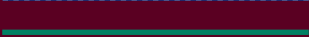
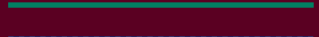


Living Cultures  
United by the Unique  
SETO



SETOMAA TRAVEL GUIDE



SETOMAA

TRAVEL GUIDE

E S T O N I A



-  Setomaa piir
-  border of Setomaa
-  kaitseala piir
-  boundary of a protected area
-  maanteed: kõvakattega, kruus
-  main road: surfaced, gravel
-  riigipiir
-  national border
-  raudtee
-  railway
-  muu tee
-  other road



Pihkva järv  
Lake Pskov



Text: Helen Külvik  
Editor: Epp Petrone  
Consultant: Ahto Raudoja  
Translation: Translation Agency Tritex  
Design: Evelin Urm, HurmArt  
Layout: Maiken Austin  
Print: Paar Printing House  
ISBN: 978-9949-7215-4-2  
© Seto Institute, author, 2019



EUROPEAN UNION



This publication reflects the views of the author. The managing authority of the programme is not liable for how this information may be used.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	5	
Setomaa's symbols	7	
Land	9	
People	15	
Culture	19	
Interesting facts	27	
Along the route “Seto Külävüü”	35	
Event calendar	81	
Where to eat?	97	
Where to stay?	101	
Practical information	107	
Small Seto-English dictionary	109	





Setomaa is an exotic border area. The well-preserved traditions and cultural heritage of Seto people and especially the Seto *leelo* (their special way of singing) make this remote getaway a treat for those seeking purity.

This land with its beautiful nature – bright pine forests, golden chanterelles and deep primeval valleys – surprises with its exciting places and special people. The Orthodox background of the region, the Seto language and the area's bordering location make it an especially attractive place.

The Setomaa travel guide gives a short overview of Seto people and their land, and then focuses on the tourism route of which is called *Seto Külävüü*. Since the historical Setomaa has been divided between two countries – Estonia and Russia – it also gives a brief overview of the most important places on the current territory of Russia, such as Pechory and Izborsk.

The book outlines some of the most important annual events and gives an overview of catering and accommodation facilities. The end of the travel guide has some practical tips and a small Seto-English dictionary.

Setos have lived for centuries on the border of two large cultures, the eastern and western cultures, determined to keep their customs and follow their own beliefs and that is why Setos are cautious, conservative and sustainable. Come with an open mind and respect local customs, then you will be greeted with great hospitality and a very special culture.



## SETOMAA'S SYMBOLS

---

**Setomaa's flag** was approved by the 7<sup>th</sup> decision of Seto Congress in 2003. The flag bears the belt pattern of Seto.

The lyrics of the **Seto anthem** are written by Jaan Rääpo. At the beginning of the Seto Kingdom Day, a couple of verses are added to the anthem and this is called the Kingdom Anthem.

**Seto leelo** is an archaic polyphonic singing method of Setos, which has been included in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of UNESCO (2009). Setos are best known around the world for their leelo and silver jewellery.



## BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES

The historical settlement of Setos is divided between two countries – the Republic of Estonia and Russian Federation. The area of historical Setomaa (Pechory County) is about 1,600 km<sup>2</sup>. Historically, Setomaa has mostly been a part of different Russian countries. A closer relationship with Estonians was established only in 1920 when Setomaa was united with the newly created Republic of Estonia. Pechory County was part of the Republic of Estonia in the years 1920–1940.

In 1944, the ethnic unity of Setomaa was broken: 75% of historical Setomaa became part of the Russian SFSR and only a quarter (460 km<sup>2</sup>) remained on the Estonian SSR. In 1991, when Estonia regained its independence, the border that separated the two ex-soviet republics, became a border between two independent countries – the Republic of Estonia and the Russian Federation. Officially, it is still called a line of control because the border agreement between the two neighbouring countries is still unsigned.

The area of Setomaa in Estonia currently forms the Setomaa rural municipality, which belongs in Võru county. The centre of the rural municipality is in Värskä.











## RICH NATURE

Setomaa is naturally outstanding and surprisingly diverse. Setomaa's nature is best characterised by luminous sparse pine forests covered with moss and lichens which are wonderful for campers and travellers alike. The forest is home to blueberries, lingonberries and a wide range of mushrooms. Setomaa is famous for its chanterelles – these are the gold of Setomaa. In the old days, boletus and russula were picked and sold to the monastery: mushrooms were a highly valued food during fasting.

Alongside forests, water bodies are also important. The largest river in Setomaa is Piusa which separates Setomaa from Estonia in the middle. The Piusa River has a deep primeval valley and many picturesque side valleys. The most important lake is obviously Lake Pskov, but the best ones for swimming are Lake Õrsava Lake and Lake Obinita.

Natural resources include Värška mineral water and mud drawn from Värška Bay. The famous mineral water is bottled and it can be bought from any store in Estonia. At the Värška Sanatorium, anyone who wishes can bathe in mineral water and pharmaceutical mud (upon prior reservation). Setomaa also has some gorgeous red clay which was once used in making pottery. However, in Western Setomaa, from Tiirhanna to Izborsk, you can find a lot of limestone on the Earth's surface, also used in construction.

