

FINLANDIA FOUNDATION  
SUOMI CHAPTER

# FINNOVATIONS

PROMOTING FINNISH HERITAGE FROM THE  
EVERGREEN STATE TO THE GOLDEN STATE



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Cover Photo: A tram stopping at Aleksanterinkatu, a popular shopping area in Helsinki, Finland.



**"Sibelius:  
Seven Symphonies  
Seven Cigars  
and Seven Wrinkles."**

## Finlandia Foundation Suomi Chapter: Our Anniversary Year!

This year we celebrate our first ten years as a chapter for Finlandia Foundation National. When we joined FFN, our national organization, there were 38 chapters, today there are 58 across the country. Some 7,000 members altogether.

Our mission statement reads: To support the Finnish culture, heritage and language in our local area. I think we have done this well within the past 10 years. We began with four founding members and have grown to a sixty member organization. Our organization serves communities in Whatcom county and the surrounding Skagit and Island counties where folks have joined this important northwestern chapter of FFN.

During these ten years we have been able to bring various choirs from Finland not only to perform in Bellingham but on the whole West Coast. The Helsinki Policemen Choir in 2006, Helsinki School of Economics Male Choir in 2010, and last but not least The Singing Fellows of Viipuri in 2017, the second oldest Men's Choir, which celebrated their 125 Anniversary tour here on the West Coast.

Besides the choirs we had the pleasure of inviting and hosting the City Orchestra of Vaasa, Finland to perform in 2009. We have had the pleasure of organizing concerts for Janne Mertanen, Chopin Interpreter, Olli Hirvonen, Jazz guitarist, Kati Valimaa, violinist and Marja Kaisla, pianist, performing in Bellingham and during the Vappu concert in Seattle. All of these folks have been named POY and are graduates of the famous Sibelius

Academy of Finland. Music knows no borders and Bellingham has become a destination for hosting high quality Finnish musicians and performers.

Also it is important to note that our own youth orchestra, North Star Chamber Orchestra, with Maestro Sharyn Peterson, visited Finland three summers ago and performed in Vaasa and the surrounding city of Pohjanmaa as a guest of Vaasa's own Kuula Institute.

Our publication, Finnovations reaches some 500 FF members, mainly on the West Coast and even some copies are found on the table of the Finnish President and cabinet members of the Finnish Parliament. Our publication brings up the issues from our fatherland/motherland mixed with local events related to local and distant Finnish activities.

A sincere thank you to everyone who has supported us for these first ten years. May the next ten years be as beneficial as the first ten to promote our beautiful and lovely native land, Finland!

Yours in Sisu spirit!  
Tapio Holma

***Editor's Note: Please enjoy some photographs celebrating the last 10 years of Finlandia Foundation Suomi Chapter!***



*The Helsinki Policeman Choir Visits Bellingham in 2006.*



*The Helsinki School of Economics Male Choir performs in 2010.*



*Above Two Photographs: The North Star Chamber Orchestra, with Maestro Sharyn Peterson.*



*Prof Toikka, creator of bird arts, Nuutajarvi  
Factory visit to Washington.*



*Finland's Honorary Consul for WA State, Matti  
Suokko with his wife and the Holmas.*



*Former Bellingham Mayor Mark Asmundsen in  
Helsinki Harbor.*



*The North Star Youth Symphony with Maestro Sharyn  
Peterson Performing at the Sibelius Anniversary Concert  
at Mt. Baker Theater in 2015.*



*Finlandia Foundation National President Ossi  
Rahkonen with Tapio Holma.*



*Concert Pianist Janne Mertanen.*



*The Singing Fellows of Viipuri for their 125th  
Anniversary Tour on the west coast.*



*Soloist Kati Valimaa from Sibelius Academy at  
our Anniversary concert.*

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## Women Under 35 Run Finland as World's Youngest Leader Takes Office

HELSINKI (Reuters) - Thirty-four-year-old Social Democrat Sanna Marin took office in Finland on Tuesday as the world's youngest serving prime minister, heading a coalition with four other parties led by women, all but one of them under 35.

