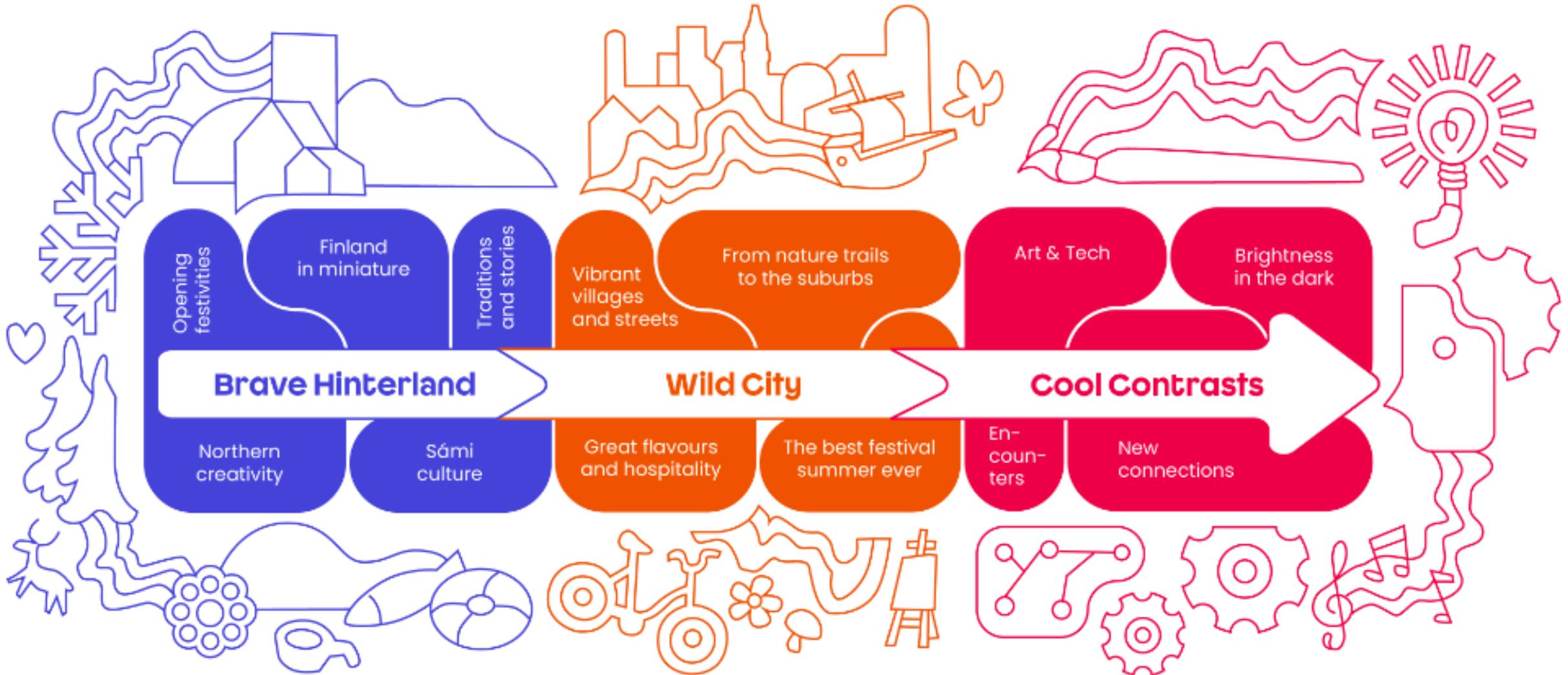


# European Capital of Culture Oulu2026





# 365 days of exciting events, works of art and experiences



**Something to experience  
every day!**

**Also check out:  
[oulu2026.eu/events](https://oulu2026.eu/events)**

# The Year Kicked Off At Full Speed

- Oulu2026: New Year's Show took place on 31 December 2025 at Ouluhalli and was broadcast on Yle's channels.
- The programme reached a total audience of over one million viewers on TV (TV1) and Yle's digital services during the 2025–2026 New Year transition.
- Performers included HOKKA, KUUMAA, BESS, Goldielocks, Ege Zulu, pehmoaino & Suvi Teräsniska, Screaming Men's Choir, the Oulu Sinfonia string quartet, Dance center Citydance, Marko Keränen and DJ Kaasi.
- Photo: Riika Lantto



# Oulu2026 Opening Festival 16–18 January

A winter city festival for everyone. Reportedly the largest urban event in Oulu

- Over 250,000 visits – 30,000 online views
- Around 200 events
- 20 different event venues
- Record audience numbers at Oulu Central Library Saari
- A huge number of volunteers and students helped make the event possible
- An estimated 9,000 people attended the opening moment on Friday
- The President of the Republic of Finland, Alexander Stubb, opened the European Capital of Culture year.
- Photo: Henri Luoma



# Risku: A Borderless and Lively Sámi Culture

The traditions and contemporary culture of the European Union's only Indigenous people are featured in a diverse programme throughout the year.

