

# Åland



Little known beyond the Baltic, this sweeping archipelago is a curious geopolitical entity that belongs to Finland, speaks Swedish, but has its own parliament, flies its own flag proudly from every pole, and issues its own national stamps.

There are over 6000 islands, although many of these are small mounds of granite rising centimetres above the sea. Indeed, the islands are all so flat that few eminences top 100m above sea level; Ålanders won't be voting for global warming at the next elections.

This flatness, however, makes the islands ideal for exploration by bike. The main island (Åland) is connected with those around it by bridge and cable ferry, while, northeast and southeast of here, the archipelago islands are even more rural and remote: on places like Kökar you could easily think you have stepped back in time to a Viking village. Throughout Åland, traditions such as the Midsummer celebration bear a marked local character.

More than elsewhere in Finland, Åland has a very defined holiday season. From Midsummer until the end of July, the islands are full of Swedes and Finns enjoying the summer break cycling and camping. Consider visiting in May or September, when you'll have the islands to yourself. Outside these months, very little is open; the winters are wet and gusty.

Åland is easily accessed from both Sweden and Finland, and Mariehamn, its spread-out and tranquil capital, makes a convenient stop between the two.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Island-hopping by bike around the ideally flat archipelago. You can rent a bike right by the ferry terminal in Mariehamn or **Eckerö** (p242).
- Enjoying the slow pace of island life and the Swedish-speaking culture. Things don't get much more relaxed than at the camp site on **Vårdö** island (p241).
- Touring the **Kastelholms Slott** (p239) in Sund, then a **snail safari** (p240) nearby
- Visiting the southern archipelago, perhaps staying on fascinating, remote **Kökar** (p247)
- Returning to 'city' life in **Mariehamn** (p232), with its maritime history and bustling harbour
- **Midsummer celebrations** (p235), when the colourful Midsummer poles are erected
- Summer cruises on the schooner **Linden** (p235)



■ TELEPHONE: 018

■ POPULATION: 26,200

## History

The first settlers set foot on Åland 6000 years ago, and more than a hundred Bronze and Iron Age *forminne* (burial sites) have been discovered. These are all clearly sign-posted, though they are in a fairly ruinous state. Åland was an important harbour and trading centre during the Viking era, and evidence has been found of six fortresses from that time.

During the Great Northern War of 1700–21 (nicknamed the ‘Great Wrath’), most of the population fled to Sweden to escape the Russians, who were bent on destroying Åland. The Russians returned during the 1740s (a period known as the ‘Lesser Wrath’) and again in 1809.

When Finland gained independence in 1917, Ålanders were all too familiar with Russians and feared occupation by Bolsheviks. There were strong moves for Åland to be incorporated into Sweden, which was not only the Ålanders’ former mother country but also their source of language and cultural identity. But Finland refused to give up its island province. The Swedish-Finnish dispute only came to an end in 1921, when Åland was given its status as an autonomous, demilitarized and neutral province within the Republic of Finland by a decision of the League of Nations. Today Åland is almost a Little Sweden, and locals are more aware of events in Stockholm than Helsinki.

Although Åland joined the EU along with Finland in 1995, it was granted a number of exemptions, including duty-free tax laws that allowed the essential ferry services between the islands and mainland Finland and Sweden to continue operating profitably.

## Information

Åland shares the same time zone as Finland; one hour ahead of Sweden, and two ahead of GMT.

While the euro is the currency, most places also accept the Swedish krona.

The main tourist information office is in the capital, Mariehamn; there are smaller, summer-only, offices in Godby, Eckerö, and Föglö. The website [www.visitaland.com](http://www.visitaland.com) is very helpful, and [www.alandsresor.fi](http://www.alandsresor.fi) lets you book much of the islands’ accommodation online.

Finnish telephone cards can be used on Åland, but there are also local cards. Åland uses the Finnish mobile phone network but DNA service (mobile network provider) is sketchy. Mail sent in Åland must have Åland postage stamps – Finnish ones won’t work.

The general emergency number is ☎ 112; for the police call ☎ 10022, for medical services ☎ 10023 and for a dental emergency ☎ 14600.

## Activities

Åland’s manageable size, flat landscape and great network of trails make it a cyclist’s paradise. There are heaps of places to rent bikes, and great facilities. In summer there are more bikes on the road than cars.

The water is an obvious attraction; sailing boats from all around the Baltic pull in at the archipelago’s secluded islands in summer. You can do anything: from charter a yacht for a week’s cruising to renting a kayak for a couple of hours’ splashing about.

Fishing is popular, both from boats and the shore. In winter, Åland is many Swedes’ destination of choice for ice-fishing.

## Self-Catering Accommodation

There’s a wealth of cottages for rent on Åland. Both Eckerö and Viking ferry lines (see p238) have a comprehensive list of bookable places, as does **Destination Åland** (☎ 040-300 8001; [www.destinationaland.com](http://www.destinationaland.com); Elverksgatan 5, Mariehamn).

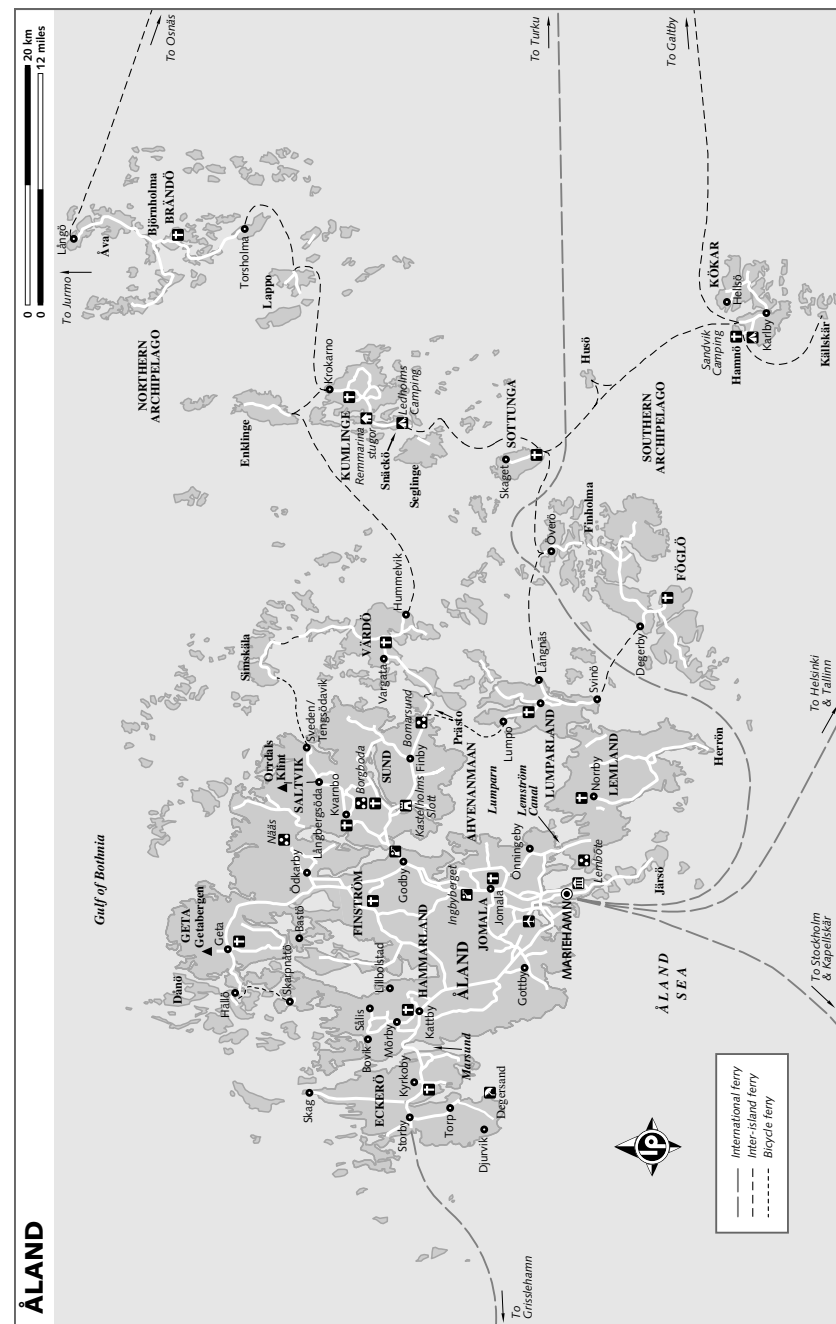
## Dangers & Annoyances

Ticks carrying infectious diseases that may cause rash and fever are a concern in rural areas of Åland. The simplest way to deal with this problem is to take proper precautions – do not walk barefoot outside, wear trousers or long pants when hiking, and always conduct a swift ‘tick check’ after spending time outdoors. For more information, see p356.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

The airport is 4km northwest of Mariehamn and there is a bus into the centre. A taxi to the centre costs about €14. **Finnair** (☎ 634 500; [www.finnair.fi](http://www.finnair.fi)) has a daily service from Helsinki. There’s a Finnair office in **Hotell Arkipelag** (Strandgatan 31, Mariehamn).



**Executive Express European** (☎ 02-415 4957; www.european.se) flies three times a day Monday to Friday between Turku and Mariehamn and twice daily between Mariehamn and Stockholm Arlanda. It suspends flights between mid-June and late July.

