

AKTIVITEETIT JA LUONTO



Ruokolahti canoe route

The picturesque canoe route starts on Finland's largest lake, lake Saimaa and its islands. It then winds through narrow passes, man-made canals and through quiet river sections. Most of the way shores are safely nearby, although on Greater Saimaa you may also paddle far into open water, if you so wish. The numerous bends and turns of the route constantly present you with beautiful new vistas and locations. The border between Sweden and Russia was located here in the 18th century. The Russians dug Kutvele, Käyhkää and Kukonharju Canals, all along this route.

The route starts at Rasila quay (1) next to Ruokolahti center. Paddle either north- or southwards around Salosaari and Äitsaari (2) isles. You can also go between the islands, where you'll pass the traditional Suikkala summer dancing place. Then head towards the beautiful & long Huuha beach (3) and then Kyläniemi and Kutvele Canal. After that head northwest (4) to Lehmiselkä and onwards to Käkövesi (5). Underneath the Ruokolahti-Puumala road you'll pass along Käyhkää Canal, after which the route starts to serpentine north through narrower lake passes. At the southern end of Pöllösaari, you have two choices: east along the historic Kukonharju Canal (6), or west around Kiukuanniemi peninsula. Either way you come to Hiekkaniemi (= Sandy peninsula) (7) and it's peaceful and beautiful resting place. From there head east, where narrow straits (8) and even narrower forest rivers (9) lead you to lake Jukajärvi, which btw has the greatest average depth of all of Finland's 187 888 lakes! The rapids at Kemppilä Mill (10) drop into the lake on a wide front and here you'll have to carry the canoe 300 m up to lake Ihalanjärvi. After Ihalanjärvi the route gets even more winding and narrow, if possible (11). The canoe route ends at the western end of lake Savonkaita (12), near the Virtutjoki-Sulkava road.

The total length of the canoe route is 110 km and it can be paddled both ways. There are two places where you'll have to carry your canoe a short way: at Lieviskä Mill (8) you carry 70 meters; height difference of 4 m. At Kemppilä Mill (10) you carry 300 m; height difference is 17 m.

Starting from Ruokolahti the carrying sections are uphill.

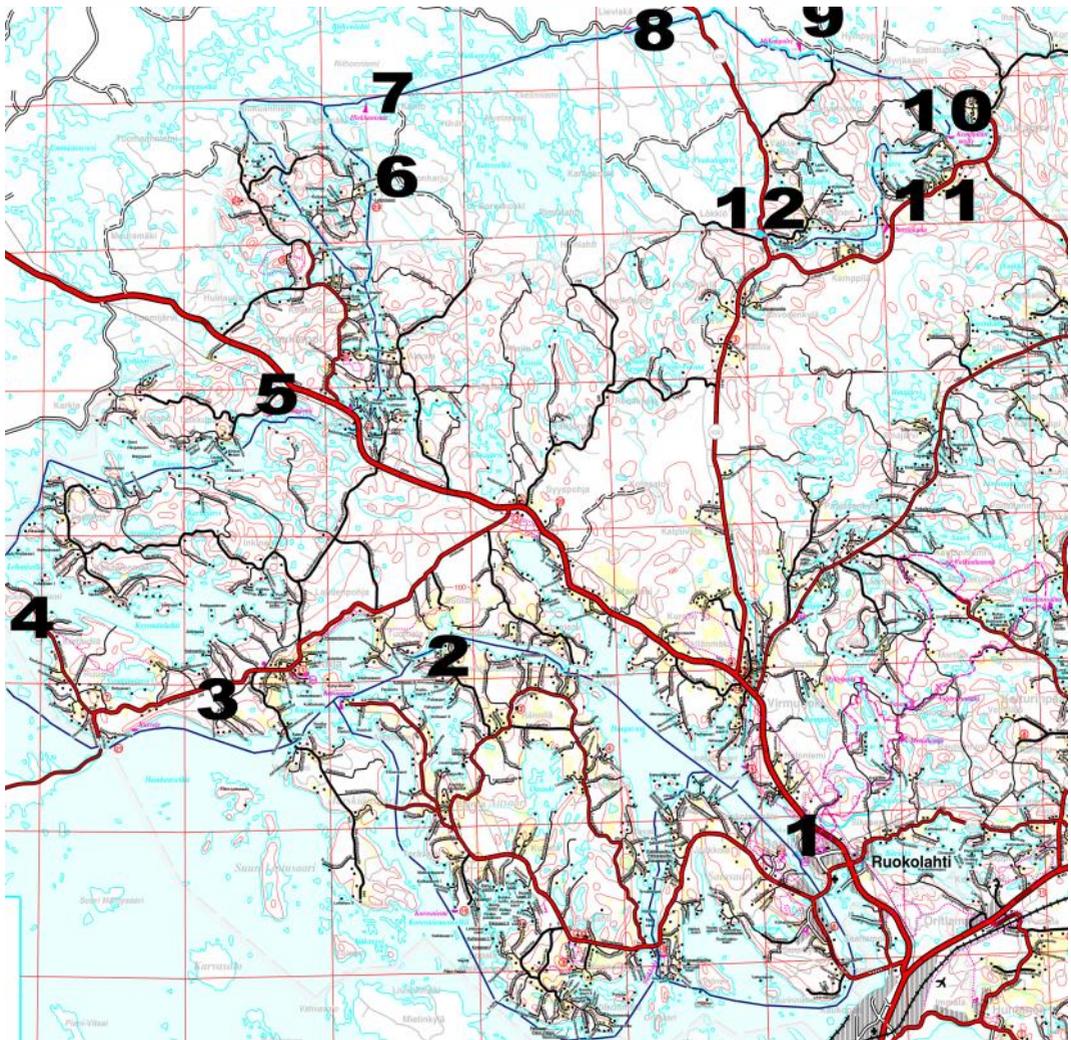
Whenever you feel tired or hungry, take a break at one of the ten resting places along the route. You may also make a campfire, firewood is provided in most places. Eight places have lean-to shelters, where, having the proper gear, you may also stay overnight. Handle open fire with the utmost caution, please.

