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Picture: Markku Lappalainen

KANSANPUISTO ROUTE 1:

1. Honkapirtti

The Continuation War's 14th Infantry Regiment was mostly composed of men from Turku. During a quieter trench warfare phase in 1942, they founded a brothers-in-arms association and had the idea of building a house for it. The men built the White Sea Karelian style Honkapirtti cabin in Uhtua, East Karelia, during trench warfare. It was moved to Ruissalo Island in 1944. The brothers-in-arms association was abolished in 1945 and the building became city property. A café opened in the cabin in 1965.

There is a great example of a native hazel grove behind Honkapirtti. Hazel groves can be found along the southern and south-western coasts of Finland. Many species in the surrounding area depend on the hazel trees. In springtime, the ground underneath is covered in blooming hepatica.

2. The oak grove is bustling with life

During its centuries-long lifespan, the old oak provides nourishment and a home to thousands of species, including tawny owls, stock doves, yellow-necked mice and Daubenton's bats. About 500 species of insects are also dependant on the oak. Many of them are rare and/or endangered. Ruissalo's unofficial mascot is the hermit beetle, which resides in the hollows of oaks and other large leafy trees and cannot be found in Finland outside the Ruissalo island.

3. The Spring of Choraeus

The Spring of Choraeus was named after Mikael Choraeus, Docent of Eloquence at the Royal Academy of Turku from 1799 to 1802. The stone rim was fitted in 1849. The spring was known as a place of refreshment where jubilant baccalaureates and town residents raised their glasses. The words FONS CHORAEI PHOEBEI PERENNIS have been etched into the stone, translating to "the ever-flowing spring of the poet Choraeus".

4. The University of Turku Botanical Gardens

In 1678, a garden area was established next to the Royal Academy of Turku. The present University of Turku was established in 1920 and its garden in 1924 in Iso-Heikkilä. In the 1950s the gardens were moved to their current location in Ruissalo, where they re-opened in 1956. Today, the gardens' primary purpose is to aid in botanical research and teaching as well as to offer a recreational space for the public. The indoor and outdoor gardens feature over 5,000 species of plants that act as a living window into the diversity of the earth's flora.

5. Springtime in Ruissalo

The blossoming of perennial plants in spring before the trees get their leaves is a sight to behold. The common hepatica, wood anemone, spring vetchling, fumewort and many other flowers dazzle by daylight, but songbirds are the stars of the evenings and early mornings. The clear April evenings are the time of thrushes and robins, while insectivores like warblers and nightingales take the stage in May and early June.

6. Ruissalo boatyard

The Turun veneveistämö boatyard was founded in 1889 on the Hevoskari cape in Ruissalo, which formerly housed a villa and a tenant farm. A large boat works building, machine shop, boat shelters and mast storage were built in the area. When the boatyard closed its operations in 1954, the Turku harbour took control of the buildings. The old boatyard area is still partially operational, but there are also services for visitors.

7. Ruissalo estate

The Ruissalo estate used to be the centre of the island life until the 1840s. The main building of the estate was built in 1901 after the old main building from the 1720s burned down two years prior. The garden of the estate was established in 1754 and consisted of a kitchen garden and fruit trees, as well as lilacs and Siberian pea trees. The surrounding rocky meadows and horse pastures are habitats for several rare and endangered insects and other organisms. The Ruissalo estate's shore meadow and fields are favoured by openland birds and birdspotters. The species that nest in the area include, for example, the northern lapwing and little ringed plover, and you can also spot many other waders during migration season. Witnessing a flock of thousands of barnacle geese take flight upon spotting a white-tailed eagle is quite the experience.

8. Kansanpuisto park

The common folk's recreational area, the Promenade, was moved from the Spring of Choraeus to its current location in 1860 and was later named Kansanpuisto. A restaurant and bowling alley were opened in the area, joined later by an outdoor theatre. Kansanpuisto became a popular destination for summer outings and strolls for Turku residents. The first swimming facility was constructed at the shore in the 1890s, followed by a newer sea pool in 1908. It was larger than the previous one and included a grandstand and diving platform. The facility collapsed and was demolished in 1964. The oldest rock festival in Finland, Ruisrock, was originally organised in Ruissalo's Saaronniemi in 1970. From 1972 on it has taken place in Kansanpuisto. Many renowned musicians perform at Ruisrock every year. The spectacle amazes the people on the large cruise ships passing the shore. Kansanpuisto is an excellent place to see these monumental ships up close – mornings between 6:45– 9:00 and evenings between 7:00– 9:00.