## BOAT

Viking and Silja lines have year-round daily ferries to Mariehamn from Turku as part of their links with Stockholm (see p238); you can stop off 'between' countries or sail return from either. Viking also sails to Mariehamn from Helsinki and from Kapellskär (north of Stockholm) in Sweden. Birka Cruises sails only between Stockholm and Mariehamn. **Tallink** (www.tallink.com) runs a new route from Stockholm to Tallinn via Mariehamn.

**Eckerö Linjen** (☎ 28000; www.eckerölinjen.fi; Torggatan 2, Mariehamn) sails from Grisslehamn in Sweden to Eckerö – this is the cheapest and quickest route from Sweden to Åland. There are three to five connections a day from Grisslehamn during the high season and two or three during the low season. The trips have a bus connection to/from Stockholm and Mariehamn. The boat trip takes two hours (remember the time difference!), and a combined boat and bus trip from Stockholm to Mariehamn takes five hours.

Ferry fares vary widely by season and class of travel. As a rule, they are very cheap: off-season, these ferries make their money on sprightly pensioners buying duty free with the grey krona. The passenger fare from Grisslehamn to Eckerö is €8.90 in high season (€5.50 off season).

Free travel for pedestrians and cyclists on the archipelago ferries all the way to the central Åland islands is possible from mainland Finland via Korpo (southern route, from Galtby passenger harbour) or Kustavi (northern route, from Osnäs passenger harbour), but you usually have to break your outward journey in the archipelago; car drivers are required to do this.

## Getting Around

### BICYCLE

Cycling is a great way to tour these flat, rural islands. The most scenic roads have separate bike lanes that are clearly marked. Ro-No Rent has bicycles available at Mariehamn (p238) and Eckerö harbours.

## BUS

Five main bus lines depart from Mariehamn's regional bus terminal on Torggatan in front of the library. Bus 1 goes to Hammarland and Eckerö; route 2 to Godby and Geta; route 3 to Godby and Saltvik; route 4 to Godby, Sund and Vårdö (Hummelvik); and route 5 to Lemland and Lumparland (Långnäs). Bus 6 runs from Godby Monday to Friday, servicing other destinations in Finström. The one-way fare from Mariehamn to Storby (Eckerö) is €4.90; from Mariehamn to Långnäs is €4.70. Bicycles can be carried on buses (space permitting) for €4.

If you plan to use the bus a lot, you can buy a bus pass valid for the whole island (24-hour/three days €12/24).

## FERRY

There are three kinds of inter-island ferry. For short trips across straits, simple vehicle ferries ply nonstop and are free. For longer routes, ferries run according to schedule, and take cars, bicycles and pedestrians. There are also three bicycle ferries in summer – a ride is €7 to €9 per person with a bicycle. The bike ferry routes are Hammarland–Geta, Lumparland–Sund and Vårdö–Saltvik.

Timetables for all inter-island ferries are available at the main tourist office in Mariehamn and online at www.alandstrafiken.aland.fi.

## MARIEHAMN

pop 10,712

Pretty Mariehamn will seem a bustling metropolis if you've arrived from some of the other entry points in Åland or have spent some time in the archipelago. It's by far the largest settlement hereabouts and is spread-out and elegant, with stately wooden houses looking over broad tree-lined streets – it has been dubbed the 'town of a thousand linden trees'. Built on a peninsula, it is framed on either side by marinas full of gleaming sailing boats. It is hectic here in summer but outside the peak season Mariehamn reverts to its somnolent, local self.

Mariehamn was founded in 1861 by Tsar Alexander II, who named the town after his wife, Tsarina Maria. Mariehamn is the administrative and economic centre of Åland. It is the seat of the *lagting* and *landskapsstyrelse*, the legislative and executive bodies of Åland, and has several good museums.

## Orientation

Mariehamn is situated on a long, narrow peninsula and has two harbours – Västerhamn (West Harbour) and Österhamn (East Harbour). Ferries from Sweden and mainland Finland dock at Västerhamn, but just about everything else is at Österhamn, a stone's throw from the city centre. Torggatan is the colourful pedestrian street, while the long, broad, tree-lined Storgatan is the main thoroughfare connecting the two harbours. The airport is 4km northwest of the centre.

## Information

You can store luggage in the lockers (€2) at the ferry terminal for up to 24 hours.

**Ålands Turistinformation** (☎ 24000; www.visitaland.com; Storgatan 8; ☎ 9am–6pm daily mid-Jun–mid-Aug, 9am–5pm Mon–Fri 9am–4pm Sat & Sun early–mid-Jun & mid-late Aug, 9am–4pm Mon–Fri 10am–3pm Sat Apr, May & Sep) Heaps of information on Åland and books tours. Internet for 15 minutes €1. Very helpful.

**Ålandsresor** (☎ 28040; www.alandsresor.fi; Torggatan 2; ☎ 8.30am–5pm Mon–Fri, also 9am–2pm Sat Jun & Jul) Eckerö Linjen's travel-agent arm handles hotel, guesthouse and cottage bookings for the entire island. Often the only way to secure accommodation other than camping grounds. Viking Line offers a similar service.

**Ålandstrafiken** (☎ 25155; Strandgatan 25; ☎ 9am–5pm Mon–Fri, also 9am–3pm Sat Jun & Jul) Will store backpacks for longer periods.

**Cycle Info** (☎ 9am–7pm Jun–Aug) Two-wheeled summer tourist information units: just flag them down and ask a question.

**Main hospital** (☎ 5355; Norragatan 17)

**Main post office** (☎ 6360; Torggatan 4; ☎ Mon–Sat). Sells the collectable Åland stamps; Finnish stamps won't work here.

**Mariehamn library** (☎ 531 441, Strandgatan 8; ☎ 10am–8pm Mon–Fri, 11am–4pm Sat, noon–3pm Sun) Several free Internet terminals; maximum 15 minutes at a time if you don't book ahead.

**Tourist information booth** (☎ 531 214; ☎ daily Jul, Mon–Sat Jun & Aug) At the Västerhamn ferry terminal.

## Sights & Activities

### MUSEUMS

The Åland Museum Card allows entry to any four museums for €8.50. If you choose your visits wisely, this can garner a big saving. Buy it at the tourist office or at most museums.

In the centre of town, the **Ålands Museum & Ålands Konstmuseum** (Ålands Museum & Art Museum; ☎ 25426; Stadsparken; admission €3; ☎ 10am–4pm

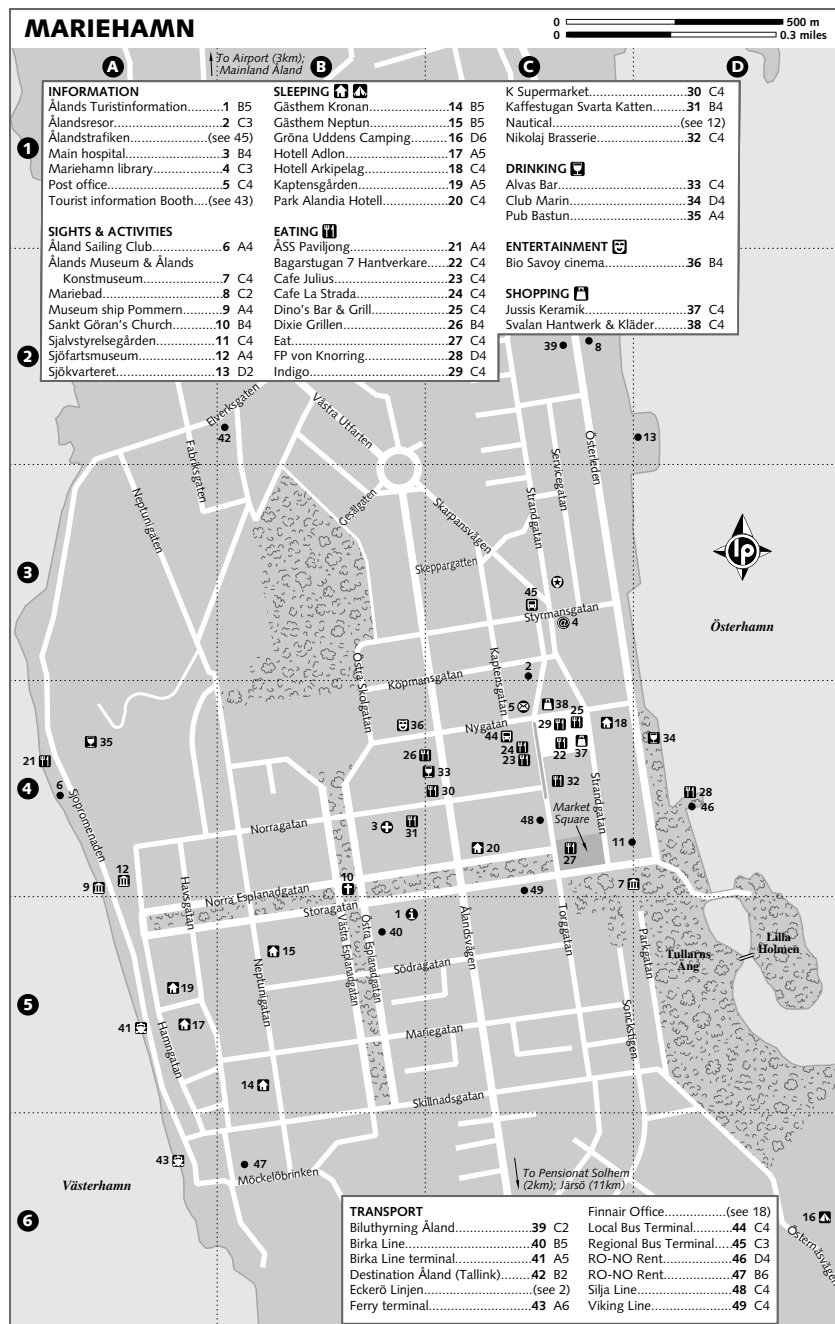
Wed–Mon, 10am–7pm Tue Jun & Aug, 10am–7pm daily Jul, 10am–4pm Wed–Sun 10am–8pm Tue Sep–May; ☎) are housed in the same building and should definitely head your list of things to see in Mariehamn. The lively and well-presented museum gives an absorbing insight into the complete history of the islands and includes a Stone-Age replica boat made of sealskin, and a reconstructed traditional pharmacy. The panels don't have English, so take an information leaflet on entry.

