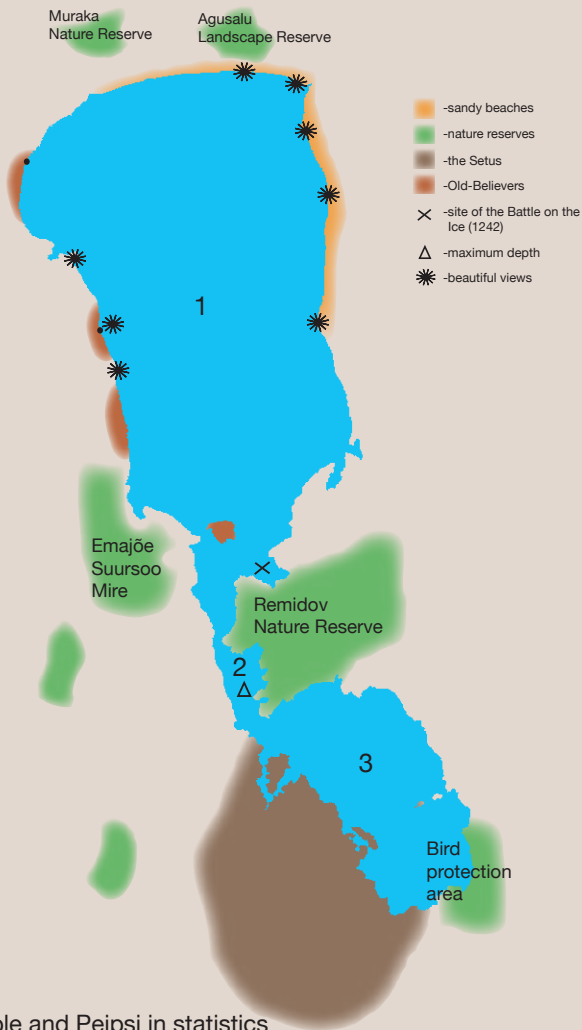


# PEOPLE ON THE SHORES OF LAKE PEIPSI - THE PAST AND TODAY

PEIPSI GUIDE





## People and Peipsi in statistics

Total area of the Lake Peipsi region ~9300 km <sup>2</sup>
East-Peipsi area (Russian Federation) ~5000 km <sup>2</sup>
West-Peipsi area (Republic of Estonia) ~4300 km <sup>2</sup>
<b>Population</b>
1970 - 97 000 people

West-Peipsi area 57 000 people (58,6%)
East-Peipsi area 40 000 people (41,4%)
<b>2004 – West-Peipsi area ~38 287 people</b>
<b>Largest towns</b>
Republic of Estonia: Mustvee, Kallaste, Räpina
Russian Federation: Oudova, Pechory (Petseri)

Area of the lake	3555 km <sup>2</sup>
1 Lake Peipsi proper (Peipsi Suurjärv)	2611 km <sup>2</sup>
2 Lake Lämmijärv	236 km <sup>2</sup>
3 Lake Pskov	708 km <sup>2</sup>
3 within the Republic of Estonia	44%
3 within the Russian Federation	56%
total length	143 km
width	49 km

Average depth	7,1 m
Maximum depth	15,3 m
Average water volume	25 km <sup>3</sup>
Number of islands	35
Number of rivers, streams flowing into the lake	237
in Estonia	41
outflowing river	Narva River
largest river	Velikaya River

## Lake Peipsi

Lake Peipsi, located on the eastern border of Estonia, has very significantly affected the life of the people living on the shore. The lake has fed them, enabled movement and has been the natural defender of the local kinfolk. Peipsi is an ancient place-name of local settlers. However, the Slavs who reached Lake Peipsi in the middle of the first millennium, attributed their own name to the lake – Lake Chudskoe – Чудское озеро, the first name being more common.