9. Villas and the Pikku-Pukki Promenade

Spending the summer at a villa was part of the Finnish middle class lifestyle in the 1800s. The first villa was built on the island in 1848 and by the end of the 1930s there were 98 of them. The first 1840s villas were mainly manor-like buildings in the empire style. The newer, more ornate style of villa was introduced to Finland and Ruissalo by architect G. Th. Chiewitz in the 1850s. By the end of the century, villas had evolved to be extravagant in their ornamentation. The early 1900s saw a new wave of simpler, smaller villas. This stylistic evolution culminates in the functional Villa Waren, designed by architect Erik Bryggman. The island houses a wide variety of villas from different eras. When taking the Pikku-Pukki Promenade from Kansanpuisto towards Airisto, the first villa on the right is Villa Haga, designed by Chiewitz and constructed by steel factory owner Thalus Ericsson in 1853. Next to it is Villa Gustafsberg (1884), known as the villa of merchant Gustaf Petrelius, and further back you can see Skogshyddan (exp. 1891) which once belonged to merchant Hoffstedt. Both represent the extravagantly decorated phase of villa architecture. Other ornate villas include Solhem, which formerly housed cork manufacturer Larsson, and next to it Ekhem, which was built for merchant Strandell in 1871. Right at the edge of the Promenade you can find the yellow Berghorn, which was built for wine merchant Nordfors in 1871; the white Rauha built in 1885; and Villa Carlo, which was built for merchant Juselius in 1886 and includes a tower. Last but not least, Synvilla from 1880 is located right around the corner.

10. Crimean War forts

There are five defence batteries in Ruissalo from the Crimean War (1854-1856). The defence batteries used to have places for cannons as well as a storage cellar for gunpowder. One of the most impressive cannon batteries is located next to Villa Carlo. There is also an info plaque at the site. There also used to be cannon batteries located near Honkapirtti.

11. The realm of the woodpeckers

Coarse woody debris, which refers to fallen trees left on the forest floor, is important for the diversity of Ruissalo's nature. It provides sustenance for insects that many species of woodpecker use for food. All species of woodpecker that nest in Finland can be found on the island. In addition to the great spotted woodpecker, an eagle-eyed hiker may also spot the elegant grey-headed woodpecker, the striking black woodpecker and the tiny lesser spotted woodpecker.

12. Jarno Saarinen and the motorcycle road race

Starting from the 1930s, a motorcycle road race was organised in Ruissalo. The route followed the road leading from the Spring of Choraeus to the Pikku-Pukki Promenade, then east towards Kansanpuisto and from there to the motorway. For almost four decades, the roar of motorcycles was an essential part of spring on the island. The races were cancelled in 1971 as a result of protests from the police and conservationists. The Turku-born Jarno Saarinen introduced a new kind of hanging riding posture to motorcycle racing and was the world champion in 1972. Saarinen, who passed away in a racing accident on the Monza Circuit in 1973, continues to be a respected sportsman in the international circles. He has a road named after him in Ruissalo and a statue in Barker Park in Turku.

13. Ruissalo airport

In the early 1900s, aircraft mainly used water to take off and land. The Turku Chamber of Commerce decided in the 1920s that the city needed its own airport. Ruissalo was chosen as the location because it was possible to build a land airport in addition to a sea airport there. The first flight to the Ruissalo sea airport was made on 2 May, 1927. Bank manager Grotenfelt's villa acted as the waiting area for the airport. The daily flight connection to Stockholm ended in 1935 after the Artukainen land airport was built and the Ruissalo airport was no longer used. The Turku yacht club started using the plot in 1943.

KUUVA ROUTE 2:

1. Honkapirtti

See the first attraction on route one.

