

Common gulls and wild pansies.



Harakka in winter.



The island is alive. In the spring, the air is filled with the sounds of gulls and other sea birds. The island's colours remain muted until the chives and biting stonecrops growing in the rocky meadows burst into bloom. After that the island turns green. The island is at its liveliest in early summer, when bird mothers fuss about their young around the clock. In July, the floral splendour is dizzying. The island starts to

dry. As autumn rolls along, the birds migrate south, the green algae recedes from the shores and the autumn foliage changes colour. Flounders glide along the bottom of the ocean into the depths. Now brown and grey in colour, the island gains a chill as it prepares for winter. With the snows come light and unbelievable shades of colour. Field voles leave tracks on the snowbanks. The stars in the night sky grow bright.

Nearly half of the nine hectare island consists of nature reserves, which ensure peaceful nesting conditions for the birds and the preservation of the island's plantlife.



A jellyfish.



On the nature trail.



Opening hours

Harakka Nature Centre is open daily from the start of May to the end of September 10:00–17:00.

The nature house has a range of tools for visitors to borrow, such as binoculars, nets, loops and anemometers.



The nature house.

How to get to the island

Using public transport, you can get closest to the island by tram, getting off at the Kaivopuisto stop (Catholic church). Plan your journey with the help of HSL's journey planner. The ferry departs approximately every 30 minutes from Kaivopuisto waterfront Ullanlinna pier, adjacent to Café Ursula. The white sign at the pier must be raised before departure to indicate that you wish to board the ferry. The ferry timetables can be found on the Environment services website: www.hel.fi/environmentcentre/harakka

Contact information

City of Helsinki Urban Environment Division / Harakka Nature Centre
tel. May–September +358 (0)9 310 32028, +358 (0)9 310 32056
tel. other times +358 (0)9 310 31535
www.hel.fi/environmentcentre/harakka
www.facebook.com/Harakanluontokeskus (in Finnish)
Instagram: [harakanluontokeskus](https://www.instagram.com/harakanluontokeskus)

nature school teacher tel. +358 (0)9 310 31515
environmental educator tel. +358 (0)9 310 31577
environment planner tel. +358 (0)9 310 52256
communication tel. +358 (0)9 32048
team manager tel. +358 (0)9 310 31521
Renting of the Artists' house's meeting facilities and catering for meetings:
island's building caretaker tel. +358 (0)40 413 4355

Helsinki

Harakka

Nature Centre



Information and experiences on an island where nature, culture and history meet.

Harakka Island

Harakka is located off the coast of Helsinki where the Helsinginniemi peninsula extends out and is embraced by sea. The island's atmosphere reflects the closeness of both the city and the outer archipelago. The south side of the island offers an open view of the Gulf of Finland.



The Baltic Sea crashes against the shores.

Old casemates from the 19th century.



Harakka is a former military island of the Finnish Defence Forces, and it was opened to the public in 1989. The buildings on the island date back to when Finland was ruled by Russia, and some are from the time when the island was occupied by the Finnish Defence Forces. The island's current nature house was originally a Russian barracks building built in 1908.

Harakka is a veritable cornucopia of life. The courtyards areas, old embankments, rocky and coastal meadows and small mires offer so many different habitats that there is no other place in the entire Helsinki archipelago with more diverse plant- and birdlife.

The nature centre is powered by renewable energy. Electricity is provided by a small-scale wind turbine and the island's buildings make extensive use of solar power.

A barnacle goose and a view of Kaivopuisto from the island.





A herring gull, a common gull, a great black-backed gull, a lesser black-backed gull and a black-headed gull.

Exhibitions

There are exhibitions detailing the underwater life of the Baltic, the island's nature and the history of the island housed in several buildings on the island. Created as a scientific and artistic collaboration, they highlight the uniqueness and beauty of our sea for everyone to see and experience.

Guided nature hikes and events

Nature hikes are held from early May to the end of September. The subjects of the hikes follow nature's calendar, from the migratory birds of spring to the moonlit nights of late summer. The island also hosts events related to the Baltic Sea and the archipelago for the whole family.

Nature hikes, island adventures, energy tours and occupational wellbeing days are available by request. (subject to fees).

Trails

The island is circled by a one-kilometre-long trail. The routes and points of interest along the nature and geological trails can be found on the mobile map:

<https://citynature.eu/en/helsinki/>



A Nature house

The old barracks building now serves to showcase maritime and archipelago nature. The building also houses facilities for the Harakka Nature School and the Nature Centre's office.

B Aquarium shed

The brackish water aquariums throng with life from the seaweed zone – fish, algae, crustaceans and other creatures.

C Fairy tale house Vellamo

An activity space where children can immerse themselves in the enchanting world under the sea.

D Pier shelter

An exhibition about the history, nature and operation of Harakka and a presentation map of the energy trail.

E Bird watching tower and bunker

Photography exhibition Onnellisten saari ('Island of Joy').

F Artists' house

The Finnish Defence Forces' former chemical research facility now houses artists' workrooms and an environmental chemistry teaching laboratory.

G Telegraph

Rotating exhibitions.

H Bird watching hide

I - IV Casemates

The old munitions storehouses are used as venues for rotating nature and art exhibitions. Casemate III houses a photo exhibition entitled The Internal Scenery of the Sea.

J Small wind turbine

K Caretaker

L Pier

M Viewing point

N Campfire site

WC Toilets

Archipelago nature is delicate, so make sure to

- stay on the marked roads and routes
- not step on or pick any plants
- not disturb the birds – particularly during the nesting season
- leave your dog home.

Peering across the open sea.



Courses, seminars

Nature, environmental and environmental education courses for educators and everyone interested are held on the island.

Nature school

The nature school serves Helsinki-based comprehensive schools, upper secondary schools, teachers, pupils and students. Classes visiting the island can look forward to an exciting day of study, during which they will learn about marine ecology, the state of the environment and conservation of the Baltic Sea.

Children's nautical island adventures

Children get to explore the island nature and the mysterious world of the surrounding sea through play and stories. In the kingdom of Vellamo, their very own nature house, children can don bug suits and experience life under the sea. The island adventures are intended for children between the ages of 4 and 10.

Sea creatures through a microscope.



A flounder.



Harakka Nature Centre

The Nature Centre's services are free of charge unless stated otherwise. More information on the services: www.hel.fi/environmentcentre/harakka

Vellamo, mistress of the sea.