Marin won the confidence of parliament with 99 votes in favour and 70 against. She replaced Antti Rinne, who resigned last week after the Centre Party, one of the members of governing centre-left coalition, said it had lost confidence in him over his handling of a postal strike.

"I want to build a society in which every child can become anything and in which every human being can live and grow old with dignity," Marin wrote on Twitter.

The new cabinet takes over in the middle of labor unrest and a wave of strikes which have halted production at some of Finland's largest companies for three days.

"It is my great pleasure to congratulate the new Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin. Finland has truly taken the gender issues to the next level: all coalition parties are now led by women!" tweeted new European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen.

Twelve ministers in the new cabinet are



women and just seven are men. The head of the Centre Party, Katri Kulmuni, 32, becomes finance minister, Green Party leader Maria Ohisalo, 34, continues as interior minister and the Left Alliance's chairwoman Li Andersson, 32, remains education minister.

Despite outward shows of harmony, divisions remain between the main coalition partners, Marin's Social Democrats and the Centre Party. Marin will struggle to defend her leftist views against the Centre Party, which wants action to boost Finnish employment to pay for the costly welfare state.

Centre Party chairwoman Kulmuni defended her decision to force out Rinne, accusing him of having taken the employees' side in recent labor market disputes when he should have remained neutral. "It became sort of a habit to flag in advance in favor of one side, in matters which should be dealt with cool impartiality," Kulmuni wrote in a long post on Facebook. Marin said recreating trust between the coalition partners was one of her first tasks. "It demands discussion, a direct one," she said.

**-Adapted From an Article on  
[Reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com)**

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## President's Message

Are you thinking about building a sauna? When my kids were young they lobbied heavily for me to build a sauna for our backyard in early 90s. I told them that it's just impossible in our budget to come with \$5,000 to build one. "Hey Dad, no Xmas presents, no birthday presents; let's build a sauna." This was their sales tactic for loosening some money from the budget.

Building a sauna reached another high pressure situation again in mid 90s when I built a 10'X8' cedar shed in the backyard with my kids. I managed to keep it as a shed just barely, because we had plans to add on to our house and include a sauna into that addition. We ended up cutting out the plan with another bathroom along with sauna section from the addition; budget problems struck again.

My poor kids ended up growing up without a sauna in their house. They were very familiar with them, because we were able to visit Finland often. We even sent our older two kids by themselves to Finland for a month the summer after they finished their 4th and 2nd grade.

Straight Finnair Charter flight from Vancouver to Helsinki. Both of our sons spent an year in Finland after graduating from high school, too.

We ended up building a sauna finally in 2009, after all three of our kids had moved out on their own. My daughter's family is building a sauna of their own in their backyard this summer (they bought the Harvia Heater in Portland at Finlandia

Sauna just like I did). My sons are thinking about it.

Now I am one of the millions (7) of Finns and their descendants worldwide who think their sauna is the best. My sauna is a free standing building in our backyard with a garden shed attached to it. Next to the sauna is an outdoor shower with only the cold water piped to it, which may sound a little crazy unless your toes are sweating from the Löyly.



I am using it 4-5 times a week, my wife Bobbi twice a week. My sauna is the best because of the fresh air intake and general ventilation is done correctly. I will never run out of oxygen. The outdoor shower is the kicker and so much cheaper than living on the lake or on the Chuckanut.

I am excited about retiring from a 31 year career at P66 Ferndale Refinery this spring. I have recently bought a travel trailer and am ready to go. My first trip will be to Carlsbad Caverns National Park in New Mexico. On the way there I am going to stop by General Sherman at Sequoia National Park to give him a hug. After that I'll be camping in my trailer at my son's house in Dillon, CO until him or the HOA kicks me out.

I will also be retiring from the presidential duties of Finlandia Foundation Suomi Chapter. I'll be joining the army of ex-presidents on the board and excited to be able to vote in the meetings (as a president I never got to vote, because we were never in a tie situation).

I'll be causing ruckus, because I'm tight with your membership money, just like I am with my own. Luckily we have some smart people on the board with a broader view on things, because I made a mistake in the 90s not building my sauna then.

