



11 000 YEARS OF PÄRNU



EESTI VABARIIK



www.visitparnu.com



DID YOU KNOW

that the oldest human figure in the Baltics was found from Pärnu County? It is at least 8,200 years old and made from a moose antler.



11,000 YEARS OF HISTORY

The oldest evidence of human settlement in Estonia has been found from Pulli village in Pärnu County which was covered by water at the time. The archaeological excavations carried out in the 1960s revealed that there had been a settlement at the mouth of the Pärnu River, which had already been inhabited as early as 11,000 years ago.

Fire pits and the endpoints of stakes driven in the ground, which could originate from the dwellings at the time, were discovered from the settlement. It was most likely a seasonal settlement which was only inhabited in the summer when the fishing conditions were good. Objects found from the settlement consist of knives, arrowheads, awls, burins and other everyday and hunting tools made from flint and horn. The finds also include a dog tooth which is the oldest known evidence of domesticated dogs in Estonia.

Pärnu County was quite densely populated throughout the Stone Age. There are at least 12 known settlements from that period. The rise of the sea level created bays, lagoons and islands along the coast, which enabled to engage in hunting as well as fishing. The bones found from the settlements suggest that people at the time most-

ly caught pike, bream and zander, and hunted moose and beavers, later aurochs and wild boar as well. Sindi-Lodja settlement dating back to 7,000 BC is among the oldest more precisely dated settlements in Estonia, in addition to hunting wild animals and fishing, its inhabitants also hunted seals.

The dense population is also confirmed by the thousands of rare stray finds from the Stone Age discovered along the banks of Pärnu River. The finds consist of primarily everyday, hunting and fishing tools – spearheads, arrowheads, fish-spears, fish-hooks and axes – made from bone and horn. These are likely items that have been washed out from the locations of former settlements by the Pärnu River.

Around 4,000 BC various changes took place which influenced the worldview and material culture of Stone Age people. New inhabitants who brought with them new skills arrived in Pärnu County as well as the rest of Estonia. It is at that time that the pottery-making emerges throughout Estonia and the pottery of the period is given the name combed ware after its distinctive ornaments made with a comb stamp. First indications of crop growing in Pärnu County date back to that period as well.



DID YOU KNOW

that there were two separate towns at the mouth of Pärnu River during the Middle Ages? Old-Pärnu was located on the left riverbank and New-Pärnu (Livonian branch of the Teutonic Order) on the right.

HISTORY OF THE HANSEATIC MEDIEVAL NEW-PÄRNU AND LIVELIHOOD



The first town emerged on the left bank of the Pärnu River no later than in 1251 when Hendrik (Henricus), the bishop of Ösel-Wiek, ordered for a dome church and a town around it to be built at the site of modern day Old-Pärnu. The town was destroyed already in 1263 when Treniota, the Prince of Samogitia, and his troops burnt down the church as well as the town. It is likely that a town was also emerging on the right bank of the Pärnu River because a commandry was appointed in New-Pärnu merely two years later, and there was probably also an active Town Council.

There were two judicial territories in New-Pärnu throughout the Middle Ages – the town and the ordensburg (castle of the Order). The ordensburg was the area’s administrative centre which was ruled by the local representative of the Order i.e. the commandry. The heart of the Pärnu Commandry was the town that stood next to the ordensburg. Even though town life was under the command of the Town Council, it did not reach the ordensburg. The Town Council consisted of primarily merchants, and on special occasions also noblemen and artisans, whose primary task



was to carry out court duties and collect taxes.

New-Pärnu was one of the few towns in Estonia that was surrounded by a rampart during the Middle Ages. The town could be exited and entered through six gates, the most significant of which were River Gate, which is currently located under the floors of the lobby of Pärnu Museum, and Riga Gate, which was located opposite of the first. The main church of the town – St. Nicholas church originating from the 13th century – and the market square were located in between. Meat and bread shops were located on the market, whereas the two-storeyed Town Hall and the weighing room were located on its northern side.

Medieval New-Pärnu was one of the biggest towns in Old Livonia according to its area (62,000 m²) and population, falling behind only Riga, Tartu and Tallinn. Hypothetically, New-Pärnu may have been home to around 1,100 people during the 16th century, 600 of which lived inside the town walls. The economy of the town was largely based on the activities of Hanseatic merchants and artisans. Dwellings were initially mostly made of wood, however, stone houses had already become dominant by the beginning of the 16th century. In addition to dwellings, there were also taverns, stone granaries with cellars, stables, garden plots and artisans' shops located in the town. At least 25 artisan trades existed in the town at the start of the 16th century.

