

A photograph of a curved staircase with a white railing and a light blue wall. The text "ESTONIAN HERITAGE" is overlaid in white.

ESTONIAN  
HERITAGE

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A **LARGE PART** of Estonian heritage is made up not of palaces and monuments, but of practical buildings, full of amazing stories about the time when they were constructed, technology, ideals of their time, people's everyday lives and politics. For a small country on the outskirts of Europe, we can boast of quite a few technological achievements, such as the huge arch of the Tallinn Song Festival Grounds, the reinforced concrete bridge across the Kasari River, or the Glehn palm house, with its granite vaults. We can also argue about whether the tower of St Olaf's Church was ever the tallest in the world or not. And now we once again have the **Seaplane Harbour**.

Cultural heritage is the mirror of history and politics. The big wars of the 20th century were 'on the horizon' long before they actually broke out. The Russian tsar Nicholas II planned the construction of enormous coastal batteries, minefields and naval units

around Tallinn and Porkkala back in 1907, in order to block the enemy from getting to St Petersburg. One of the most spectacular constructions was the Seaplane Harbour.

The winner of the competition in 1916 to build the seaplane hangars was the Danish company Christian & Nielsen. The design was more than merely innovative; this was probably one of the first large-scale reinforced concrete shell structures in the world.

Many of our monuments have a Cinderella story similar to that of the Seaplane Harbour: abandoned and crumbling, nearly derelict heritage being turned into important objects. The Seaplane Harbour is now a branch of the Estonian Maritime Museum. The extraordinary restoration work on such a unique building, plus the bold approach of the exhibition, linking modern technology and novel ideas to our heritage, garnered it the Europa Nostra Award in 2013.

Arne Maasik





Photo: Arne Maasik

# THE OLD TOWN OF TALLINN

**LOOKING AT THE** outline of Tallinn, it often seems that the town grew with a mirror in its hand – observing its appearance from the **sea**. In earlier centuries, the main town gate was indeed the Baltic Sea. In the 19th century, an increasing number of people started arriving by land, when the railway joined the roads, and industry forced its way between the town and the sea. Tallinn has moved away from its original position at the sea because of the rising earth crust; besides nature, man has turned the sea into land by filling the harbour area with soil. The biggest chasm between Tallinn and the Baltic Sea was dug by the Soviet occupation between 1944 and 1991. As people lost access to the sea, it became a symbol of freedom. Today's inhabitants of the capital generally don't have daily business in the harbour area, but the town's historical orientation to the sea is still physically perceivable. A typical Tallinner tends to move crosswise to the paths taken by medieval town inhabitants, and thus hardly ever uses the grander main streets, instead making zigzags via narrow side-streets. It was still possible in the 1980s to find a shortcut through courtyards, but now there is limited access to those mystical and romantic places.

The highest place in Tallinn is Toompea Hill, on a natural limestone cliff. Ancient Estonians built a stronghold here. The Danes and the Teutonic Order, who conquered Tallinn in the early 13th century, shaped the **outline** of the town with various buildings, inserting church steeples both in the lower and upper towns. In the second half of the 13th century the town was gradually fortified with massive limestone walls.

The current competitions are now mostly about height. The tallest and most impressive pinnacle in the outline strewn with towers – the Gothic St Olaf's Church – was until the 21st century the agreed mark of maximum height in Tallinn. The existing plans, however, predict the end of this status of the church pretty soon.



St Olaf's Church.



2 x Estonian Maritime Museum



For Estonians, the outline of Tallinn is associated with a tin of Baltic sprats. In a town largely identified with the sea and fishing, the Baltic sprat has been packaged in tins depicting the outline of Tallinn for more than a century. Spicy sprat is the pride of the national cuisine.

Labels of sprat tins from the 1960s (above) and from the 1930s (below).

The European slender outline of the town was disfigured by the Alexander Nevski Cathedral (1900), erected under the instructions of the Russian tsar. Politics and power are written into this sacral building loud and clear: the direct aim of the church was to diminish the impact of Baltic-German culture on the subjects of the Russian tsar, and the alien structure was placed in the most prominent spot in Tallinn. It still acts as a historic dominant capturing the eye of tourists today.

A tower is often a symbol of wealth and ambi-

tion; in economically difficult times, the town did not aspire to any heights. The new towers of the 19th century, St John's Church and Charles Church, defined the urban landscape for rural Estonians who moved to Tallinn. In its eagerness to earn foreign currency, the Soviet Union built two towering hotels, the Viru and the Olympia. The Soviet belief that only Western tourists owned real money vanished when Estonia became independent again in the early 1990s. Capital accumulated in banks, which then shot way above the existing towers. People were afraid that the tall build-

Ingrid Sibul



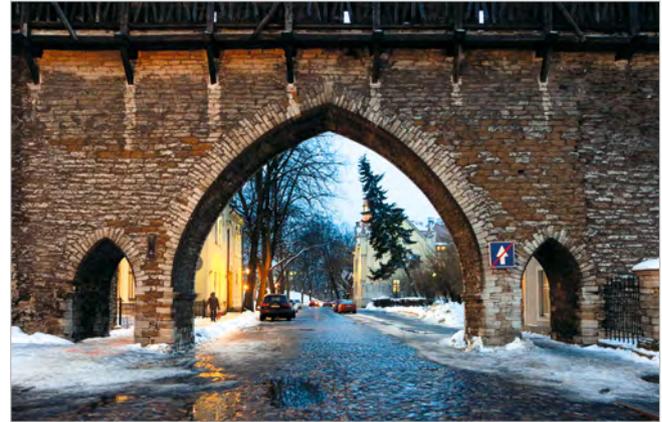


2 x Karlin Tombak

The medieval Tallinn town wall with defence towers and Nunnavärv (Nun's Gate). ↑ ↗

ings would ruin our dear sprat-tin outline. However, when we look at the town from the sea, it is quite clear that the new skyscrapers not only lengthen, but also reflect the medieval landscape of towers.

People can rarely appreciate what they have in abundance. Tallinn was struck off the list of tsarist Russia's fortifications in 1864. The **defence structures**, which had withstood centuries of various attacks rather well, were hopelessly inadequate in the face of 19th century weapons. Flourishing industries quickly



increased the population, and the value of land shot up. The town wall and towers took up a great deal of space, and the moment permission was granted, demolition work started. Dramatic changes in the urban scene made people aware of the need for heritage protection and gradually, almost at the last moment, further demolition of the town walls was halted. A total of 1.85 km out of the 2.45 km of the 16th century town walls and 28 wall towers out of 48 survived. Compared with other European towns, that is actually quite a lot.



Tallinn Culture and Heritage Department



Karlin Tombak

← Medieval merchant houses in Pikk Street. ↑



Carved stone details  
on the facades →  
and interiors of houses in  
the Old Town.  
← ↓

2 x Tallinn Culture and Heritage Department



3 x Katrin Tombak ↓



The images of a lion and a dragon by a medieval Nordic master. ↑ ↓





Katrin Tombak

St Catherine's Passage in the Old Town of Tallinn has retained its ancient ambience.

Following the example of European cities, the bastion zone was turned into green areas. New landmarks of the growing Estonian power in the town were the churches of St John (1867) and Charles (1870), and the biggest Estonian cultural building, the Estonia Theatre (1913). The one-time fortification zone is most

strikingly marked by the Snelli pond, the remains of the former moat. An attempt was made in the 1970s and 1980s to restore the bastion zone by constructing a bastion-like office and sports building between the Great and Small Coast Gates (Suur ja Väike Rannavärv).



4 x Tallinn Culture and Heritage Department

Romantic inner courtyards of properties in the Old Town.





One of the few pre-fire buildings on Toompea Hill.



View of Toompea.

Despite considerable reconstruction work and new buildings added over the centuries, the Old Town is still predominantly medieval and Gothic. A sense of the Middle Ages comes not so much from the architecture of the buildings as from the preserved conservative structure of streets and properties and the visual urban elements: market places, churches, the hierarchical placing of various guilds, monastery and school complexes, merchants' houses etc.

A totally different environment, and not just architectural but also social, exists on **Toompea Hill**. One reason is the fact that most buildings on Toompea date to the period after the great fire in 1684. Until the declaration of the Republic of Estonia in 1918, society was run on the basis not only of social status, but also of nationality. The rural population was largely divided into Estonian peasants and the foreign aristocracy. Besides Germans, the landowners included numerous Swedes, Poles, Russians and

Danes. Multinational trading towns were essential places of integration, in terms of both social status and nationality. There were very few Estonians amongst the merchants and skilled masters, as they were mostly employed as servants. Active communication diminished the differences.

However, Toompea was not a trading town with a diverse population, but instead a rather conservative stronghold of the aristocracy, whose social status was reflected in the noble architecture. Administratively, Toompea and the downtown functioned as different towns until 1877; the gates of Long and Short Leg Streets between the towns were closed each night.

The elitism of Toompea has largely survived. It accommodates the Government of the Republic, the Parliament, the Academy of Sciences and several embassies. There are few residences on Toompea, and people's lives and work mainly take place beyond the closed gates.



4 x Katrin Tombak

Wooden areas of Kadriorg and Kalamaja in Tallinn.



# WOODEN SETTLEMENTS

**JUST LIKE THE** railway, the wave of big industries arrived in Estonia a few decades later than in the rest of northern Europe. When it finally arrived, it caused a considerable change in society, as the explosive growth of towns coincided with the abolition of serfdom and granting peasants freedom of movement. The peasants who were unable to buy land from their landlords moved to towns and became part of the workforce there.

In the 1850s and 1860s, Estonian towns gradually lost their status as fortified towns and restrictions on building outside town walls disappeared as well. However, compared with the closest big cities, such as St Petersburg, Helsinki, Stockholm and Riga, the workers' districts in Estonian towns looked quite dif-

ferent. Although, in the era of stove heating, wooden houses posed a considerable fire threat, they nevertheless emerged in large numbers, because it was necessary to build cheaply and quickly.

Wooden settlements were surprisingly varied, reflecting their original inhabitants, their social status and opportunities, as well as the architecture of the era. Walking around such neighbourhoods today, it becomes quite clear that urban inhabitants one hundred years ago could not manage without chicken coops, stables and vegetable gardens.

Just like old towns, the wooden neighbourhoods have largely survived because of poverty. After the destruction of World War II, Estonia suffered an acute

Details on wooden houses in Kadriorg.



2 x Katrin Tombak



The urban region for workers, established one hundred years ago on the Kopli peninsula in Tallinn, has a structure that has survived exceptionally well. Various types of building still exist: factories, a kindergarten, a community house, a church, the villa of the factory owner, and barracks for workers and their families, and for unmarried workers. The whole region has unfortunately deteriorated, and a large number of the inhabitants are squatters.

5 x Katrin Tombak





Katrín Tombak



Tiina Toomast

← Décor in Tartu wooden regions, reflecting its era. ↑ →



Katrín Tombak

accommodation crisis; most of the modern high-rise blocks of flats were filled with people coming from other parts of the Soviet Union. In a society propagating equality, the outskirts constituted several problems. For anyone hauling in firewood and heating stoves on a daily basis, central heating and hot tap water in the blocks of flats represented clear social inequality. The Communist Party was worried as well, because bourgeois neighbourhoods, with their private gardens, failed to present the Soviet Union as a sufficiently developed country.