The gallery has changing exhibitions as well as a handful of paintings by local artists. Perhaps most interesting among them are the canvases of Joel Petterson (1892–1937). You really sense the elemental forces at work behind the Åland treescapes and behind his furrowed brow in a self-portrait; he's something of an Åland Van Gogh.

The stalwarts of Åland are mariners and the **Sjöfartsmuseum** (Maritime Museum; ☎ 19930; Hamngatan 2; admission €5, joint ticket with Pommern €8; ☎ 9am–5pm May–Aug, 9am–7pm Jul, 10am–4pm Sep–Apr), an enjoyably kitschy museum of sailing and maritime commerce, is devoted to them. There are heaps of items from old boats, including figureheads that once graced local ships, model ships, ships in bottles, sea chests and nautical equipment. The central part of the museum is a re-creation of a ship with mast, saloon, galley and cabins, but to see the real thing, go outside.

The **museum ship Pommern** (☎ 531423; admission €5, with Sjöfartsmuseum €8; ☎ 9am–5pm May–Aug, 9am–7pm Jul, 10am–4pm Sep & Oct), anchored behind the Sjöfartsmuseum, is a beautifully preserved four-masted merchant ship and a symbol of Mariehamn. The four-masted barque was built in 1903 in Glasgow, Scotland, and once carried tons of cargo and a 26-man crew on the trade route between Australia and England; its record run was a very creditable 110 days. An audio guide (available in English; €3.50) can help bring the old ship to life.

On the opposite side of the peninsula, at the northern end of Österhamn, is **Sjökvarteret** (Maritime Quarter; ☎ 16033; www.sjokvarteret.com; adult/child €4/free; ☎ 10am–6pm daily mid-Jun–mid-Aug, 9–11am Mon–Fri mid-Aug–mid-Jun), where you can see the modern-day approach to boat-building, along with traditional wooden boats. There's also a museum with exhibitions on shipbuilding, several craft workshops and a café.



## OTHER ATTRACTIONS

The 1927 copper-roofed **Sankt Görans Church** (St George's Church; ☎ 10am-3pm Mon-Fri) in the town centre is not as interesting as the medieval treasure-trove churches in Åland's villages. The design is Art Nouveau, by Lars Sonck, and the church was donated to the town by a wealthy shipowner.

**Självstyrelsegården** (Self-Government Bldg; ☎ 25000; nr Österleden & Stora Esplanadgatan) is home of the Åland parliament. Free guided tours (available in English) are given at 10am every Friday from June to mid-August. The tour ends with a slide show about Åland.

South of Österhamn is **Tullarns Äng**, a small park that is prized for its spring wildflowers. **Lilla Holmen** island, connected to Tullarns Äng by a bridge, has a summer café, a decent swimming beach and peacocks strolling through the grounds.

The **Järsö** recreational area, 12km south of Mariehamn at the tip of the peninsula, is a good place for short bicycle and walking tours. The area is at its most beautiful in spring and early summer, when wildflowers cover the ground.

## ACTIVITIES

In addition to bicycles, Ro-No Rent (☎ 12820; www.goaland.net/rono; ☎ 10-11am & 4-5pm May, 10am-6pm Jun-Aug) rents all kinds of fun outdoor equipment. You can rent fishing rods per day/week for €7/15; canoes per hour/day for €10/20; boats seating six with outboard motor per two hours/day for €60/102; and beach buggies per two hours/day for €25/45. Scooters can be had per two hours/day from €17/45, with free mileage and a full tank.

With so many boats packed into Mariehamn's harbours it's tempting to try your

hand at sailing. **Åland Sailing Club** (☎ 040-724 5797; Västra Hamnen) runs sailing courses and private lessons, while **Midnight Sun Sailing** (☎ 57500; www.midnightsunsailing.fi) rents out yachts for charter or cruises.

On the eastern harbour, **Mariebad** (☎ 531 650; Österleden; www.mariebad.net; adult/child €7/4) is one of those fun Northern European water-parks, excellent for the whole family. There's a serious pool for lengths, as well as a warm pool, waterslide, saunas, Jacuzzi and café.

## Tours

From mid-June to mid-August a novel sightseeing tour is operated by **Röde Orm** (☎ 0457-548 3554). Leaving from the market square in Mariehamn, a red London double-decker bus does a 45-minute tour to Järsö and back, (€7, 11.15am, 1.15pm and 2.15pm Monday to Friday, from mid-June to mid-August).

In July to early August there are cruises aboard the traditional wooden schooner **Linden** (☎ 12055; www.linden.aland.fi). There's a four-hour lunch cruise at noon (per person €39) and a four-hour dinner cruise at 6pm (per person €49) every day. The lunch one leaves from Sjökvarteret and arrives at Västerhamn; the dinner one vice versa.

## Festivals and Events

The decoration and raising of the Midsummer poles (see below) and the subsequent dancing is memorable; you might also want to check out the **Viking Market** (www.visitaland.com) at Kvarnbo at the end of July, or the **Organ Festival** (www.afest.org) in late June. The harvest festival in mid-September sees a variety of traditional events organized across the island. On a less traditional note, the

## MIDSUMMER POLES

The most striking manmade feature in the Åland landscape is the Midsummer pole. It's a long flagpole decorated with leaves, miniature flags, small boats and other symbols, whose nature and symbolism varies from village to village. Each village usually has one or more poles, decorated in a public gathering the day before Midsummer. The pole then stands until the next Midsummer.

Although some theorists feel that the pole is a development of an ancient fertility rite, its origins on Åland itself are probably more recent. The poles often resemble ships' masts, with cross spars and cords resembling the rigging. Atop the poles there is usually a figure, the Fäktargubbe, who represents toil and diligence. Below him may come a streamer bearing the year of the Midsummer pole. Other motifs may include sailing boats, ears of corn representing the harvest, a wreath of love, a sun symbol facing east and symbols of community togetherness.

**Rockoff** (www.rockoff.nu) rock festival takes place in late July and draws some big Swedish, if not international, acts. It runs for a week in the evenings only.

## Sleeping

Mariehamn's hotels generally raise their rates between mid-June and the end of August. It pays to book ahead, as the islands are popular destinations.

## BUDGET

Mariehamn has no youth hostels.

**Gröna Udden Camping** (☎ 21121; www.gronaudden.com; per site €4-5 plus per adult €4-5, 2-/4-person cabins €55/85, r €50; ☹ mid-May–Aug) Just a 15-minute walk south of the centre, this seaside camping ground is a great place to stay. The beach is good for swimming, and, while the tent spaces can be a bit cramped, the brand new cabins are very cute and cosy. There are also simple rooms sleeping one to three, a sauna and minigolf. You can walk back into town through the seaside parkland.

**Pensionat Solhem** (☎ 16322; fax 16350; Yttermä; s/d €41/61; ☎ ☹) This is one of the more peaceful places to stay in Mariehamn. It's pleasantly situated near an inlet, 3km south of the centre. The rooms are simply but caringly decorated, the shared bathrooms are good, and guests can use the rowing boats and sauna. The local bus (routes B and D) stops nearby.

**Gästhem Kronan** (☎ 12617; kronan@aland.net; Neptunigatan 52; s/d €41/62; ☎ ☹) This guesthouse is handily close to the Västerhamn ferry port but a bit of a hike from the centre. The rooms are spacious if a little austere, and the shared bathrooms tiny, but the management is helpful and it's not a bad deal, at least out of season (singles/doubles without breakfast €26/47). It also runs the summer-only **Gästhem Neptun** (Neptunigatan 41; s/d €46/67; ☹ mid-May–mid-Aug; ☎ ☹), which is newer. Breakfast and linen are included at both.

## MIDRANGE

**Hotell Arkipelag** (☎ 24020; www.hotellarkipelag.com; Strandgatan 31; s/d €110/135, ste from €185; ☎ ☹ ☹ ☹) Overlooking Österhamn, this hotel is large but friendly. It has all sorts of facilities: sauna, indoor and outdoor pools, casino, nightclub and more; the rooms are polished if unexciting. It's well worth shelling out an extra €12 to get a (magnificent

view over the water; you can sit out on the balcony and toast it.