*Nulk* (corner, region) is a unit of popular administrative division which usually has 10–15 villages. The borders of *nulks* usually follow natural borders and their names are often related to natural characteristics, e.g. Üle-Pelska (across Pelska) *nulk* stands for villages across the Pelska stream, Mokornulk comes from the Russian word pair *mokrõi lug* – a wet meadow. Historical Setomaa has 12 *nulks*.



For a thousand years, the local people, who were named Setos only at the end of the 19th century, lived side by side with two larger neighbours – Slavs and Estonians. Setos have been strong and prescriptive from age to age and have preserved their culture. According to the census of the Republic of Estonia in 2011, there are about 12,500 people in Estonia who understand the Seto language. About 3,500 of them live in the rural municipality of Setomaa, about 8,500 elsewhere in Estonia and about 200 in Russia's Pskov Oblast (Pihkva in Estonian) in the Pechory (Petseri in Estonian) region.

### SETOS ARE NEITHER ESTONIANS NOR RUSSIANS

Setos differ from Slavic people by their Finno-Ugric origin (and the customs and practices accompanying it) and by their language. Setos distinguish from Estonians firstly by their faith: Setos are of Orthodox religion. Secondly, Seto language is so different from Estonian that it can be difficult for Northern Estonians to understand. Thirdly, the modern cultural pattern and school education reached Setomaa much later than Estonia: only in the turn of the 19–20th century. Partially because of this, but also due to the conservative background of Setos, many customs have been preserved better in Setomaa than by neighbours Estonians, Latvians and Russians.





## SETO OR SETU? SETOMAA OR SETUMAA?

It is not known where the name “seto” comes from. One possibility is that Setos have said that they are neither this nor that (in Estonian *see ega too* = seto), referring to their neighbours. It is also believed that the name Setomaa is derived from the word pair *sõto maa* (a land of wars in Seto language), referring to the area as a constant battleground.

But why Seto and not Setu? Both options are actually correct. The locals call themselves seto and they like when others do the same. The names Setu and Setumaa are rooted in the Estonian language, but the words Seto and Setomaa can be seen increasingly more also in Estonian and Setos really appreciate it.



### LEELO

Seto culture has been verbal for a long time and its main values have been conveyed through song. Setos are first and foremost known for their special way of singing – Seto *leelo* – and gorgeous silver brooches. Seto *leelo* i.e. the Setos’ way of singing is more than a thousand years old. *Leelo* is mostly sung and carried on by women but there are also some men’s *leelo* choirs. *Leelo* is mainly known as polyphonic: the lead singer sings one line from the verse and the choir repeats it in many voices of different height. The most important voice in the choir is *killõ* – the sharpest and most resounding upper vocal harmony. Lead singers, who are capable of saying and improvising thousands of verses, are called song mothers. The most famous of ones of them are Vabarna Anne and Hilana Taarka, the latter has even had a film made about her.

### LANGUAGE

Seto language is a dialect of Southern Estonian language (which is in turn a dialect of Estonian); a native regional language which is part of the endangered languages of UNESCO. For Estonian speakers, Seto language sounds quite similar to Võro language, but Setos and Võros consider their languages to be clearly different. The Seto language has more loan words of Slavic origin (*tsäi* – tea, *tsässon* – chapel).



## FOLK COSTUME

The folk costume of Seto women is characterised by the recognizable combination of white, black and red. Red and white are the main colours of the Seto culture. Red is the colour of life, it protects from evil and illnesses, for instance, from plague. For that reason, there is a red band at the bottom edge of the woman's pinafore dress (*sukman/kitasnik*). The most recognisable piece of clothing of a married Seto woman is a head set, which is covered with a head belt and decorated with numerous bands, and which often has a colourful lace decoration on its bottom edge. In order to achieve the characteristic square head shape, plaited braids (*kossa*) made from linen fibres are put under the head covering. The head of a married woman wearing a folk costume must always remain covered. Ladies wear a scarf, or a garland on festive occasions.

It is said that you can hear a Seto woman before you see them since the fancy silver jewellery has a loud jingling sound. The most lavish piece of jewellery is definitely the silver brooch which also has a strong protective and a magical meaning. There are two specific rules for jewellery. First: the more the merrier. Second: the silver brooch is a sign of woman in her fertile age.

Seto men wear a white shirt (*hamõh*) and a white woollen coat, lavish black boots or beautifully patterned wool socks (*kapuda'*) with peasant shoes.







## FOOD

The food of Setos is familiar to most – soups, roasts, buns, pies –, but with a little twist: for example, Setos put meat and fish together in one dish. The long fasting periods of the Orthodox church calendar have led to eating a lot of fasting dishes (fish, leguminous vegetables and grains) and dairy, however very little meat. Mushrooms have also been an important food, mainly in dried and fermented form. Other foods characteristic to Setos include pressed curd cheese (*sõir*) and pies. If you wish to know more about Seto foods, ask museums or information points for Seto cookbooks.