- Opera, concerts, visual arts, workshops, seminars – and so much more.
- A highlight is the Sámi National Day on February 6th.
- During the first months of the year, the Oulu Museum of Art will be a museum of Sámi art.
- The early-winter Dálvemánnu event series brings together a wide range of contributors and their offerings.



# Eanangiella – The Language of the Land

## Major exhibition

- A major exhibition of Sámi art and duodji introducing the diversity, resilience and endurance of Sámi culture.
- The largest collection of Sámi art ever presented.
- The exhibition features around 70 artists and duojárs from across Sápmi.
- Curated by Inga-Wiktoria Påve, Fredrik Prost and Áilu Valle, the exhibition explores themes such as ancestors, paths of memory, between worlds, land, green colonialism, spirituality and the ornaments of life.
- Photo: Ann-Sofie Kallok, *Guoddi*, 2025.  
Dancer: Ánna-Katri Helander. Photo: Albinas Liutkus.



# Ovllá

An opera about the search for roots and the state-led oppression of the Sámi people.

- World premiere on the main stage of Oulu Theatre on January 16th 2026.
- Produced by: Oulu Theatre in collaboration with Oulu Sinfonia Orchestra, the Sámi National Theatre Beaivváš, and Oulu2026.
- In the photo: Emil Karlsen and Albert.  
Photo: Knut Åserud



# Untamed Office

A youth-driven production company that creates and produces unique events and develops urban culture.

- A diverse program led by Oulu Urban Culture ry.
- Frozen People — a festival of electronic music and northern art — takes place on the frozen Bothnian Bay on February 28th.
- Year-round activities include clubs, flea markets, street festivals, and urban art across the city.
- A cultural laboratory space in Pikisaari, alongside development of the cultural sector through training, workshops, and new initiatives.
- Photo: Vera Lakovaara, Frozen People 2025



# Layers in the Peace Machine

An immersive work by Ekho Collective, presented at Oulu City Hall throughout the year.

- An artwork combining art and technology, inspired by AI researcher Timo Honkela's book *Rauhankone* (The Peace Machine).
- The work explores different aspects of peacebuilding and invites the audience to reflect on their personal relationship with peace.
- The work continuously evolves through interaction with the audience.
- The virtual part of The Layer of Sharing can be experienced at [rauhankone.eu](https://rauhankone.eu).
- Photo: Linnea Laatikainen



# Earworm – Media Art from Kiasma

A free-entry exhibition curated by the Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, held at Oulu City Hall throughout the year.

- The works in the exhibition are part of the collection of the National Gallery.
- The exhibition features video works in which music and sound play a significant role in creating atmosphere and storytelling.
- Photo: Screenshot from the work Tunisian Dance Tutorial with Mamou, Cheffi, Dora Dalila, 2022.





# PLAY

## Fotografiska Tallinn x Oulu2026

A group exhibition inspired by the cultural climate change, on display at Kauppakortteli Pekuri throughout the year.

- The exhibition explores play as both a source of joy and a distraction, highlighting moments of delight, resilience, rebellion and connection.
- 17 artists, including Martin Parr, Cristina de Middel, Susan Meiselas, Jouko Lehtola, Bruce Davidson, Roger Ballen, Trent Parke, Nina Katchadourian, and Joosep Kivimäe.
- Photo: Sage Sohler, Perfectible Worlds, 2021

# AaltoSiilo

The pulp mill silo in Oulu's Toppila, designed by Alvar and Aino Aalto, has been brought back to life.

- The long-abandoned concrete cathedral is being renovated into a top-class cultural and event venue.
- The project is led by the Factum Foundation, the architectural firm Skene Catling de la Peña, and AaltoSiilo ry.
- The AaltoSiilo Festival has been held three times in collaboration with numerous partners.
- Photo: Kevin Kallombo, Ilona Jäntti, AaltoSiilo Festival 2024.



# Climate Clock art trail

- Six permanent public artworks by international artists form an art trail.
- The works explore the impacts of climate change on the region's natural environment.
- The ensemble also includes *The World's Most Valuable Clock* by Tellervo Kalleinen and Oliver Kochta-Kalleinen.

