

Pallas-Yllästunturi National Park

Summary

Explore one of the oldest and most popular national parks in Finland in the grandeur of the pristine fells of Pallas-Yllästunturi National Park in Lapland. Here the ancient rounded fells, once as tall as mountains, are still massive and dramatic. What they lack in height, they make up for in untamed splendour. In this day-hiking and Nordic skiing paradise, nature still writes the rules. The peace and quiet of the wilderness with the cleanest air and water in the world seduces you with breath-taking 360-degree vistas. It's a magical place that entices visitors to move at its pace and rhythm. The hustle and bustle of routine life is quickly left behind.

Activities

Pallas-Yllästunturi changes dramatically with the seasons. In summer you can go trekking on the 500 kilometres of marked trails in one of Finland's oldest and most famous hiking areas during the wondrous nightless night when the sun never sets. Or hike in the autumn when the mountain birch trees, shrubs, and ground cover turn spectacular shades of yellow, red, and orange. In winter you can go cross-country skiing on around 500 kilometres of ski tracks and witness the life-changing display of the aurora borealis, the colourful Northern Lights that dance across the fell tops. Throughout the year there are open day trip huts available for rest stops. Opportunities for mountain biking, winter mountain biking, and snowshoeing are also plentiful in the park.

Trails

Pallas-Yllästunturi National Park is ideal for day hikes. Here are some top picks. The somewhat demanding eight-kilometre-long Taivaskeronkierros Circle Trail leads to the top of the highest fell in the park. At the middle of the hundred-kilometre-long fell chain, the peak of Taivaskero Fell offers a fantastic 360-degree view of unspoiled wilderness.

Ideal for families with small children the three-kilometre-long Varkaankurunpolku Nature Trail leads through a unique green oasis on duck boards. The protected gorge creates an ideal environment for a large variety of plants that are rare at this latitude.

The well-marked 50-kilometre-long Hetta-Pallas Hiking Trail was first laid out in 1934 making it Finland's oldest and a rite of passage for Finnish trekkers. This famous trail passes through the heart of the fell chain from one treeless fell top to the next offering fantastic views throughout its length.

Nature

The hard quartzite fells are what remains of the three-billion-year-old Svekokarelid, a mountain range that once stood as tall as the Alps. The many millennia of ice ages have worn them down to the gently rounded, easy-to-traverse fells they are today.



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This is also a transition zone, southern plant species like the spruce tree reach their northern limit here, and many plants and animals that flourish further north live here too. Bear and elk inhabit the old-growth and virgin taiga forests and aapa mires. In winter the trilling call of the snow-white willow grouse pierces the silence. In early spring, the snow bunting, the official mascot of the national park, returns to nest on the rocky fell tops.

Culture

For thousands of years the indigenous Sámi people followed the herds of reindeer and lived off the land. Much later Finns began to visit the area to take advantage of the rich hunting grounds and fishing waters. Some decided to stay and built small communities in the area. Many realized the value of preserving this unique fell chain and its diverse nature. Plans to create a national park began in 1910 and were finally realized in 1938. The area quickly became a popular destination for hiking and skiing clubs with small hotels and guest houses springing up in the small Lapland villages to accommodate the rising number of tourists. In 2005 a nearby nature reserve was added to the national park doubling its size and putting even more precious fell nature under protection.