**Park Alandia Hotell** (☎ 14130; www.parkhotel.vikingline.fi; Norra Esplanadgatan 3; s/d €78/98; ☎ ☹ ☹ ☹) This place is on the main boulevard. The rooms feel particularly Scandinavian with their polished pine floors; they are spacious and light. The hotel also has a popular sunny public terrace. Rates are significantly cheaper on Sunday nights.

**Hotell Adlon** (☎ 15300; www.alandhotels.fi; Hamngatan 7; s/d €109/121; ☹ May–Oct; ☎ ☹ ☹) This modern hotel close to the ferry terminal is pretty ugly from outside but has light and comfy rooms as well as a restaurant, sports bar, and indoor pool. The décor veers towards the maritime. It has a cheaper annexe across the road, the Kaptensgården (doubles with/without bathroom €91/73); rates include use of the Adlon's facilities.

## Eating

The best dining on the islands is found in Mariehamn. Many cafés in town serve the local speciality, *Ålandspannkaka* (Åland pancakes), for around €3 to €4. They're fluffy square puddings made with semolina and served with stewed prunes and whipped cream. Another tasty local speciality, *Ålands svartbröd* (Åland dark bread), is available at local markets – this fruity creation takes four days to make and is cracking with *sill* (pickled herring).

## RESTAURANTS

**ÅSS Paviljong** (☎ 19141; Västhamn; lunch €13, mains €24-29; ☹ lunch & dinner May–Aug; ☹) Don't worry about the acronym: this boat-owners' favourite is the oldest restaurant in town, and also one of the most atmospheric. It's in a lovely old wooden building on the water's edge. The speciality is seafood and the set lunch buffet is good value.

**FP von Knorring** (☎ 16500; Österhamn; mains €15-27; ☹ lunch & dinner May–Aug; ☹) This beautiful boat restaurant has classy seafood meals served in intimate surroundings below deck, plus a busy beer terrace on the deck. It tends to use local ingredients prepared in fairly traditional ways.

**Indigo** (☎ 16550; www.indigo.com; Nygatan 1; mains €20-30; ☹ restaurant 11am-3pm & 5-11pm, bar until 3am weekends; ☹) This spot is an intriguing mix of the old and the new. Set in an elegant historic stone building, the interior is warm

and cosy. The kitchen has a more contemporary slant, turning out smart, tasty fare like carpaccio of beef. There's a cheaper bistro menu on the terrace, and it fills up after dinner with a trendy drinking crowd.

**Nautical** (☎ 19931; Hamngatan 2; mains €22-28; ☹ lunch & dinner Mon–Fri, dinner Sat; ☹) Above the maritime museum, this classy spot has great views over the western harbour and the *Pommern*. The décor is, unsurprisingly, nautical (ahem); the food is classy, with small, elaborate portions of such fare as medallions of venison, as well as fine seafood.

## CAFÉS

**Bagarstugan 7 Hantverkare** (☎ 19881; Ekonomiegatan 2; light meals €3-8; ☹ 10am-5pm Tue–Fri, 10am-3pm Sat; ☹) Just off Torggatan, this is one of Mariehamn's more charming cafés. Its homemade soups and sandwiches come with a smile and have a strong local following; there are also local crafts for sale.

**Nikolaj Brasserie** (☎ 22560; Torggatan; mains €8-14; ☹ 9am-8pm Mon–Fri, 9am-7pm Sat, 11am-1pm Sun; ☹) Set in the Galleria shopping arcade on Torggatan, this makes a filling stop for lunch or dinner. There's a tasty daily soup and huge pizzas, vegetarian dishes and more elaborate plates. Eat on the terrace if you can find a table.

**Kaffestugan Svarta Katten** (☎ 21599; Norragatan 15; ☹ 10am-5pm Mon–Fri, 11am-4pm Sat) This cosy place is a smart but homely café and stands out as one of the best places to try *Ålandspannkaka* (though not the cheapest). There are a few classic metal garden chairs if you fancy sitting out.

**Eat** (☎ 19999; Torget; meals €4-9; ☹ 11am-6pm Mon–Fri, 11.30am-3.30pm Sat) This place at the market square is an incredibly popular lunchtime spot, particularly with Åland's parliamentarians. There's an open and enclosed terrace.

Also recommended:

**Café Julius** (☎ 14211; Torggatan 10; ☹ 7am-5pm Mon–Sat, 9am-4pm Sun) Early opener with plenty of cheap sandwiches, pastries and snacks.

**Café La Strada** (☎ 13270; Torggatan; pizzas & pasta from €7-10; ☹ 10am-6pm Mon–Fri, 10am-4pm Sat) As well as pizza and pasta, they do a dish of the day for €8 to €10.

## QUICK EATS

**Dino's Bar & Grill** (☎ 13939; Strandgatan 12; mains €9-23; ☹ food 10.30am-9pm Mon–Sat, 2-9pm Sun) This bar is a popular meeting spot, with enormous

hamburgers, pasta and pizza and a great outdoor deck. The mains, such as a mixed kebab, are tasty if a touch overpriced and come with chips and salad.

**Dixie Grillen** (☎ 19743; Ålandsvägen 40; burgers €4-5; ☹ until 10pm) While the décor is nothing to put on your postcard home, this is an established spot for cheap snacks; burgers (including a veggie one), pizza and the like.

## SELF-CATERING

There are several minimarkets all over town, but the largest supermarket is **K** (nr Ålandsvägen and Norragatan).

## Drinking

Mariehamn is busy with holidaying people of all ages in summer, so there's a reasonably varied nightlife on offer. As well as these places, see the previously mentioned Indigo and FP von Knorring restaurants, and the Park Alandia Hotel.

**Club Marin** (Österhamn; ☹ 11am-1am daily May–Jul, lunch and dinner Aug–Apr) This is an attractive, slightly upmarket harbour pavilion serving beer and meals, and is very popular on weekend nights in summer when there's dancing and live music.

**Pub Bastun** (Hamngatan) This down-to-earth place near the maritime museum has a small terrace and a grassy bank to lie back on with a beer. It has loud live music most weekends in summer; some surprisingly well-known Swedish and Finnish rock groups have played here.

**Dino's Bar and Grill** (☎ 13939; Strandgatan 12; ☹ 10am-1am or later Mon–Sat, 2-11pm Sun) This is a popular central pub with live entertainment in summer. The terrace on the enclosed square is a great place to relax.

**Hotell Arkipelag** (☎ 24020; Strandgatan 31; ☹ bar 11am-midnight, disco 10pm-3am Thu–Sat) An evening hotspot, especially for the big-spending boat-owners. It has a lively disco and a casino.

**Alvas Bar** (☎ 16141; Ålandsvägen 42; ☹ 10pm-4am) The most popular late-night bar and disco with the younger crowd, particularly on weekends.

## Entertainment

**Bio Savoy cinema** (nr Nygatan & Ålandsvägen) This cinema, west of the centre, usually shows films in English, with Swedish subtitles.

## Shopping

Mariehamn is a great place to shop for quality handicrafts – pick up a map of craft shops in Mariehamn and around mainland Åland at the tourist office.

**Jussis Keramik** (☎ 13606; Nygatan 1) This place sells interesting ceramics and glassware, and you can watch the objects being made.

**Bagarstugan 7 Hantverkare** (☎ 19881; Ekonomiegatan 2) This is a crafts collective representing nearly a dozen artists. It also has a lovely café of the same name.

**Sjökvarteret** (Maritime Quarter; ☎ 16033; www.sjokvarteret.com) There are several craft workshops in this boat-building complex, see p233.

**Svalan Hantverk & Kläder** (☎ 13470, Torggatan 5). This shop sells handicrafts, materials and handmade clothing.

## Getting There & Away

See p230 for information on travelling to and from Mariehamn by plane or ferry.

Viking, Tallink and Silja ferries depart from the ferry terminal at Västerhamn. Just north of it is a smaller terminal used only by Birka Line.

All ferry lines have offices in Mariehamn:

**Birka Line** (☎ 27027; www.birkaline.com; Östra Esplanadgatan 7).

**Eckerö Linjen** (☎ 28000; www.eckerolinjen.fi; Torggatan 2)

**Silja Line** (☎ 16711; www.silja.com; Torggatan 14)

**Tallink** (c/o Destination Åland; ☎ 040-300 8000; www.tallink.com)

**Viking Line** (☎ 26211; www.vikingline.fi; Storgatan 2)

Regional buses depart from the terminal in front of the library; for route and fare information see p232, or get a timetable from the tourist office.

## Getting Around

There are four local bus routes running around two circular routes. A and C serve the northern parts of town, while B and D serve the south. They run half-hourly in winter and hourly in summer and are free.

For bicycles, **Ro-No Rent** (☎ 12820; www.goaland.net/rono; ☎ 10-11am & 4-5pm May, 10am-6pm Jun-end Aug) is the main rental firm and it has outlets at Mariehamn's Österhamn and Västerhamn. There are daily/weekly rates for standard bicycles (€7/35), three-speed models (€9/45) and mountain bikes

(€13/65), as well as tandem bikes (€17/85) and motor scooters (€45/135). When its office isn't open, arrangements can be made by phone.