## The artists are:

Ranti Bam (United Kingdom),  
Rana Begum (United Kingdom),  
Takahiro Iwasaki (Japan),  
Gabriel Kuri (Belgium),  
Antti Laitinen (Finland)  
SUPERFLEX (Denmark)

Curator: Alice Sharp, Invisible Dust



# Faravid's Land

A large-scale, site-specific, and immersive work presented in an unprecedented performance space.

- This piece combines theatre, dance, and circus and it is a journey stretching from the remnants of a supermarket to ancient Northern Ostrobothnia as well as a myth of those who seek and those who conceal happiness.
- Production: Oulu Theatre and Flow Productions
- Premiere on August 27th 2026 in the former vacant supermarket in Raksila.
- During the performance season, from August 26th to December 12th, there will be a total of 50 performances.
- In the photo: Katariina van Earle, and Annina Rokka. Photo by Kati Leinonen.





## Everyone's Birthdays

The 40th anniversary of the Aine Art Museum will be celebrated all year long!

- Every month, a surprise gift will be revealed. What will happen and when is still a secret!
- The events will feature professional artists originally from Tornio, as well as creators from across the Nordic countries and experts from various fields of art and culture.
- In the photo: Rajakartano, Aine Art Museum. Photo by Eija Mäkivuoti.



## Pikisaari – Creative Village

Art, nature, and creativity live side by side just a stone's throw from Oulu city center on a unique island.

- Galleries and other places to visit, environmental art, events, and services in a delightful setting.
- The area's activities and development are managed by several cultural associations and operators working together.
- The picture shows part of Kuosittaja's artwork in the Re:form demolition art exhibition 2023.

# ARToulu art district

Visual art captivates, surprises, and delights in residential areas and urban nature.

- Seven neighborhoods in the Oulu River estuary are transforming into a distinctive and multi-voiced art district.
- The area will feature artworks of varying durations and forms.
- The art district will be accessible at all times of day and throughout the seasons starting from summer 2026.
- Photo: Joonas Karjalainen





## Art not tar!

Regional performing arts as part of ecological reconstruction.

- We are developing new ways of exploring what regionality, ecological reconstruction, and theatre art can be together.
- Including, for example, a course on ecological reconstruction and a road trip performance along the Tar Route.
- Organizers: Kajaani City Theatre – Regional Theatre in collaboration with the Mustarinda Association, the Theatre Academy, and Näty.
- Illustrative image, photo by Elsa Lankinen.