An attempt to renovate many neighbourhoods was made immediately after World War II. New residences were first constructed in bombed-out urban districts; the next step was to erect large buildings with Stalinist décor at significant street corners, thus giving the impression that entire districts had been modernised. This system survived despite various

A house in the Stalinist style in Kotzebue Street in Tallinn, concealing wooden houses. →

grand plans, until ownership relations changed and the opening of borders encouraged people to re-evaluate their living environments. Nowadays the former workers' districts have become expensive housing areas, evaluated for their historical and environment-friendly materials and greenery.



Katrín Tombak



# INDUSTRY



Old machinery in the still operating wool-carding workshop on Hiiumaa.

Kaali pilt

**THE OLDEST ESTONIAN** industrial objects are watermills and windmills. Watermills mainly exist in northern and southern Estonia, whereas windmills are more common on the windy islands and the western coast. Wool-combing and sawing workshops operated on the mill principle, as did the first paper mills. Manor complexes largely relied on distilleries and dairies. Production in rural areas was greatly advanced by steam engines in the mid-19th century; in the early 20th century farmers in villages jointly purchased steam engines.

The last third of the 19th century brought about the triumph of industry. Bigger towns focused on metal and textile industries. In the early decades of the 20th century Tallinn, for example, produced both railway carriages and submarines.

Industry was a priority throughout the Soviet era. The north-eastern part of the country established huge oil-shale mines and industry. A uranium enrichment plant was established in the town of Sillamäe and the whole town was closed to outsiders.

Industry has always encouraged people to move



Triina Tallinn

Paper mill built in the mid-18th century in Räpina, which is still partly operating.

← Interior of the production hall at the Kreenholm Manufacturing Company in Narva, after the factory was closed down in 2010.



Katrin Tombak

The industrial building of the textile factory Baltic Cotton Manufacturing Company in the Kopli region of Tallinn, built in 1900.



The State Distillery, built in 1898, the current distillery in Tallinn.



2 x Katrin Tombak

A former cellulose factory, and the current Fahle House, in Tallinn.

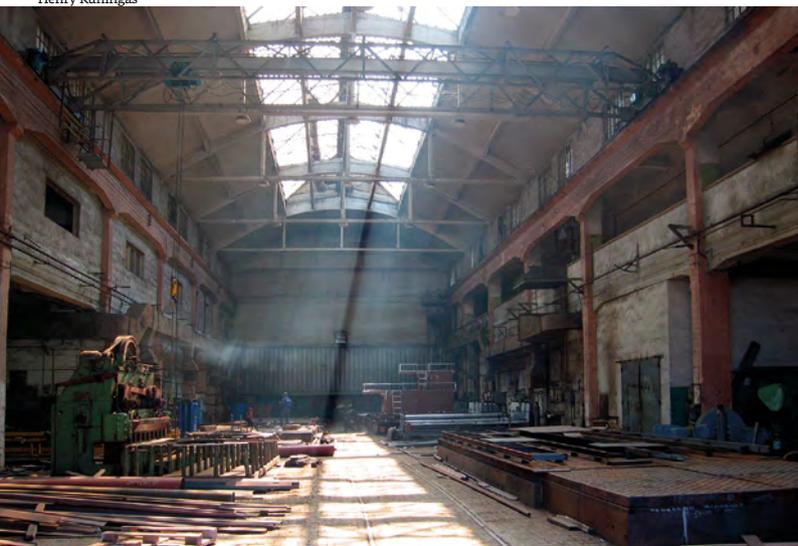
around; Soviet industry caused massive immigration from other parts of the Soviet Union, and a large part of the north-eastern region and some districts in Tallinn became overwhelmingly Russian.

Today's trend sees industry moving out of towns and the former grand and imposing industrial urban quarters have turned into residential areas and culture centres. Industrial architecture, with its simplicity and large scale, has tempted Estonian architects to seek exciting combinations of the old and the new. People

arriving in Tallinn from the south, for example, are greeted by a green cube resting on top of the former cellulose factory (the Fahle House). One of the most fascinating areas is the Rottermanni quarter in central Tallinn, displaying the imagination and ideas of various architects. Several other industrial areas are currently being developed. The Kreenholm textile factory in Narva, as well as the Noblessner shipyard in Tallinn, should soon get a new lease of life, and a former power plant has been turned into the Culture Cauldron.

The Noblessner Foundry in Tallinn and Wagner's "Parsifal", performed there by the Estonian National Opera.

Henry Kuningas



Harri Rospu





4 x Kairin Tombak



The Rotermann quarter in Tallinn. During the first decade of the 21st century, the previous industrial complex was turned into an exclusive residential and business area with modern architectural language.





The hangars in the Tallinn Seaplane Harbour were built as part of the defence strategy of tsarist Russia before World War I. The structure, with its impressive concrete shells, has now been fully renovated and houses the Maritime Museum.

The Kalaranna fort, completed in 1840. In 1869 the fort lost its defence function and was turned into a simple barracks. Between 1919 and 2005 it was the Patarei (Battery) Prison.

3 x Arne Maasik



# MILITARY HERITAGE

DISPLAYING VARIOUS MILITARY structures has always been a significant way for a country to demonstrate its might and mark its territory. An awesome stronghold, a medieval town wall or a stone castle also showed the wealth of the community or the owner. Only six medieval Estonian towns had a stone wall: Tallinn, Tartu, Narva, Pärnu, Viljandi and Haapsalu.

Beginning in the 15th–16th centuries, in the face of increasingly powerful firearms, buildings had to be better protected. Entrenchments (primarily bastions) that could withstand artillery fire were established around Tallinn, Tartu, Narva and Pärnu in order to protect old fortifications.

The mighty stone structures were again used at the beginning of the 19th century. The Kalaranna fort in Tallinn (later known as the Battery prison) is exceptional in the whole of Europe. The front looks towards land and the back, the most powerful part, faces the



Jaak Nilsson

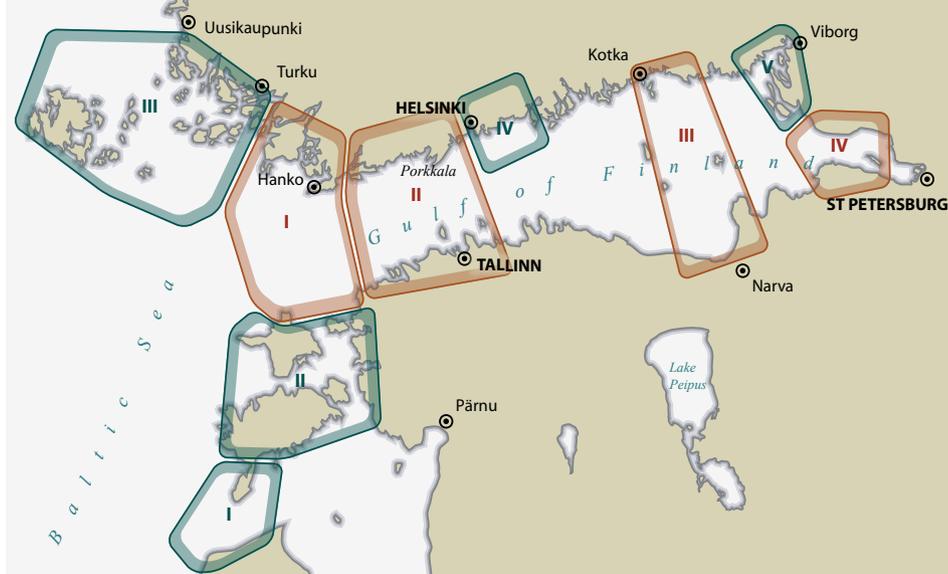
Episcopal castle in Kuressaare in Saaremaa.

sea. The process of concealing defence structures accelerated in the 1860s and 1870s, when the quality of projectiles and explosives rapidly improved. The resistance of stone structures reached its limits when a new material, reinforced concrete, was adopted in the 1890s.

The Narva River is the border between Estonia and Russia. The bridge is guarded on both sides by medieval castles: Ivangorod in Russia ↙ and Hermann in Estonia. ↘



Tina Tallinn



St Petersburg naval defences.

**main positions of St Petersburg naval defences:**

- I** forward position
- II** main or central position
- III** reserve or inner position
- IV** final position

**flank positions of St Petersburg naval defences:**

- I** Irbe strait position
- II** Moonsund position
- III** Åland position
- IV** Transverse position
- V** Viborg position

Meeli Mees

When Russia lost the war to Japan (1904–1905) it was clear that more powerful buildings were needed. To protect the capital St Petersburg, a new naval base was founded in Tallinn (known as Peter the Great's Military Port) along with shipyards and compact settlements. These were in turn protected by minefields in the Gulf of Finland, artillery positions along the coast and fortification lines around Tallinn and Helsinki. An immense St Petersburg maritime defence system was thus assembled, possibly the biggest compact defence system in the world at that time. One part was called Peter the Great's Naval Fortress, built near

Artillery battery of Peter the Great's Naval Fortress on the Paljassaar peninsula in Tallinn.



Katrin Tombak

Tallinn and Porkkala and in the Gulf of Finland area.

The first Republic of Estonia (1918–1940) had to consider an attack from the east, and therefore most of tsarist Russia's legacy could not be used. Artillery positions were set up along the coast near Tallinn. Extensive fortification zones were planned on the eastern and south-eastern borders, most of it was never finished.

During the German occupation, the Panther Line (which included the eastern border of Estonia as well) was started in 1943 and was probably the biggest military complex that ever included Estonia.

The extent of the Soviet military legacy is enormous,

The small Naissaar Island near Tallinn is covered with narrow-gauge railway lines.



Kailli Pihl



Kalli Pihl

Shells of sea mines are now part of the memorial, at the tip of the Juminda peninsula, to ships that perished in World War II.

and it is not easy to grasp its entire bulk even today.

During the later Soviet period (from the 1960s, the era of nuclear weapons) the more interesting buildings were mostly underground, such as intermediate-range missile bases, a testing field for quickly built missile silos, and an enormous air defence monitoring centre in Pääsküla on the edge of Tallinn. Some remarkable constructions were also built above ground (the Tartu air-base, the Sillamäe and Narva nuclear industry complexes and the submarine research centre in Paldiski) or underwater (the naval research stations on the northern coast).

The main headache in tackling modern military architecture was caused by the fear of enemy intelli-

The Hara (submarine) harbour and naval research station.

Marju Kõivupuu



Triinu Ootsing

The Pakri Islands, off the north-western coast of Estonia, acted as testing sites for military aircraft during the Soviet era. Hundreds of bomb shells are still lying around on the pretty klint.

gence activities. Modern military structures were established outside towns; large territories were cleared of inhabitants and access to the areas was prohibited. Entire regions and their stories thus disappeared from people's minds. The neglect of the military heritage of the Republic of Estonia is largely due to ignorance. Dealing with the legacy of tsarist era and especially the occupation regimes is hindered by ideological burden. Employing the military structures for civilian use is technically nearly impossible, and the buildings are in today's sense located in the periphery. However, there is still a vast amount of heritage that we should evaluate and examine. Military heritage is one of the fastest changing and vanishing types of heritage.