2. Villa Roma and its tomatoes

The villa was designed in 1850 by architect Chiewitz for Nils Pinello, who sold it to the Suomen talousseura financial society. The society's experimental garden operated at the villa from 1862 to 1876. From the year 1906 until the 1950s, it functioned as a market garden established by gardener Josef Mäkilä. The greenhouses were used to cultivate, for example, tomatoes and cucumbers. Tomatoes were still considered a tad exotic in Finland in the 1920s, and many people didn't much care for the taste. That's why the side of Mäkiläs transport truck read: Turku residents, learn to eat tomatoes! Josef's son, artist Otto Mäkilä, worked and lived in the villa until his death in 1955. Artist Kaj Stenvall has lived in the villa since 2003.

3. Krottilanlahti

In the winter, the Krottilanlahti grove attracts flocks of common redpolls and siskins who feast on the seeds of its alder trees. On summer nights, you can see bats fluttering about between the trees, catching insects. The crown jewel of Ruissalo's diverse population of bats is the endangered natterer's bat, which is rarely found in Finland. The grazing cattle keep Krottilanlahti's coastal meadows open and diversifies the selection of insect species found in the area.

4. From fields to a golf course

Originally, almost all villa plots included fields as well as kitchen and pleasure gardens. The coastal meadows were converted into fields in the 1700s and the cattle moved their grazing grounds into the woods. Ruissalo was a very rural area up until the 1950s. The first golf courses were built on the former grounds of the Ketola croft in 1967. The golf course expanded to the fields of Huiskala's Oskarvuori in 1983.

5. The Kalfdal croft and bat cellar

The Ruissalo estate expanded its cultivation in the 1700s and needed more hands on the field. More tenant farms were established; by the 1830s, there were 15 of them. They were located around the island and had their own sections of field near the residential buildings. The barrel-vaulted cellar masoned out of natural rocks is located on the former grounds of the Kalfdal croft. The cellar can be dated back to the turn of the 18th and 19th century. Today, bats use the cellar as their resting spot in autumn and spring. The northern bat, Daubenton's bat, whiskered bat and brown long-eared bat have all been spotted in the cellar, but what makes it special are the handful of natterer's bats found there every year. The cellar is one of Finland's few known established resting spots for natterer's bats.

6. Kuuvannokka

You can get a taste of the outer archipelago atmosphere at the tip of the Kuuvannokka cape. The open water of Airisto stretches out before you, the gateway from Turku to the wide seas. A wide variety of seabirds make their homes on the islets near Ruissalo, from the common eider to the highly endangered lesser black-backed gull. The white-tailed eagle, which has returned from the brink of extinction, is a common sight around the year. If you're lucky, you might spot a grey seal peeking its head out from the water.

7. A winter nest for snakes

Snakes are also a part of the Ruissalo nature. The adder and the protected grass snake have been on the decline in Finland as a result of traffic, construction and persecution, and both are in need of protection. The adder is not aggressive towards people or pets. Its venom is an important means of acquiring food, and it only wastes it on defending itself as a last resort. However, an adder's bite can be dangerous, so it's best to leave them in peace.

8. The silence of the forest

Kuuva's nature trails are a great place to enjoy the silence of nature. The trail takes you from Kuuvannokka's rocky pine forest to a mixed spruce forest, where dead standing trees offer nutrition to woodpeckers and forest-dwelling tits. The landscape along the trail changes from rugged pine-dominated boreal forests to alder groves and lush mixed forests. The sprawling polypores and bumpy old trees spark a wanderer's imagination and remind us of what a forest full of life looks like.

9. Birka

Some plots were used to cultivate professional gardens all the way to the late 1950s. In the 1920s, Birka was home to a market garden called Birkka Handelsträgård. The garden included a greenhouse, orangery, which is said to have been used for raising grapes and flowers. The greenhouse was converted into a cow stable in late 1920s, and only the building's foundations remain today.

