

## **The Republic of Karelia**

Karelia is one of the most famous Russian territories in international tourism for its unique architectural, cultural and historical objects located on Kizhi, Valaam and Solovetskie islands, which are included in the UNESCO World Heritage List.

The historical and cultural peculiarity of Karelia, which differs it from the other regions of Russia, is made by the cultural heritage of four indigenous populations of Karelians, Finns, Russians and Vepps. Living together for more than ten centuries they've created a unique and original culture.

Karelia is the place of birth of a famous Karelo-Finnish epos "Kalevala" - a literature monument of world significance. Here ancient Karelian and Vepps settlements, which are of great interest for the fans of ethnic tourism, are still kept protected.

Petroglyphs are more than five thousand years old. These are rock carvings created by ancient hunters and fishermen. These are the samples of ancient written language and culture.

Karelia possesses very abundant natural and landscape resources for development of nature-related and ecological tourism. A special place in this respect belongs to nature protected areas, which occupy about one million hectares, or 5,3% of the Republic's total area. The protected areas include natural reserves, national and nature parks, game reserves and monuments of nature. For more information see:

<http://www.ticrk.ru/en>

<http://www.visitpetrozavodsk.ru/en/>

<http://intourist.onego.ru/eng/tourskarelia.html>

## **The City of Petrozavodsk**

Petrozavodsk, the capital of Karelia, is an industrial, scientific and cultural centre of Karelia with a total population of 282 000 inhabitants. The city was founded by Peter the Great as an armaments plant (The city's name means "Peter's Plant") in the period of the Northern War against Sweden (1703). Near the plant grew a settlement which gained the city status in 1777.

Today Petrozavodsk is not only the Republic's centre but also a vital starting point for tourists wishing to experience the Karelian wilderness. The city is situated 400 km from St. Petersburg and 268 km from the Russian-Finnish border on the shore of Lake Onego which makes the city panorama exceptionally beautiful.

Founded on the bank of Lake Onego, the second largest lake in Europe, Petrozavodsk resembles a butterfly. The city districts are scattered along the shore of the Onego like wings of a butterfly. The city attracts not only by its architecture but also amazes by its green parks blossoming in spring and charming with all shades of yellow and red in autumn.

Petrozavodsk is distinguished among other towns of Karelia by its neoclassical architecture which includes the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral (1832) and the ensemble of the Round Square (1775). Now the complex houses the Karelian State Museum of Local Lore which displays the history of the region and its capital as well as its wildlife and ethnographical heritage. The Petrozavodsk Museum of Fine Arts houses a comprehensive collection of Karelian and Russian folk and modern art, West European art and a very interesting collection of Karelian icon painting.

During the Second World War, Petrozavodsk was devastated and it was totally rebuilt after the war. The modern appearance of the city is made of residential and administrative areas of 1950 s- 1980 s. The architecture of Karl Marx Avenue is being protected by the state as a pattern of after-war construction. Among the city landmarks are the outdoor statue to Peter the Great, Gavril Derzhavin, the building of the Petrozavodsk railway station and the open-air museum of modern sculptures made by Karelian sculptors or presented by sister cities of Petrozavodsk from around the world. See also:

<http://www.visitpetrozavodsk.ru/en/info/>

<http://intourist.onego.ru/eng/tourskarelia/daily-excursions-cat/petrozavodsk-city-tour-eng.html>

<http://intourist.onego.ru/eng/tourskarelia/package-tours-cat/silver-ring-eng.html> (Silver ring of Karelia: Valaam + Petrozavodsk + Kizhi + Kivatch + Solovky, 6 days/5 nights)

## **Kizhi Island**

The most remarkable monument of the ancient wooden architecture is the Kizhi ensemble – a group of small islands in the skerries of the southern part of the Zaonezhye region, on one of which the pogost of Kizhi (i.e. the Kizhi enclosure) is located.

The architectural ensemble of Kizhi has served as the foundation for an open-air museum well-known throughout the world. The most significant monuments of old wooden architecture have been moved to this place. Old buildings that were distorted by renovation were restored to their original appearance.

The first mention of a village and churches on Kizhi Island occurred in chronicles four hundred years ago. Beginning with the sixteenth century, Kizhi was the administrative center of a large region (pogost) with a total population of 12.000.

In 1714 the 22-domed Church of the Transfiguration was built with the funds donated by parishioners. In 1764, the Church of the Intercession rose up beside it. The third building of the ensemble is a well-proportioned belfry, which gives the complex balance and completeness. People embodied its idea of the world in these religious constructions. The cathedral, the church and the chapel represent a model of the Universe.