New-Pärnu was a Hanseatic town and commerce played an important role in the shaping of town life. New-Pärnu

received Hanseatic town rights in the beginning of the 14th century at the latest and the town developed into an important export port for agricultural produce in Livonia. Being part of the Hanseatic League was important because all goods that were to be forwarded had to first be unloaded and stored in the Hanseatic town. This, however, was profitable for local merchants. The closest trade partners were Tallinn and Riga. Most important trade partners outside of Livonia were Lübeck and Rostock. The exports of New-Pärnu included grains (rye, barley, malt) and flax, as well as smaller quantities of wood and leather.

Most important import items were salt, beer, broadcloth and herrings.

Overseas trade was mostly carried out with ships that were specially designed for carrying goods. The primary ship type during the beginning of the Hanseatic trade was a cog, which had open decks, shallow drafts and flat bottoms. A board piece of one such ship was found from Pärnu River in the beginning of the 1990s and is now exhibited in the lobby of the Pärnu Museum.

Jakob (Jacobus), the bishop of Ösel-Wiek, established a new town in either the 1320s or 1330s at the site of the one that had been burnt down in 1263, the town was named Old-Pärnu and it had around 200-300 inhabitants in the 16th century.

The River Gate in Pärnu's Town Wall. Wooden paving and the western tower (view from the east)





DID YOU KNOW

that the soldiers who were serving in Pärnu garrison in the 17th century had to sew their own blue and yellow uniforms?

The Gate of Karl-Gustav a.k.a. the Gate of Tallinn. The maquettes in Pärnu moat will provide a visual overview of the development of Pärnu from a fortified town to a modern health resort.

PÄRNU AS A FORTRESS TOWN IN THE 17TH CENTURY

Livonia, including Pärnu, was passed under the rule of Sweden with the Truce of Altmark, which was concluded by Poland and Sweden in 1629. Pärnu managed to preserve its town rights and the management of the town was still led by the Town Council. It was during the Swedish rule that Pärnu began developing into a baroque town which nearly doubled its territory.

Pärnu was located in a strategic position between Tallinn and Riga, which required the construction of a strong

defence system. Work began in the end of the 1670s and resulted in the reconstruction of the medieval town wall into a heptagonal bastion zone. A bastion is an outward projecting triangular defence structure with an embankment, which made it possible to flank enemies from each side. Bastions were named after celestial bodies – Sol, Jupiter, Mercurius, Luna, Venus, Saturnus, Mars and two ravelins Morgenstern and Abendstern. By the end of the 17th century Pärnu had developed into one of the largest garrison towns in Estonia and Livonia.

The town could be entered through three gates – Riga Gate, Water Gate and Karl-Gustav's Gate i.e. Tallinn Gate, only the latter of which has been preserved. The territory of the town was expanded along with the construction of the bastion zone. The objective was to design an ideal town with rectangular quarters with a precisely planned street network and town centre. Medieval walls separating the old and new part of the town were demolished and Rütli street became the town's main street. The town was surrounded by four streets: Põhja and Lõuna, Hommiku and Õhtu streets. These streets help to envisage the size of the 17th century Pärnu even nowadays.

Among other innovations, a university began operation in Pärnu in the end of the 17th century. It was officially opened in the end of the summer of 1699 in the building of the old ordensburg. The university had four faculties – the faculty of religion, philosophy, law and theology. The first print shop in Pärnu began operating in the cellar of the university and two Estonian poems were also published there among other publications. Teaching and studies continued up until 1709 and the last of the professors and students left in the August of 1710 when Pärnu surrendered to the Russian troops.



Heptagonal bastion belt



The 'Red' Tower in Pärnu's Town Wall



RESORT – CINDERELLA OF THE BALTIC SEA!



The year when the first seaside bathing establishment was opened – 1838 – is considered the birth year of the Pärnu resort. Baths with seawater and bathing in the sea were available during the summer and a sauna operated at the same location during the winter. The bathing area, parks, avenues and the elegant bathing architecture that are ever so characteristic to Pärnu were not established until around 40–50 years later.