See you at one of the parties this year!

**-Pasi Virta**  
**FFSC President**

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## Planning a Move to Finland?

Then you're in good luck! Your source of comprehensive information on Finland, in many languages, is [InfoFinland.fi](http://InfoFinland.fi).



**infoFinland.fi**

InfoFinland provides all of the important information you need to know before you arrive in the country. The service contains useful tips about everyday life in Finland and helpful descriptions of the health care system, working life, studying and more.

The InfoFinland website is published by the City of Helsinki and is funded by the participating municipalities and the state.

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## The First Uranium Mine In Finland

In early February, the Finnish government granted a permit to start mining and refining uranium at its mine in eastern Finland. This permit will allow a majority state-owned mining company to become the first miner to extract uranium on a commercial scale in the country. Talvivaara ("Winter Mountain," *vaara* also means "danger") mine in Kainuu went bankrupt due to environmental pollution. In 2015, Terrafame acquired this nickel mine.

Last Summer, Finland's radiation and nuclear safety authority STUK issued a thumbs up recommendation to Terrafame. It plans to recover uranium from ore in the nickel mine and enrich it into yellowcake, a semi-finished uranium oxide product to fuel nuclear power plants. Terrafame has already invested 75 million euros (\$82.5 million) in its uranium recovery plant in Sotkamo, with another 10 million euros to bring it operational.

Olkiluoto 3 (*olki* = straw, *luoto* = a rocky island, or skerry) is expected to start producing power next Winter. This nuclear power plant is located in southern Finland, and is the first plant in about 40 years.

To store the spent nuclear waste, Finland has started digging a very deep tunnel in the solid rock layer. It is going to be one the deepest tunnels in the world.

**-By Asko Hamalainen**

## Full Circle

A high school class ring lost in Portland, Maine in 1973 was recently found buried in a forest in Finland. How the ring got there may never be known. Debra McKenna, 63, said her boyfriend Shawn McKenna, who she later married, gave her his ring when he went away to college. McKenna said she took the ring off while at a department store in Portland and forgot to put it back on. She said she went back to get the ring, but it was already gone.

She pretty much forgot about the ring until last month when a man found the ring in Finland. Marko Saarinen was using a metal detector in a forest when he found the ring beneath several inches of dirt. Saarinen posted a picture of the ring on Morse High School's class of 1973 Facebook page.



It didn't take long for the alumni association to identify who the ring belonged to. McKenna said she and her husband had a wonderful life together until he passed away in 2017 after a battle with cancer.

“He’s telling me to get my act together. To get going with the rest of my life,” McKenna told the Bangor Daily News.



## Finlandia Foundation Suomi Chapter Membership Form

JOIN US!!! Or RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

DUES: Single: \$25/yr, Couples/Family: \$30/yr,

Supporting: \$50/yr, Lifetime: \$300

**NEW! Student \$10/yr**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone/Email \_\_\_\_\_

Dues Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Newsletter donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_

My donation to FFSC \_\_\_\_\_

Grant & Scholarship \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please check here if you **DO NOT** wish to be acknowledged as Donor to FFSC

I would like to see my chapter support the following: \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to volunteer  New/returning member  Renewal

Dues and donations are tax deductible. We are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization

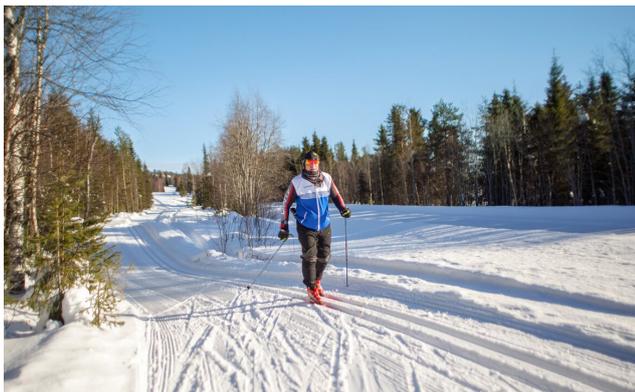
Return this form with your dues in the enclosed envelope to:

Finlandia Foundation Suomi Chapter - P.O. Box 2544 Bellingham WA 98227

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## The Best Way to See Finland? Ski Finland.