The Rohu missile base.

Katrin Tombak

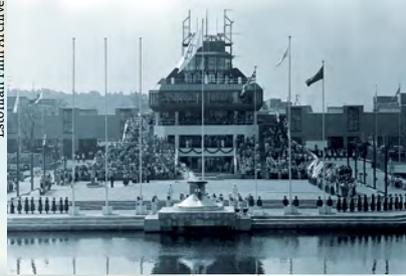




2 x Katrin Tombak



Estonian Film Archive



# HERITAGE OF THE SOVIET ERA

**MAINTAINING HERITAGE IS** a part of official policy, because emphasising or suppressing an object or a phenomenon is often a political choice. The Soviet Union occupied Estonia in the course of World War II. In order to secure its power, it also used cultural monuments, which helped in shaping the “correct history”.

The towns of Narva, Tallinn, Pärnu and Tartu suffered considerable damage in the war. The traces of the war in Europe were concealed by restoring Old Towns, whereas such an approach was not allowed here; instead, gaps caused by bombing were filled with buildings in the Stalinist style. More space for this type of architecture was pinched from the fringes of destroyed areas. At the same time, the Estonia Theatre was restored with great pomp and ceremony, by which the Soviets hoped to win the trust of local people. The effects of displaying peasant architecture at the Open-Air Museum, established in 1957, were also ambiguous. For locals, this provided an excellent opportunity to exhibit their national heritage, but it also enabled the Soviets to show how primitively people lived before the “fertile conditions of the Soviet system”. Churches and manor houses were pushed into the background, the focus on the role of revolutionaries increased, and various objects were placed under protection, such as underground flats and printing shops.

← ↖ The Tallinn City Concert Hall, completed for the Moscow Olympic Games in 1980 (the small photo shows the newly completed building), and the Pirita Yachting Centre (the small photo shows the final ceremony of the Olympic Regatta in 1980).

Interior of the Tallinn City Concert Hall, completed in 1980.



During the first post-war decades, numerous historical buildings were demolished. From the 1960s onwards, however, Estonian heritage protection managed to establish itself. The historical environment, especially the medieval Old Town of Tallinn, became the Estonian trademark; local heritage protection activities formed a model for the whole Soviet Union. The Tallinn Old Town heritage protection zone was established in 1966 and constituted one of the first urban environment protection zones in the world. In 1973 similar zones were set up in other Estonian historical towns. It is well known that heritage protection is nowhere able to keep up with the times and developments. Nevertheless, we can say that the enthusiasm of the heritage protection people back then, together with the desire of the Soviet Union to earn precious



Katrin Tombak

A Stalinist building on the corner of Liivalaia and Tartu Streets in Tallinn.



Katrin Tombak

The Tallinn Song Festival Grounds, consisting of an arch with a unique construction, the fire tower (right) and radio tower (left).

foreign currency from tourism, saved a considerable part of the unique Estonian heritage. The historical environment became a much loved symbol of opposition to the Soviet mass architecture.

Due to the relatively brief temporal distance, and also because of the political mind-set, very little of what was built in the Soviet era is actually under protection. The few examples include the Tallinn Song Festival Grounds, completed in 1960, the yachting centre in Pirita, constructed for the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games and the Tallinn regatta, and the Tallinn City Hall. Some residences and military objects are listed as well.

Although the Estonian landscape was primarily shaped by mass construction based on standard designs, a fair number of special designs by the best Estonian architects were also built. Most of these buildings are in the countryside, as the increasingly wealthy collective farms were best positioned to commission them back in the 1970s and 1980s. Several prominent works, which are even included in the DOCOMOMO list, which gathers the pearls of 20th century architecture, are today gradually falling apart because of changed regional policy. Another factor preventing the appreciation of past architecture is the poor quality of Soviet construction.

The pseudo-classicist centre of the small town of Orissaare on Saaremaa Island.

Triinu Ootsing



The Stalinist-style town centre in Sillamäe.

Tiina Tallinn





2 x Katrin Tombak

Pearls of Soviet architecture, the main building of the Kurtna Poultry Farm, ↑ and the office block of the Põdrangu state farm. ↑

A certain temporal distance is needed in order to evaluate previous periods properly. One curiosity attracting attention today is Stalinist architecture. Although the pompous style cultivated elsewhere in the Soviet Union was never extensively realised here, various objects are still fascinating as examples of their era, such as residential complexes in Tallinn and Sillamäe. Besides architectural taste, the historical buildings, urban planning and even the green areas are witnesses of the era's opportunities and ideals.

Stalinist architecture often displays dashing grandeur, whereas the "Khrushchyovkas" of the 1960s are

not much more than concrete boxes. Besides industrial buildings, separately designed and architecturally exciting blocks of flats were occasionally planned as well. A far more exciting type of Soviet-era structure is the private residence. Because of the accommodation crisis immediately after the war, people were allowed to build their own homes. In the 1960s and 1970s people in bigger towns could no longer acquire building plots, but at the end of the 1970s a new wave of constructing private residences began. Postmodernist and neo-functional villas were the best opportunities for architects to realise their ideas.

"Golden Home" blocks of flats in Pärnu, completed in 1984.



Postmodernist residential house from the 1980s in Tallinn.



2 x Triinu Ootsing



Raimond Raadik

The bridge across the Kasari River was built in 1904, and at 308 m was the longest reinforced concrete bridge in Europe and Russia.

Old narrow-gauge railway embankment. Today, the road is straight as an arrow.

In a cold winter, it is possible to travel between an island and the mainland or between islands along an ice road.



2 x Marju Kõivupuu

# ROADS AND MOVEMENT

FOR A LONG time, Estonia was spared boring straight motorways. A large-scale road construction project was undertaken after World War II when German prisoners of war built the paved Tallinn-Narva Road. Recent years have witnessed the unfortunate straightening of a considerable part of the Tallinn-Tartu Road, representing a transformation of our own Route 66: the old road had several traditional places to rest and have a bite to eat, which are now essentially doomed by the new motorway.

Waterways are probably the oldest means of transport, although Estonia has few navigable rivers (e.g. the Emajõgi, Narva and Pärnu Rivers). The most important waterways have always been Lake Peipsi and the Baltic Sea. Portages had to be considered as well, i.e. places where goods had to be transported by land across two bodies of water.

Estonia has vast areas of marshland, and people driving between them, especially in the evening, can

feel the air turning damp and misty. In cold winters, ice roads across swamps and water bodies have been used, making it possible to considerably reduce driving distances. The importance of winter roads diminished when railways appeared at the end of the 19th century. Ice roads, however, have partly survived, and offer an exciting way to travel to and between the islands in winter.

Historically, roads ran past pubs and postal stations, and they are still occasionally seen by the roadside. Pubs used to be located at crossroads and also near churches. Folklore and literature contain numerous references to these establishments. Roads and watermills were often linked, as most watermill dams operated as road bridges. A bridge was an expensive and complicated structure and, especially in southern Estonia where the riverbeds are wider, most traffic flowed via barges and rafts. A large number of Estonian bridges were built in the 20th century.

Katrin Tombak



The early 19th century Viitna pub still operates today. A settlement sprang up around the pub and hence the speed limit was set. The new section of the Tallinn-Narva Road was built at a distance from Viitna.

Triinu Ootsing



The old Varbuse postal station in Võru County, which now houses the Road Museum.



3 x Prit Peteron

The Estonian dugout canoe, or one-log boat, has been used on Estonian inland waters for thousands of years. The body is carved from one aspen log. The boat is then placed on an oblong coal fire to stretch it with hot water and willow sticks. In the pictures, the canoe is being built and tested by students of native construction at the Viljandi Culture Academy.



2 x Urmas Voinet



← Barges on the River Emajõgi in the early 20th century.



Triinu Oosting

Barges were first made in Europe in the 14th century and were mainly used on inland waters. To transport goods on Lake Peipsi and the River Emajõgi, a type of barge was developed with an especially broad body and low draught, and one or two masts. Authentic Peipsi barges disappeared after World War II. In 2006, after a gap of fifty years, the barge called Jõmmu was launched by the Emajõgi River Barge Society. The pictures show a moment during the building of Jõmmu and a trip on the River Emajõgi.



Jaan Kristin

The Nõmme railway station around 1905.

Railways arrived in Estonia a few decades later than in the rest of Europe: the first line, in 1870, linked the Paldiski harbour and Tallinn with St Petersburg. In the same decade it was possible to take the train to Tartu, Valga and Võru. In the course of half a century, a dense network of broad- and narrow-gauge railways was built across Estonia, some of which transported passengers, although there were lines specifically meant for the needs of the growing industry and the military. The network was reduced in the 1960s and 1970s, when narrow-gauge railways were gradually abandoned. In some places, broad-gauge railways were established next to the narrow-gauge, but in other places railways were totally demolished. The past existence of railways in the Estoni-

Water tower in Sõrve near Tallinn for steam engines running on a narrow-gauge railway. The railway itself was demolished long ago.

2 x Katrin Tombak



Katrin Tombak

The Rahumäe viaduct, from 1925, was built for the former narrow-gauge railway to cross the broad-gauge railway.

an landscape is today witnessed by unexpectedly straight sections of roads, or by stylish railway architecture in places where trains and tracks have not been seen for ages.

The effect of the railways on the development of Estonian life and culture was immense: the speed of movement and freight traffic advanced industry and encouraged towns to expand. Above all, however, the railway broadened people's perspectives, had an impact on daily life and education, brought influences from near and far.

Rail passenger transport fell sharply in the 1990s, when the tracks were largely reserved for transit, especially crude oil trains. Reducing passenger transport in rural areas unfortunately encouraged massive urbanisation and numerous villages were abandoned as a result.

Beautiful wooden architecture: the Haapsalu railway station, which operates as a museum, as trains no longer run there.





Pärt Peterson

The lighthouse on Keri Island. The current building dates from 1858; between 1907 and 1912 local natural gas was used for the first time in the world to produce light.  
Boatsheds in Altja in Lahemaa National Park.

Marju Kõivupuu



# MARITIME HERITAGE

Diving in the Gulf of Finland to the wreck of the armoured ship *Russalka* of tsarist Russia, which sank in 1893.



Kaido Peremes

ESTONIA HAS 3780 km of coastline. If we add its lakes and rivers, we certainly see a true nation of water. Coastal people, especially on the islands, traditionally lived off fishing and seal-hunting. Coastal areas have also been essential contact points with other countries and peoples: innovations in, for example, building materials and clothes mostly reached the islands first. Other peoples, such as Swedes and Russian Old Believers, preferred to settle near the sea and by Lake Peipsi.

Estonian coastal areas are rich in seafaring-related heritage: sheds for nets and boats, lighthouses, rescue stations, military defence structures etc. In search of more heritage, enterprising people have dived to the seabed, where the most diverse type of watercraft have

been found, such as, for example, Viking boats and the cogs of Hanseatic merchants.

The Baltic Sea and especially the Gulf of Finland are considered to be two of the most mine-infested water bodies in the world. Estonians, who are fond of joint undertakings, have organised large-scale international marine operations to clear the seabed of mines. Besides those dating from both World Wars, mines from the Crimean War have also been found.