Hiring a car is a good way to see Åland. The best place is friendly **Biluthyrning Åland** (☎ 525 505) at the Esso petrol station opposite the Sjökvarteret. Rates for a small car start at €63 for a day, but there's often a 24-hour special for €55. There's a minimum of fuss involved, and they'll deliver it for free within Mariehamn.

# MAINLAND ÅLAND & AROUND

The largest islands of the archipelago form a core group, which is the most popular destination in the province. This is where many of the oldest historical landmarks in Finland are found. Eckerö is particularly loved by Swedish families, given its proximity by ferry to Sweden, while Saltvik and Sund have the most well-known sights.

Bicycle tours around this part of Åland are very popular in summer because there are marked paths, distances are not too great and bridges or ferries connect the various islands to make up an area large enough for an interesting week of touring.

## JOMALA

pop 3508

The Jomala region, just north of Mariehamn, has two main centres: Kyrkby, with a range of facilities, and the smaller Gottby.

The famous landscape painter Victor Westerholm had his summer house in Önnin-geby, a tiny village in eastern Jomala. Other artists followed him there, and for two decades around the turn of the 20th century, the area was known as the 'Önningeby colony'. There's an interesting **museum** (☎ 33710; admission €3; ☎ noon-3pm Sun May-Aug, 10am-4pm Tue-Sun late Jun-early Aug) here that is dedicated to the artist and the village, with local historical memorabilia on display. The building itself was once a stone cowshed. The art collection and exhibitions include works by many of the artists influenced by the Önningeby School, but none by Westerholm himself. The area around the museum forms a photogenic scene of

red wooden farm buildings, windmills and Midsummer poles.

Two kilometres west beyond Gottby, and 4km from the main road, the peaceful hamlet of Djurvik overlooks a gentle bay. Right by the water, **Djurviks Gästgård** (☎ 32433; www.goaland.net/djurviks; d €42, 2-/4-person cabins €45/57; ☎ ☒) has an apartment with a kitchen, good cabins, simple double rooms and a garden; it's a remote spot and great for a relaxing stay with kids.

From Mariehamn, catch bus 5 to near Önnin-geby or bus 1 to Gottby. From Tuesday to Thursday in July, a special taxi leaves for the Önningeby museum from Mariehamn, allowing a couple of hours at the museum. A return ticket including museum entry is €6; cheaper than the bus.

## FINSTRÖM

pop 2399

Finström is the central municipality in Åland. Godby is the island's second-biggest town and offers all facilities, including a **tourist office** (☎ 41890; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat, noon-4pm Sun mid-Jun-mid-Aug) in the main shopping centre.

The medieval **Sankt Mikael Church** (☎ Mon-Fri May-Sep), with a wealth of frescoes and sculptures, is in a small village 5km north of Godby along a picturesque secondary road and is perfect for a stopover on a bicycle tour.

Just outside Godby, the Café Uffe på Berget, just south of the bridge to Sund, has a 30m-high **observation tower** with superb views of the archipelago. Across the road is **Godby Arboretum**, a tiny park with native and exotic trees along a short, marked nature trail.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Bastö Hotell & Stugby** (☎ 42382; www.basto.aland.fi; s/d €72/91; ☎ May-Sep; ☎ ☒ ☒) This large holiday complex is set on a headland at Bastö, 12km northwest of Godby. Its hotel rooms are fairly simple, but come with en suite; all have a fridge, and some have simple cooking facilities. Large cottages sleep four to six people. There are saunas, minigolf, restaurant and all the other Finnish holiday essentials.

**Café Uffe på Berget** (☎ 41190; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Sat, 11am-8pm Sun May-Aug) Just outside Godby, this sits right on the bridge on the Mariehamn-Sund road. It's a popular

stopover, as much for its viewing tower and outdoor terrace as for its pancakes and coffees (espresso machine!).

## Getting There & Away

Road 2 from Mariehamn takes you to Godby. Bus 2, 3 and 4 from Mariehamn all go via Godby (€3). Bus 6 services other parts of Finström, leaving Godby three times a day, Monday to Friday only.

## SUND

pop 1024

Sund, just east of the main island group and connected by bridge to Saltvik, is one of the most interesting municipalities in Åland. As well as a muscular medieval castle and large open-air museum, its attractions include a snail-tasting tour and the ruins of a formidable Russian stronghold. Sund is just 30km from Mariehamn, which makes it an ideal first overnight stop on a slow-paced bicycle tour. Finby, in the centre of Sund, is the largest town, with all services.

## Sights & Activities

One of Åland's premier sights, **Kastelholms Slott** (☎ 432 156; admission €5; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Fri May, 10am-5pm daily Jun & Aug, 10am-6pm daily Jul, 10am-4pm Mon-Fri early-mid-Sep) is a smallish but perfectly formed castle picturesquely set by a little inlet. It has experienced several building phases, the earliest of which was in the 14th century. The most impressive part is the keep, which towers 15m high in parts; the walls are 3m thick; there was no escape for Eric XIV, a Swedish king imprisoned here for a time. The hall, a later construction, ended up being used as a grain storehouse and has an exhibition of items found by archaeologists. Entry is by regular guided tour; while English tours are rare (2pm Saturday and Sunday from late June to early August), there are plenty of information panels. The castle is just off the main road number 2, clearly signposted and visible to the right (when heading east), after passing Kastelholm village.

Next to the castle is **Jan Karlsgårdens Friluftsmuseum** (admission free; ☎ 10am-4pm May-mid-Sep, 10am-5pm Jun-Aug, closed weekends in Sep), a delightful open-air museum. Stroll around examining a variety of traditional Åland buildings, including windmills and a smoke sauna. It's worth purchasing the guidebook

(€1) from the Vita Björn museum before entering. Central to all is a Midsummer pole; this is a great place to be when it's erected at the Midsummer festival.

By the entrance of the Jan Karlsgården Museum is **Fängelsemuseet Vita Björn** (☎ 432 156; admission €2; ☎ 10am-5pm May-Aug, 10am-4pm Mon-Fri early Sep), a small prison museum. The building was used as a jail until 1975, and there's a demonstration of how cell conditions evolved over the two centuries it was in use. Although it looks like a cottage, the walls and floor are of thick stone, so there was no tunnelling out.

Also near Kastelholm is Åland's odddest tourist attraction, the **snail safari** run by **Alandia Escargots** (☎ 43964; admission €5.50; ☎ 2-3 tours daily Jul, 2 tours Tue-Fri late Jun & Aug). The snail farm opens only for the one-hour tours; it's worth paying the extra (total €9) to taste one of the little critters in garlic butter, washed down by a glass of strong cider.

Åland's original **golf course** (☎ 43883), boasting 36 holes, is across the bay from Kastelholm. The Slottsbanan course is harder than the Kungsbanan.

North of Kastelholm, **Sankt Johannes Church** (☎ May-Aug) is the biggest church on Åland. It is 800 years old and is decorated with beautiful paintings. Note the stone cross with the text 'Wenni E'. According to researchers, it was erected in memory of the Hamburg bishop Wenni, who died here when on a crusade in 936.

East of Kastelholm are the ruins of the Russian fortress at **Bomarsund**. After the war of 1809, Russian troops began to build Bomarsund as a defence against the Swedes. Construction took decades, and the mammoth building was operational but not wholly complete by the time the Crimean War (1854) came around. Twenty-five British and French ships bombarded it heavily from the sea; after two days it capitulated and was demolished by the victors. The evocative honeycomb ruins can be seen on both sides of the main road at the eastern end of Sund, by the bridge leading across a beautiful sound to Prästö island. On the other side of the water is the small **Bomarsund museum** (☎ 44032; admission by donation; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Fri Jun-mid-Aug, also Sat & Sun in Jul) has more information and displays bits and pieces excavated from the site of the fortress ruins.

There are several **graveyards** – Greek Orthodox, Jewish, Muslim and Christian – clearly marked on the island of Prästö. All date back to the Russian occupation.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Kastelholms Gästhem** (☎ 43841; kastelholms.gasthem@aland.net; s/d €47/65; ☎ May-mid-Oct; P ☒) This tranquil spot is a 15-minute walk from the castle in the village of Tosarby. It's a serene spot with a grassy garden, wooden deck and laundry/kitchen facilities. Accommodation is good for this price, for which reason you should really book in advance.

**Puttes Camping** (☎ 44040; puttes.camping@aland.net; tent sites per person €2.50 plus per tent or vehicle €2, cabins €29; ☎ May-Aug; P) Right next to the ruins of Bomarsund, this friendly place has plenty of grassy camp sites, well-priced simple four-berth powered cabins, laundry, kitchen, a beach sauna and a canoe jetty. Phone ☎ 0457-313 4177 if there's nobody about.

**Prästö Stugor & Camping** (☎/fax 44045; tent sites €3, cabins €39-59; ☎ mid-Apr-mid-Sep) Located at the eastern end of Prästö, just near the ferry across to Vårdö, this location has a bit of everything. As well as small and large cabins and camping space, there are amusements including sand volleyball and a sauna, as well as a grill that does simple hamburger 'n chips (€8.50) and the like. It's also a popular spot to sip a beer on the veranda as the sun hangs in the evening sky.

The restaurant at the Jan Karlsgården Museum serves light snacks and delicious meals. It serves surprisingly classy fare for a museum restaurant, so it makes a great lunch stop.