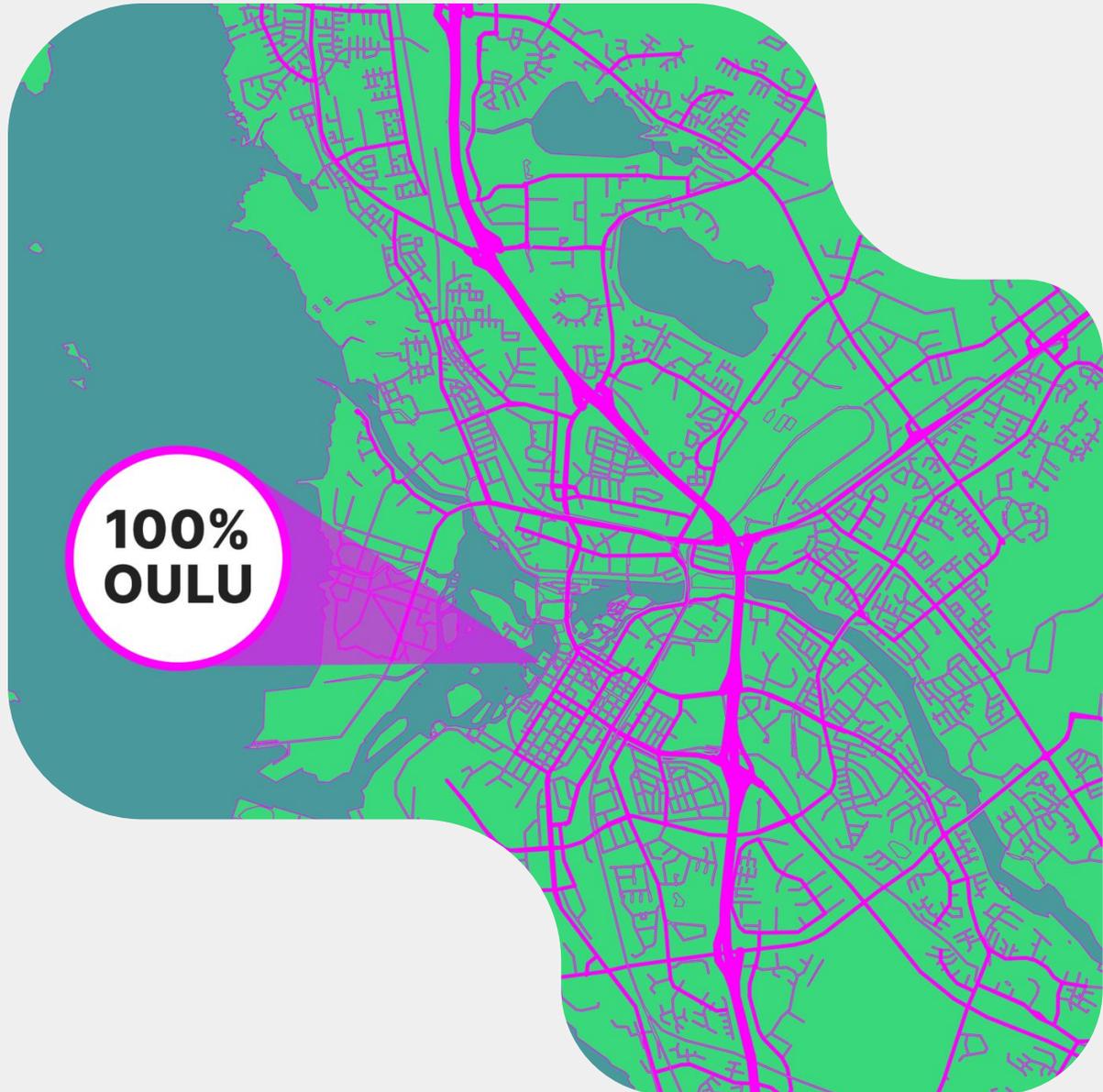


## Arctic Food Lab

Northern flavors, experiences, and hospitality!

- The brand reflects the purity of northern nature and the ingredients nurtured by it.
- *Summer Night's Dinner* (14th August 2026) is a charming communal food event where we invite everyone to gather around Europe's longest table!
- During the *Arctic Tasting* (23–26th September 2026), restaurants and cafés compete to create the most delicious dish.





## 100 % Oulu

A miniature version of the city that gives voice to its citizens — literally.

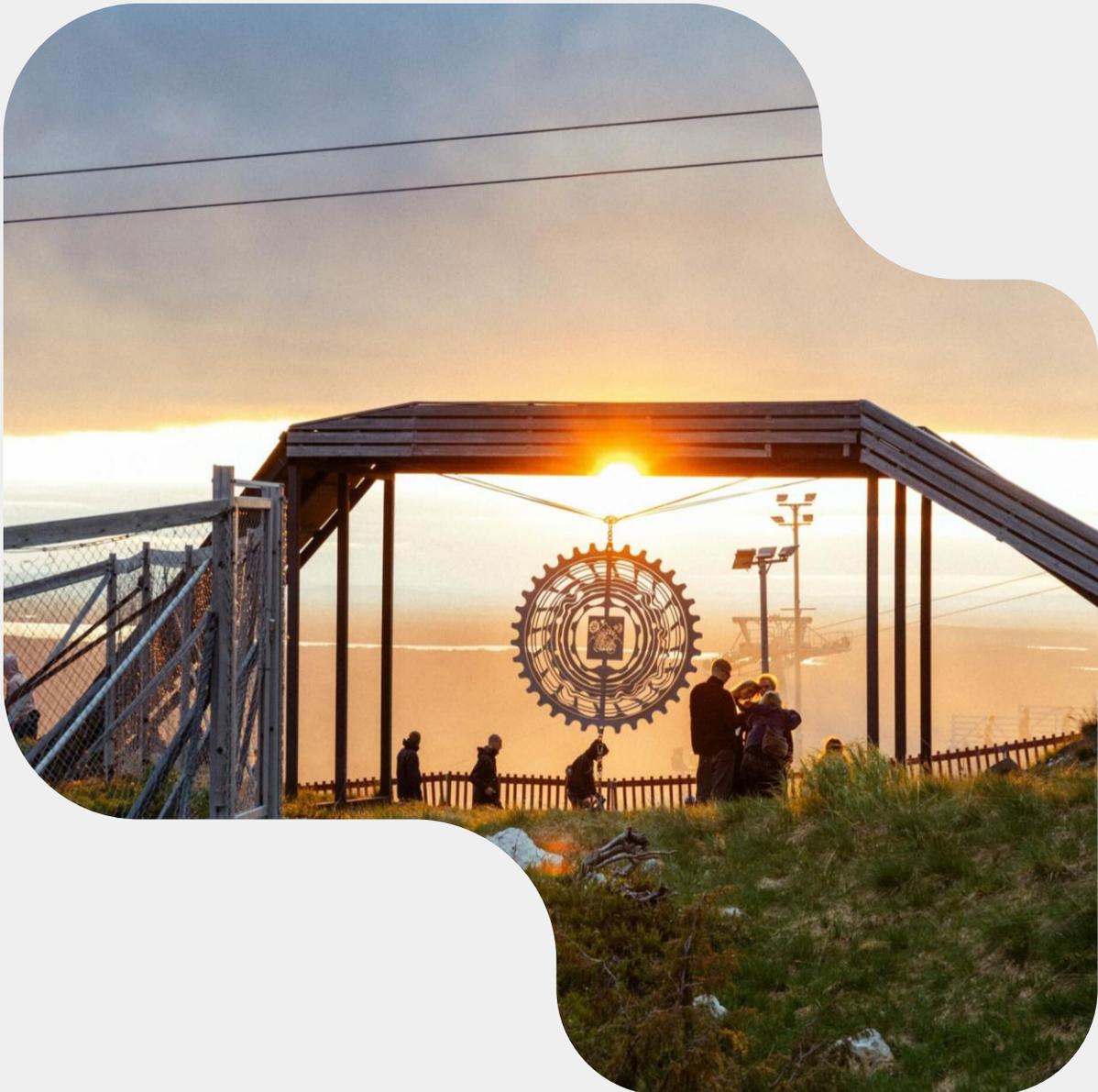
- A group of 100 Oulu residents will be selected to perform, chosen through a statistical chain reaction to reflect the city's population as accurately as possible.
- The concept, *100% City* by the German group Rimini Protokoll, has already been brought to nearly 40 cities around the world. Now, it comes to Finland for the very first time!
- Shows on the main stage of Oulu Theatre from August 14th to 22nd 2026, with a total of five performances.
- Photo: Kaisa Tiri