## ORTHODOXY

Christianisation began in Setomaa in the 11th century, therefore, about hundred years earlier than in Estonia, and it went relatively peacefully. The Pechersky Monastery, which was established in the 15th century, quickly became the centre of the religious life in Pechory County and it plays that role until this day (read more on page 72).

Alongside churches, village chapels (*tsässons*) play an important role in Setomaa. Every church and *tsässon* bears the name of a saint and the day of this saint is the biggest holiday for the village and surrounding villages.

Seto orthodoxy has many pre-Christian era elements: respect for sacrificial stones, trees and springs and many cemeteries established in the pre-Christian area are still in use. When people go berry picking in the forest, the first picked berry is given back to the forest – this is also a sign of ancient sacrifice.

The part of Setomaa that is on the Estonian territory currently has 24 chapels and one icon house. There are also two churches which were built during a very interesting time: both the Obinitza and the Miikse Church were established in 1952, during the Stalin Period. The fact that the churches were built is a kind of Seto miracle: the will of the community was just so strong that the churches were established despite the strong opposition of the authorities.



*GOOD TO KNOW: Setomaa churches and chapels are usually closed. If you wish to visit them, please arrange your visit by contacting the phone numbers given in the appendix. It is polite to leave money in the sanctuary to support for the congregation. The amount may be agreed upon in advance.*



**Last name first, first name second.** When talking about people in Setomaa and also in Võrumaa, it is customary to say their last name first followed by their first name. Last names were given to Setos only in 1921, before that they were called by their village name (e.g. the famous Seto song mother Hilana Taarka – Taarka from the Hilana village) or by their father's name.

**A mighty jewellery set.** The jewellery set of a Seto woman can weigh up to five kilograms. Obviously, they don't wear all that jewellery every day, but there are plenty of festive days in Setomaa that give Seto women a reason to bring out their silver beauty.

**The old calendar.** The Seto church calendar follows the old calendar which means that holidays are celebrated two weeks later than elsewhere in Estonia. For example, Midsummer's Day is celebrated on 7 July, Seto Christmas i.e. winter holidays on 6 January. Moving holidays also depend on the difference of the calendars and it is possible that some years e.g. Easter will be celebrated on the same day as in the Lutheran Church in Estonia, but in other years, many weeks later. See the event calendar at [visitsetomaa.ee](http://visitsetomaa.ee).





**Eating on graves.** Setos have a habit of eating and drinking on graves during the holidays. This is an ancient Finno-Ugric tradition which has long disappeared from Estonia but remained in Setomaa. Setos think eating on graves shows the solidarity of family, including dead ancestors. According to the old customs, some food is left on the grave before leaving the cemetery. After the meal with the ancestors, it's time to dance and sing. This traditional community celebration following the service and eating on graves is called *kirmask*. If you want to take part in the holidays, be respectful for local customs.

**The Pechersky Monastery** is the only monastery in Russia where praying has not stopped for more than 600 years. This is because during the complex years of 1920–1940, when monasteries were closed in the former Soviet Union, Pechory was part of the Republic of Estonia. In 2009, the Pechersky Monastery was included in one of the Seven Wonders of Russia.

**Becoming a teacher in four years.** The Obinitza school-church used to be called Setomaa University and its graduates received teacher education. It is particularly surprising that in order to receive this title, one only had to attend school for four winters. Up until the 1920s, school education in all of Setomaa was provided exclusively in Russian, which meant that many educated Seto youngsters Russified.





**Setos have their own money.** The Seto kroon was put into circulation in 2015 on the Seto Kingdom Day. This is a completely valid currency which can be used in most places of purchase in Setomaa as an equal payment method alongside the euro. The circulation of the Seto kroon is organised by the Seto Bank. [pank.seto.ee](http://pank.seto.ee)

**Turtles live in Setomaa!** So far, they have been found by the Optjok river on the Russian territory of historic Setomaa, but it is possible that they also inhabit other places in Setomaa.

**Mineral water is strong stuff.** Not all mineral waters extracted from Väraska are drinkable. Some boreholes have such salty water that it is only suitable for treatment purposes. Salinity i.e. mineral content depends on the depth of extraction: the deeper it is, the stronger it is. In most cases, Väraska water is extracted from a depth of approximately 500 metres. The lobby of the Väraska Water Park has taps from which you can taste the mineral waters of different boreholes.

**Hansa is not moonshine.** The famous Seto drink *hansa* (pronunciation: han(d)sa) should not be confused with moonshine. *Hansa* is a strong drink (55–70%) made from rye (also from rye and wheat mixture) which can be compared to a middle-class whiskey in quality. A particular etiquette is followed in Setomaa when offering and drinking *hansa*: the host of the party or a designated person offers the drink in one shot glass. The shot glass is not shared but it is given back to the person who offered it to you. Accepting the shot glass is considered a form of courtesy but no one is forced to drink.



**Red Easter eggs.** In Setomaa Easter eggs are painted red. According to the Orthodox tradition, this shows respect for Christ and the blood he shed.