In the second half of the 19th century, the sandy beaches of Narva-Jõesuu, the Kadriorg area of Tallinn, Haapsalu and Pärnu became hugely popular spas and received holiday-makers from near and far, including St Petersburg and Moscow. At the beginning of the

Kalli Pihl



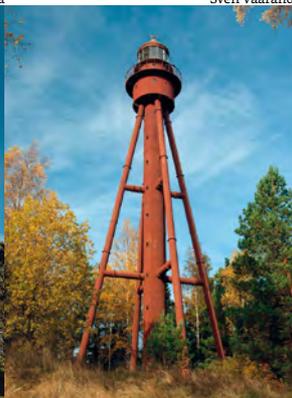
Lighthouse on Kihnu Island.

MasDom/Wikipedia



The 16th century Kõpu lighthouse on Hiiumaa is the oldest surviving lighthouse in Estonia.

Sven Vaarandi

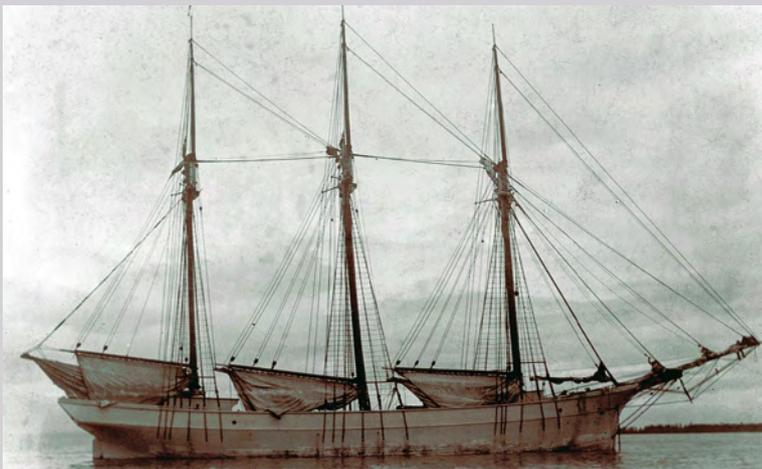


Lighthouse on Ruhnu Island.

Katrin Tombak



Suurupi lower wooden lighthouse from 1859.



From Aarne Valk's private collection

The village by Käsmu Bay in Lahemaa National Park is popularly known as the "Captains' village". Between 1884 and 1931 a marine school operated there. Many students became long-distance captains. The first ship was built in Käsmu in 1697. In the second half of the 19th century the first big sailboats were purchased from Finland and were later built locally as well. In 1891 the ship "Salme" ↑ was built, and it later crossed the ocean. Käsmu Bay became the most important wintering place for ships in northern Estonia: sometimes up to 70 ships were anchored there. In the 1920s and 1930s Käsmu shipowners owned the biggest cargo vessels in the country. Several pretty "captains' houses" date back to that time. ↗

Smuggling in the Baltic Sea was very active between the two world wars: because of Finnish alcohol prohibition, coastal Estonians decided to help their northern neighbours out. Transporting forbidden spirits in their fishing boats to Finland in the dark of night earned them considerable profits. The house of a "vodka king" in Tapurla village. →



2 x Katrin Tombak



20th century children of better-off farmers took to spending time on the beach after haymaking in the summer. Later the shallow, relatively warm water and mud baths in Pärnu and Haapsalu attracted large crowds of Soviet people for whom Estonia was the closest equivalent to the Western world.

The 19th century beach culture mostly consisted of strolls in the coastal parks and only the bravest dared take a plunge into the sea, whereas now people really enjoy the water. The Estonian summer is short, and the water is usually just about warm, so serious swimmers who want to prolong the season have no

choice but to start when the water is 14–15 degrees.

On the eve of World War II, some strategically placed islands were emptied of inhabitants. As a result, the majority of coastal Swedes, for example, fled to Sweden. People were not allowed to settle in the abandoned places during the Soviet period, as most of the coastal areas were turned into border zones where people could only go with special permits. The unique culture of many coastal villages, for example on the islands of Osmussaar and Pakri, was thus destroyed.

The remaining inhabitants living by the seaside had restricted access to the sea: fishing was organised



Old postcard

Bathing carriages driven to the sea in Narva-Jõesuu in 1910.

collectively, and owning a personal vessel was not allowed. The coast was patrolled by the border guards and the army. Paradoxically, despite the military installations, the limited access preserved miles of untouched beaches, together with their rare natural communities. A large part of Lahemaa National Park, established in 1971, was a former border zone.

Access to the sea during the Soviet era was restricted in Tallinn as well: the seaside was mainly a closed industrial area rather than a gate to the harbour city. Half a century of restrictions have considerably diminished the daily contact of Estonians with the sea. Even sailing was only allowed as an organised

Laoküla Maritime Camp on Estonia's north-eastern coast has taught children maritime skills for 15 summers.



Prit Peterson



Katriin Maiste

The Pärnu Beach Hotel of 1920 is a pearl of functionalist architecture in Estonia.

sport and not as a leisure activity. It is quite obvious that, compared to the inhabitants on the northern and western coasts of the Baltic Sea, we lack a similar culture of popular mass sailing.

Efforts have been made in recent years to help Estonia regain its status with full rights as a maritime country by the Baltic Sea. Shipbuilding is on the increase: old boat-building traditions are being researched and ancient models are being constructed. Young people are encouraged to take up sailing. The seaside local governments try to bring people closer to a life linked with the sea, organising maritime days and thematic festivals in different locations along the entire coast of Estonia.

The yacht Runbjarn was built by the wooden-boat society Vikan in 2008. It is a copy of an old Ruhnu sailboat.



Wooden Boat Society Vikan



2 x Ato Pinel



# LANDSCAPE HERITAGE

ESTONIA IS A land of forests, swamps and bogs. More than half of the mainland is covered with forests. Forests are among the greatest national treasures. Estonians, just like other European peoples in the forest zone, reputedly lived in 'tree time' until the 19th century: farmhouses (and the earlier manor mansions) were built of beams, fences were erected from poles cut in the forest, and tools, various vehicles and everyday consumer goods were also made of wood. A farmer largely made everything he needed himself, which required good knowledge of different qualities of various tree species. Types of trees, e.g. oak, ash and birch, are the most popular Estonian family names.

The extensive bog landscapes and picturesque bog lakes offer a sight only rarely seen elsewhere in

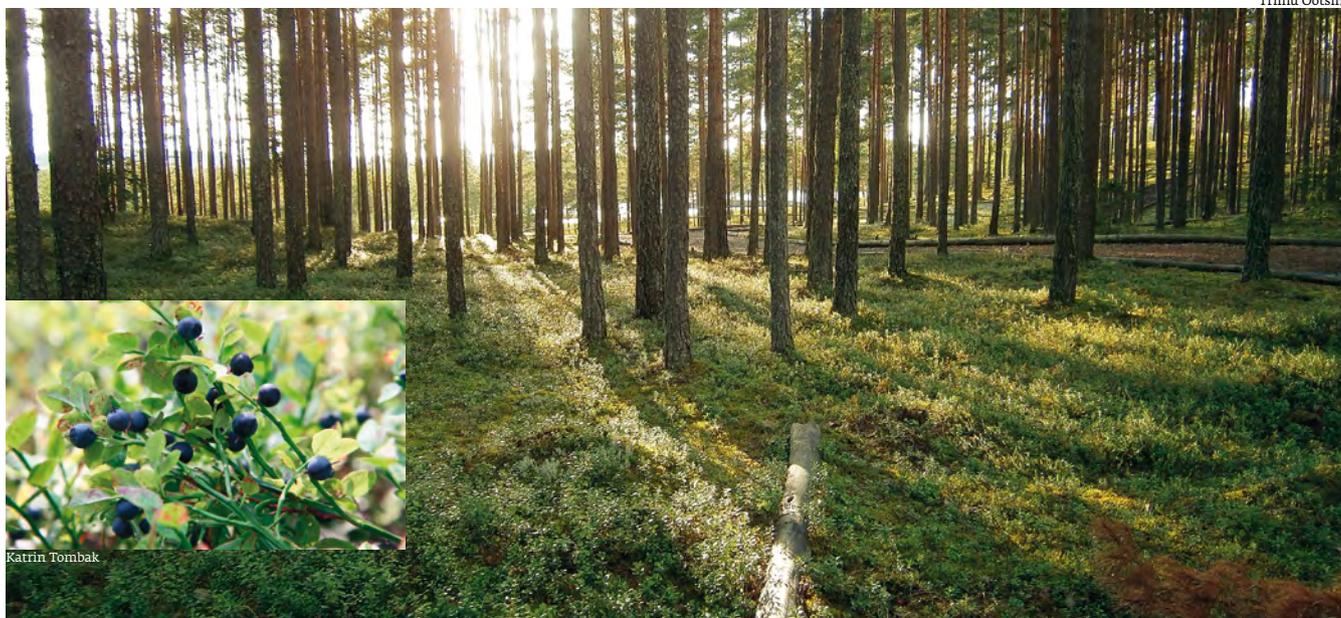
Europe. In Estonia, living bogs cover about 6% of the mainland, and the share of all peat areas is much bigger. Among all Estonian biomes, bogs are the most primal: swamp formation began here after the Baltic ice lake retreated about 10 000 years ago and is still going on today. About a quarter of Estonian plants grow in swamps, including many Ice Age remnants.

Forests and swamps offer Estonians opportunities for picking and gathering, as they did for our ancestors millennia ago. Today, picking mushrooms and berries is a pleasant way to spend your free time and enjoy nature. Preparing preserves from something you picked yourself, according to recipes handed down for generations, is part of the traditional Estonian food culture.

No less than 23% of the territory and water area of

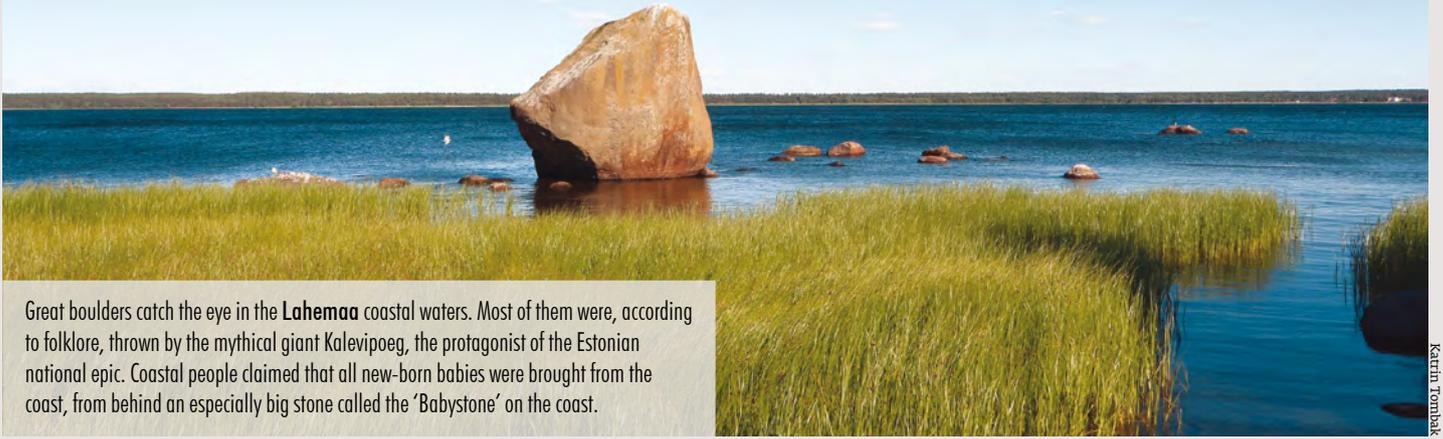


Katrin Tombak



Triinu Ootsing

Katrin Tombak



Great boulders catch the eye in the **Lahemaa** coastal waters. Most of them were, according to folklore, thrown by the mythical giant Kalevipoeg, the protagonist of the Estonian national epic. Coastal people claimed that all new-born babies were brought from the coast, from behind an especially big stone called the 'Babystone' on the coast.