*Author and political consultant Stuart Stevens loves a good sufferfest, so he couldn't resist Border to Border: 420 kilometers of nordic sliding through a country that defines what winter is all about.*



We left Mora at 2 A.M. with snow falling, headed for the Arctic Circle. Mora was Mora, Sweden, the small town that's famous as the end point of the 90-kilometer Vasaloppet, the oldest and largest race in cross-country skiing. I first completed it back in the 1980s, when I was making a film with National Geographic about doing, in a single year, all the races in the European series known as the Worldloppet. One of the sponsors was Karhu skis, which also sponsored the Swedish marathon team that dominated the race circuit that year.

Out of pity for my sad skiing ability, Karhu asked the team's coach, Kjell Kratz, to help me out, and we've been close friends ever since. Over the decades, Kjell's red house, which is a short walk from the finish line of the Vasaloppet, has become a second home for me.

A few years ago, I heard about an event in Finland called Border to Border. The idea seemed irresistibly loony: a 420-kilometer cross-country ski all the way across Finland, from the Russian line to the Swedish line. Border to Border had been held every March for more than 30 years, run by volunteers, never advertised or commercialized, just one of those wild challenges that attracts a self-selecting group of ski nuts.

I signed up and was trying to figure out the best way to get there from Mora when Kjell, who was then 76, announced that he was going too and that we would drive. "That'll take us two days, right?" I said. It was about 750 miles away, and Mora was just south of the Arctic Circle. Kjell eyed me with a look of disappointment that I'd come to know well. "Two days?" he said. "It is nothing."

Which is how we ended up leaving Mora in the middle of the night, heading north to Lapland. Kjell is a famously fast driver. One time, near the start of the Vasaloppet, he dropped me off to stay with a friend. Her husband, a renowned Swedish race-car driver, saw Kjell roaring away, came into the house wide-eyed, and asked, "Who was that lunatic?"



We drove up the eastern coast of Sweden, the sun rising over frozen pieces of the Baltic. We arrived just after dark at a cluster of buildings deep in the woods, buried in snow. The place was called the Oivanki Outdoor Education Centre.

About 30 skiers were there, most on the older side, and they had the lean and perpetually tired look of endurance devotees who'd probably pushed their bodies too hard.

A few very fit-looking younger women—Americans and Canadians, as it turned out—studied posted maps that showed each day's route. They described the first day, tomorrow, as an "easy warm-up." It was 42 kilometers, with a long climb.

Later that night, after I'd taken a sauna—in Finland there's always a sauna—I stepped out and looked at a frozen lake, glistening in the reflected glow of the moonlight. A short dock led to a ladder descending into a hole in the ice. I stood there sweating, the snow falling softly, and knew there was no place in the world I'd rather be.

The next morning, we bussed a short distance to a trailhead near the Russian border. Kjell had followed the bus in his Volvo; now he studied the snow with the concentration of a bomb maker soldering wires to a detonator. I'd brought two pairs of skis. One was prepped with Start wax tape, a magical application that went on like masking tape and delivered shockingly good results in a wide variety of conditions. The other was treated with standard Start hard waxes for cold weather (Kjell was a Start rep and viewed all other waxes with suspicion).



Conditions this morning: ten degrees Fahrenheit, with a projected high of fifteen. "Perfect skiing weather," Kjell announced, but I knew he would say that of anything short of rain. He handed me the hard-waxed skis and announced solemnly, "These will work."

He was right, of course. When you're a mediocre skier, there's a certain magic to having perfectly waxed skis—it's as if you changed running shoes and suddenly started knocking off miles two minutes faster.

In the Border to Border ski, inevitably, the first five or so kilometers were across a frozen lake. Finland is not known for visual extremes, breathtaking vistas, or high peaks. Mostly it's marked by endless expanses of forests, lakes, rivers, rolling hills, small towns, and neat farms. During Border to Border, there was no hint of spring at all.