**Pottery Setos.** Setos used to be good ceramicists. At that time, clay pots were made of the local red clay. Pots were sold by masters, who were called pottery Setos, on horse-drawn carriages across Estonia. Seto pots were simple but durable and highly valued amongst people. Pots were exchanged for old rags. Why rags? Because the Rāpina Paper Factory purchased rags at a decent price to manufacture paper from them. Recycling was fashionable already a long time ago!



**Fun sayings.** Setos have many fun sayings in their language. *Juut ikk, ku seto sünd* (Jews cried when Setos were born) – referring to the fact that Setos have always been clever salesmen. *Koh sõira, sääl sõpru* (where there is pressed curd cheese, there are friends) – pressed curd cheese is a festive food in Setomaa and there are always many people at the parties. *Õgal talol uma taar* (every farm has their own root beer) – every family has its own customs. *Seto inne usu-ui, ku kumbis* (Setos will not believe it until they touch it) – referring to Setos being cautious and sceptical.





## ALONG THE ROUTE “SETO KÜLÄVÜÜ”

The main tourist route of Setomaa is Seto Külävüü, which rolls open along the rural paths of Setomaa ([maps.visitsetomaa.ee](http://maps.visitsetomaa.ee)) like a long belt. Its one end is in Võõpsu and the other in Luhamaa. Külävüü, which swirls through Setomaa forests and villages, is approximately 100 kilometres long and has many information displays along the way.

1. **Võõpsu.** The northern gate of Setomaa is a bridge over Võhandu River. On one side of the bridge you are in the Võõpsu settlement in Estonia, on the other side you are already in Võõpsu village in orthodox Setomaa. Here you can find the largest wooden *tsässon* in Setomaa, **Võõpsu tsässon** (built in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century). The chapel is dedicated to the most beloved male saint of Setomaa – Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker.
2. **Lüübnitsa.** A road from Võõpsu leads to three coastal villages. The biggest of these villages is Lüübnitsa and it is characterised by a road network with intersections and a clearly Slavic architecture and use of colour. And of course, there are also onion beds! Onion and fish fair is held here at the end of August. From **Lüübnitsa Viewing Tower**, which is located at the beach, Lake Pskov and the Kolpino (Kulkna) island (currently part of Russia) can be seen..



- 3. Laossina.** Laossina village by Lake Pskov is one of the oldest inhabited villages in Setomaa. Traces of human settlement date back to the Neolithic Age. Many tombs originating from the second half of the first millennium indicate Iron Age settlement. The **Laossina tsässon** (built in 1860), which stands on the edge of the village cemetery, is dedicated to the birth of the Mother of God and the corresponding holiday is celebrated on 21 September. Medieval stone crosses can be found in the cemetery near the *tsässon*.

+372 795 4433 (*Õie Saarestik*)



- 4. Mikitamäe.** The pride of Mikitamäe village are its chapels. Since there are two chapels, people call this place the Chapel Square. The old Mikitamäe *tsässon* is the oldest wooden building in all continental Estonia: it was probably built in 1694. The patron saint of Mikitamäe *tsässons* is Thomas the Apostle and the corresponding village holiday is celebrated a week after Easter. +372 5647 8930 (*Raili Mõttus*)





- Värška.** This is the centre of Northern Setomaa and the whole of Setomaa currently on the Estonian side. The patron saint of **Värška Orthodox Church** (current building was built in 1907) is Saint George, therefore the biggest holiday of Värška is the St. George's day celebrated on 6 May. The church is decorated by an early 20<sup>th</sup> century iconostasis with holy images depicting St. George, among others. This icon painted on wood dates back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Many well-known Seto cultural figures have been buried in the Värška churchyard, such as song mother Anne Vabarna and the poet Paul Haavaoks.

+372 796 4788, +372 5660 6703 (*Andreas Pöld*)

- Värška Health Resort Centre.** The Värška Sanatorium, now officially called Värška Health Resort Centre, was completed in 1980. The building is located in a beautiful place: on the shore of a lake surrounded by pines and with a view to Värška Bay. Another advantage is that there are two very important mineral resources available on the spot: mineral water and mud. At the sanatorium, it is possible to improve your health in both mud and water baths. **Värška Water Park** has several mineral water baths and a swimming pool.

+372 799 3901 (*sanatorium*), +372 799 9334 (*water park*),  
*spavarska.ee*

*GOOD TO KNOW: During the summer, Seto Line picks up interested people from the wharf of the sanatorium's beach and goes on couple-hour boating trip which runs along the coast of Lake Pskov to Lüübnitsa and back. [setoline.ee](http://setoline.ee)*



7. **Podmotsa.** Driving onward from the Väraska Orthodox Church, a sign indicates a dead end ahead. You should not be discouraged by this because the road leads to exactly where needed: to **Podmotsa village**. Right now it really seems like the end of the world because there is no way forward: the land, the road and the Republic of Estonia all end here.

