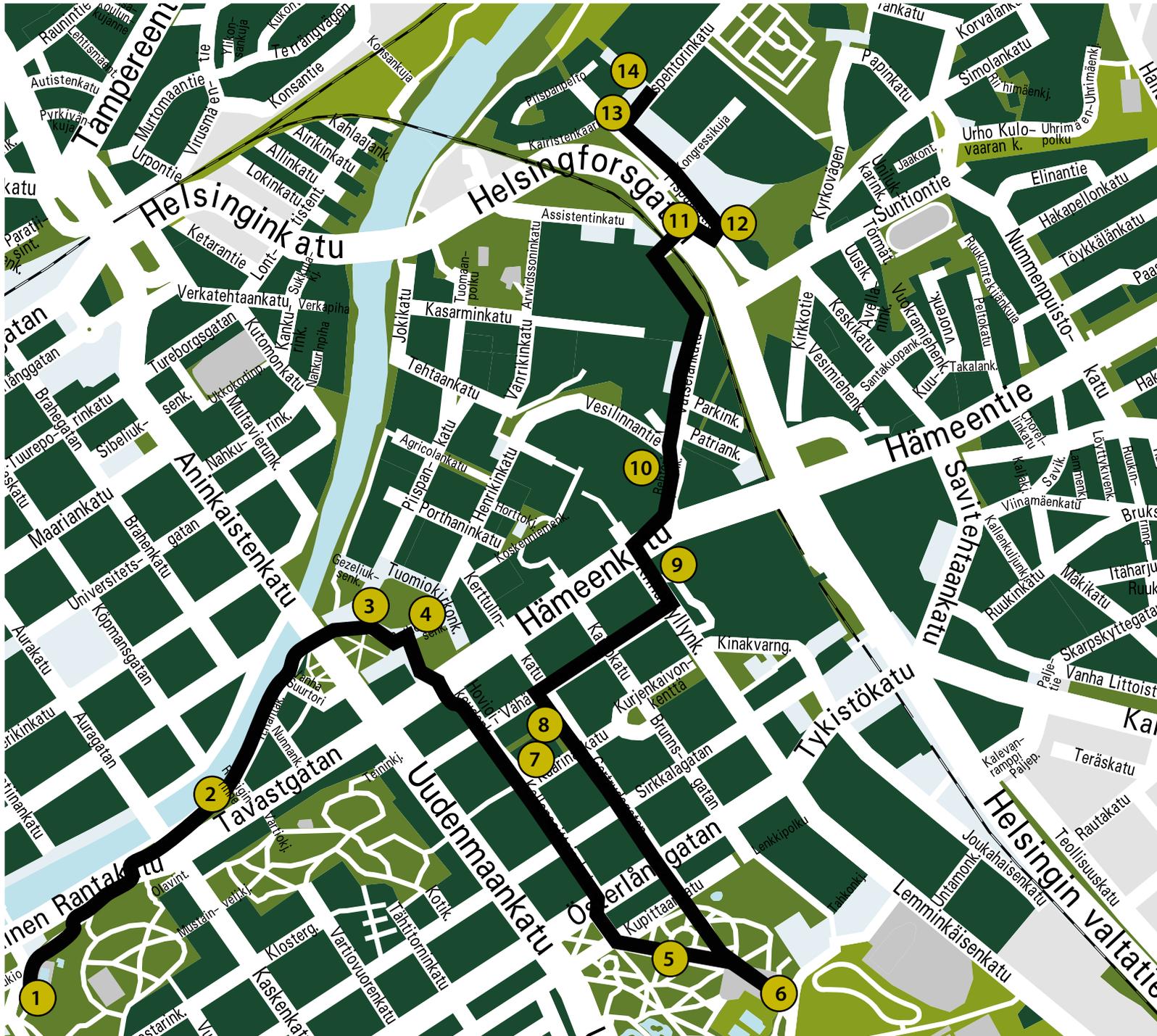


Amazing Turku – strange happenings and alternative sights

Stories about what the locals in Turku have experienced – what is peculiar, strange or amazing. Where have moments been experienced where something strange has taken place? And what is the most typical kind of Turku strangeness? What is it worth going to see in Turku, if you are not interested in traditional sights?