### Getting There & Away

Road 2 and bus 4 from Mariehamn to Vårdö will take you to Sund. The bus goes via Kastelholm (€3.60, 20 minutes), Svensböle, Bomarsund and Prästö (€4.90, 30 to 45 minutes).

The bicycle ferry **Nadja** (☎ 040-553 3256; ☎ Jun-mid-Aug) operates between Prästö and Lumpo, Lumparland. There is one departure a day from Monday to Saturday from June to mid-August. It leaves Lumpo at midday, and returns from Prästö at 12.30pm (one way €7).

## VÅRDÖ

pop 425

This quiet and remote spot has been chosen as a retreat by several noted Finnish and Swedish authors. Small wonder, as its rippling bays, rustling silver birches, and views over the numerous islets of the archipelago impart much inner calm.

The main settlement is Vargata, which has a bank (no ATM), a shop and a post office. The **library** (☎ 47970, ☎ 2-4.30pm & 6-9pm Tue & Thu) has free Internet access. Beyond here, the island's **church** (☎ 10am-6pm Jun-Aug) is a typically picturesque 18th-century affair with a curiously bulbous tower. Further northeast, Lövä village was the scene of a peace conference in 1718 between representatives of King Karl XII of Sweden and Tsar Peter I (Peter the Great) of Russia, during the Great Northern War. Judging by what has been dug from the earth here, the 1200 participants in this high-class event consumed French wine and oysters in frightening quantities.

On the main road between Vargata and Lövä, **Seffers Homestead Museum** (☎ 47605; adult/child €2/free; ☎ noon-3pm Tue, Thu & Sat mid-Jun-Jul) is an old 18th-century farmhouse with a windmill, farm equipment and a Midsummer pole on display.

### Sleeping

**Sandösunds Camping** (☎ 47750; www.sandocamping.aland.fi; tent sites per person €3, plus tent or vehicle €2, cabins from €35) This delightful spot is a great camp site. On a beach in the island's north, there are pleasant two- and four-bed cabins, a café-restaurant and canoe and bike rentals. Best of all, the enthusiastic owners have created a unique 'floating sauna' on the picture-perfect sound. While it's nominally open from May to August, you won't be turned away if you ring ahead out of season.

**Bomans Gästhem** (☎ 47821; Vårdöby; dm/d €22/72; ☎ May-Sep; P ☒) This HI-affiliated hostel is signposted 500m off the road between Vargata and Lövä. As well as dorm beds, there are some smart new rooms in little bungalows and simpler cabins (€50) also. There are all sorts of facilities and activities; guests have use of a kitchen and sauna, and can rent bikes. There's even a driving range in the field out the front. Breakfast and linen are included in price.

## Getting There & Away

Bus 4 will take you to Vårdö from Mariehamn (€5.60, 40 to 55 minutes), crossing on the short, free car ferry from Prästö. Ferries on the northern archipelago route depart from the village of Hummelvik on Vårdö; the bus meets them. For more details see p245. For information on the bicycle ferry between Saltvik and Vårdö, see p242.

## SALTVIK

pop 1723

Was the legendary 10th-century Viking capital, Birka, situated in Saltvik? Though there's no evidence – and stronger proof exists that the Viking stronghold was near the Swedish Lake Mälaren – one Ålandese archaeologist is convinced of Saltvik's former glory.

Whatever the case, many signs of Viking occupation have been unearthed around Saltvik, more so than elsewhere on the Åland archipelago. Nevertheless, a giant leap of the imagination will be required to reconstruct longhouses from the scant ruins.

East of Kvarnbo, the central village of Saltvik, is the Iron Age fortress of **Borgboda**. On the main Saltvik bicycle route, it is thought to have been built in the mid-to-late first millennium AD. Some stone outcroppings remain, but otherwise it's just a cow field with a nice view.

Kvarnbo has the large **Sankta Maria Church** that dates from the 12th century and is probably the oldest church in Finland. There are some wall paintings and sculptures from the 13th century, as well as a fine baptismal font, but most of the paintings are from the Lutheran era, in the 1500s.

## Orrdals Klint & The Stone Age Village

The highest 'mountain' in Åland, 129m above sea level, is really no more than a big hill. Two short, well-marked walking tracks (1km and 2.5km long respectively) lead to the top, where there's a viewing tower and a simple four-bed camp hut.

On the road to Orrdals Klint near Långbergsöda is a Stone Age walking trail starting from a clearly-marked car park. It's more of a stroll than a hike, taking you past two excavated settlements and then to a fully reconstructed **Stone Age Village** (☎ 11am-6pm late Jun-mid-Aug), with sealskin-covered huts.

In summer there are plenty of Neolithic skills to try your hand at; there are even real people living Stone Age–like lives there. There is no public transport; you'll have to make your own way from Kvarnbo.

### Getting There & Away

Bus 3 runs from Mariehamn to Kvarnbo (€3.60, 35 minutes) and other villages in Saltvik.

The bicycle ferry **Kajo** (☎ 0400-783 086) runs between Tängsödavik (Saltvik) and Västra Simskåla (Vårdö) late June to early August. There is one daily departure each way, leaving Västra Simskåla at noon and Tängsödavik at 12.30pm. One way it's €9.

### GETA

pop 461

The northern municipality of Geta is quiet and isolated; the main attraction is **Getaber-gen** – a formidable peak at 98m above sea level. One nature trail here is aimed at kids (2km), while a longer trail (5.5km) leads to Djupviksgrottan, a spacious natural grotto that is one of several striking geological features hereabouts.

**Soltuna Stugor** (☎ 49530; 2-/3-/4-person cabins €30/35/40; ☽ May-Aug) at the top of Getaber-gen, is a pleasant group of 10 cottages and a popular stop for cyclists. Soltuna restaurant at the top of Getaber-gen serves breakfast, lunch and dinner during summer.

Bus 2 runs from Marienhamn to Geta (€5.40, 50 minutes) via Godby.

The bicycle ferry **Silvana** (☎ 0400 229 149; ☽ Jun–mid-Aug) travels between Hällö in Geta, and Skarpnätö in Hammarland. There is one departure daily in early June (leaving Skarpnätö at noon and Hällö at 12.30pm) and two daily departures during the rest of the season (the second leaves Skarpnätö at 4.30pm and Hällö at 5pm). The trip one way costs €7.

### HAMMARLAND

pop 1387

The northwestern section of mainland Åland is called Hammarland. This is one of the oldest inhabited areas in Åland; almost 40 burial mound sites have been discovered. Kattby is the main village, with all facilities.

**Sankta Catharina Church** (☽ summer) in Kattby was probably built in the 12th century. There's an **Iron Age burial site** to the west of the church, with more than 30 burial mounds.

North of Kattby, on the road to Skarpnätö, is **Ålands Wool Spinnery** (☎ 37810) and shop. It sells homespun yarn and handmade sweaters. Further north in Lillbolstad is a ceramics shop, **Lugnet Ceramics** (☎ 37780). All products are handmade. West of the village of Sälis, **Bovik** is a pretty little fishing harbour.

Activities in Skarpnätö centre around **Södergård Estate** (☽ closed winter), a museum and handicrafts shop. The owners of the estate rent fishing boats.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Kattnäs Camping** (☎ 37687; tent sites €8-13, cabins €37; ☽ May–mid-Sep) This camping ground is 3km south of the Eckerö–Mariehamn road, a bit west of Kattby. It feels delightfully remote when not too busy, and is set by sparkling blue water; it has a café, TV lounge and kitchen.

**Kvarnhagens Stugor** (☎ /fax 37212; 2-/3-/4-person cottages €45/50/55; ☽ May–Sep) This place at Skarpnätö has six sturdy timber cottages. They are equipped with fridge and simple kitchen facilities, and the communal facilities include sauna, laundry, and a smoke hut in case you catch any fish!

### Getting There & Away

Bus 1 from Mariehamn to Eckerö runs through Hammarland. For information on the bicycle ferry between Hammarland and Geta, see left.

### ECKERÖ

pop 897

The island of Eckerö is the westernmost municipality in Finland, just a two-hour ferry ride from mainland Sweden. Eckerö has been a popular holiday spot since the 1800s. While it is very quiet in spring or autumn, vacationing Swedish families multiply the population by several times in July.

**Storby** (Big Village), at the ferry terminal, is the main centre, with an information point, petrol station, and bank. The distance from Mariehamn to Storby (40km) makes this a suitable day trip by bicycle.

### Sights & Activities

The historic **Post och Tullhuset** (Post & Customs House; ☎ 38689) in Storby was designed by German architect Carl Ludwig Engel, designer of parts of central Helsinki. It was

completed in 1828, during the era of Tsar Alexander I of Russia. As Åland was the westernmost extremity of the Russian Empire, the building was meant to be a show of might to the west and, for that reason, is far more grandiose than a post office in a small village should be. If there's something about the façade that troubles you, it may be the lack of a front door! It also now houses a café, post office, and exhibition gallery and the small **mailboat museum** (☎ 39000; admission €1.70; ☽ 10am–3pm Jun–mid-Aug, 10am–4pm mid-Jun–Jul). The museum (and, at time of writing, the exhibition gallery) tells the story of the dedicated men whose job it was to get the mail through to mainland Sweden and Finland by boat. This gruelling system was in place for two and a half centuries, and many perished. The post office and art gallery are open daily in summer, and Monday to Friday only in winter.