A little further from the lake, on top of the hill, there is a medieval village cemetery and in the middle of that is the **Podmotsa tsässon** (built in 1760), which is dedicated to Whitsun (Pentecost). During the Whitsun, the chapel is decorated with young birches and yellow painted eggs are brought there for celebration. Next to the cemetery there is a village swing and the yellow “extraordinary landscape” window of National Geographic, where the famous magazine recommends taking photos.

Over the Kuulja Bay, only a couple hundred metres from Russia, one can see the **Kulje (Kuulja) church domes**. Both sides of the bay were vibrant with life in the pre-war Republic of Estonia. In those days, Podmotsa was not a periphery, but an important place on the Väraska-Kuulja highway. They maintained a link with Kuulja by boats and rafts.





8. **Õrsava lake.** Moving from Värskä toward Saatse, look to the right and you will see Õrsava Lake, the loch of Värskä Bay. A five-kilometre Õrsava hiking trail has been set up around the lake. The official beginning of the trail is by the Värskä school's stadium, but you can start from any point. The **Värskä campfire site**, located on the shore on the side of Õrsava village, is a good place to start. You can also camp there or stay overnight in one of the **Värskä cabins**. In addition to the beautiful views on the water, the lakeside hiking trail provides a history lesson: the trail is partially on the premises of the former Northern Camp of the Estonian Defence Forces.



9. **Pechory Northern Camp.** The camp was built as a summer training centre for Estonian Defence Forces in the second half of the 1920s and is located by the shore of the Õrsava Lake. The soldiers built all the camp buildings themselves. In addition to the soldier barracks, there were some quite outstanding buildings, for example a casino and residential buildings for officers. Even though the camp was largely demolished during WW II, some of the soldier barracks and other buildings have survived, including the Reegi building (to be reconstructed) – a luxurious building that belonged to Nikolai Reek, the General of Defence Forces.





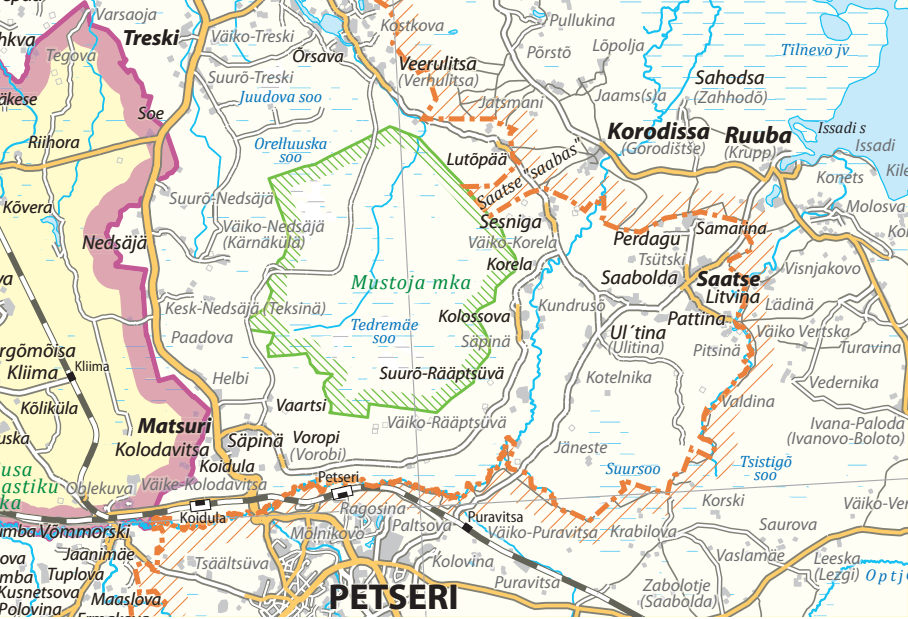
**10. Värška Farm Museum.** Built on the former sports grounds of the Northern Camp, this is the biggest museum of Setomaa and it introduces the wealthy Seto farm and the local way of life of the 1920s. Here you can get a good idea of what a Seto fortress-type farm looks like from the inside. The farm museum is an actual farm with some living animals and even a dog to guard the farm.

In summer, you can also listen to Seto *leelo* in the yard: on two Thursdays of July a Setomaa *leelo* choir will perform at the museum grounds. As *leelo* does not play that big of a role in everyday life anymore and you cannot come across singing Setos on the street, then this is an opportunity worth seizing. +372 505 4673, [setomuuseum.ee](http://setomuuseum.ee)



*GOOD TO KNOW: The farm is also worth a visit during winter, because it's during the colder times that you can feel the actual warmth of a big Seto furnace and the housewives of the museum often bake something delicious in the oven. Winter is the best time for wondering how people in the olden days managed to live together in such a narrow cottage. The average Seto house was about 80–100 m<sup>2</sup> but in a traditional cottage, only one room (about 35 m<sup>2</sup>) was heated and the majority of that room was taken up by the furnace. A dozen people often lived together in such a cottage.*





- Saatsse Boot.** The way from Värskä to Saatsse passes through a foreign country's territory: the only road is through the so-called Saatsse Boot. **Saatsse Boot** is a place near the Russian border which cuts the Värskä-Saatsse road in the extent of 800 metres. You do not need a Russian visa to drive through the boot, but you should still have your passport with you when navigating around the border area. You can pass the Saatsse Boot only by a vehicle, there is no passage by foot. You are also not allowed to stop your car there.