Peipsi is the second largest lake in Europe and the largest transboundary body of water. The greatest richness of Lake Peipsi is the water, the quality of which is estimated to be relatively high. Not only is the Peipsi water needed for keeping the Narva Hydroelectric Power Plant in operation and cooling the boilers of Estonian and Baltic Thermal Power Plants – the lake also has great perspective as a drinking water potential for North-East Estonia. Sand and lake-mud can be mentioned as relevant earth deposits. Mineral water is found within the whole of the Lake Peipsi basin, the most well known deposit being located in Värskä. However, mineral water is also found in Alatskivi, Mehikoorma, Kuningaküla, Põlva and Võru.

Being so sizeable, the lake naturally has a remarkable impact on the local climate. In autumn, the weather stays warmer longer than average, whereas spring appears about two weeks later. Peipsi is considered one of the best fish lakes in Europe, with 37 species present in these waters – thus, more than half of Estonian fish species have been represented here. Similarly, the lake is rich in birds: 232 species of birds have been observed on the water surface and in the close vicinity of the lake, 175 of the different species also nest here.



*Lake Peipsi shore in Kallaste (2001)*

## The People

Lake Peipsi was inhabited as early as during the Middle Stone Age. Over the centuries, the mainly fishery-based lifestyle has caused the development of very original subcultures. Estonians, Russian Old Believers, Russian Orthodox and the Setus have traditionally been living on the western side of the lake.



*The Setus (beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century)*

The Russian coast is now prevalingly inhabited by Russians, but the region of historical Novgorod used to be the primeval home for a number of Finno-Ugric peoples (e.g. the Votians, Izhorians). Today, the population in the area of Lake Peipsi is ever decreasing.

The northern shore of Peipsi has developed into a holiday area of Eastern Virumaa, with its centre in Kauksi. Ancient villages have been changed into summer homes. A number of traditional settlements have been preserved along the shoreline in Jõgeva and Tartu Counties, including the towns of Mustvee and Kallaste and some villages of Old-Believers, with their infrastructure and lifestyle established during the course of centuries.

### The Old-Believers

In the area of Mustvee town and the 7 km long section of line-villages (the villages of Raja, Kükita, Tiheda and Kasepää of the Kasepää rural municipality, Jõgeva County) live the Fedossejevtsy who have accepted today's lifestyle, but are more strict in their religious matters. A monastery which was unofficially operating during Soviet times and where Gavriil Frolov, the famous founder of the Iconostasis painting school, once lived and worked, has been well preserved in the village of Raja.

The Pomors – famous onion growers – with a more archaic lifestyle - are settled in the Peipsiääre rural municipality, Tartu County, along the 8 km long line-village area, comprising Varnja,



*The Old-Believers*

Kasepää, Sohvia and Kolkja (Kolki) villages. Old-Believers also live on Piirissaar, an island in lake Peipsi, where an archaic lifestyle is particularly genuine.

The areas to the south of the Emajõgi River mouth are settled by Estonians and the Setu people.

### **The Setus**

Setumaa is a unique cultural community, generated because of being located in the periphery and staying separate for a long time. Faith and an administrative border separated the Setus from Livonia, and their language, mind and customs detached them from the Russians. If elsewhere in Estonia, habits and holidays were determined by the Lutheran Church, then in Setumaa, it is the role of the Orthodox religion. Likewise, Russian influences may be noticed in the material culture of the Setus. The main source of subsistence has been agriculture. Setumaa is the place where a number of ancient nature-related traditions have mixed and are still followed today– abundant usage of timber and clay. In everyday life, the regional (clerical) feasts have been preserved,



*The Setus at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century*

the celebration of which is only characteristic to this locality. Setu folk costumes, with plentiful jewellery, are still worn during important celebrations, similarly, the tradition of presenting and bequeathing jewellery is still preserved. The Setu people also have several national dishes and eating traditions, known only in this particular region.

Unfortunately, the preservation of the specificity of all the above-mentioned places is jeopardised by decreasing fish resources in Lake Peipsi and the disappearance of fishing as a source of subsistence.