Also in Storby, the **Labbas Homestead & Bank Museum** (☎ 38507; admission €1.70; ☽ noon–4pm Wed Jul–mid-Aug) opens about as often as Halley's Comet comes around. If you do coincide, drop in; the typical archipelago houses have traditional local furniture, maritime displays and a section devoted to banking history.

Just north of Storby is the attractive **Käringsund harbour**. On summer evenings this peaceful little cove with its rustic old wooden boathouses reflected in the water is so scenic it's almost unreal. There's a nature trail and small **beach** here and canoes and rowing boats can be hired from a kiosk nearby.

At Käringsund harbour is **Ålands Jakt och Fiskemuseum** (Åland Hunting & Fishing Museum; ☎ 38299; admission €4.20; ☽ 10am–5pm May–mid-Sep, 10am–6pm mid-Jun–mid-Aug) with photographs, stuffed animals, pearl-digging displays and the history of the hunting and fishing industries.

**Viiltsafari** (☎ 38000), also at Käringsund harbour, is a fenced-in forest with typical Finnish fauna like red and fallow deer, swans and wild boar, as well as a few ostriches. The 45-minute tour (€4) departs from opposite the Hunting & Fishing Museum hourly in summer and by arrangement during other seasons.

In the village of Kyrkoby, about 5km east from Storby on the road to Mariehamn, the 13th-century **Sankt Lars Church of Eckerö**

(☽ 10am–6pm May–Sep; admission by donation) is a delightful little place with a cosy wooden interior, a 14th-century Madonna sculpture, and rustic murals. The altar painting is a 19th-century work depicting a Magdalene penitent.

Kyrkoby is also home to the **Kyrkoby golf course** (☎ 38370; short course €17, weekday/weekend green fees €28/35), which has a brand-new 18-hole course, a short-course, and a driving range, as well as one of Åland's best restaurants.

**Degersand**, about 9km south of Storby beyond the village of Torp, has a good **beach** for swimming and sunning, and it's also possible to camp right on the beach.

There's a branch of Ro-No Rent near the harbour for bicycle, scooter and canoe hire. See p238 for price details.

### Sleeping

Eckerö has more cabin and cottage rentals than any other Åland province – contact **Ålandsresor** (☎ 28040; www.alandsresor.fi; Torggatan 2, Mariehamn; ☽ 8.30am–5pm Mon–Fri, also 9am–2pm Sat Jun & Jul) for details.

### GUESTHOUSES & HOTELS

**Ångstorp Gästhem** (☎ 38665; angstorp@aland.net; s/d 55/63; ☽ Apr–Oct; ☎ ☒) In an 18th-century wooden house in Storby, this is one of the best places to stay on Åland and should be booked ahead. The rustic décor is simple and beautiful; there are three upstairs rooms, with loveable sloping ceilings, that share kitchen facilities and a downstairs apartment that's great for families. There's also a sauna, garden, bike rental and a genuine welcome. It's very handy for the Grisslehamn ferry.

**Hotell Havsbundet** (☎ 38200; havsbundet@aland.net; s/d €78/95; ☽ Apr–Dec; ☎ ☒) This place, between the Post and Customs House and the sea, is a likeable place run by a sound old couple. It's good for families; on a very quiet road and opposite the gentlest of beaches. There's a grassy terrace and a good restaurant.

**Österängens Hotell** (☎ 38268; osterangen@aland.net; s/d €70/83; ☽ Mar–Sep; ☎ ☒) This place, on the quiet beach of Torp, has a good restaurant and sea views. There are all the beachside activities you could desire, and there's an indoor pool and sauna. Some of the rooms have their own sauna.



**CAMPING**

**Käringsunds Camping** (☎ 38309, 040-589 7230; yvonnee@aland.net; tent sites €6-9, cabins €35-55; ☹ mid-May-Aug) At Käringsund harbour, this is a down-to-earth place with friendly management, camping and lots of cabins. There are all kinds of activities available, and the restaurant is busy at weekends with Swedes dancing to live music.

**Uddens Camping** (☎ 38670; fax 38547; tent sites per person & per car €1.20, cabins €54; ☹ May-Sep) This place is in the isolated village of Skag on the northern coast. It's a good place to get away from things, although it is over-caravanned at times. There's a kiosk and café.

**Eating**

**Restaurang Rusell** (☎ 38499; lunch €12.95, mains €18-28; ☹ lunch & dinner late Apr-Oct, no weeknight dinners until mid-May; ☹) A significant advance on the usual '19th green' concept, the Kyrkoby golf course has one of the best eateries in the whole 'nation' of Åland. Lunch is available until 3pm, but evenings see plenty of locals gossiping downstairs at the pub. There's also accommodation (doubles €62).

**Jannes Bodega** (Käringsund Harbour; ☹ Jun-Aug) This little café sits on a rickety wooden dock overlooking the tiny harbour with its gently warping boathouses. It's a beautiful place to while away some time.

**Café Lugn & Ro** (☎ 38420; Post & Customs House; ☹ 10am-4pm May-Sep, 10am-6pm Jul-mid-Aug) This friendly place serves sandwiches, hamburgers and delicious pastries with a Venezuelan touch. There's also accommodation available in the historic complex: singles/doubles €60/68, mid-January to December.

**Getting There & Away**

Road 2 runs from Mariehamn to Eckerö. If you use public transport, take bus 1 (€4.90, 40 minutes). For information on ferries between Eckerö and Grisslehamn, Sweden, see p232.

**LEMLAND**

pop 1694

Lemland municipality is between Lumparland and the Lemström Canal, 5km east of Mariehamn on road 3 (take bus 5). The canal was built in 1882 by prisoners of war. **Norby** village is Lemland's centre.

In Norby, **Sankta Birgitta Church** (☹ Mon-Fri May-Aug) has 13th- to 14th-century wall paint-

ings that were rediscovered in 1956. **Burial mounds** from the Iron Age are nearby. At **Lemböte** on the western side of the island are the ruins of a 13th-century chapel and more ancient burial mounds. Near the crossing to Lumparland, **Skeppargården Pellas** (☎ 34001; adult/child €2.50/free; ☹ 11am-4pm late Jun-Aug) is the homestead museum of a local shipmaster.

**LUMPARLAND**

pop 379

Many travellers pass through Lumparland in southeastern Åland because of its two ferry harbours, Svinö and Långnäs. Otherwise, there's little reason to visit.

**Sankt Andreas Church** (☹ Jun-Aug), built in 1720, is one of the 'newer' churches of Åland. This little wooden church is in a beautiful seaside spot along the road to Lumparby village and Lumpo.

**Långnäsbyn** (☎ 35557; 4-/5-person cottages €42/48; ☹ May-Aug), near the Långnäs ferry terminal, has nine reasonably priced cottages and a communal kitchen. **Svinö Stugby** (☎ 35781; cabins €29; ☹ May-Sep) is a rustic group of 10 simple but good-value two-person cottages by the beach in Svinö.

From Mariehamn take bus 5 to Svinö and Långnäs (€4.50, 45 minutes); it meets the ferries. For information on the bicycle ferry to Prästö see p240.

**NORTHERN ARCHIPELAGO**

The northern group of the Åland islands consists of the archipelago municipalities of Kumlinge and Brändö. They are very quiet and offer less for the traveller than the southern group, but you're certainly away from it all exploring these far-flung islands. If you're coming to Åland from Kustavi on the Finnish mainland through Osnäs, you'll arrive at Långö in the north of the Brändö island group. You can also depart from here, but confirm ferry times in advance to avoid getting stuck.

**KUMLINGE**

pop 371

About 1¼ hours by ferry from Vårdö, Kumlinge municipality isn't exactly a thrumming tourist hotspot. The main island, Kumlinge,

is flanked by **Enklinge** island to the north and **Seglinge** island to the south. All services can be found on Kumlinge, and a bank is on Enklinge. There is no accommodation on Seglinge and no restaurant – only a shop in the main village.

The ferry to Seglinge departs from the island of **Snäckö**, 8km from Kumlinge village. Local ferries to Enklinge from the main island depart from the village of **Krokarno**.

A marked **cycling route** runs from Snäckö north to Krokarno, with bridges between the islands. On Enklinge there is a signposted route from the harbour to the local museum.

Many consider **Sankta Anna Church** (☹ summer) on Kumlinge island to be one of Finland's most beautiful churches, with 500-year-old Franciscan-style paintings. The church is some 2km north of Kumlinge village.

On Enklinge is the small open-air **Hermas Farm Museum** (☎ 55334; admission €2; ☹ 10am-4pm Mon-Fri Jun-Aug, 10am-7pm Jul), 3.5km from the pier, with 20 buildings that are all original to this island.

**Sleeping & Eating**

**Remmarina Stugor** (☎ 0400-529 199; 2-/3-/4-person cottages €45/50/55; ☹) At the guest harbour 2km from Kumlinge village, this place has 12 clean, reasonably priced cottages on a small hill, plus a wood sauna and a small canteen for snacks. It's open all year round; call if there's nobody about.

**Ledholms Camping** (☎ /fax 55647; tent sites per person €2.50; ☹ Jun-Aug) This camping ground is on the island of Snäckö near the ferry pier. It also has cheap cabins and a small grocery.