A new modern bathing establishment was opened in 1890, at the same year

Pärnu was also added to the list of Russia's imperial resorts. The local elite became more and more enthusiastic of the idea of Pärnu as a vacation and bathing town. A resort suburb with ethereal and commodious verandas, numerous historic wooden summerhouses and boarding houses with wooden outskirts, shadowy avenues and parks emerged seawards from the fortress town.

Innovative changes concerning the organisation of the way of life in the resort shaped Pärnu into a health resort with a modern treatment base in the 1900s. 1908 became the most successful season of the pre-war period with nearly 2,500 summer visitors staying in Pärnu. Noble summer visitors from mainly Moscow and St. Petersburg lovingly referred to Pärnu as the "adorable Cinderella of the Baltic Sea".



Holidaymakers in front of the Mud Baths in the early 1930s / 2013.

Resort wear





24.02.1918

THE STORY OF THE BIRTH OF THE REPUBLIC

Estonians had become the majority in the town established by the German colonists as early as by the 19th century, and the community centre of the Endla culture and theatre association was finished in 1909 as the largest building in town. Estonian parties reached an agreement in the beginning of 1918 that Estonians would use the right of self-determination of nations emphasized during World War I for the declaration of the Republic of Estonia.

The Salvation Committee appointed by the authorisation of the Estonian Provincial Assembly in the summer of 1917 confirmed the "Manifesto to the Peoples of Estonia" on 21 February 1918, which was used for the public expression of the declaration. Estonia was part of the Russian empire, which was at war with Germany and the battle front was at the time moving over the autonomous

government of Estonia. The manifesto was therefore to be declared after the Russian troops had left and before the German troops had marched in, and under the protection of the national troops of Estonia which had been created under autonomous conditions.

The size of Pärnu's national battalion along with the associated naval troops was 700 men; on 20 February, the determined battalion stood combat ready against all Russian troops that were stationed here and achieved victory in the bloodless battle – the opposing side, equipped with heavy artillery, retreated. The manifesto was not risked to be read out in public in any other Estonian town. On 22 February, Pärnu was already completely under the rule of Estonian politicians who had established a temporary Law Enforcement Committee and the decision to declare the independence of the Republic of

Estonia and state the neutrality of the nation state in the ongoing First World War was adopted during the public meeting held at the Endla theatre hall on the same evening. Jaan Soop, the Head of the County Government, i.e. the executive power of the Estonian Provincial Assembly, arrived in Pärnu with the manifesto texts on 23 February. The representative of the Schoolteachers' Association of Pärnu Jaan Järve, the local representative of the Estonian Rural Union August Jürmann and other Estonian politicians organised the printing and spreading of tens of thousands of copies of the manifesto, as well as its public reading from the balcony of the Endla community centre at 20:00. On 24 February a parade of military troops and Estonian associations was organised from Endla to the town hall, the act for the public reading of the manifesto of independence was signed in the town hall and the Republic of Estonia had been born in Pärnu. Public readings of the manifesto took place on the same day and the next day in Viljandi, Paide, Tallinn, Narva and other places as well, however, on 25 February German troops arrived and they had been ordered to recognise neither the Republic of Estonia nor its representatives, thus began the German occupation which ended with the capitulation of the country in 1918.

The Republic of Estonia was restored in Pärnu on 23 to 24 November 1918 and the reconstruction began right away. Pärnu did not fall in the hands of the enemies during the War of Independence and the regiments of the Estonian National Army that were formulated here were active on the Southern as well as the Eastern front. Even military equipment was manufactured in Pärnu – the armoured car "Vanapagan" was built onto the frame of a Delahaye truck, as well as parts for "armoured trains"

which were manufactured by adjusting the freight wagons of narrow-gauge railways. Sea trade was restored in the 1920s and trade companies of Hans Diedrich Schmidt, Julius Dicks and others began operating again. Even though the better part of economy was taken up by wood export, the Estonian processing industry (the flax plant and others) and mechanical engineering (engine plants of R. Stryck and M.Seiler) had a significant role as well.

Sunbathing and active vacation trends which reached Estonia in the 1920s also gave new substance and appearance to the Pärnu resort. The bathing architecture was dominated by functionalist elegance and practicality, whereas the beach landscape was taken over by ever more tanned and scarcely clothed vacationers. Pärnu developed into the most popular and representative vacation and treatment resort in the Republic of Estonia – a paradise for the revelers of summer and the summer capital of Estonia.