Saatsse Boot was created by a line of control drawn between the Republic of Estonia and the Russian Federation along the borders of the former Soviet countries. The border wasn't of great significance during the Soviet times, but nowadays it is a border between two countries and moreover between the European Union and Russia.

*GOOD TO KNOW: When driving from Värskä to the south and from Sesniki to Koidula, the road runs near the line of control of Estonia-Russia. Keep an eye on your phone and if possible, switch off mobile data: your phone might reach a Russian network and cause a large bill. Keep in mind that you cannot get closer than 10 metres to the post indicating the national border.*





**12. Mustoja kame field.** This is an area covered with forest where inhabitation has always been sparse. The history of the approximately 3,000-hectar kame field is closely related to military use: in the 1920s, the Mustoja kame field became a training area for the Northern Camp, also known as the **Pechory shooting range**. After WWII, the Soviet army used the kame field as a polygon.

In 1998, the fate of the kame field changed: the former military area became the **Mustoja landscape reserve**. This is an area with very exciting and diverse landscape. It has forests and swamps, valleys and hills, heaths and sands. This whole complicated landscape complex has shaped a habitat for many rare species. Growing here are numerous plant species of southern origin that feel great in these bright pine forests, for example the Eastern pasqueflower, Jovibarba globifera and Helichrysum arenarium. Rare bird species living in the landscape reserve include the western capercaillie, black grouse and lesser spotted eagle.

In 2012, the Laskevälja cycling trail was marked on the Mustoja kame field. This 43-kilometre-long trail is quite a challenge even for hikers who are in good shape because the difference between altitude and the sandy roads of the kame field take their toll. If the entire trail is too much, you can opt for half: the 17-kilometre part of the road from Värskä to Southern Camp is quite flat, while the part of the trail from the Southern Camp back to Värskä is longer (26 kilometres) and more challenging.

*GOOD TO KNOW: Bikes can be rented from Värskä Sanatorium. [spavarska.ee](http://spavarska.ee)*

*When wandering around the forest, follow the rules of the border area and observe your exact location. Wandering in the forest, you could accidentally end up in Saatse boot and suddenly find yourself outside of the European Union.*





13. **Saatse.** This is the farthest south-eastern part of today's Estonia. Saatse museum is located in the eastern side of Saatse village, actually already in Samarina village. Saatse museum is just as the Saatse area, clearly unique. The museum building itself does not resemble a traditional Seto residential building, it is a lavish mansion! The house, which was originally built to be a residential building, was used as a schoolhouse from 1931–1963, later with the leadership of local enthusiast Viktor Veeber, it became a museum. Saatse museum stands out with its painted texts on the walls and many interactive opportunities.

+372 5342 1428, [setomuuseum.ee](http://setomuuseum.ee)

The current **Saatse church** was completed in 1801. The Saatse St. Paraskeva congregation has been a mixed congregation from the beginning. This can also be seen when walking around the cemetery: both Setos and Russians are buried here. The biggest holiday in Saatse, the day for the church's saint, is St. Paraskeva's Day (the last Friday in July). Paraskeva is Greek for Friday and the Seto language form has been derived from Russian (rus *пятница* – Friday).

+372 5342 1428



14. **Kolossova.** Since one cannot go forward from Saatse, you have to drive back. After passing over the Piusa River, the Seto Külävüü turns west to the forests of the Mustoja kame field. Make sure you visit the **Vana-Jüri soap shop** in Kolossova. The lovely lovely soap master Silver Hüdsi works here and he named the soap factory after his grandfather Jüri. Every soap has something from the nature of Setomaa. The most special addition is holy water from the nearby Pechersky Monastery, which cannot be found in any other soaps in the world. The best-selling products include the tar soap, bog peat soap and Piusa sand soap.

+372 529 9190, [vahtraorg.eu](http://vahtraorg.eu)



**Jumalamägi (God's Hill)** is located in the immediate vicinity of the soap shop: according to the legend, this is where God picks souls up onto his carriage to bring them to heaven. In 2007, the **statue of Peko**, Seto's fertility god, was placed on the hill. Peko is brought gifts in order to get a blessing to one's actions. People say that the hill is a place with especially great energy where it is possible to get rid of negative baggage and recharge your batteries.





15. **Koidula.** When driving through Koidula along the Seto Külävüü, it feels like the road is almost going through the border crossing point. Make sure you turn right in time! Koidula is an important transit point: this is where one of the Estonian-Russian border crossing points on Setomaa's territory is located.

