

Home > Health & Fitness > Finland holidays: The benefits of sauna yoga and bellowing in the dark...

Health & Fitness

# Finland holidays: The benefits of sauna yoga and bellowing in the dark in Finnish Lakeland – Daily Mail

By [admin](#) January 11, 2022

4 0

By [Margaret Hussey For The Daily Mail](#)

Published: 11:27 GMT, 4 January 2022 | Updated: 11:27 GMT, 4 January 2022

8

View

comments

Pitch black and it's about 1c, yet I'm strangely calm and relaxed lying down in the middle of a forest. Earlier, I even hugged a tree.

That's what you do in Finnish Lakeland, where nature governs everything. We're near Lake Saimaa, three hours north of Helsinki and just two hours from former Russian capital, St Petersburg.

Our meditation with wellness coach Tero Vanttinen, from Hotelli Punkaharju, Finland's oldest hotel, aims to ground us in the natural world and open our minds.

Healing: Lake Saimaa (pictured) – and a traditional sauna – will help you de-stress on a wellness break

Lake Saimaa is three hours north of Helsinki (pictured) and just two hours from former Russian capital St Petersburg

Once upright, Tero encourages us to bellow from our diaphragms as we stand in the dark.

Apparently it will rid us of any stress.

'Don't be afraid to let go,' he says. I manage a loud yawn — more sleepy cub than roaring lion.

This might all sound quite hippy, but for Finnish people, the lakes, nature and being outdoors, even in winter, is part of their psyche.

One of the biggest parts of this is the sauna. It's the only Finnish word to make it into the English language. 'I have one nearly every day,' says Tero. 'It's who we are.'

So next in Tero's wellness repertoire is sauna yoga. Sitting in 50c heat, you twist and turn your body, stretching and rolling as he gently nudges us into position. After a 30-minute session, I can feel my posture improving.

Finland's oldest hotel, Hotelli Punkaharju, pictured above, 'is painted an eye-catching pink'. Picture courtesy of [Creative Commons](#)

Walking back to the hotel in the dark, it's handy it is painted an eye-catching pink. Lovingly restored by Finnish top model Saimi Hoyer, it's packed with retro, vintage and fashion finds. Saimi loves foraging for wild mushrooms and our four-course tasting menu dinner is a revelation in the versatility of fungi.

The region is becoming well-known for its gastronomy and the D. O. Saimaa mark is the first Finnish regional quality label for food. Local sourcing is apparent at Tertti Manor, an Ibsenesque country house packed with sepia family photos, stuffed birds and samovars, where we stop for dinner.

Sauna is the 'only Finnish word to make it into the English language', Margaret reveals (file photo)

Margaret says that the owner of Tertti Manor 'has taken inspiration from Sissinghurst and Ballymaloe, so the menu is farm and garden to table'. Pictured are the castle gardens at Sissinghurst

Margaret was a guest of Visit Finland ([visitfinland.com](#)), Visit Saimaa ([visitsaimaa.fi/en/](#)) and Finnair ([finnair.com](#), 020 8001 0101), which flies between Heathrow and Helsinki from £110 return per person.

Rates at Hotel Punkaharju ([hotellipunkaharju.fi/en](https://hotellipunkaharju.fi/en)) start at €146.

Owner, Matti Pylkkanen, has taken inspiration from Sissinghurst and Ballymaloe, so the menu is farm and garden to table: pickled celeriac, beetroot, pike and a riot of colour on the plate.

Leaving tradition behind, we move on to the uber-stylish Kuru Resort, a private retreat for adults. The cabins all have a sauna, views over the lake and no televisions. 'Your window is your viewing,' says the manager.

The food, too, is a big draw, with chef Remi Tremouille blending his experience of working in Asia and Australia with Finnish produce.

Kuru has yoga classes and a Sisley spa. Here I try a sound bath. Lying on the floor, snuggled in a blanket, with the sound of chimes, my mind empties and I drift off.

Kuru is linked to the neighbouring Jarvisydän Hotel & Spa, where you can try 'fat' bike riding (with big tyres) or take forest or lakeside strolls. I opt for another sauna.

The Finns, often viewed as introverted, in the sauna seem liberated. I chat to a woman celebrating a family birthday with everyone from granny to son-in-law in their swimming cossies. It's

Saturday night and a chance to get together, get a sweat on and drink beer.

'You feel so much better when you come here,' she says.

I can only agree.

Published by Associated Newspapers Ltd

Part of the Daily Mail, The Mail on Sunday & Metro Media Group

[source](#)