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Amazing Turku



Point of interest 3 Picture: Sariina Tani



Point of interest 2 Picture: Sariina Tani



Point of interest 6 Picture: Sariina Tani

1 A spectrum of people at the Samppalinna Open-Air Swimming Pool

In summer, the Samppalinna Open-Air Swimming Pool is the best place to get to know what the people of Turku are like.

In summer, Samppalinna is the best place in Turku to go people-watching. In winter, you can imagine the echoes of summer fun. By watching closely at this swimming pool, you can distinguish at least the following different types of Turku people:

- Muscular guys in long shorts who always show up, whatever the weather. They can be recognised by the fact that they are always there, showing off some fine dives on the diving board.
- The so-called swim racers and triathletes, the guys who really mean business - you can spot them as they crawl earnestly from one end of the pool to the other. When they are done, these serious guys climb out of the pool, breathe deeply and go off for a coffee and doughnut
- Big 'hump-back whales' of guys, who come out when the sun is shining. Watching this type can require several days: the true hump-back whale can be identified by the fact that he always sunbathes in the same specially selected place right from the start of the summer
- The loud-voiced water-jogging women who move about in large groups, pedalling slowly through the water and exchanging gossip on matters related to love and health.
- The local bouncers who turn up in the morning with their little girlfriends. They have grabbed a few hours sleep after their shift and continue to doze at the edge of the pool, the sound of splashing water lulling them to sleep.

2 Weird things by the banks of the River Aura

Just what can you encounter by the River Aura?

If Turku were a violin, the River Aura would be its bow. If you watch the river closely on different days, you will see how its colour changes with the light and the seasons. More often than not, you'll see mainly leaves floating on the water, or perhaps a half-submerged beer bottle, but now and then you might come across something a little strange.

According to one particular tale, during the War a submarine surfaced in the river. The 'Posankka' (pig-duck) on the other hand was floated up the river to the place where it now sits. The first thing one Turku resident saw when he got to town was a man swimming with a blow-up doll. Another encountered several guards and police officers who were observing a floating fridge as it made its way downstream. It has also been said that, at some time, nobody knows when exactly, a dolphin was spotted in the river.

3 The cathedral

The cathedral is a traditional sight that tourists come to see in busloads. But there are also interesting things here for little girls.

"We lived near here in Finland's first prefabricated house in Horttokuja Lane. It didn't look anything like prefabricated houses do today. I played with Sirpa from next door. We sang 'Chirpy Chirp' and bounded through piles of autumn leaves. On Saturdays, almost every Saturday, I would go with Sirpa to the cathedral. We went there to watch the brides. It was enchanting. The brides were so pretty! There amongst a crowd of strangers, we would go and see how white their dresses were and how wonderful their veils. It is said that, as a bride is walking down the aisle of the cathedral, if she looks at the image of Jesus in the eye, her child will have blue eyes."

4 But is there something secret in the cathedral?

Turku Cathedral is the third main sight in Turku after the River Aura and Turku Castle.

The cathedral was also damaged in the Great Fire of Turku. The inner parts and the tower were burned down. The clock on the cathedral only has an hour hand. But is there something secret in the cathedral? A secret underground passage runs from the cathedral to Turku Castle. Many Turku people have searched for it, but the start of the passage near the cathedral has not been found – or at least if anyone has found it they have not let on. This passage is used by the castle elf, about whom you can find out more in the tales of Topelius.

5 Kupittaa Park

Kupittaa Park was established in 1837, and is Finland's oldest and most extensive urban park.