The oldest monument of the museum is the Church of Lazar of Murom. According to the legend, it was built in the latter half of the XVth century on the south-eastern shore of Lake Onego. Dwelling peasant's houses, brought to the territory of the museum in different times, are the unique complex houses, where household and living quarters are under the same roof.

Almost for 250 years fires, antireligious hysteria of 1930ies, wartime (during the last war finnish pilot, striked with the beauty of the cathedral, didn't carry out the order to bomb the island) passed the churches by. In 1966 the pogost was changed into museum.

There is an "alive exposition" in the museum – demonstration of peasant's crafts, trades and folk ceremonies are organized. An ensemble of bell music and Republican children's museum center are working here. For the last time builds guest houses, which help tourists to get closer to the unique combination of wild nature and folk art. See also: [http://kizhi.karelia.ru/index\\_en.html](http://kizhi.karelia.ru/index_en.html)  
<http://www.ticrk.ru/en/gallery.php?docId=8091>  
<http://intourist.onego.ru/eng/tourskarelia/package-tours-cat/silver-ring-eng.html> (Silver ring of Karelia: Valaam + Petrozavodsk + Kizhi + Kivatch + Solovky, 6 days/5 nights)

**How to get to Kizhi.** Going on your own is easy - regular hydrofoils run every day from the River port of Petrozavodsk to Kizhi Island (May 15 - September 30). The trip takes 1 hour and 15 minutes. In summer time the museum is open from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. without breaks and days off. Duration of stay on Kizhi is 3 hours.

## **Male Monastery of Savior and Transfiguration (Valaam)**

Valaam archipelago is located in the northern part of Ladoga Lake. The territory of archipelago has received the status of a national park in 1999. The area of the park is 24,7 thousand hectares, only 3600 hectares of which account for islands. Valaam Island (2800 hectares) is especially notable among them. The island gave its name to both the archipelago and the monastery. For its centuries-old history, dating back to the 10th - 11th centuries, the monastery has created an outstanding architectural complex, which received world fame.

The history of the monastery is full of events, but the main thing, that attracts the attention of tourists, is the nature of Valaam. It is so unique, that in the 19th century Valaam became a peculiar school of landscape painting, in which the graduates of the St.-Petersburg Academy of Fine Arts I. Shishkin, A. Gine, F. Vasiljeva e.t.c. prepared their degree activities. They visited Valaam more than once and have immortalized its landscapes on many pictures, which are nowadays stored in the most known museums of the world.

The nature of Valaam is unusual and beautiful even now. Here mighty pines and fur-trees grow directly on rocks, which are on tens of meters elevated above water, so that the shores sometimes look as an unassailable fortress. In other places, on the contrary, the rocks go under water very slightly and are ironed by ice to the condition of "forheads of mutton". Quite often one can meet stone areas or fine sand beaches here. On many islands usual pines, fur-trees and birches are supplemented by groves and avenues of oak, fir, larch, cedar and many other species brought here by the monks from different regions of country a long time ago. All these plantations have rather a decent age - up to 100-150 years, and even more. All of these creates an impression of a certain botanical oasis on severe northern rocks. The picture is completed with gardens, created by the monks. The gardens are especially beautiful during flowering time.

The main purpose of the park is to keep safe beautiful views of archipelago and with the help of the specially made routes to show tourists both cultural, historical and natural sights of this place.

Architectural decoration of the park and its orthodox relics, which have been created for centuries, are inseparable from the natural beauty of the archipelago. The islands were first inhabited in the 10th century, and then orthodox monks settled there. The monastery they built here was ravaged by swedes in 1611 and was reestablished only in 1715. In 1751 and 1754 all the wood constructions burned down again. From the time of its first revival and prosperity in the 18th-19th centuries churches, bell towers, cells, household and industrial constructions were built; roads laid and dams made. With christian persistence and patience Valaam monks, sensu stricto by hands, created a fertile layer of soils on rocks and grew garden trees, which are remarkable for these places. It is enough to tell, that 1,5 centuries ago on Valaam in the conditions of an unique microclimate water-melons were cultivated in an opened ground.