**The eastern shore** of the lake is the border area with Russia and therefore hard to access. The Remidov Nature Reserve has been founded in this area, aimed at the protection of nature and wildlife. The main tourist sites on the Russian side of the lake are the monastery of Pechory (Petseri) and the city of Pskov (Pihkva). Beautiful sandy beaches in the eastern part of the Peipsi area are located north of the mouth of the Oudova (Tsherma) River, at Lake Lämmijärv in the vicinity of Raigla and near Petschki, at Lake Pskov. However, the proximity of the border and lack of roads and infrastructure prevent them from becoming popular resort areas.

## Activities

During the course of time, the economy near Lake Peipsi has been enhanced and altered. Industry and trading developed during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Vegetable growing and several branches of craftsmanship were furthered beside fishing and land cultivation, a part of the population were temporarily employed in other regions. A number of Old-Believers' villages made their income by the means of chickory farming.



*Fisherman Vidrik Rosin (1923)*



*Buying up chickory (1923)*

Natural preconditions for land cultivation are not the same everywhere. The least suitable areas for arable crops include the swampy river basins of Zheltsha and Tshornaya, wide areas in Oudova (Gdov) region, in the mouth of the Emajõgi River, Alutaguse and Palumaa.

Cattle-breeding is the main source of subsistence in the more



*Kasepää shore (1923)*

fertile areas in southern and western parts of Lake Peipsi. Potato farming is widely spread and, in the area of Mustvee and Kulje, vegetable growing is very common.

Agricultural products are mainly processed in Tartu and Pskov. In many towns, light industry is well developed and the local wood reserve is also being utilised.



*Recreational fishermen (2002)*



The conditions for developing fish farming, however, are most favourable. More than 1,200 professional fishermen are employed in the Peipsi area, added to by a couple of thousand shoreline inhabitants and a large number of recreational fishermen.

*Onion sorting (2001)*



*Onion beds in Varnja village (2002)*



Peipsi järv

Chudskoye ozero

Pskovskoye ozero

PÕLVA

VÕRU

VECHORY

GDOV

SLAV



## 10 places where to go

### Vasknarva

Vasknarva is situated near the beginning of the Narva River – the river bordering Estonia and Russia. Here are the ruins of a 14<sup>th</sup> –15<sup>th</sup> century castle and an Orthodox Church of the prophet Elias, together with a recently established monastery. The largest in Estonia – the Alutaguse forests – spread from the western swampy coasts of the Narva River, among them, the primeval Poruni forest, now under protection.

Old river meanders in the mouth of the Jaama (Struuga) River and periodically flooding grasslands are essential nesting and resting areas for birds.



*Prophet Elias Orthodox Church and the monastery (2002)*

### Kauksi and Rannapungerja

Shore escarpments, the “singing” dunes up to 20 m high with pine forests covering the sand are the pearls of the landscape in Kauksi area. The most beautiful beaches of the Peipsi shore extend to a length of 20 kilometres, with good bathing opportunities and hiking trails.

The Rannapungerja River, with white and yellow water lilies, meandering in the valley between the forests, offers many spectacular views. A lighthouse is situated near the river mouth. This area is the favourite place of recreational fishermen.



*Kauksi beach (2002)*

### Mustvee

Mustvee, a town with nearly 2,000 inhabitants, was granted the right of township in 1938. An interesting phenomenon – there are churches of four different faiths in the town (Orthodox, Lutheran, Old-Believers’ and that of the religious group Odnoverjy).

As early as during the 14<sup>th</sup> century, this locality was well known as a fishing location. For local Russians, fishing has often been the only source of income, with minor support obtained from handicraft and trading. Estonians, however, were also engaged in land cultivation.



*Fishermen in the vicinity of Mustvee (1923)*



*A fisherman (2002)*

## Kallaste and the Old-Believers' villages

The town of Kallaste, with 1,300 inhabitants, mainly of Russian ethnic origin, is located on the approximately 2 km-long western shoreline of the lake, on a red sandstone steep of up to 8 metres high. This is the section of Lake Peipsi, most densely populated with birds – more than a thousand Sand Martins nest on a 200-metres-long sandstone outcrop. This colony of Sand Martins is one of the largest in Estonia. In earlier days, more than 2000 pairs of these birds have nested in this location.