*GOOD TO KNOW: Koidula border crossing point is in the immediate vicinity of Pechory town, it is only a couple of kilometres to the heart of the town. The ones who have a visa can leave their car on the border and cross the border by foot or by bike – many locals do that. If you do not want to walk to the city, you can order a cab or take the bus. Buses and trains from Tallinn and Tartu go to Koidula.*

**Koidula railway station** is one of the biggest infrastructure investments in the Republic of Estonia. The station organizes trade with Russia, and for that they have special x-ray equipment and everything else necessary for customs, including 10 pairs of rails, 38 switches and 25.6 kilometres of rails.

*GOOD TO KNOW: During summer, the Tartu-Koidula passenger train goes until the Piusa train station which is directly next to the Piusa Caves. Later, it is possible to take the train back to Tartu.*



**16. Pechory Southern Camp.** The route runs parallel with the Piusa River for quite a while, with Russia on the other shore, but this side is the grounds of the former Estonian Defence Forces Southern Camp. Pechory Southern Camp was established in the 1920s to the southern part of Pechory shooting range but unlike the Northern Camp, no buildings have remained here. In order to not forget its past, a two-kilometre-long **Southern Camp hiking trail** has been established on the former campground. The hiking trail has many information boards about the buildings and life during the first Estonian Republic. The trail passes a small artificial lake where you can take a break and have a little picnic or put up a tent by the **Southern Camp campsite**.



**17. Treski.** You can also drive to Koidula from Värskä by a shorter route, through Treski village. Treski was known for its fun Midsummer Day parties for a long time, but has just recently been made even more famous by Värskä's own Jalmar Vabarna who built a distinctive concert venue in his farm, called **Treski Küün (Treski barn)**. Many authentic, special and surprising concerts are held here. **Lauda Tavern** welcomes visitors for a meal in their renovated barn building. +372 5344 4005, [treskikyyn.ee](http://treskikyyn.ee)





**18. Piusa Caves.** Digging the famous Piusa caves in the light Devonian sandstone began in the 1920s because the white Piusa sand, which was low in quartz, was well-suited for manufacturing glass bottles. At the end of the 1960s, they put an end to underground mining and began to extract sand from quarries. Sand is not extracted at Piusa anymore, but the caves and the quarry resulting from previous work have created a tourist attraction, a favourite especially for families with children. **The Piusa hiking trail**, which is a little more than kilometre-long, is perfect for a short hike.

The caves are used as a winter bedroom by many bats who come here to hibernate from within a 100-kilometre radius. Thus, the so-called Hotel Piusa is currently the biggest

hibernating place for bats in Northern Europe. In order to keep peace during the hibernation of bats, the **Piusa Caves Nature Reserve** has been created in the area of the caves and quarries.

Currently, you can explore the Piusa Caves with the ticket of **Piusa Caves Visitor Centre**. In the centre you can see a film clip about bats and then enter the caves with a museum guide. In the summer, a small café is opened at the visitor centre. +372 5304 4120, [piusa.ee](http://piusa.ee)

*GOOD TO KNOW: It is always cold in Piusa caves! In order to maintain the indoor climate of the caves, so that they would not collapse, they are kept at a constant temperature (8–10 degrees Celsius). In the summer when the weather is hot, the caves seem really cold, but during winter, the caves are a nice warm place to visit. In the summer, take a jacket or a sweater with you when going to the caves.*

Near the centre, in the former station building, is the Piusa Pottery Ceramics Studio where you can see how ceramicists Signe and Meelis Krigul turn clay and decorate ceramics. The exhibition sale of the Pottery Ceramics Studio always has something new and interesting for every taste.

+372 510 1783 (Meelis Krigul),

+372 523 3316 (Signe Krigul), [savikoja.ee](http://savikoja.ee)

**19. Obinitsa.** This is the largest centre of western Setomaa. The tradition of Seto Kingdom Days begun in Obinitsa. However, in 2015 Obinitsa was, in a way, a centre of the world: **Obinitsa was the Finno-Ugric Capital of Culture** i.e. the cultural centre for 25 million people. The year of Capital of Culture is remembered by the **flag square** in the centre of Obinitsa village, where the flags of all Finno-Ugric nations are hoisted.

**Seto Studio-Gallery** is located by the flag square. Evar Riitsaar's and Kauksi Ülle's cosy gallery was established in the house of a former shopkeeper. At the gallery, you can see Seto handicraft and silver jewellery made by Evar, admire the paintings on the wall, see creations done in block print technique and flick through Kauksi Ülle's books. You can also try the traditional block print technique on the spot. At the other end of the flag square, the creative couple has transformed a Soviet-era sauna into a small handicraft and souvenir shop called Kunstizaal.

+372 5656 9079 (*Kauksi Ülle*), +372 51 7361 (*Evar Riitsaar*), [setokunst.ee](http://setokunst.ee)



**Obinitsa Museum** is in the middle of the village and it has a tourist information point. What is remarkable about this place is that it has some beautiful Seto women's handicraft on sale and a great selection of books and records. The museum organises thematic days and workshops and you can also try Seto clothing on upon a request in advance. This is an experience for both the spectators and the one changing into Seto clothes.