We started our ski on a track made by volunteers who used a snowmobile dragging a weighted sled. Around midmorning, we connected with the beautifully groomed trails of the Ruka system.

For a groupie like me, skiing in the Ruka system was like trotting onto the field at Fenway.

With small cafés situated along the route and trail signs pointing in every direction, this was the alternative universe I'd long sought, where skiing was the organizing principle of life, both transportation and sport, and other endeavors, like work, were of far less importance. Life was here. That other stuff was what you did because you really couldn't ski all the time.

The Border to Border volunteers had set up lunch on the porch of a trackside café. Kjell was waiting inside. "The wax is fantastic," I told him, sitting at a wooden table. He frowned. "Of course it is."

That night we stayed in a sprawling spa hotel just off the track. I walked in, still a little dazed from the cold, sweating from a cluster of short, sharp hills in the final kilometers, and for a moment I thought I might have been hallucinating. This was a destination resort, geared to families, complete with a water park. It was warm and slightly moist inside, almost tropical. I stood there, feeling the melting icicles that hung from my sweaty hat, while families walked around in white robes headed to the spa or pool. Kjell approached with a beer in one hand and room keys in the other. "I love this place," he beamed. "The wax room is superb. The first dinner is in an hour. Sauna now."



On the second day, we slogged a slow and snowy 53 kilometers. When I first looked at the daily distances in Border to Border, I figured that 10 kilometers per hour would be a nice pace. But on a day of heavy snow and no need to press hard, I found myself quite happy to poke along at a rate that started to feel more like walking on skis than skiing. When I finally finished and met Kjell in the lobby of that night's hotel, he pointed to my Garmin watch. "I think we should get you a calendar, not a watch," he said. Which, as nordic ski humor goes, wasn't bad.

We were staying at one of the sport hotels popular in Scandinavia. A banner in the lobby read, "Eat. Sleep. Train. Repeat." I'd stayed in Swedish hotels like this and always found them idyllic. There were small rooms, big buffets, and a sauna that was always hot.

I'd feared my body would start breaking down after back-to-back long days but was pleasantly shocked to feel myself growing stronger and more comfortable with the distance, most likely because of the easy pace, regular feed stops, and absence of outside stress. It was still exhausting, but a world in which the most critical questions of the day were how to wax and how much to eat is rejuvenating in ways that are difficult to replicate.

Most of the third day was spent on groomed trail systems with warming huts at intersections. Every so often, there was a fire pit where locals would be roasting the inevitable sausages on sticks. The perfect ski life started to seem normal, as if this was how one was intended to live.

The fourth day was the longest scheduled, at just under 90 kilometers, the total length of the Vasaloppet. At the start of every Vasa, I'd felt a mix of dread and anxiety about my ability to finish. But this morning, I was relaxed and comfortable. The weather had turned warmer—around 32 degrees—with snow falling, making for the ultimate waxing nightmare. I was on my Atomic skis, using Start wax tape, and after the first five kilometers, I could have sold the product to other skiers for a fortune. Every wax combination seemed to be failing: snow got stuck under skis, which led to much scraping and cursing.



I'd long ago learned from my long-distance cycling hero, the late Bob Breedlove, that the secret to tough days is to not think about the finish but to consume the course "like the ant eats the elephant, bite by bite."

Late in the afternoon, I came to one of the feed stations that had been set up inside the traditional, teepee-like structure used by the Sami. As soon as I stepped inside, my goggles fogged, but when I pulled them up, there was Kjell, deep in a heated conversation with one of the volunteers—who was the tallest man I'd seen in Finland. All at once I felt exhausted. It always seemed that way when doing the long stuff. You feel fine

when you're moving, but once you stop, the hammer falls.

"How did you get here?" I asked, the words feeling strange coming out of my frozen mouth. As far as I could tell, we were deep inside a Finnish wilderness. "There's a road," he said. I stepped outside. In the near whiteout, I could barely see Kjell's Volvo in the falling snow.