Karriin Tombak  
Olev Mihkelmaa



**Matsalu National Park** in western Estonia is an essential stopover for migrating birds. Incredible numbers of bird species stop or nest in the shallow sea, as well as in coastal meadows. Besides birds, Matsalu Park also protects semi-natural areas typical of western Estonia (coastal meadows ↑, wooded meadows → and canebreaks) and the cultural heritage of Väinameri (the Sea of Straits).

Marko Vahnu



Aivar Ruukel



Kaati Pihl

The hilly landscape in **Karula National Park** in southern Estonia emerged when continental ice melted unevenly. An impressive one-third of Karula's territory is heritage cultural landscape, which developed over the course of thousands of years of human activity. ↑

← **Soomaa National Park** in central Estonia has large areas of bogs and swamps. In spring the park gets high water – the “fifth season” – when all lower forests, roads and even people's gardens are flooded. The only means of transportation is by water, for example in a dugout boat.



Saula blue springs.

Estonia are under protection, including five national parks. In 1971, the Lahemaa National Park was founded on the northern coast. This was not just a nature reserve. Establishing the first national park in the Soviet empire's border zone also discreetly pointed out that only one generation before Estonia had been a free maritime country. Besides nature protection, another crucial aim was to maintain the continuity of Estonian national culture and revive the traditions of coastal people. For many, establishing a national park meant that it was easier to make Midsummer Night bonfires on a coast normally closed by the border guards.

Our oldest nature reserves are natural sacred places: untouched areas of nature where communities have been able to develop freely. Estonians differ from other European peoples in that during the Catholic Middle Ages, when Christianity was universal, people in this corner of the world continued to cherish ancient natural sacred places and also adopted new ones. The continuity of traditions connected with sacred places prevented their research as late as the first half of the 20th century: people were reluctant to betray their locations. Natural sacred places are sacred stones, rivers, streams, springs, primeval trees and groves. Some trees growing by the cemetery paths in southern Estonia have crosses cut into their bark. The



A sacrificial stone with a hollowed-out area in the Samma sacred grove seems to still be used.

crosses are in various shapes and sizes, some are quite fresh, dripping with resin, and some are barely visible. According to old customs, godsons or close male relatives cut crosses into tree trunks when the deceased were taken to cemeteries, so that the spirits of the dead would find refuge in the trees and would not return to bother anyone at home. Although cutting a cross into a tree is not a Christian funeral custom, most of the clergy in southern Estonian rural congregations does not condemn this practice. Instead, they respect it as the last wish of the deceased and close relatives and as an ancient funeral tradition.



← A few truly old pines have well over one hundred crosses.



The Tuhala church is a typical rural Estonian church blending into pastoral landscape. ↑

View from the tower of the Simuna church. ↓



# CHRISTIAN HERITAGE

UNTIL THE 11TH century, Estonians, together with Baltic peoples and Finns, were the last pagans. The West was inhabited by people in the sphere of influence of the Roman Catholic and the East by the Greek Catholic (orthodox) Church. In the 13th century, Christianisation turned Estonia into a Catholic region, although in the 16th century Estonians were still called neophytes, the newly baptised, because many pre-Christian beliefs had still survived. These had gradually blended into Catholicism and produced a popular form of Christianity: village Catholicism. As a result of the Lutheran Reformation in the 16th century, the Catholic Church withdrew from Estonia almost totally.

Soviet Estonia officially proclaimed freedom of religion, but the government still worked against religion. To eliminate the influence of the church in society, atheist propaganda and new Soviet customs were introduced: celebrating Mother's Day and Easter was banned, Christmas was replaced by New Year, and baptism, confirmation and church weddings were frowned

upon. When Estonia again became independent, many returned to church customs and traditions. Although Estonia is today regarded as one of the most secular countries in Europe, the local religious landscape is diverse: according to the census of 2011, Estonia is home to 90 different confessions, with the Orthodox, Lutherans and Catholics forming the largest groups. The number of people belonging to Christian free congregations is also significant. The Russian Old Believers, who since the end of the 17th century have mainly lived along Lake Peipsi, have developed a singular culture in their villages.

The first **churches** in Estonian territory were built in the 12th century. As part of Christian cultural space, local architecture was influenced by building masters from Germany and Scandinavia. The architecture of the early churches (e.g. the Valjala and Kaarma churches on Saaremaa Island) still reflects the impact of the Romanesque style, whereas Gothic became prevalent in the 13th century. Examples of Gothic are various churches in Tallinn, such as the Cathedral, St Nicholas', St Olaf's

The Pirita Convent church was completed in 1436.



Katrin Tombak

Old cemetery on Vormsi Island, with stone circular crosses.



Katrin Käivapuu

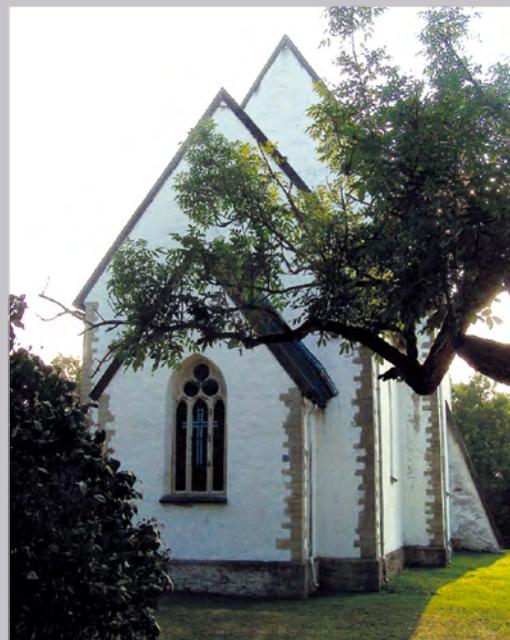


↑ The Karja St Catherine's Church in Saaremaa is among the oldest sacred buildings in the country and quite singular in northern Europe. The church has remarkable sculptures; the vaults and walls are adorned with unique ornaments with magical meanings: the triskele is considered to be the symbol of a ball of fire or the Kaali meteorite. It is also the symbol of the ancient Scandinavian chief god Odin and the Holy Trinity; its three legs stand for the rising, midday and setting sun, and man's cycle of life. The face looking back and sticking out his tongue, visible between the legs, is called a leg Satan or a shin Satan. It was supposed to ward off evil, just like the pentagram.

Churches on the islands and in the coastal areas did not initially have towers, as they did not wish to attract unwelcome attention from those approaching by sea. Only three churches have remained without towers today: the Karja, Muhu and Vormsi churches.

The tower-less St Catherine's Church on Muhu Island was probably built in the 13th century. ↗

Animalist stone figures from the 13th century in the Kaarma church on Saaremaa. →



An outstanding example of the Gothic style in Tartu is St John's Church, famous for its terracotta sculptures. Terracotta is not entirely unknown in medieval art, although there does not seem to be another building in the whole of European Gothic with quite as many sculptures in that technique, or that can compete with those in St John's Church in size or artistry.



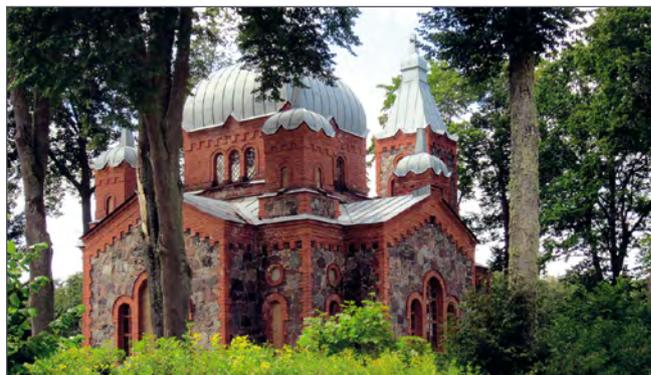
Mariju Kõivupuu

The painting on the main gate of the Kuremäe Convent depicts the icon of the Dormition of the Mother of God, which was found at the site of the convent.

and the Church of the Holy Spirit. (Their original steeples were destroyed in fires and replaced by steeples in new styles; only St Olaf's got a Neo-Gothic one.)

Travelling around Estonia, we can see an occasional **Orthodox church**. The Russian Orthodox Church began active missionary activity in Estonia in the second half of the 19th century, when Estonia had for some time belonged to the Russian empire. Promoting the Orthodox faith was part of the general Russification policy of the tsarist state: funds to build the churches came straight from the State Treasury.

**Kuremäe Convent** was established on the ancient sacred site of the local rural population. According to a



Katriin Tomihak

Most Orthodox churches were built according to a standard design: the walls are of local stone and red or yellow bricks, and the churches are adorned with onion domes.

legend, local Estonian peasants saw a miraculous apparition near the sacred spring of Kuremäe and later found a sacrosanct Orthodox icon at the foot of an ancient oak tree. The founding of the Kuremäe Convent occurred in the Russification period. Kuremäe was in fact the only operating Orthodox nunnery in the entire Soviet Union.

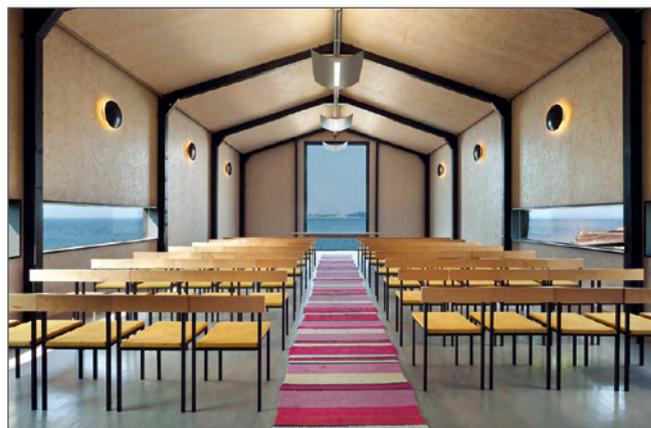
**Chapels** in Estonia were located outside parish centres. They did not have their own congregations or paid clergymen. In the medieval era, coastal areas had numerous fishermen's chapels. Before going out to sea and/or after returning, people said prayers in coastal chapels, often popularly called "fish chapels". These chapels doubled as sea- and landmarks for the fishermen.