Central monastery complex made of stones became the semantic dominant of the archipelago. Its construction started in the first decade of the 19th century and was finally completed by architect A.M. Gornostaev in 1845-1862. The central manor consists of the Monastery of the Transfiguration of the Saviour, cells, guest house for pilgrims, sacred gates with the Church of Sts. Peter and Paul, the temples of Assumption and Vivifying Trinity. The Chapel of the Protection, the Church of Reverend Fathers, the Skete of St. Nicholas, the Skete of Alexander of the Svir, the Genthsemene Skete, the Resurrection Skete, the Skete of St. John the Precursos, the Skete of Smolensk Icon and other temple buildings are erected around the central manor. The extended information is on website: <http://valaam.ru/en/>

### **How to get**

Pilgrimage service of the Valaam monastery and many tourist companies of Moscow, Saint-Petersburg and Priladozhje organize visits to the archipelago. From southern Karelia, the gateway to Valaam is the town of Sortavala, about 300 km west of Petrozavodsk. A local bus goes from Petrozavodsk to Sortavala daily. By train from Petrozavodsk, take № 680, whose final destination is Kostomuksha. Once you get to Sortavala it's an easy 15 minute walk from the train station to the boat pier. Head north along the tracks - the direction from which the train comes into the station - until you get to the bridge, then turn right, then right again. Boats and hydrofoil perform regular voyages between Sortavala and Valaam. It takes 3 hours by boat and 45 minutes by hydrofoil. The exact time for each hydrofoil voyage is specified in advance.

See also <http://intourist.onego.ru/eng/tourskarelia/package-tours-cat/silver-ring-eng.html>  
(Silver ring of Karelia: Valaam + Petrozavodsk + Kizhi + Kivatch + Solovky, 6 days/5 nights)

## **Solovetsky Islands**

Solovetsky Monastery is situated in the western part of the White Sea, less than 100 miles from the Polar Circle, and consists of 6 big and many small islands. The biggest is the Greater Solovetsky Island, on which the famous medieval monastery stands.

When visiting Solovetsky Islands, you get acquainted with legendary Monastery buildings and fortress walls and towers, learn the history of the infamous Stalin's prison SLON.

You can see numerous hermitages in different parts of the Island, the monastery drydock, stone labyrinths of prehistoric times, take an exciting boat trip along the intricate canal system of the Island, connecting its largest lakes. The nature wonders of the Island are spectacular, and its botanical garden introduces many plant species. The archipelago is a place of inhabitation of white whales, or belugas, thriving in the wild. A shore-based whalewatching or boat whalewatching is a never-to-be forgotten experience.

### **History of the island**

The habitation of the Karelian coast of the White Sea began in the 12-13th centuries when fishermen and hunters from Novgorod settled down in this area. Monks were the next to move there. Local inhabitants new about the Islands in the sea, and told about it to the old monk Savvaty. Savvaty at that time was looking for loneliness after the death of his teacher Kiril Belozersky and travelled in the north of Russia. For some time he lived in Valaam Monastery, but found it overcrowded and went away far to the north. In 1429, he reached the Solovetsky Islands.

Savvaty was later respected as the pioneer on the Islands, but it was not him who established the monastery. In 1436, Zosima, a son of rich parents lived on the shore of the Lake Onego (near Kizhi). One day he decided to devote the rest of his life to monkery and gave out all his property to poor men. Zosima and his team of followers landed on The Solovetsky Islands and established a monastery.

Until to the middle of the 16th century the Solovetsky monastery was alike other small-sized monasteries in the north. But in 1549 the Monastery got a new leader Phillip, who was an energetic and outstanding person. Under his leadership the Monastery started building stone temples, new roads, canals to connect it numerous lakes.

That time the Monastery began to play an important role in the defense of the north of Russia. In 1582-1594 a new fortress was erected on the Island by monks upon the order of Tzar. It was built of huge boulders and became one of the biggest and most powerful Russian fortresses. For many centuries the fortress and its garrison guarded the border.

In the middle of the 17th century, the Monastery's political and moral influence on Russian life became very strong. And that time the Monastery authorities started to resist the religious reforms of the Russian Church supported by Tzar. Peace negotiations gave no results and Tzar sent army forces to punish the rebels. It was time of the famous "Solovetsky siege" (1668-1676). The strong and well equipped army managed to capture the Monastery only with the help of a traitor in January 1676. The punishment was very cruel and many monks were executed. This was the only time in the Monastery's history when it was occupied.

Another military attack took place in 1854. It was the time of the Crimean War. On 6th of July 1854, two British 60-cannon frigates "Brisk" and "Miranda" approached the Island. The skirmish started. The ships made about 1800 shoots at the monastery within 9 hours. The surprising result was that there were no human casualties after such an intensive fire and only a few buildings were slightly damaged.

Solovetsky Monastery was often used as a prison for criminals and heretics. In 1923, a infamous prison SLON (Solovetsky Camp of Special Purpose) was set up. Hundreds of thousands prisoners were kept on the Island. They suffered badly and many of them died. The prison was closed in the 1939.

Since 1965 the restoration works in the Solovetsky Kremlin has been going on. In 1974 Solovetsky museum was opened.