# Delta Life

A multidisciplinary, international project that explores and brings to light the origins of the city and its culture along the waterways.

- Performances, encounters, documentation, and diverse events since 2021.
- The project culminates in a celebratory weekend at Oulu's birthplace, Pokkitörmä, on August 28–29th 2026.
- Production: Oulu Cultural Events Association, coordinating the Oulu Festival Weeks.
- Different parts can be followed on the channel [pohjoinenkulttuurivirta.fi](https://pohjoinenkulttuurivirta.fi).
- In the photo: Mandi Koskela from the documentary series *Taiteilija syntyy suistoon*. Photo by Antti Pylväs.





## Best festivals of Europe & Nature trails into Culture

Stunning destinations in the Oulu2026 area  
in the European spotlight.

- The most original and captivating festivals, as well as nature and cultural sites.
- New international programs are being created alongside the festivals, and accessibility is being improved.
- Dozens of local events and cultural sites are involved.
- Photo: Samuli Vienola, Solstice Festival

# Underground Clash (working title)

A poetic, rhythmic, and sensory-stimulating media art exhibition from September 18th to November 30th 2026.

- The work by Danish artist Jakob Kudsk Steensen explores northern nature and creates a digital world of a cave system beneath the center of Oulu.
- The exhibition consists of projections, light, and sound.
- Disappearing subarctic ecosystems, traditions related to tar preservation, and the seed vault of extinct plants at the Oulu Botanical Garden come together.
- Photo: Jakob Kudsk Steensen, preview of the artwork, 2025.



# Lumo Art & Tech Festival

The beloved Lumo Light Festival is expanding into a diverse and multifaceted event from November 13th to 22nd 2026.

- Light, sound, and media art featured in concerts and exhibitions, as well as seminars and much more.
- In collaboration with Oulu2026, the City of Oulu, Oulu Sinfonia Orchestra, University of Oulu, Oamk, Flash ry, and the Oulu Museum and Science Centre.
- Photo: Antti-Jussi Ahponen



# Beyond the Sky

This innovative work combining art, science, and technology brings beautiful distant nebulae within the audience's reach.

- The work, inspired by the life's work of Oulu-based astrophotographer Jukka-Pekka Metsävainio, is complemented by music composed by Lauri Porra.
- Featuring the magnificent Oulu Symphony Orchestra, conducted by star maestro Dalia Stasevska.
- Experience this journey beyond the skies at Ouluhalli from November 19th to 21st, 2026, with a total of five performances.
- Photo: Jukka-Pekka Metsävainio





## Experience anytime! Northern Stories

Local history brought to life through captivating digital stories — on the streets and in your living room.