15th century Saha St Nicholas chapel is the oldest chapel surviving in its original form.



Mariju Kõivupuu

Chapel in Viinistu in Lahemaa, built in 2010.

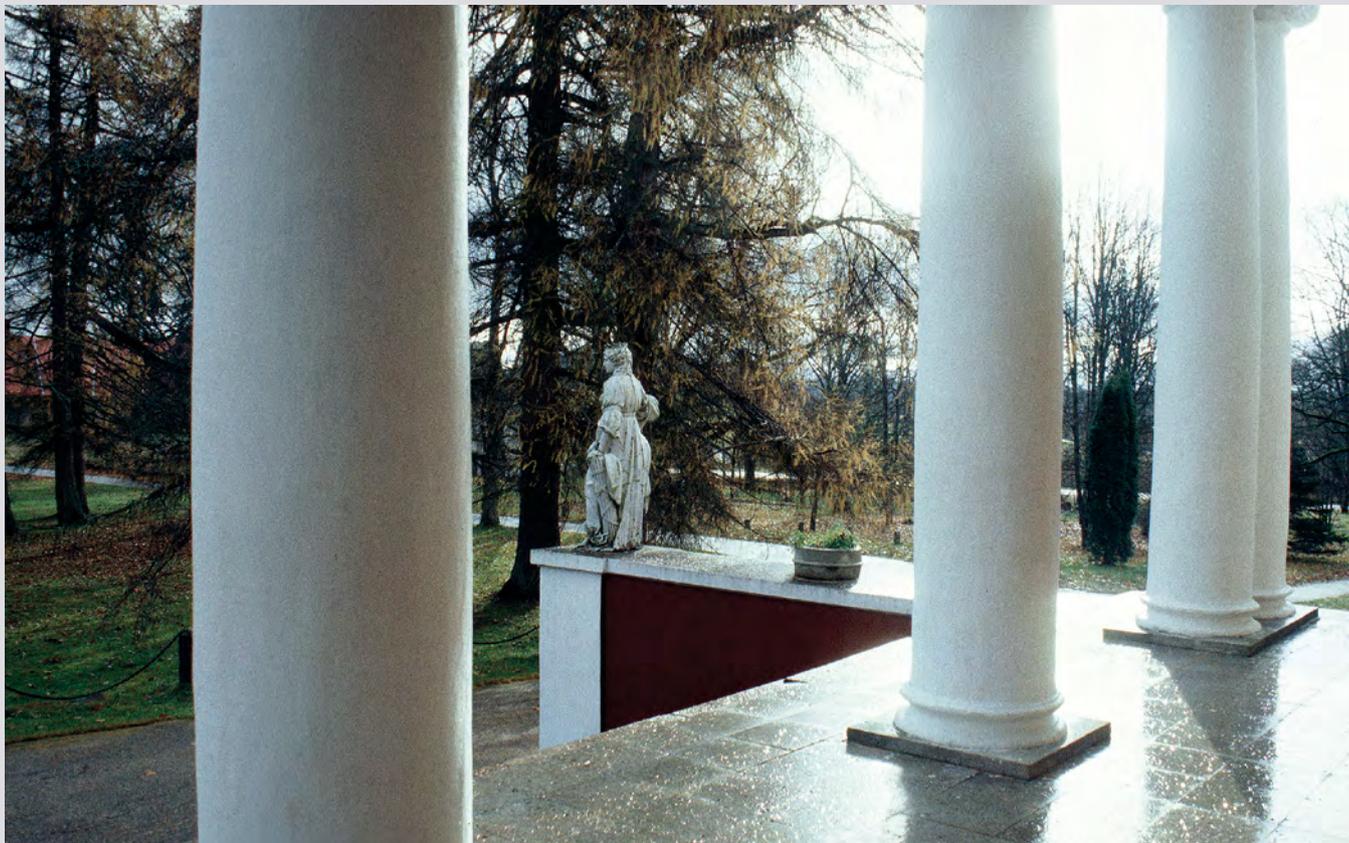


Toomas Truul



Kalli pilt

The beautiful classicist Suuremõisa manor complex in Hiiu, <sup>↑</sup> and a view of the park from the Õisu mansion in 1998. <sub>↓</sub>



Ants Hein

# MANOR HOUSES

**ONE OF THE** dominant features in Estonian cultural and historical space, as well as in landscape, is the manor house. It is difficult to be objective and all-embracing in introducing them. On the one hand, they are a spectacular part of our architecture, and a nursery of education, arts and science; on the other hand, they symbolise foreign invaders, the class system and harsh serfdom. Attitudes towards manor houses are also reflected in what has happened to them in the course of the past one hundred years. In the immediate aftermath of the 1905 revolutionary events, manor houses were extensively burnt down, in the early 1920s, the new Estonian independent state eliminated the land ownership of the nobility, and then under the Soviet occupation, collective farms left their unfortunate stamp on noble architecture. Despite both intentional and unintentional destruc-

19th century distillery at the Heimtali manor.



Urmas Volmer

Carved wooden Corinthian capital in the colonnade of the Õisu manor stables.



Triinu Oksing

tion, Estonia still remains a country of manors.

For centuries, manors were among the defining creators of local identity, as they divided the population into social classes according to nationality. The Baltic-German nobility controlled the Estonian economy through their manors. The living conditions of Estonians, who were forced into the lower class, depended not only on the existing state authority, but primarily on the success of their local manors and the goodwill of their owners. Estates thrived by selling grain, which had a good storage life and a peculiar smoky taste, to Europe. Harvesting the grain depended on the hard labour of local peasants, who threshed it at night after their other daily chores were done. In the 18th and 19th centuries the manors earned enormous profits by selling spirits to Russia and by sending fattened oxen to markets in St Petersburg.

Stables of the Õisu manor.



Triinu Oksing



← **Karl Ernst von Baer** (1792–1876) was a Baltic-German naturalist and a medical researcher, the founder of descriptive and comparative embryology. Between 1810 and 1814 he studied medicine at the University of Tartu and continued his studies in Berlin, Vienna and Würzburg. He was a professor in universities at Königsberg, St Petersburg and Tartu. He discovered the mammalian egg cell. The general rules of the development of organisms formulated by him are known as Baer's laws. He was also one of the founders of ecology.

→ Prince Michael Andreas **Barclay de Tolly** (1761–1818) was a Russian military commander. His father was a manor lord in Valga County, but his ancestors came from an old Scottish noble family. In 1808 and 1809 Barclay de Tolly took part as a corps commander in the war between Russia and Sweden. In 1809 he became Governor-General of Finland and the supreme commander of the troops there. Between 1810 and 1812 he was Minister of War in Russia. In the war against Napoleon, de Tolly became the commander-in-chief of Russian troops, and in 1814 he led the conquest of Paris.



**Struve's geodetic arc** was the invention of the Baltic-German astronomer and geodetic scientist **Friedrich Georg Wilhelm Struve**. It constitutes a triangulation chain that between 1816 and 1855 established the exact shape and size of the Earth from the Arctic Ocean to the Black Sea. The length of the arc is 2820 km. Back then, it was the longest measured meridian arc. It runs through today's Norway, Sweden, Finland, Russia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine.

← Three points survive in Estonia, the picture shows the one in Simuna.

Although the Baltic Germans were harsh on the local population, they also encouraged the ideas of the enlightenment in tsarist Russia. There were about 1200 manors in Estonia in the 19th century. Besides architecture, a large number of manors deserve attention because of the contributions made by the noble families to science, literature, music, art, the military, exploring distant lands and many more areas.

The 1919 Land Reform of the newly independent Republic of Estonia abolished the land ownership of

the nobility, allowing the previous owners to keep a few manorial buildings and minimal land around them. As profits dwindled, a large number of the manor owners relinquished their buildings to the state. The Republic of Estonia used them to carry out one of its biggest projects: developing a school network. Between the two World Wars the manors accommodated over 200 schools. A number of the manors were turned into hospitals, care homes and nurseries. As a result, a considerable number of the



3 x Kalli Piht

valuable buildings were saved from the destruction that occurred after the end of the manor era, when many manor complexes were demolished for quality building materials. The best examples of manor architecture were carefully selected and placed on heritage preservation lists to rescue them from this dismal fate.

After World War II there was no time or inclination to deal with the heritage of the ideologically castigated nobility. This attitude changed only in the 1970s, when the Soviet Estonian collective and state farms finally became economically successful

and expanded the size of the former manors. First in Lahemaa National Park and later elsewhere, the manor mansions got a new lease on life as collective farm centres and culture centres.

The occupation era intensified class hatred against the former manor lords, whereas the regaining of independence placed the manors in a new light. When the Iron Curtain finally fell, the architecture of the European aristocracy and the history of famous families constituted strong links with European heritage and culture.

View of the nicely preserved manor park from the Sangaste manor tower.

Kalli Piht



Vääna manor school.

Katrin Tombak





Katri Tombak

Alley leading to the Purdi manor. ↑

View of the Rāpina Sillapā manor and the large English-style landscape park across the artificial lake. ↓



Tiina Tallinn

# PARKS

**TRAVELLING THROUGH ESTONIAN** landscapes, it is easy to notice when you are approaching a manor house. Forests give way to fields and meadows, settlement gets denser, an alley appears by the road. The alley leads to a different kind of landscape, with big trees, often of foreign origin. This could be a manorial park, perhaps completely grown over, perhaps maintained to perfection. Soon enough, grand outbuildings come into view, and then the mansion. It's also possible that the buildings are no longer there.

By the beginning of the 20th century, about 1200 manors covered Estonia in a dense network. Manorial landscapes were elite landscapes that dominated the surrounding environment. Manors as economic units were established near bodies of water, preferably in naturally beautiful sites with expansive vistas: river bends, lake shores, high cliffs overlooking the sea.

In the early 17th century parks were fairly un-

known in the Estonian territory. Manors were surrounded by fields, forests, pastures and meadows. A manor might have a vegetable garden, an orchard and a flower garden. After the Estonian territory was taken over by Sweden, grandly designed manor complexes were established. The Swedish royal Svartsjö Park, in Renaissance style, influenced several Estonian manor parks. The early manor parks were lavish pleasure gardens belonging to Swedish high nobility, full of flowers, pavilions and covered paths.

Park design picked up again in Estonia during the final years of the Great Northern War, when Tsar Peter the Great commissioned a summer palace with a Baroque garden in Kadriorg in Tallinn (1718). The park and palace, designed with magnificent radial symmetry, formed one whole. Today, Kadriorg is like a park-museum, where later park styles are also visible. After horse-drawn tram traffic started between

Round pavilion of the Palmse manor complex.



Marija Kõivumägi

The Keila-Joa mansion in a landscape park featuring natural beauty.



Kaarin Tomback



Flower garden in the French style, a part of the Kadriorg Baroque Palace ensemble.



Popular park in Kadriorg.

central Tallinn and Kadriorg in 1888, a European-style popular park was established there, and at the beginning of the 20th century also a landscape park.

Inspired by the Kadriorg Park, Baroque parks were established on many Estonian manors. In the 19th century these were redesigned into landscape parks. The radial symmetry and single Baroque elements may have survived.