You can find Ruokolahti canoe route from Ruokolahti haja-asutusalueen osoitekartta -map

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RESTING PLACES AND LEAN-TOS (WGS84 -coordinates)

1. RASILA QUAY (N 61.292°, E 28.808°)

Ending /starting point of the route near Ruokolahti center. Grocery shops and restaurants are nearby.

2. KARONIEMI LEAN-TO (N 61.3406°, E 28.5042°)

At the western end of beautiful Äitsaari isle. Toilet and fireplace. The lean-to is big enough for 2-3 to sleep comfortably in. The pier of the quaint Utula village grocery shop & bar is 2 km due WSW.

From the pier there is a about 1 km walk along a beautiful forest path to the shop.

3. HUUHA BEACH LEAN-TO (N 61.335° N, E 28.401°)

A 1,5 km long sandy beach. In the middle of the beach you'll find a big lean-to with firewood, a toilet and waste bins. Very shallow beach, great for small children.

4. PATASAARI (N 61.3683°, E 28.2536°)

A small sandy beach on the island in the municipality of Taipalsaari. Next to a Nature Reserve for rare grove vegetation.

5. MUSTANIEMI LEAN-TO (N 61.4277°, E 28.4565°)

A large full service lean-to on a peaceful peninsula. Benches, table, campfire place with griddles, coffee pots and fish smoking-box. Toilet, firewood and asphalt boat ramp. The site can be used by hikers and boaters outside of hunting season.

6. KUKONHARJU CANAL CAMPFIRE SITE (N 61.493°, E 28.5261°)

A modest campfire site on a historically significant canal, firewood available. Toilet 100 m north by the parking lot, boat dock, an info-stand and trash bins.

7. HIEKKANIEMI LEAN-TO (N 61.5235°, E 28.522°)

A peaceful, scenic woodland peninsula, with a decent beach and a small pier. Small lean-to, fire place and firewood. A toilet and Roska-Roope waste disposal point.

8. LIEVISKÄ MILL AND LEAN-TO - CARRYING PLACE (N 61.544°, E 28.690°)

A basic needs lean-to in Puumala municipality. The forest around it has been felled in 2018, so currently not a very attractive site. The concrete ring is where you make fire, firewood available.

After 200 meters you'll arrive at the old mill, where you'll have to carry the canoe for 70 m.

9. MIKONPOLVI LEAN-TO (N 61.5356°, E 28.8135°)

A good lean-to shelter on the border of Sulkava and Ruokolahti, on the scenic Lieviskä river. Toilet and firewood. 1,5 km east is Small Jukajärvi. There is a road 200 m along the path, should you wish to start or end here. You'll find glacial giant's kettles in the hills nearby. A horizontal giant's kettle is visible from the river in the first bend downstream.

10. KEMPPILÄ MILL AND LEAN-TO - CARRYING PLACE (N 61.511°, E 28.910°)

Lean-to with tables, benches and a modern fireplace etc. Chemical toilet. A beautiful site where the river drops 17 meters down within 50 meters, making rapids that drop right into the lake on a wide front. Good new staircases on both sides of the rapids. Canoe has to be carried 300 m up/down a steep slope.

11. SAVONKAITA LEAN-TO (N 61,481°, E 28,870°)

A small forest lean-to, fireplace and waste bin in the middle of the eastern shore of lake Savonkaita. The lake is about 80 m away, 20 m below the shelter. Toilet 100 m up the foot path.

12. SAVONKAITA WEST END (N 61.4785°, E 28.7915°)

Ending / starting point of the canoe route.