I'd never felt so happy in my life. "Enough?" he asked gently. He was telling me it was OK if I wanted to bail out and head to the hotel. "Enough," I said. In the short ride to another sport hotel, down a beautifully plowed dirt road that seemed to stretch to the Arctic Circle, I experienced a strange feeling of relief. I've come in last in events before, but I was not a guy who DNF'd. Today, putting my skis in the car, I felt not a twinge of regret or shame as I watched other skiers cross the road, heads down against the snow, determined to finish the last 20 kilometers. I'd always told myself I did these crazy endurance events for fun and not to prove anything, but of course that was just a convenient lie. I always had something to prove, though I couldn't have told you precisely what it was. Perhaps now, after decades of skiing, I was stumbling into some hidden secret: that it's OK to enjoy the sport because, well, it's enjoyable.



I devoured both dinners that night and listened to two Canadians and an American laugh about the day. They were dismissive of what they'd accomplished, in the way of people who are accustomed to making the difficult seem easy. The next day's ski was "only" 46 kilometers, they said. A walk in the park. But it turned out to be the hardest day we had.

Most of the route was on a narrow track laid down by a snowmobile and sled. The snowstorm of the day before was followed by a vicious cold wind that obliterated the course anytime there was a break in the trees. I found myself struggling across a wide expanse of what I thought, from the map, was a bog and wondering if I was even close to being on course. I had also stupidly skied past the last feed station, eager to be done for the day. So now I was bonking.

In the distance, I could just make out a stake with a yellow ribbon, the course marker used by Border to Border volunteers. The wind was straight in my face, blowing icy snow that bit into my skin, making it hard to look up. I floundered across the bog exhausted, finding it hard to start moving again anytime I stopped.

Ultimately, I was able to see the red houses where the day's route ended. There were no hotels along this section of the track. The overnight stop was an old schoolhouse that had been converted to a clubhouse for a local ski team—with, of course, a large sauna attached.

I bent over to take off my skis and felt dizzy, staggering a bit as I came up. One of the German guys walked back from the

sauna—he'd finished long before—and put a firm, steady hand on my shoulder. "Hard day," he said. I nodded. "Go eat."

The organizers had advised everyone to bring a sleeping bag for the stop at the schoolhouse, and I'd dutifully brought one. But when Kjell saw this request on the itinerary back in Mora, he was adamant: "We don't do this," he said. So I dragged myself out to his car, and we drove back to the hotel where we'd spent the previous night. At a small store across the street, I bought as much chocolate as I could carry, ate most of it before I got inside the hotel, and fell asleep on my bed, still wearing my ski clothes.

The last day was long but mostly on beautiful tracks and easy terrain, the sun shining, no wind, the sort of day that makes you want to ski forever. There was an end-of-term lightness with the group, a few impromptu sprints to see who still had some snap—I didn't even try—and many hours of quiet skiing. Mostly I skied alone, not wanting to worry about keeping up or holding anyone back, deep in my own thoughts and rhythms. I reached the banner at the end of the course, with that unique feeling of relief and regret that comes from finishing a challenge that's right at the edge of your capabilities. I took off my skis, sweating, a bit unsteady. Two students from the nearby high school brought over hot cider and the now familiar sausage on a stick. They hovered quietly, watching me, and I realized they were wondering if I might fall over. Finally one of them, a tall girl with hair so blond it looked almost white, said softly, "It was a good ski, no?"

The tour ends with a banquet and a night of skits presented by the different nationalities represented during the ski, but Kjell would have none of that. He wanted to drive back to Mora immediately after the finish. I was too tired to argue, and the thought of being back at Kjell's house had its appeal.



We stopped at the home of a friend of Kjell's a few miles from the finish for coffee. He lived in the farmhouse he had been born in, right on the Torne River that separated Finland from Sweden. When I asked him what happened to his family during the war, he said his mother's family had gone over the river into Sweden, and the Germans had used the house as a field hospital. When his family returned, the floor and walls were saturated in blood. They spent weeks cleaning. He talked about it with the matter-of-fact tone that summed up the tough resilience and determination of the Finns.