How to get: Boat from Kem or Belomorsk

See also: <http://intourist.onego.ru/eng/tourskarelia/package-tours-cat/solovki-tour.html>  
or <http://intourist.onego.ru/eng/tourskarelia/package-tours-cat/silver-ring-eng.html> (Silver ring of Karelia: Valaam + Petrozavodsk + Kizhi + Kivatch + Solovky, 6 days/5 nights)

## **Kivach Waterfall**

Kivach waterfall is the second (after The Rhine Waterfalls in Switzerland) largest plain waterfall in Europe. The height is 10.7 metres. The waterfall is situated on the Suna River in central Karelia. Surrounding it is the Kivach Reserve. Nature Reserve "Kivatch", founded in 1932, is one of the oldest in Russia. The territory of 10880 ha unites all the landscapes that you can meet in Karelia, 197 species of birds, 48 mammals, 18 species of fish and 569 plants including the famous Karelian Birch.

The name of the waterfall derives either from a Finnish word "Kivi" (stone) or from a Karelian word "Kivas" (snow mountain). The waterfall is incredibly beautiful and majestic. The river water pressed by the basalt cliffs collapses down from the 10 meters slope onto the rocks, creating a powerful foamy whirlpool and making a lot of noise. There is a Karelian legend about two sister rivers — Suna and Shuya, which didn't want to part from each other and ran alongside. One day Suna let her sister have the more convenient channel and went to take a rest. When she woke up she found that Suna had rushed a long way ahead so she ran to catch up with her, sweeping everything off on its way. So in the place where Suna smashed stones and cliffs, the waterfall appeared.

Kivach is the most famous waterfall of Karelia. It is G.R. Derzhavin — the first governor of the Olonetsky district and an outstanding poet – who dedicated it his famous ode “Waterfall”. The Kivach Falls has been repeatedly described by many poets, artists and prose writers. The most renowned visitor to this place was Emperor Alexander II. In view of that a good road, a bench on the right bank, a lodging house on the left and a bridge over the Suna River were built. Nowadays, Kivach is one of the most popular places to visit in Karelia. The waterfall and the unique nature reserve welcome up to 30—40 thousand people annually. See also: [http://www.ticrk.ru/en/regions/region\\_8071/sights/8270.html](http://www.ticrk.ru/en/regions/region_8071/sights/8270.html)

## **Martsialnye Vody (Marcial Waters)**

Martsialnye Vody, or the Waters of Mars, is the oldest spa in Russia. Its special treatments are very popular among local visitors which come here to enjoy the healing power of sulfur-smelling mud as well as lovely scenery. The health resort is situated about 50 km away from Petrozavodsk.

This spa is a remarkable place whose history goes back to the tsar Peter I, who was its founder. Having learnt about the unbelievable qualities of the spring, Peter I issued the decree of establishing a health spa “Martsialnye Vody” and creating special rules for the water usage. The area became a huge construction place, with three wooden palaces for the tsar and his family. The tsar himself paid the spa a healing visit several times and many of Russian officers followed his example over the years as well.

Unfortunately, only one building has survived since those times. The Church of the Apostles Peter and Paul, built by order of Peter I in 1721, was preserved in its original form. There is also the historical museum of the first Russian resort. Nowadays the resort is well known not only in Karelia but throughout Russia. For more information see: [http://www.ticrk.ru/en/regions/region\\_8071/sights/9643.html](http://www.ticrk.ru/en/regions/region_8071/sights/9643.html)

## **Ruskeala Marble Quarry**

The Ruskeala quarry is a memorial of nature and mining. It is situated in 24 km to the north from Sortavala. The marble has been extracted since XVIII century, it was used to decorate many architectural masterpieces of Saint Petersburg. Within the period between 1769 and 1830 200 thousand tons of marble was extracted here.

The most interesting is the Marble Canyon. This is the oldest quarry, now totally flooded with river water. The Ruskeala marble was used for the decoration Kazanskiy and Isakievskiy cathedrals in St-Petersburg. Once you are in Saint Petersburg, take the time to see the Primorskaya and Ladozhskaya metro stations. Interestingly, their grayish-green and light gray walls are also decorated with the Ruskeala marble.

Currently, the main pit of the Ruskeala quarry with its remnants of the entries and mines are considered to be the memorial of industrial culture (mining) of the late 18th - early 19th centuries. The quarry (its length is 450 metres, width - 60, and depth - 30) is flooded to the level of the upper underground horizon. On its side, just half a metre below the water level, one can see the tunnel openings. Those are the Finns who decided to flood it before the onset of the Soviet-Finnish war in 1939-1940. On the bottom there lie cranes, cars, motorcycles, which still attract divers.

See also: [http://www.ticrk.ru/en/regions/region\\_8069/settlement\\_8132/sights/8250.html](http://www.ticrk.ru/en/regions/region_8069/settlement_8132/sights/8250.html)