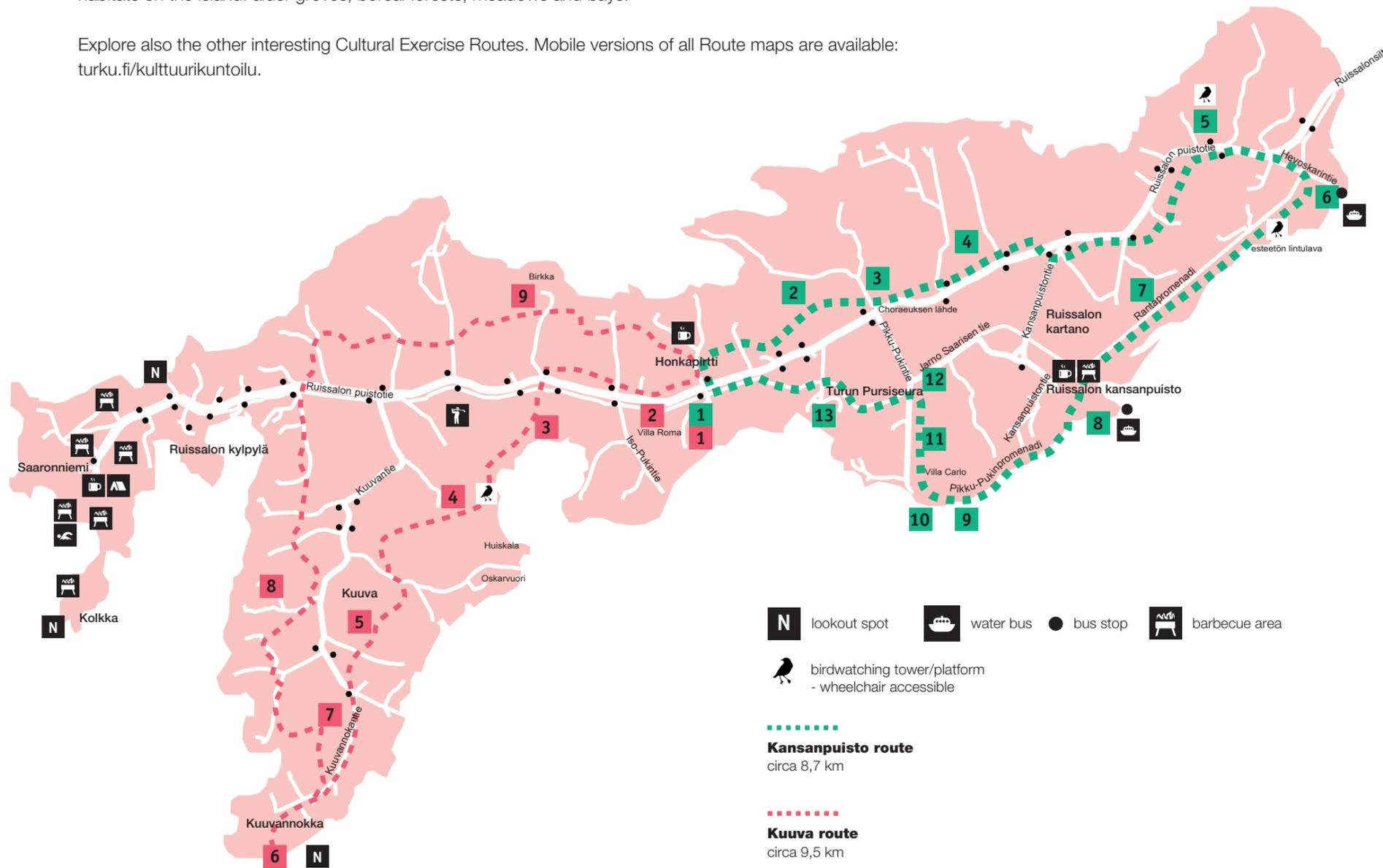
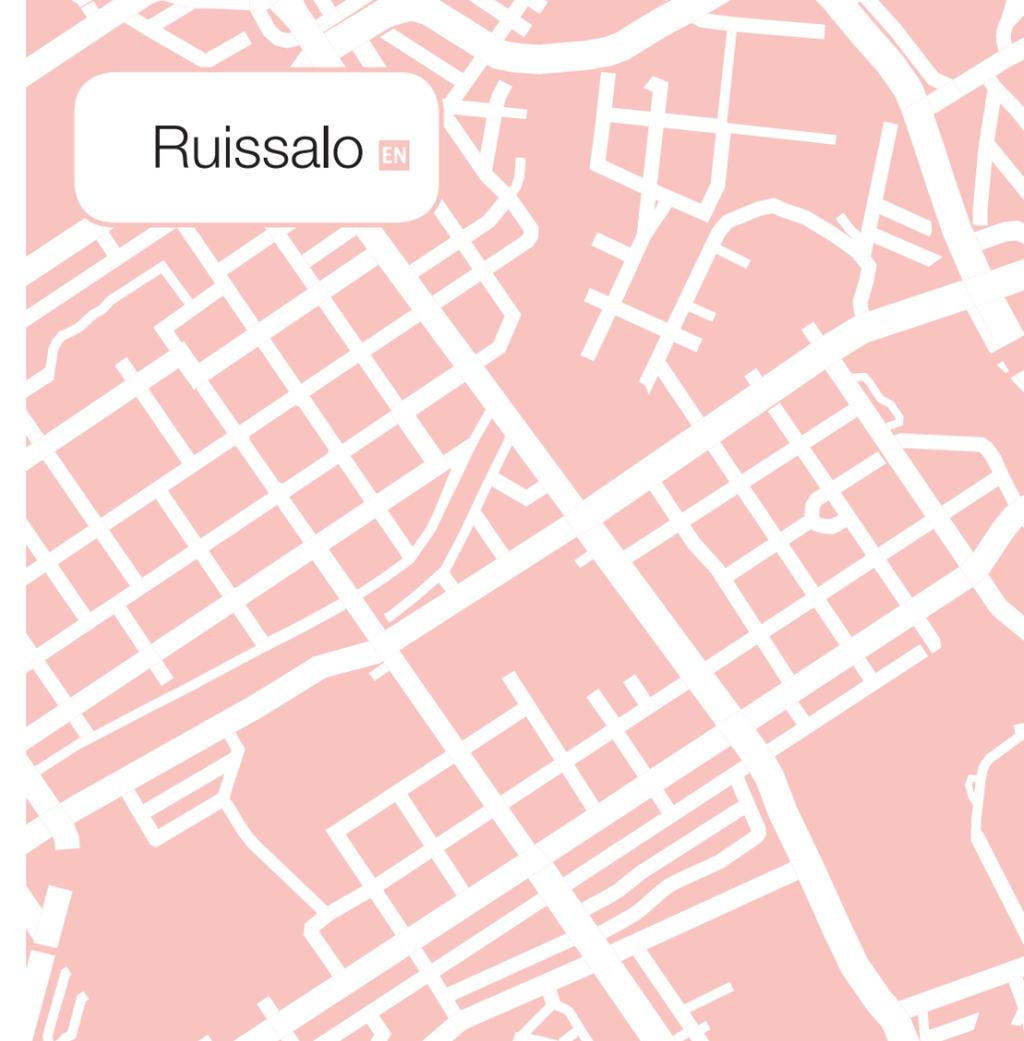
RUISSALO

For a long time, Ruissalo was used for pasture. People began cutting down groves in the 1540s to cultivate fields. Around the same time, Ruissalo came under the rule of Turku Castle, and its crops were used for the castle's needs. In the 1550s Ruissalo became the hunting grounds for the Duke of Finland.

In the 1600s, the Ruissalo estate along with its fields were first handed over to the governor-generals and later governors ruling over Turku Castle. Tenant farmers attended to the estate. Ruissalo was used by governors until 1844, when the government handed it over to the City of Turku in 1845. The following year, Ruissalo was divided up and the plots were leased out as summer villa lots.

Today, Ruissalo has become a recreational site, since there's no natural attraction quite like it anywhere else in Finland. Ruissalo is known for its temperate deciduous forests, which are the largest in Finland, and particularly for its ancient oak trees. There are also many other habitats on the island: alder groves, boreal forests, meadows and bays.

Explore also the other interesting Cultural Exercise Routes. Mobile versions of all Route maps are available: turku.fi/kulttuurikuntoilu.



Please follow regulations when moving around Ruissalo. Pets must be kept on a leash and bicycling is prohibited on the nature trails and off-road. You may pick berries and edible mushrooms, but no other plant life.



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