It's such a national character trait that they have a word for it: *sisu*. It was *sisu* that got you through war and the long Finnish winters. We made it back to Mora in the early morning. The finish line of the Vasaloppet on the town's main street had been dismantled. There was a hint of a warmth in the air. A few cyclists were out before sunrise; winter was ending. But I felt better knowing it was still out there in

Lapland, waiting. For a brief moment, I thought about going back and starting over. Then Kjell said, "It took us 16 hours to get there. Next year I think we can do it in 12." I told him I thought he was right.

**-By Stewart Stevens  
for [outsideonline.com](http://outsideonline.com)**

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## Cast Your Vote For the Nordic Museum!

Greetings friends of the National Nordic Museum! The Museum just received notice that we have been nominated as a contender for Best New Museum in USA Today's 10 Best Readers' Choice Awards. We are both honored and humbled by this news. I am reaching out to invite you to participate in the Readers' Choice by visiting

<https://www.10best.com/awards/travel/best-new-museum/>

Please pass the word to others in your community and/or organization. USA Today will be gathering input for the next four weeks. A person can vote once a day for the run of the contest.

We appreciate your support and participation!

**-By Erik G Pihl,  
Director of Community Engagement**



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## The Aurora Borealis

Mysterious lights dancing in the northern skies have intrigued and fascinated people for thousands of years. In Finnish they are called *revontulet* (fox's fires). In my childhood, I remember gazing at these colorful displays from my bedroom window. Mostly the colors were greenish, but sometimes different hues, or even crackling sounds could be heard. Clear and cold February nights were the best time, although they could be seen other times of the year, too. The northern lights are caused by highly charged particles from space entering the atmosphere. Magnetic pole attracts the ions. They are hard to study - weather balloons with scientific instruments do not reach high enough altitudes and satellites fly way too high to capture data.

In Finland, a Facebook group of more than 11,000 members is dedicated to studying and photographing the northern lights.

One of the members, a physicist and professor at University of Helsinki, Minna Palmroth, leads a research group that studies space weather and aurora borealis. She often answers questions from the Facebook members' pictures about the type of aurora and other scientific information. With two other members, she published a Field Guide to the Northern Lights. After the Guide was published, a few photos did not fit any known categories. It had green, horizontal waves running in parallel. These undulations looked like sand formations, and therefore were called "the dunes".

These amateur sky watchers identified a new type of aurora and helped scientists to study a lesser known part of the atmosphere. The dunes discovery has since been published in the journal AGU Advances by Palmroth, Grandin, and a few other authors. "Without them asking questions, or taking pictures in the first place, we would probably never heard of the dunes and never investigated them." Grandin continues: "The dunes have existed for millennia, but it was about noticing them and bringing them to the attention of scientists that mattered." He says that the citizens are passionate about their observations and questions, which leads to more scientific studies.



Chasing and photographing the aurora borealis has resulted in a tourist industry in the northern countries. In Finland, you can take a reindeer or snowmobile safari to observe the dancing lights. Many cabins have large picture windows in your bedroom for observation. More unusual treats are glass igloos, or laying on your back in a dry suit in a ice hole in a lake!!!

**-By Asko Hamalainen**

**Ever wondered what the Northern Lights  
sound like? Visit**

**[https://www.youtube.com/watch?](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GFa26aJTues)**

**[v=GFa26aJTues](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GFa26aJTues)**

**to find out!**

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## Finlandia Foundation

### Suomi Chapter



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98227

We're on the web!  
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Tapio Holma

#### **Contributors:**

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Holma

#### **Creative Editor:**

Cassie Revell

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## Upcoming Events

You are invited to attend the Scandinavian Friendship Dinner. Where? Old Vasa Hall, 1805 Cleveland Ave, Mt Vernon, WA.

RSVP Betsy 360 293-9328

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Interview project by Nordic National Museum. NAV (North American Voices) by the Nordic Folks, for those whose ancestry is in Scandinavia or in Finland. Will be interviewed by Nordic Museum folks in Bellingham on April 18th. Place and time to be announced later. If interested, please contact Tapio (360 714 8600) for details.

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Vappu Spring Concert at the Rotunda, Old City Hall, Bellingham, on Saturday May 2nd at 6:00PM. Donation \$15 general, students \$10.

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## Membership and Donation

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