**Getting There & Away**

Ferries on the route between Hummelvik and Torsholma on Brändö stop at both Enklinge (one hour) and Kumlinge islands (70 minutes).

One or two ferries a day go from Långnäs in Lumparland to Snäckö in Kumlinge, via Överö in the Föglö island group (1¼ hours).

**BRÄNDÖ**

pop 516

The municipality of Brändö consists of a group of 1180 islands, the largest and most important of which are connected by bridges. Banks and other services are on the

main island and in the villages of **Lappo** and **Torsholma** on smaller islands.

The peculiar shape of the main island makes for interesting cycling – no matter where you go, you will always be riding by the sea. A signposted **bike route** runs from the harbour at Torsholma north across the main island to the harbour at Långö.

**St Jakobs Church**, the wooden place of worship on the main island of Brändö, dates from 1893. On Lappo island further south (and connected to the main island by ferry), **Skärgårdsmuseet** (☎ 56689; adult/child €3.50/free; ☹ 10am-noon & 2-4pm mid-Jun-mid-Aug) has exhibits of local history, boats and nature as well as a photography exhibition.

**Sleeping & Eating**

**Hotell Gullvivan** (☎ 56350; www.gullvivan.aland.fi; s/d €66/84; ☹) Open all year and completely nonsmoking, this comfortable hotel sits on Björnholma island not far from the central services. There's a restaurant, sauna and mini-golf as well as the opportunity to hire boats or go fishing. There are also four-person huts available (€84) with a microwave, fridge and cooking facilities.

**Pellas Gästhem** (☎ 040-832 4333; www.pelas.aland.fi; Lappo; 2-/4-/6-person apt up to €44/59/76; ☹ late Mar-early Dec; ☹) Formerly the local school, this friendly accommodation option is on Lappo, southwest of the main Brändö island complex; the Hummelvik-Kumlinge-Brändö ferry stops here. There are cabins with simple cooking facilities sleeping four (€44), and a variety of spick-and-span apartments with bathroom and kitchen facilities; they are attractively furnished in pine and some come with sauna.

**Brändö Stugby** (☎ 56221; http://come.to/brando.stugby; ☹ May-mid-Oct) There's a camping ground on Brändö which also has log cabins and rowing boats for hire.

**Getting There & Away**

From Mariehamn, take bus 4 to Hummelvik harbour on Vårdö. There are three ferry connections a day from Vårdö to Lappo and Torsholma via Kumlinge. The trip from Hummelvik to Torsholma takes about 2½ hours. It's free for passengers and bicycles, and €19 for cars.

From Turku on mainland Finland, take a bus to Kustavi, and on to Vartsala Island

**ARCHIPELAGO FERRIES**

If travelling by car between the main part of Åland and the Finnish mainland via the northern or southern archipelago, you must spend a night en route: reservations will not be accepted on through ferries. The ferries run for the benefit of islanders, so this system ensures that the islands benefit from tourists taking advantage of the subsidized ferries. It's a blessing in disguise anyway; you may end up staying much longer!

to reach the harbour of Osnäs (Finnish: Vuosnainen). There are five to seven connections a day from Osnäs to Långö on the northern Brändö island of Åva. This journey is free for passengers and bicycles, and €14 for cars.

**SOUTHERN ARCHIPELAGO**

The southern group of Åland islands consists of the municipalities of Föglö, tiny Sottunga and remote Kökar. Kökar is the most quaint and appealing island, and is also the jumping-off point for archipelago ferries from Galtby harbour on Korpo on the Finnish mainland (see opposite). The ferry trips are worthwhile in themselves; it's quite feasible to do a day-trip from Mariehamn, spending a couple of hours in, say, Kökar or Sottunga. The views from the boat, of myriad low granite islets clung to by pine and silver birch, are memorable.

**FÖGLÖ**

pop 607

The Föglö island group was first mentioned in 1241 by a Danish bishop who landed here en route to Tallinn. An inn was founded in 1745 at Föglö at Enigheten Estate.

A signposted bike route runs between the settlements of **Degerby** and **Överö**, and there is a regular bus service. Both villages are served by archipelago ferries.

Degerby has a bank, post office and grocery, as well as a summer **tourist information kiosk** (☎ 0457-342 7274; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat, 10am-2.30pm Sun mid-Jun-mid-Aug). The 'capital' of Föglö, Degerby is a small

village noted for its unusual **architecture**. Many Föglöites have traditionally been civil servants, not farmers, and have chosen to build their houses in Art Nouveau or Empire styles instead of the traditional archipelago style.

In the red building at the harbour you'll find the local **museum** (☎ 50348; admission €2; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun mid-Jun-mid-Aug). **Sankta Maria Magdalena Church** (☎ Mon-Fri summer) is on an island south from Degerby, connected by a bridge. Getting there is half the fun, as the road is scenic. The simple 14th-century church is not very impressive but the way it rises from the plain rock bed is dramatic.

**Sleeping & Eating**

**Enighetens Gästhem** (☎ 50310; s/d €40/56; ☎ May-Sep; (P)) This rustic retreat 1km from the Degerby ferry terminal is a fine place to stay. Booking is essential. It has a café and good breakfasts.

**C & C Camping** (☎ 51440; per tent & car €2, per person €3, cabins €30-49; ☎ Jun-Aug) This place is on the small Finholma island northeast of Degerby. It's on the Degerby-Överö cycle route and has a variety of cabins sleeping from two to four; you pay a little more for a simple kitchen. It's relaxed and family-friendly.

**Seagram** (☎ 51092; ☎ May-Aug) This place on the shore in Degerby is a good licensed restaurant with dancing in summer and a terrace popular with boat people.

**Getting There & Away**

From Mariehamn, bus 5 goes to the Svinö and Långnäs ferry harbours, both in Lumparland. A dozen or so ferries a day make the one-hour trip between Svinö and Degerby. There are six to seven ferries a day from Långnäs to Överö, some going on to Kumlinge, and others to Kökar.

**SOTTUNGA**

pop 131

Somnolent Sottunga island has more cows than people. Despite the small population, the island has its own bank, shop, school, health-care centre, library and church.

The wooden **Sankta Maria Magdalena Church** was built in 1661 and renovated in 1974. A short **nature trail** starts at the

fishing harbour, and a marked **cycling route** runs north from the harbour to the village of Skaget.

**Strandhuggets Stugor** (☎ 55255; d €30; ☎ Jun-Aug; (P) ☎) right next to the harbour, has six cute pine-shaded cottages for two people available for overnight or longer stays, as well as a café/restaurant and sauna.

Ferries on the southern archipelago route from Lumparland or Föglö, as well as occasional ferries from Kumlinge, will take you to Sottunga.

**KÖKAR**

pop 296

The Kökar island group, with its strikingly barren landscape, is one of the most interesting in Åland. Many of the inhabitants live in and around the quaint little town of Karlby, which has a bank, post office and grocery.

Though it feels quite isolated from the rest of the world, Kökar is not difficult to reach by ferry. Its marshier areas harbour a significant number of species of waterbird.

**Sights & Activities**

Historic **Hamnö Island** is connected to the main island by a bridge. Since time immemorial, boats have been anchored at its shores, many of them plying the Hanseatic trade route between Germany and Turku. A very small – a dozen members at most – Franciscan community built a monastery here in the 14th century. The main building is long gone, but the present **church** (☎ daily May-Sep), from 1784, was built on the same site.

The small **Kökar Homestead Museum** (☎ 55816; admission €2; ☎ noon-5pm mid-Jun-mid-Aug) of local history is on the east side of the main island, in the village of Hellsö. A short **nature trail** starts near Hellsö.

**Sleeping & Eating**

**Hotell Brudhäll** (☎ 55955; www.goaland.net/brudhall; s/d €91/108, ste €195; (P)) Right in the throbbing heart of things in tiny Karlby, this is one of the best hotels of the islands. It's a pretty red place right on the little harbour, with plenty of chairs on the terrace to relax on by the lapping water. The rooms are rustic and attractive; the suite has its own sauna, and it has a highly regarded restaurant serving traditional archipelago dishes. There's entertainment and dancing on summer evenings.

**Antons Gästhem** (☎ 55729; fax 55938; summer s/d €64/68) This chunky old house is 3.5km from the ferry harbour near the island of Hamno. It's friendly and open year round. There are bikes for hire, and rates are cheaper outside the June-to-August high season.

**Sandvik Camping** (☎ 55911; tent €5; ☎ May-Sep) This camping ground is 3.5km southwest of the harbour, near Hamno Island. If you're on foot, you can get there much quicker picking your way around the coast (to your right as you exit the ferry). There are kitchen facilities, one cabin, a sauna and a grill (June to August) as well as a good swimming beach.

**Getting There & Away**

On mainland Finland, ferries depart for Kökar once or twice daily from the harbour of Galtby on Korpo Island, 75km from Turku and connected by bus. The trip from Galtby to Kökar takes 2¼ hours. It's free for passengers and bicycles, and €19 for cars.

To get to Kökar from mainland Åland, there are three to five connections a day from Långnäs (take bus 5 from Mariehamn) via Föglö and Sottunga. The ferry also stops at the tiny island of Husö. Travel time is 2½ hours from Långnäs. It's free for passengers and bicycles and €19 for cars.

See the boxed text, opposite, for important information about this ferry route.

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