

Central Finland

General information

- The region of Central Finland is located in the very heart of Finland. It is the easternmost part of the Province of Western Finland. The area of Central Finland is 19 763 square kilometers, 5,8 % of the total area of Finland. The population consists of about 264 770 inhabitants, which is 6 % of the total Finnish population. The region is divided into 6 subregions and 30 municipalities. The capital of the region is Jyväskylä (80 000 inhabitants), famous for its university, Alvar Aalto's architecture and the annual motor sport event Neste Rally Finland.

Economy

- Forests are a major livelihood in the region of Central Finland. Paper is produced in two different subregions of Central Finland, and plywood is also made in the area. Metal industry is also well represented, especially in the form of manufacturing paper machines.
- Jyväskylä is the region's cultural, business and research center.

Problems

- In spite of the different kinds of industry and other possibilities of livelihood, the unemployment rate has stayed rather high for years. The rate is 14.4 % compared to the country's total unemployment rate of 9 %.
- Quite many of the region's 30 municipalities, especially outside the subregion of Jyväskylä, are having financial problems, some bigger some smaller.

Sports

- Central Finland is full of different kinds of sporting possibilities. Every municipality has their own sports teams, either ice-hockey, soccer, basketball, volleyball, floorball or all of them. Many of them compete in national level. In addition to team sports the region offers good facilities for doing athletics, swimming, orienteering, cross-country skiing etc.



- In summertime the national parks offer great opportunities for hiking. Because 15% of the region's area is water area, it is obvious that swimming, canoeing and even white water rafting are popular pastimes.
- In wintertime nothing beats cross-country skiing, even though downhill skiing and snowboarding are on the increase due to good slopes in the area. Ice-skating is popular especially among children, and later many kids take on figure skating and even more continue skating in the form of ice-hockey. Another form of skating that is becoming more and more popular is the so called adventure skating or long-distance skating which you do on lakes or rivers. The ready-made tracks that attract whole families are 1-3 kilometers long. When the weather conditions are optimal and there is no snow on the ice, it is possible for the more adventurous skater, to make longer ice skating hikes.
- Jyväskylä University is the only place where teachers of Physical Education are trained in Finland. The Faculty of Sport and Health Sciences is also known for its research projects concerning sports and health education.
- Rally drivers Tommi Mäkinen and Juha Kankkunen are probably the best known contemporary sportsmen from Central Finland.

Way of life

- In a way, Central Finland has it all. Jyväskylä is a typical university town with a lot of cultural and entertainment activities. The two industrial subregions in their turn give their own mark to the area. However, most of the region's area could be called rural, with small villages surrounding the rural municipalities.
- It seems that the rural landscape of forests and lakes has a special place in the hearts of all people of Central Finnish origin. If they don't have a lakeside summer cottage of their own, a friend or a relative has one that they can visit.
- People in Central Finland are somehow a mixture of the stereotypically talkative eastern and stiff western people. The language is also rather neutral and it is said to have been the basis for standard Finnish.

SUOLAHTI

- Suolahti is a small town, located 45 kilometers northeast from the region's capital Jyväskylä. 5500 inhabitants live in the town which is situated by the beautiful lake Keitele. The biggest employers in Suolahti are a tractor manufacturer called Valtra and a plywood factory called Finnforest.
- For a small town, Suolahti has a quite lively cultural life. On the campus of the College of Central Finland there is a concert hall which has weekly performers throughout the year. In summertime, when music and reading courses are held at the College, the performances at the concert hall are even more frequent.
- Suolahti is a great place for outdoor activities with nice hiking trails and rivers and rapids for canoeing. In wintertime there is a good network of ski trails in the woods and on the Keitele ice. Suolahti has a modern indoor pool with steam bath facilities and also an indoor ice rink for ice skating and ice hockey.