- Along the Tar Stories route, short stories written by Katariina Vuori transport you to the golden age of the tar trade in Oulu.
- In *The Sound of the North* stories, Esa Nissi guides the audience through the phenomena, places, and people of popular music.
- The stories are available to read or listen to in Finnish, Swedish, English, and Easy Finnish.

# Snowball

- Set in the enchanting land of the Northern Lights, Snowball will have its world premiere in Oulu, Finland at Ouluhalli on 4th December 2026.
- The Christmas musical for the whole family weaves together Northern legends in an exciting story full of magic, mystery and romance.
- Cast includes Saara Aalto, Kristo Salminen and Mika Nuojua. Oulu Sinfonia conducted by Kristian Nyman.
- Script and music Douglas Pashley and direction Paul Garrington.
- 19 shows from 4th to 19th December 2026.





## Winter Classic

The goalposts clang as Kärpät and HIFK face off at the end of the Capital of Culture year.

- Kärpät, celebrating its 80th anniversary, is hosting the Kärpät–HIFK game at the Raksila outdoor ice rink.
- A concert event will also be held in connection with the hockey game.
- The goal is to create the largest game event in terms of attendance ever seen in Oulu and all of Northern Finland.

# And much more!

## Explore the event calendar at [Oulu2026.eu](https://Oulu2026.eu)

[Kuusamo Nature Photo - luontokuvafestivaali VOL 2](#) [Village Anthems](#) [Kaupungin Osa](#) [Xulu202X](#) [Ikiaikaiset selviytymistaidot](#)  
[Neuleita Euroopan reunalta](#) [Ärjän taidefestivaali](#) [Light/Dark Matters, valotaiteen ja kulttuurin ohjelmakokonaisuus](#)  
[Kuhmon 56. Kamarimusiikki Euroopan keskiössä](#) [Oulun Musiikkivideofestivaalien eurooppalainen musiikkivideokilpailu](#)  
[E75 Taidebussi](#) [Sopukka](#) [Art Linnakallio 2026 Symposium](#) [Sopeutuminen, aika ei ole meidän puolellamme](#) [100 % Oulu](#)  
[K2 taiteilijatalo - luovuuden keskus, Hiukkavaara](#) [Delta Life - Kaupunki syntyy suistoon](#) [2nd Generation Lynx Larynx](#)  
[Taidetta ei tervaa! Alueellinen esittävä taide ekologisena jälleenrakentajana](#) [Solstice](#) [Kävelyn tiellä](#) [ARToulu-taidealue](#)  
[IlmastoAreena](#) [Art li Biennaali 2026](#) [Kaikkien syntymäpäivät](#) [Festival of Augmented Dance & Oulu Dance Hack](#) [Symposium](#)  
[Vaara-Kainuun taidekansallispuiston valmistelu](#) [Kesyön konttori](#) [Agentti 026 - OSAOn Kulttuuriagenttitoiminta](#) [VILLIT](#)  
[Kirjallisuushanke](#) [Sanginkontu, taiderasteja jokivarren metsissä -kulttuurimatkailureitti](#) [Northern Landscape 2026](#)  
[Leikitään! Lets play! Kaikenikäiset, tervetuloa muotoilemaan omaa ympäristöäsi.](#) [Vesivoimalaitokset](#) [Climbing over Oulu](#)  
[Tavallisia designtarinoita. Arki on paras ja muotoilu tekee siitä paremman.](#) [Hurmos](#) [European Owl Festival](#) [Ovlá](#)  
[Marakni - romanikulttuurin markkinat](#) [Voice the Taboo](#) [Oulun koulu - Omintakeinen asenne arkkitehtuuriin Oulussa](#)  
[Kinosalonki Sofia - elokuvia ja elämyksiä Wanhassa Raahessa](#) [Cultural Kaleidoscopes - The Irish Festival of Oulu](#)  
[Beyond the Sky](#) [Täältä taiteeseen -matkatoimisto](#) [AVARA Art & Tech - tapahtuma- ja testiympäristö](#) [Faravidin maa](#)  
[Oulun yliopisto mukana luomassa unohtumatonta kulttuuripääkaupunkivuotta 2026](#) [Saamelaisen taiteen museo](#)  
[Galleria International](#) [Oulu elokuvissa - paikallinen kaupunkielokuvafestivaali](#)

# European Capitals of Culture since 1985

One of the European Union's best-known initiatives

- Highlights the importance of cities as centers of cultural life.
- European Capitals of Culture have been proven to boost the vitality of cities.
- International collaboration opens new doors for professionals in art and culture.
- Bringing new European cultural offerings to Finland.
- Finnish culture is widely visible across Europe.