Manors introduced international trends into Estonian nature using local material: alleys of oak and ash trees, lime tree circles and fir hedges were planted.

In the 19th century nurseries offering a wealth of plants were set up in Riga, Tallinn and elsewhere; it was then possible to introduce foreign species as well.

In the mid-19th century, the urban areas of former bastions and fortifications that had lost their military purpose were turned into parks and circular avenues. Most of our strongholds have acquired the form of park landscape: the Viljandi castle ruins, Tartu's Toome Hill, the Rakvere castle, etc.

In the 1920s and 1930s the Estonian state owned four grand old parks: Kadriorg, Pühajärve, Toila-Oru

Landscape park in Kadriorg.



The Japanese garden in the Kadriorg landscape park was established in 2011.



Tiina Tallinn

Toomemäe Park in Tartu, together with the Cathedral ruins.

and Keila-Joa. Increasing the areas of greenery and improving the existing parks were greatly enhanced by the state-organised campaign of home improvement in 1936–38. Houses got a new lick of paint, hedges, flowers and alleys were planted, and parks were tidied up. The impact of this movement on the appearance of people's homes and on the general look of Estonia as a whole was enormous. The movement was restored after the Soviet era, in 1997.

After World War II fire-damaged urban central areas were reinvented as parks. The destroyed classicist

The Tallinn Toompark lies on the slopes of Toompea Hill and around the Snelli pond.



Tiina Tallinn



Jaak Nilson

Tartu's Toomemäe Park and the monument to the poet Kristjan Jaak Peterson.

urban district in Tartu, for example, was replaced by an extensive park complex.

In the 1950s traditional parks and green areas were created near important public buildings. In the 1960s, when the first free-plan residential districts were built, designing parks diminished considerably. In the 1960s and 1970s grand landscape projects were undertaken; among the grander projects, the modernist Maarjamäe memorial park and the park of the main building of the Kurtna Poultry Farm were realised.

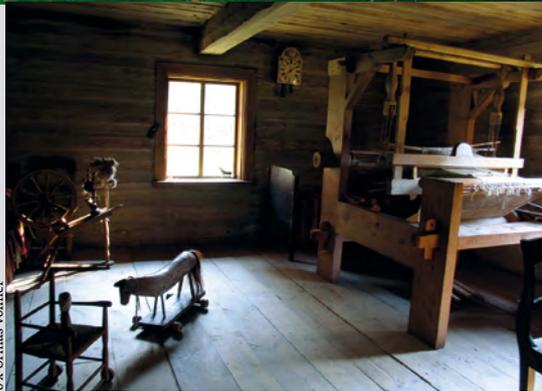
The grand modernist landscape project in Maarjamäe, Tallinn.



Katriin Tombak



Kiln house of the Sassi-Jaani farm at the Estonian Open-Air Museum in Rocca al Mare. ↑



6 x Urmas Vahmer

A chamber in a kiln house, lit by a proper window, unlike the narrow slits between beams in the archaic kiln room walls. ↑ →

Compared with the massive log houses, fences made of twigs that separate the different areas in a farm courtyard seem like airy lace. ↓ ↘



← When a fire was made in a kiln stove, people had to protect their eyes from smoke while standing.



← The most important item in a kiln room: the massive stove.



# FARMS

**THE OPEN-AIR MUSEUM** and numerous smaller museums across Estonia proudly display the barn dwelling as a type of house only typical of Estonia and northern Latvia. It is archaic and has impressive proportions. At the same time, however, the home of the Estonian peasant – a small, smoke-filled kiln house – has for centuries been castigated for its poverty, squalor and shabbiness. The Estonian peasant lived in a room also used to dry grain in the autumn. The room was heated with an enormous stove. As simple rural buildings began using chimneys only in the 19th century, the living space was dark and soot-covered. The few windows were dimly small. In winter, one room had to be shared between the family members, farmhands, chickens, and often even calves, piglets and ewes. With the first warm days, animals were moved out, boys preferred to sleep in the hayloft and the girls in the barn. With the adoption of chimneys, separate rooms were often built in one end

Smoke sauna in southern Estonia.



Jaak Nilson

of the kiln room, offering more privacy and a chance to keep the place more hygienic. The kiln room formed just one part of a long barn dwelling: about one half was a threshing floor where grain was winnowed, and in winter it was used for storage, a place to keep carts, and sometimes even as a cowshed and stable.

Abolishing serfdom at the beginning of the 19th century did not initially bring about great changes in the everyday life of peasants. The really significant break came in mid-century, when they were allowed to buy land. Ever since that time, owning a piece of land has been a passion of Estonians. The new status of landowner encouraged the improvement of living conditions. The first to be modernised were the household buildings, as these earned money. As economic conditions improved, people started building houses that stood separately from the barn dwellings, and called them “mansions”, as they were known in manor complexes.

Farm mansion in Viljandi County.



Urmas Volmer





5 x Urmas Volmer

Restoration of an old log house in Karula National Park. The ruins are first measured and photographed, and the logs are numbered. The surviving parts are then transferred to a workshop, where they are cleaned and reassembled. Suitable material is found to replace the destroyed parts of the building and the missing details are made using ancient working methods.

Practical studies of a traditional building at the Estonian Open-Air Museum. Making different corner joints of horizontal beam walls. ↵



PHOTO: REIKERSON



The proportions of the barn became a symbol of national pride in the 1920s and 1930s, when the first architects of Estonian origin began designing farmhouses.

A particular phenomenon in the Estonian farmstead is the sauna. Countless folk tales and beliefs are connected with this small building. Estonians have a saying that there are three sacred places: the sacred grove, church and sauna. Besides cleansing the body, the sauna was believed to cleanse the soul as well. You had to enter a sauna with your mind at peace. No one quarrelled or uttered a bad word there. The sick were healed and spells cast in the sauna. Children were born and the dying were brought there. People without land were allowed to live in a sauna, and helped with farm work in return. Out of fear of fires, saunas were usually built at a distance from other houses, and if possible near water. A peculiar type of sauna is the smoke sauna. A stove without a chimney was heated and, before washing, the room was thoroughly aired to get the smoke out. The steam of a smoke sauna is soft and pleasant.

Before World War II, Estonia had developed into an advanced agricultural country with the main export

items being bacon and butter. The Soviet occupation quickly put an end to the flourishing agriculture: the most enterprising farmers were deported to Siberia, and livestock and property were appropriated by the collective farms. From dispersed settlements, the rural population was gathered into urban-type blocks of flats.

In people's minds, half a century of occupation turned the pre-war independent republic into an ideal country, and many hoped to restore it fully in the 1990s. In the changed world, however, it was impossible to re-establish an agricultural Estonia founded on economically successful farms. Collective farms were demolished, but at the same time contemporary profitable large-scale production was lost as well. Managing small farms turned out to be complicated. Farms devoted to a specific product or built up into a properly sized farm are doing much better.

A large number of today's adult Estonians grew up in towns, but we have maintained close links with the country. Many urban people look after the farms of their ancestors or have bought summer cottages in the countryside.

Farmhouses tastefully adapted to suit modern needs at the Good Kaarma soap farm on Saaremaa Island ← and at the Nami Namaste gourmet farm on Muhu Island. ↓



Stephen Greenwood



Sikke Sumari



3 x Kaur Virunurm



Ato Piibel



At the song festival grounds, it is difficult to see where the row of performers on the stage ends and the audience starts. It does not actually matter. The whole point of song festivals is that people do not gather here to see a pop idol, they come for their own sake.

In 2004 the song festival procession was cancelled because of a heavy downpour. However, it still went on unofficially: people rushed to save their party. → The song festival is still needed, although its role had changed now that the country had achieved independence.



Marju Kõivupuu

Tiina Tallinn



# SONG FESTIVALS

*“An Estonian, someone with an underdeveloped emotional sense of collectivism, can be suddenly seized by a shared emotion that makes the rest of the world fall silent, in awe. This can happen at song festivals and visitors take it with them as their most vivid impression of Estonia.”*

Jaan Undusk

SONG FESTIVALS, WITH many choirs and orchestras, were first organised in the mid-19th century in various places across Europe, from where the tradition soon reached Estonia. The earliest Baltic German song festivals were held in Tallinn in 1857 and in Riga in 1861. Inspired by these, Estonians decided to have their own festivals, the more so because choir singing and playing wind instruments were becoming increasingly popular.

Thus, about one thousand male singers and musicians gathered in 1869 in Tartu at the first song festival. The programme contained only two original Estonian songs, but the significance of these songs and of the festival cannot be overestimated: nameless rural people singing itself into a nation that belonged in the European cultural space.

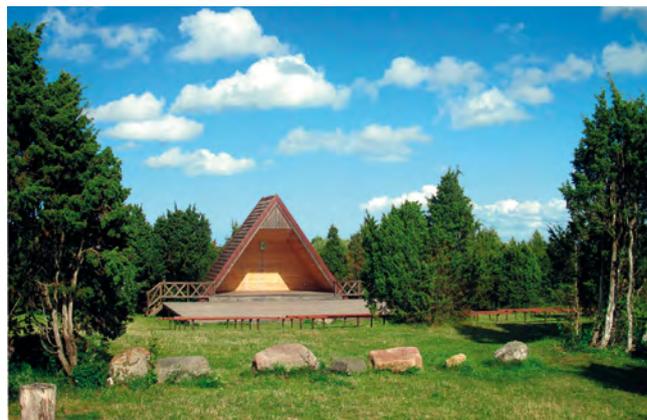
Such festivals were soon organised on a regular basis, every five years. The tradition was disrupted by World War II, but was restored during the Soviet era, shortly after the war.

The enthusiasm for patriotic songs that started in May 1988 at the music days in Tartu culminated in early June of the same year with night song festivals in Tallinn, called “the Singing Revolution”. These spontaneous song fests kicked off a chain of events that peaked with the huge undertaking called “The Song of Esto-

nia” in the Tallinn song festival grounds in September, where people publicly demanded the restoration of Estonian independence. According to a legend, about 300 000 turned up, one third of the entire population.

Although various alien powers who ruled Estonia tried to use the song festivals to their own purposes, by prescribing the choice of repertory, Estonians have always associated song festivals with a sense of belonging together and envisioning a better future. Estonians often call themselves “a singing nation”. This is part of our national identity, and it united people in aspiring to independence in the early years of the 20th century, as well as in the Soviet era. In this context, it is really not that important where the “original home” of the tradition of song festivals actually lies. Estonians have domesticated the song festival and have given it back to the world, more powerful than ever before.

Every “proper” Estonian village has its own song festival grounds with a covered stage.



Mari Kõivumäe



Kaur Viinurum

Alternative punk song festivals in 2008 and 2011 show the vitality of the song festival tradition: its ability to make fun of itself.



2 x Triinu Ootsing

The band Paabel consists of young musicians who studied folk music at the Viljandi Culture Academy. Here they perform at the Viljandi Folk Music Festival.



The public at the Viljandi Folk Music Festival.