*Varnja village (2002)*



*A village street near Peipsi (1923)*

The community of Russian Old-Believers customarily lives in lengthy street-like ribbon villages, which may be many kilometres long. The houses are located along both sides of the only street and are notable for their architecture – the living rooms, auxiliary premises and the animal barn share the same roof. There is an icon in every house and a spade in the yard. The lake provides the village people with fish and the hotbeds with onion and vegetables. The long and straight, manually dug onion beds are quite a sight in summer, so are the huge onion piles in autumn.

Orthodox and Old-Believers' congregations operate in Varnja.

### Nina

Ice drifts on Lake Peipsi can sometimes seem like an earthquake. In 2002, a house-sized ice hummock caused a lot of harm in Nina village – damaged houses, knocked over stone fences, rooted out old trees and carried away a boat pier.

The vicinity of the lighthouse in the Nina village is one of the best inland places for watching migrating seabirds. The Protection of the Virgin Mary Orthodox Church, remarkable in its classicist style, is also located here.



*Ice hummock in the Nina village (2002)*

## Piirissaar island

The majority of islands on Lake Peipsi belong to Russia. In addition to the Piirissaar island, there are only tiny islets within the Estonian territory. One of the smallest islets on the lake is Salosaar.



*The church on Piirissaar island (2001)*

The second largest island – Piirissaar – separates Lake Peipsi proper (Peipsi Suurjärv) and Lake Lämmijärv, and draws a borderline between Estonia and Russia. The entire island is a landscape reserve, outstandingly rich in species, being particularly interesting with regard to frogs and birds. Piirissaar is a unique ethnic-cultural region with approximately 100 inhabitants. A small church of the Old-Believers is also situated on the island.

## Emajõe Suursoo Mire and Praaga

The Suursoo Mire at the mouth of the Emajõgi River is the fifth largest mire complex in Estonia. The area comprises 80 mire islands and 8 dark-watered lakes, the largest being Koosa (285 ha), Kalli (176 ha) and Leegu (84 ha) lakes. Most of the area is a treeless mire. Sporadically, low-growing birches and willows form sparse brushwood. The Emajõe Suursoo Mire is a wetland and a bird area of international importance.

Praaga is a distinctive settlement, accessible only by way of water. Due to frequent floods, the houses are built on stakes and households are connected with each other with the help of wooden board paths, resting on poles.



*Praaga village in the mouth of the River Emajõgi (2002)*

## The islands

All the 35 islands on Peipsi are mainly located in the southern part of the lake, in Lake Lämmijärv and Lake Pskov. The largest islands are Kolpino (11,1 km<sup>2</sup>), located in the Väraska inlet, Piirissaar (7,5 km<sup>2</sup>) and Kamenka (4 km<sup>2</sup>), located in the western part of Lake Pskov. The Talabski islands near the eastern shore of Lake Pskov are quite specific, comprising the islands of Talabek or Zalit, Verkhni or Belov and the little Talabenets islet between them.



Lake Peipsi has a great perspective as a tourism and recreation area, with deposits of mineral water and treatment mud providing an added value. There are a number of locations suitable for holidays near Lake Peipsi. For example, the northern shore with sandy beaches open to the midday sun, favourable bathing and swimming opportunities as the picturesque pine forests provide protection against the northern winds, and good accessibility. The potential of Lake Peipsi as a trade and transport route is far from being exhausted.

The natural values of Lake Peipsi and the vicinity oblige us to carefully monitor and protect the state of the lake. The currently uniforming lifestyle in Europe has made people value traditional distinctive features of different regions. The lifestyle in the Lake Peipsi area is in many ways specific, proceeding not only from fishing as a source of subsistence but also from natural conditions and relevant restrictions. The shores of the lake are often bare and windy, thus enabling only certain types of economic activities and setting limitations for the structure of buildings.

Text written by Virve Tuubel.

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