Helsinki 2000 | Turku 2011 | Oulu 2026

# Trenčín2026

- The second European Capital of Culture is Trenčín, Slovakia
- Trenčín2026 aims to transform the city into a vibrant centre of art, creativity and community collaboration – in a sustainable and long-term way.
- Its main message is "Awakening Curiosity".  
*Every step begins with curiosity – bridges are built when we dare to take a step, even if we cannot yet see what's on the other side.*
- The programme is built around three main themes: People & Relationships, Places & Public Space and Creativity & Culture.
- Opening Ceremony: 13–15 February 2026



# Extensive regional economic impacts

## Turku2011, investment €55 million

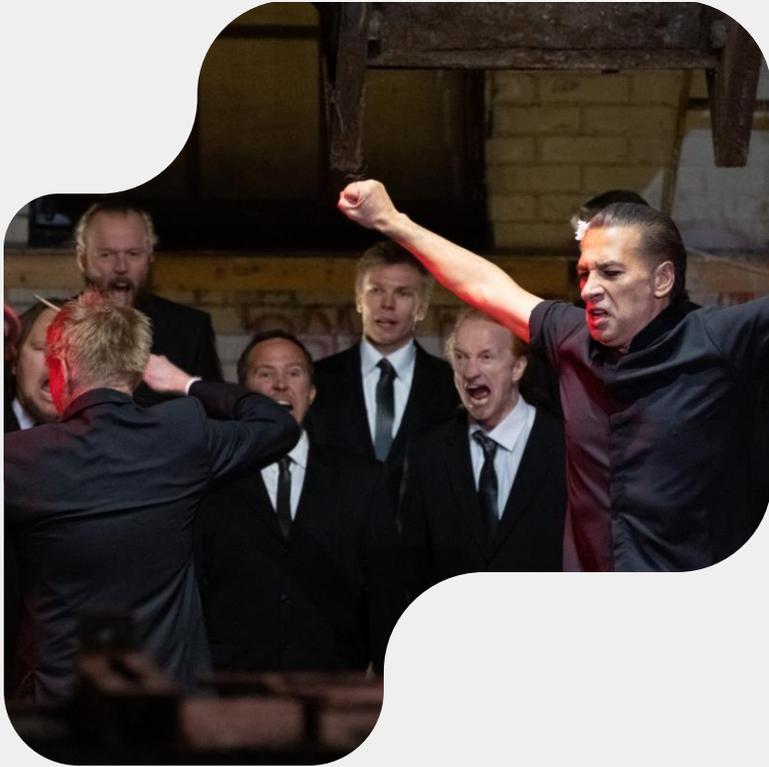
- Regional economic growth €260 million
- 3,300 new jobs (man-year)
- €17 million growth in accommodation services
- Value of international media exposure €54 million

## Kaunas 2022, Lithuania, investment €26 million

- Over 3,000 events
- 2 million visitors
- International media coverage in 66 countries with nearly 2,000 publications
- A legacy of over 1,000 events, venues and publications







**A strong city of  
technology is also a bold  
city of culture**



**The aim is to create a  
permanently richer cultural  
life**



**Together, we are  
creating a cultural  
climate change**



Oulu  
2026

# Cultural Climate Change

begins in the North



# Cultural Climate Change brings vitality

- Oulu and Northern Finland are emerging as a vibrant, creativity-driven region that attracts visitors, draws in new residents, and ensures the well-being of its current inhabitants.
- Northern Finland is becoming more attractive and gaining recognition at the European level.
- New audiences are taking part in events, as culture becomes a part of daily life and contributes to the well-being of residents.
- The working conditions and earning models of cultural professionals are evolving.
- Culture is strengthening its role as a force for building a better future.
- The number of creative areas and spaces is growing, and creativity is flourishing.
- In the photo: performers and audience at "Summer Night's Dinner" 2024. Photo: Kevin Kallombo.



# Cultural Climate Change happens beneath the surface

The tip of the iceberg: Events of the year 2026

## Cultural Climate Change beneath the surface:

- New skills
- New audiences and expanded cultural participation
- Cultural tourism
- Expanded funding base
- New spaces for culture
- Regional and international networks
- Volunteering



**Brave Hinterland**



**Wild City**



**Cool Contrasts**



## Brave Hinterland

Early 2026 is at its best in the brave hinterland, in the heart of the exotic northern winter.

We invite you to a unique opening ceremony, to experience Sámi culture in the opera and dance on the ice of the Bothnian Bay to the beat of electronic music

In 2026, Europe gets inspired by its edges!