The fencing around the bird section was built in the period 1905-1911, and the peacocks there have been one of the most significant points of interests in the park. Other new things to be introduced in the early 20th century were the open-air swimming pool and the children's play park. The children's "traffic town" was opened in the 1950s. "I visited Turku as a little boy. It must have been 1952 or 53, and I guess it was my first time in the city of Turku. We went to Kupittaa Park, which had a circus visiting at the time. I remember the big elephants and the trapeze artists flying through the air. The strangest thing of all in the circus was a horse that new its times tables. The horse trainer asked the horse a multiplication problem, such as 'what is 2 x 2?' In reply the horse selected a sign with the number 4 on it. It was amazing, and I just don't understand how it was possible".

6 Kupittaa Open-Air Swimming Pool

A wonderful night spent at Kupittaa Open-Air Swimming Pool

At Kupittaa Open-Air Swimming Pool, people still have half-an-hour to swim after the gates have closed. According to the rules, you are not allowed to swim across the pool. What on earth could happen at the pool? "It was a dark August night, and a group of us lads went for a secret night swim at Kupittaa Open-Air Swimming Pool. Clothes off and in we went. Sometimes a watchman would come by to take a look then we would duck down into the water so that he wouldn't spot us. We held our breath in the water and listened for the steps of the watchmen. Then, when the watchman had already gone, something amazing happened.

That night there was a meteor shower. High in the sky was a beautiful cascade of shooting stars. It was fantastic to stand in the warm water in the darkness of the night as the meteors rained down. The water lapped and the sky was alight."

7 Mauno Koivisto cycles by

We went to Kerttuli School together, me and Mauno

"I went to Kerttuli School. Mauno Koivisto went there at the same time, but he was a year older. I remember how he often used to cycle by. At school discipline was tough. When I was there I got boxed around the ears and rapped on the palms with a pointer, and sometimes I would get a detention for talking. The teacher was very authoritarian. The Koivistos lived there in Kerttulinkatu, and at that time Mauno was not particularly conspicuous. After the War, he began to study hard and, as you can see, he did all right for himself".

8 Hangman's rock at Kerttuli School

On the rock next to the school is a monument that tells of Turku's history

"It was the first time that I came to Turku and we were here with a theatre group for a youth art event. We were accommodated in Kerttuli School, but we erected tents on the rock next to the school building. We did not have enough tents and it wasn't very comfortable to sleep in them, so in the small hours I awoke and climbed up onto the rock to read a Moomin troll comic book. I was sitting by the monument reading and scratching the memorial plaque before I turned to read what it actually said: This rock was once an old execution site in Turku. Suddenly the camping site assumed a bleaker significance." "There's an old house in Kerttulinkatu at the bottom of Hangman's Hill. We lived there, I liked that home, it was such a beautiful house and we had really nice tiled ovens and high ceilings. But then I heard that people had been executed on that hill, and the bodies were thrown into Mätäjärvi Lake at the bottom of it, just where our house was. The homely feeling changed in an instant. The last person was executed there in the early 19th century. So you can see how urban culture changes and develops. "A monument sits on top of Hangman's Rock. According to more recent sources, there is no proof that the rock once served as an execution site – but folklore indicates differently.

9 Turku University Hospital

Miracles great and small taking place in the hospital

These days, Turku University Hospital (TYKS) is an extensive collection of buildings, but the main building is situated here at Kiinanmyllynkatu 2-4. Here there was once also a nurses' college, which, for many nurses that came here to study, was their first encounter with Turku. Entrance to the maternity ward is from the Kiinanmyllynkatu side. In 2009, 4,185 babies were born at the maternity ward at TYKS, equating to 11.4 every day. "It was in TYKS that I gave birth to my first child. It must have been up on the tenth floor, high up in any case, somewhere in the clouds. It had a view over Hämeenkatu at night, and I sang to the child who I was holding for the first time. It felt as if the world had stopped. It felt strange that people were walking down there on the street, not knowing that I had just given birth".