# HERITAGE MUSIC



Triinu Ootsing

In the 1970s a movement promoting genuine folk music emerged in Estonia, encouraging the performance of folk songs, music and dance as traditional and close to the original as possible. The movement was a counterbalance to the official Soviet folk culture, where popular musical instruments were expected to make music like an orchestra, and the folk dance repertory was dominated by arranged and authorial dances, always performed under the watchful eye of a specially trained cultural worker. The new trend was to learn via participation: people gathered with folk singers and musicians to sing and make music together, and listened to archive recordings. The new folklore bands were more like clubs or fellowships of friends, where the focus was not on performing on stage, but on socialising and involving audiences.

In 1991 the speciality of folk music was launched at the Viljandi Culture Academy. Learning songs, dances and how to play musical instruments occurs via imitation. An essential aspect is the musician's own approach and the ability to interpret folk music so that it addresses the contemporary young listener. The Viljandi Folk Music Festival, first organised in 1993, is among the most popular summer events in the country.

The ancient type of folk song of Estonians is the **runo song** – *regilaul* in Estonian. Runo song may be thousands of years old. It is also characteristic of Finns and some smaller Baltic-Finnic nations. Runo songs may at first seem boring, because they are generally quite long and sung in a monotone. They are traditionally sung without accompaniment of any musical instruments. If you do not sing yourself, you will not

The Viru Folk Music Festival in the village of Käsmu on the northern coast of Estonia. ↴ ↵



2 x Triinu Ootsing





Song and dance festival of coastal Swedes.



Bagpiper at the Baltika Folk Festival.



Accordion players in Võru.

3 x Marju Kõivupuu

have the real experience of a runo song. However, as the melodies are simple and the lead singer and choir sing alternately – the choir repeats the singer’s words – it is possible to sing along without knowing the words. Singers do not breathe together, so a runo song proceeds without interruption. The runo song form requires alliteration and assonance: the repetition of initial sounds of words. The language of runo songs is archaic and dialectic. Typical features are repetitions of words and ideas. All these repetitions have the effect of meditation. They also help the singer to remember the words and improvise on a given topic.

The runo song of the Seto people – **leelo** – is characterised by heterophony, the simultaneous playing or singing of two or more versions of a melody. *Leelo* has a lower accompanying voice (*torrõ*) and a higher voice (*killõ*), which repeat or continue the lead singer’s part. Seto leelo has a special tensioned timbre: it is sung in a guttural voice.

Runo songs were tightly connected with people’s lives. They were sung every day, and shaped rites and ceremonies as well. Estonians have preserved an especially large number of wedding songs, as all rituals at rural weddings were traditionally conducted with songs.

2 x Marju Kõivupuu





Taru Oksimäe

Local Seto leelo-choir performing in the Obinitsa village square during the intermissions of the open-air production "Taarka".

Singing was essential at various magical procedures, because our ancestors attributed more power to words that were sung. There were also competitions: the winner was the wittiest and the one who never ran out of words.

Women's singing probably prevailed, although men, too, have had plenty of opportunities to test their voices, and some were much sought-after wedding singers. There is a strong tradition of men's runo songs in Seto region.

Runo songs were widely popular until the mid-19th century, and were then pushed aside by new end-rhymed songs and those with international melodies. An interest in ancient folk songs was revived in the 1970s, at the beginning of the authentic folklore movement. Today, the archaic runo song thrives at social events and organised performances, in composers' work, in folk song arrangements and in contemporary music styles.



Marju Kõivupuu



Katrin Tombak



Marju Kõivupu



Marju Kõivupu

Intangible and material heritage are tightly intertwined: many skills, work methods and secret tricks of the trade have been passed on from one generation to the next by word of mouth or from hand to hand. Figured belts, mitten patterns, striped fabrics for skirts and carpets, patterns burnt into beer tankards and dowry chests carry our ancestors' tastes, as well as magic meanings known only to them.

Above, from left to right: patterned mittens and gloves; spinning yarn on a spinning wheel; weaving a belt; making a willow pipe; blacksmith's work; woodwork, which was by no means meant for men alone; old-fashioned carpenter's bench.



Priit Peterson



Urmas Volmer



Priit Peterson



Urmas Volmer

# ESTONIAN CULTURAL REGIONS

**THE ROOTS OF** Estonian popular culture go back a few thousand years, when people first settled here. Under conditions of serfdom, peasants were not allowed to move around and, as a result, local culture resembled a mosaic: every parish had its own language usage, national costumes, habits and customs. At the end of the 19th century, Estonian culture began to become uniform. However, even today, differences between the three bigger cultural regions – western, northern and southern Estonia – are quite discernible, especially in border areas in the south and on the islands. At the end of the 1980s, southern Estonia witnessed a regional awakening, led by the Võro and Seto peoples. Their regional languages had long been spoken at home, although publicly they were regarded as signs of poor education.

Today's schools teach these dialects. The Võro, Seto and Mulk peoples and the inhabitants of Kihnu Island all have their own ABC books and readers, which considerably raises the prestige of these languages. Public radio and television broadcast programmes in these languages. The Võro and Seto languages are similar, but as both peoples have their own strong identities, they are regarded as different languages. Prose and poetry written in **Võromaa** have played an outstanding role in Estonian culture.

The Mulk and Võro peoples are predominantly Lutheran, whereas the identity and culture of **Setos** have for the past 1000 years been shaped by their belonging to the Russian Orthodox cultural space. The Seto region became a part of Estonia only in 1920.



Thomas Tuul

Encounter between a Seto and a Mulk.

Their most important sacred place is the Petseri Monastery. Between 1920 and 1940 Petseri belonged to the Republic of Estonia and the monastery was thus able to operate in peace: it was spared the Soviet cultural policy hostile to religion. After Estonia regained independence in 1991, the monastery and two-thirds of the historical Setomaa region remained on the Russian side of the border. The border is a painful issue for the Setos: congregations are split, and property, relatives and graves are divided.

Setos have their own epic, book series, newspaper, festivities, customs, habits, clothes and jewellery. Perhaps the most significant part of their cultural heritage is leelo, a polyphonic singing tradition. Contrary to Protestant Estonia, the Seto people have always known how to party. In their view, religious holidays have to be properly celebrated: “then you are blessed



Triinu Ootsing

Seto wooden god Peko.



Marju Kõivupuu

Interior of a Seto *tsässon* in the village of Laossina, near Lake Pihkva.

Triinu Ootsing

Seto man and woman in national costume.

and can enjoy life". The village holidays of the Setos – *kirmaskid* – are famous outside the region as well. First comes the service, followed by a jolly party featuring leelo, accompanied by music and dancing.

A *tsässon* is a Seto village chapel or prayer house, where the oldest man in the village, the father of a family or the village elder conducts hour-long services called *tsäss* (Russian *tšas* – an hour) on holidays, and sometimes on Sundays and special occasions. Each chapel, just like a church, has its own saint.

The Seto customs and religious world outlook are a unique mixture of pre-Christian nature worship and Orthodox beliefs (e.g. the community remembers the dead by eating meals together on graves).

The unique nature of **Mulgimaa** was shaped by the neighbouring Latvia and rapidly advancing agriculture in the 19th century, which the Mulks responded to by maintaining the traditional (e.g. the medieval patterns of national costumes). Until the mid-19th century, sacred gardens were still in use – these were

small pieces of untouched nature in farm gardens or nearby, where people either offered food on a sacrificial stone, or where it was forbidden to enter at all. Several traditional Estonian dishes come from Mulgimaa: *kama* flour, *corp* – a type of cheesecake, and *mulgi kapsad* – stewed sauerkraut with barley groats. The Mulk people were renowned across Estonia for their education, progressive attitudes and wealth.

**Kihnu** is a small island near Pärnu. Today's Kihnu is a curious blend of the modern and the past. Unlike the rest of Estonia, women wear national costumes every day: striped skirts and chintz blouses. Men often wear thick woollen jumpers called *troi*, which have also become popular amongst mainlanders. Traditions linked with marriage are truly ancient, as is celebrating folk holidays and church holidays.

As Kihnu men traditionally spent most of their time away fishing, life at home was largely left for women to sort out. The role of a man as head of the family was thus quite modest on the island compared

to elsewhere in Estonia. Grandmother retained her dominant position in the household even after her son got married. In the 1970s women also took over music from men, and the famous male violin and accordion players of Kihnu passed into history. On top of this, men lost their desire for dancing, and it is now common for women to dance together.

Kihnu people are Orthodox: most of them converted in 1846–1847, hoping to get land from the tsar in return. The Kihnu language is still going strong today thanks to the isolation of the small island. In the first decade of the 21st century, the Kihnu language

Service in an Orthodox church on Kihnu Island.



was transformed into a written language. Today, it is spoken by approximately 800–1000 people. Schools on the island teach the Kihnu language, singing, dancing and handicrafts.

After the church reforms in Russia the **Old Believers** (*starovery*) were persecuted at home and they settled along the coast of Lake Peipsi at the end of the 17th century. As agricultural land was scarce, they focused on growing vegetable. Their onions, garlic, cucumbers and tomatoes, as well as smoked fish, are much in demand in Estonia.

The menfolk have traditionally been involved in

Kihnu women chatting after church.

2 x Marju Kõivupuu





Marju Kõivupuu

Handwritten books in the Russian Old Believers' prayer house in the village of Raja.

fishing on Lake Peipsi and do occasional work inland – they are known as excellent builders. Their original self-made hovercraft vessel – *karakat* – enable them to go out on the lake even when the ice is not yet or no longer reliable.

The Old Believers still observe their religious customs and hardly ever marry outside their faith.



Karin Tombak

← Anu Raud's tapestry "Forebears".

The community of **Estonian Swedes** has become quite active today. After a gap of almost 80 years, they held their song and dance festival in Haapsalu in summer 2013. Over 300 singers and dancers from Estonia, Sweden and Finland performed at the festival. Estonian, or Coastal, Swedes were among the largest ethnic minorities to settle on Estonian islands and the western coast, from Sweden and southern Finland in the 13th century; this migration reached its peak in the 15th and 16th centuries, when (northern) Estonia was part of the Swedish kingdom. The Coastal Swedes' main forms of subsistence were fishing and seal-hunting, whereas agriculture was not that important. The majority of Coastal Swedes left during World War II. Numerous Swedish place names in western Estonia and on the islands provide evidence of the Swedish settlements.





G u l f o f F i n l a n d

**TALLINN**

**NARVA-JÕESUU NARVA**

**PALDISKI**

**RAKVERE**

**JÕHVI**

*Coastal Swedes*

**TAPA**

**TAMSALU**

**RAPLA**

**PAIDE**

*Old Believers*

Lake Peipsi

**TÜRI**

**JÕGEVA**

**PÕLTSAMAA**

**PÄRNU**

*Mulgimaa*

**VILJANDI**

**TARTU**

**RÄPINA**

*Kihnu*

*Võromaa*

*Setomaa*

Bay of Liivi

**PÕLVA**

**VÖRU**

**PETSERI**

**PIHKVA**

**VALGA**

Lake Burtneki

Lake Piikva

Lake Aluksne

L A T V I A

R U S S I A

**UNESCO World Heritage sites in Estonia:**

Historical centre (Old Town) of Tallinn

Struve geodetic arc

**Items in the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage:**

The Kihnu cultural space

Baltic song and dance celebrations

Seto leelo, Seto polyphonic singing tradition



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