# Wild City

Spring and summer awaken the wildness of the city, making us free to experience the best parts of light, nature, and city life.

Culture is everywhere, just like water: it experiments, plays and challenges, and it surprises on nature trails and in suburbs.

Northern flavours complete the whole.





## Cool Contrasts

Autumn and the rest of the year are all about experiencing the power of opposites: the struggle between light and darkness, the powerful combination of art and technology, and the mystery of the north.

In autumn, we witness the North transforming into a focal point of light art during the darkest time of the year, and experience interactive installations of the encounter between nature, people and technology.

Budget  
2021–2027  
€50 million

Expected  
2,5 million  
visits  
2022–2026

**Oulu2026  
in  
numbers**

Majority of  
events  
available in a  
hybrid format

Creative Economy  
+20 %  
by 2027

Every day  
Oulu2026  
programme

The European  
Capital of Culture  
for all of  
Finland

**A celebration of  
Northern and  
European  
culture**

Thousands of  
events

Hundreds of  
partners



### (Noch) unbekanntes Oulu in Finnland Die coole Kulturhauptstadt

Die Stadt hat sich den kulturellen Klimawandel vorgenommen und läuft sich als Kulturhauptstadt für 2026 warm. Ein Besuch 600 Kilometer nördlich von Helsinki.

Von Christiane Peitz  
Stand: 31.03.2025, 06:43 Uhr



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article · 9:12 min · Lea

# MONOCLE RADIO

RADIO HOME | SHOWS | SCHEDULE | ABOUT

Aalto Siilo –  
ling in Oulu

What is truly in  
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GRUPE DIRECT ALIADOS, OPINIO

## Faltam menos de 200 dias para a abertura de Oulu\* 2 Capital Europeia da Cultura

\*Com base no exemplo de Turku, as expectativas são altas, e a principal ambição de Oulu



Oulu  
2026

- [SUITCASE Magazine | Oulu: A Guide to Finland's Hidden Gem | SUITCASE Magazine](#)
- [Beijing, Rio and Pittsburgh: Why these are 'best of the world' for 2026 | CNN](#)
- [Why Finland's Oulu Is Set To Shine In 2026](#)
- [Uleåborg Europas kulturhuvudstad 2026 – lyfter romsk och samisk kultur - Sveriges Radio Finska | Sveriges Radio](#)
- [Oulu 2026, a 97 dias da inauguração! | Por João Palmeiro – Postal](#)
- [Frozen People: techno sobre el mar congelado de Oulu, la próxima Capital Europea de la Cultura](#)
- [Tagesspiegel: Raven am Polarkreis : Was die Kulturhauptädte Europas 2026 zu bieten haben](#)
- [De saunas a baños en el Báltico: Oulu conquista la cultura europea | La Lectura](#)
- ['I visited some naked Europeans to find out why they're so much happier than us' - The Mirror](#)
- [Henley air guitar player out of world championships](#)
- [These are the travel spots to escape the crowds in 2026 - UK Times | UK Times](#)
- [These are the travel spots to escape the crowds in 2026 | The Independent](#)
- [Digital Nomad Visas—5 Countries With The Best Work-Life Balance](#)
- [Saunas, electronica and air guitar: Oulu, Finland's tech city, is European Capital of Culture 2026 | Finland's Hidden Gem | The Guardian](#)

TRAVEL BEST OF THE WORLD

## The best places in the world to travel to in 2026

From a legendary Alpine range to a less-traveled but no less stunning alternative to the Mediterranean, here are the year's must-visit destinations, handpicked by National Geographic's editors, photographers, and adventurers.

### The 20 best places to travel in 2026

11 December 2025

Share ↵ Save 📌

BBC Travel



# Oulu Featured on Travel Lists!

Travel destination listings include, among others:

- [The Best Places to Go in 2026 | Condé Nast Traveler](#)
- [Best of the World 2026 | National Geographic](#)
- [Frommers | Frommer's Best Places to Go in 2026](#)
- [Intrepid releases 2026 Not Hot List | Intrepid Travel EU](#)
- CNN Travel [Where to travel in 2026: The best places to visit](#)
- BBC Travel [The 20 best places to travel in 2026](#)
- Afar Where to Go in 2026: [Places That Are on the Rise and Off the Beaten Path](#)

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By subscribing to our newsletter, you'll stay informed about what's happening around the European Capital of Culture.



<https://oulu2026.eu/en/news/newsletter/>

# Thank you!

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→ [info@oulu2026.eu](mailto:info@oulu2026.eu)

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