10 The Turku Student Houses designed by Erik Bryggman

The Student Houses contain a centre of student life and Finland's second oldest swimming pool

The Student Village Foundation of Turku began at the Student Houses

built for students. There are three houses altogether: A, B and C. Until 2010, the C-House served as home to the TVO student clubs and as a handy venue for musical gigs, poetry readings, theatrical rehearsals and other events. The TVO facilities can be considered as the birthplace of Turku subculture. In 2010, the Student Village Foundation of Turku evicted the student clubs from the premises in order to extend facilities for residential services. The houses also contain Finland's second oldest swimming pool, built in 1954. It was built according to the old principle that men and women share dressing and washing facilities. Because of that, men and women take turns to use the facilities of the pool.

11 Going under the bridge

Going under the bridge, you arrive at the cradle of Turku myths: Student Village.

According to a joke, Turku Student Village contains two kinds of flats: flats and suicide flats. Flats are those with a communal kitchen where you have no choice but to meet your neighbours, which keeps you sane. Suicide flats, however, are those with their own stove for cooking. There is nothing to encourage the residents to be sociable and they may spend all their years of study buried in their own flat. On the other hand, Student Village is an area where many people with much in common meet each other. Many of them find a partner for life here.

12 Posankka - a monument to Lempi-Susanna

On Pispalantie, there was once a junkyard run by someone called Lempi-Susanna.

"My grandmother was Lempi-Susanna, a hard-working and amusing person to whom a lot of things happened. For example, when Finland was ruled by Russia there was a liquor store at so-called Lenin corner where there is an onion-domed tower. Lempi-Susanna had become an errand girl for this shop. At that time on Humalistonkatu tramlines were being laid towards the railway station. Lempi-Susanna had been given two large bottles of cognac to take to the station by handcart. The bottles had to be taken by handcart because they were so big that it was impossible to carry them. Along Humalistonkatu, for some reason this young girl fell into a building site hole and both bottles of cognac broke. Unhappily she returned to the shop. When she explained that it was the fault of the building site, she was not severely reproached and was given two new bottles to take to the station and this time she got them there safely. Later in her life, Lempi-Susanna became a scrap merchant, and

because she did not have much in the way of a pension, she kept the junkyard on Pispalantie near Student Village until she was 90. Just at the place where the junkyard was now stands Posankka. For us it is funny that such an amusing, hard-working person as Lempi-Susanna should be remembered by a monument like Posankka."

13 In Student Village snow may be a miracle Have you ever had a snowball fight indoors?

Student Village houses not only Finnish students but also international exchange students. When the Finnish winter and exchange students from southern climes meet, amazing experiences may be had by both the exchange students and the Finnish ones.

"In Student Village, it seems that exchange students are always partying. One winter, a group of exchange students were so excited to see the snow that they took some ice hockey bags, packed them full of snow and carried the snow into the building. They then proceeded to have a wild snowball fight indoors. Time went by and, after a fun-filled evening they set off to the pub, leaving the snow inside! Evidently they were not used to something like snow and what happens to it when it melts. When they returned home, they found that their flat had suffered considerable water damage. They received quite a large bill for the clean-up and it said that now they are not laughing at all, but perhaps, back in their home countries, they will have something to tell their grandchildren. "

14 Concrete apples and moths enliven Student Village

In Student Village you can come across art if you keep your eyes open.

If, when walking along Inspektorinkatu, you glance at the gardens and parking areas, you may see concrete fruit serving as concrete bollards. The fruits are red and green apples created by troubador-sculptor Pepe Gonzales. In the evening, it is also worth checking out the walls of the houses: as the sky darkens, moths start to appear on the walls and can be seen flying, for example, on the wall opposite the large parking area between Inspektorinkatu 2 and 4. These moths by Merja Pitkänen can be seen flying on a total of four buildings in Student Village.



Point of interest 5 Picture: Sariina Tani