Most foreigners who visited Pärnu during the second half of the 1920s were Finns, whereas Swedes began to dominate in the middle of the 1930s. They were followed by summer visitors from Finland, Lithuania and Germany. Pärnu celebrated the 100th anniversary of its resort in the summer of 1939.

DID YOU KNOW

that at least 20,000 copies of the manifesto of independence were printed at the print shop of Aleksander Jürvetson by manual operation of the machine, because the town's power plant had been demolished due to the panic of the Russian commandant already in 1915?



DID YOU KNOW

that the first public car park and intersection with a traffic light were opened in Pärnu in the year 1970?

SOVIET PERIOD AND THE RESORT

The period of occupations which began in 1940 lasted for half a century and changed Pärnu beyond recognition. Firstly, the town centre, which was destroyed during the war, was not rebuilt despite grandiose plans and the medieval old town was almost entirely destroyed. The historic structure of the streets was lost as well. Consistent building began in the town centre only at the end of the 1950s, when buildings of standard design projects were built, levelling the ruins of historic buildings.

The international port of Pärnu was shut down and issued as a base for fishing vessels. Guest house Vöit (current hotel Victoria) served as the only

hotel for foreign visitors before the completion of hotel Pärnu. Production plants were stretched to their limits and forced to start producing products set out in the planned economy; they were expanded by the import of foreign workforce from other Republics of the Soviet Union. The upkeep and appearance of buildings began to receive attention only in 1978 in relation to the preparations for the Olympic regatta. Public car parks were constructed in the city, many historic buildings were covered with facade paints using the techniques of Polish restorers, which freshened up the town's appearance for a while, however the fresh look flaked off right along with the plaster in a few years time.

Welcome to the west of the Soviet Union!

During Soviet times Pärnu became known as an all-year round functioning sanatorium resort and popular summer resort. The resort ambiance established during previous periods now acquired the notion of a "nostalgic ideal landscape", carrying the message of the former glory of the summer capital. The bearer of the continuity of the former paradisiac beach culture during the Soviet times was the nude beach for women, i.e. "women's paradise", which functions to this day.

The town served as a European-like foreign place in the Soviet Union, which was the only "western" experience for many. Sanatoriums of Pärnu welcomed around 25,000 health rehabilitators annually during the 1980s. Along with vacationers who stayed at boarding houses, as well as in rest homes and tourist bases during the summer, and backpackers, Pärnu was annually visited by nearly 300,000 tourists.



The elephant slide in the late 1950s/early 1960s.



The elephant slide in 2013.

DID YOU KNOW

that the bearer of the continuity of the former paradisiac beach culture during the Soviet times was the nude beach for women, i.e. "women's paradise"?





DID YOU KNOW

that Pärnu marina received the first Blue Flag in Eastern Europe in 1994? Pirita Yacht Club in Tallinn received one 2 weeks later.

SUMMER CAPITAL

Following the restoration of independence, Pärnu once again became Estonia's number one resort. A decisive breakthrough was reached in 1994. In May of the same year the President of the Republic of Estonia Lennart Meri wrote the following in the guest book of the Beach Hotel at its reopening: "The restoration of the Beach Hotel to its former state in the pre-war Republic of Estonia is a scale model of the restoration of our country, as well as a great example to our political establishment. The Beach Hotel has restored its lovely appear-

ance energetically, swiftly, and with quality. May the work that has been done here serve as an example and a symbolic conclusion, as well as an encouragement for the entrepreneurship of Estonia and Estonians!"

In cooperation with the association Hoia Eesti Merd! (Guard the Estonian Sea!), the marina of Pärnu Yacht Club received a European Blue Flag in the spring of 1994 – it was the first Blue Flag in the whole of Eastern Europe. In July of the same year Pärnu port welcomed its first post-war cruise tourists from Finland and the World Championships



of Finn class sailing took place at Pärnu bay in August. The sea gates of the resort were once again open for all!

From 1996 Pärnu also holds the title of the summer capital of Estonia again. The attractiveness and livelihood of the title is first and foremost assured by the

natural conditions of Pärnu's favourable location, the resort heritage dating back to nearly 180 years and the hospitality experience of Pärnu's residents.

Welcome to the summer capital of Estonia!





Pärnu Visitor Centre

Uus 4, 80010 Pärnu, Eesti
Tel + 372 447 3000, +372 5330 4134
info@visitparnu.com
www.visitparnu.com

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