**Obinitsa tsässon** (built in 2007) is next to the museum. A procession, beginning from the church, is organised to the chapel on the eve of Transfiguration Day on 18 August. At other times, the building is used to introduce Seto culture. +372 5622 7732 (*Obinitsa museum*), [setomuuseum.ee](http://setomuuseum.ee)







**Obinitsa Church** (built in 1952) and cemetery are located a bit further from the centre. The biggest holiday in the Obinitsa region is Transfiguration Day which is celebrated on 19 August and brings thousands of people around here. Transfiguration day is a holiday for honey and apples in the culture of Setos: starting from that day, one can start eating fresh honey and apples. After the service at the church, people go to the graves of their loved ones to eat and drink. The Seto word for the holiday – *paasapäiv* – comes from the word спасы in Russian which is derived from the Russian name for Christ and stands for Saviour. In the church calendar, the holy name of the holiday is the Feast of the Transfiguration of Our Lord.

+372 5326 7546 (*Guuri Piholaan*)

On the shore of the Obinitsa Artificial Lake, stands a stone monument of the **Song Mother**. This is a memorial for all song mothers of Setomaa. Around the statue there are many memorial stones for local masters of *leelo*.

The left-hand side of the Song Mother's monument has the **old school-church of Obinitsa** (built in 1904): the school operated on the first floor and the church on the second. This meant that the tomb with the deceased had to be carried upstairs to the second floor during the funeral and back down again afterwards.





20. **Tobrova.** When in Tobrova, it is worth taking a look at the **Luikjärve Farm**, which is one of the Setomaa museums. This fortress-type farm with high Seto gates is one of the best-preserved examples of traditional Seto architecture that can be seen in today's Setomaa. **Tobrova tsässon** (built in 1932), which is next to the farm, is dedicated to Easter. +372 5622 7732 (*Obinitsa museum*)



21. **Serga.** In the heart of the Serga village, there is a small but important building: Serga *tsässon* i.e. Orthodox Chapel (built in 1784). The chapel is dedicated to Saint Anastasia of Sirmium. The day of her celebration is called St Anastasia's Day, celebrated on 11 November. The kind hostess of the *tsässon* is always glad to welcome visitors, talk about the old and current times here at the border village and show beautiful handcrafted knitted woollen red-patterned icon scarves. +372 5683 7588 (*Eevi Liinamäe*)





22. **Meremäe hill.** The Seto Külävüü turns left at the intersection of Meremäe and keeps climbing higher and higher. Soon you will see the **Meremäe hill** (204 metres above sea level) and on top of it the **look-out tower**, from where you can admire the fields and forests of western Setomaa. You can even see the Pechersky Monastery's domes from the top of the tower, if the weather allows for it.



23. **Vana-Vastseliina.** Just beyond the border of Setomaa, in Old Livonia, resides the **Vastseliina Episcopal Castle**. The castle, known as Neuhausen (new castle in German), was located in a strategically important place, by the former Riga-Pskov trade road, and it is thought to have been built as a response to the castle established in Izborsk. It is believed that a miracle happened in the chapel of the castle in the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, after which Vastseliina became a target destination for pilgrims. The castle is mostly in ruins. **A Medieval Activity Centre** has been created in the tavern building. It was built from the castle's bricks. The complex also includes the recently built **Pilgrimage House**.  
*+372 509 6301, [vastseliinalinnus.ee](http://vastseliinalinnus.ee)*



24. **Miikse.** In Miikse village there is **Miikse Church**, dedicated to the birthday of John the Baptist, i.e. Midsummer's Day, celebrated on 7 July. Unlike in Estonia, Midsummer's Day is not the biggest holiday of the summer for everybody in Setomaa. Bigger celebrations of Midsummer's Day can only be seen in Miikse and Treski.

Near the church there is **Jaanikivi** (John's rock), an ancient place of sacrifice. This was still considered important even after people had already been converted to Orthodox. People believe that the stone has healing powers because Saint John had sat on it: if you put an aching body part against the stone on Midsummer's Day, then it will be healed. The water of the stream next to the stone is also believed to have healing powers. Even today, after the church service on the Midsummer's Day, people go to wash their eyes or other body parts in the spring.

+372 515 9766 (*Peeter Uibo*)

25. **Luhamaa.** Luhamaa region is a separate part of the current Setomaa. Luhamaa area is the highest area in all Setomaa. The highest peak of Setomaa is in Tserebi (**Maaniidu hill** 225.4 metres above sea level). The **Estonian-Russian border crossing point** is also located in Luhamaa.

**Luhamaa Church of the Holy Spirit** was built in 1932. The church holiday is Whitsun (50 days after Easter).

+372 515 9766 (*Peeter Uibo*),

+372 5373 5553 (*Malle Künnapuu*)





**26. Piusa River.** Piusa river, also known as the Mother River of Setomaa, has the sharpest downstream in Estonia. The difference between the river mouth and its source is 214 metres and a large part of the fall lies here, in the rapid middle course of Piusa river. Piusa is also known for watermills: 14 mills worked in the middle course before the Second World War - that is one windmill after every kilometre and a half. Most of them can still be seen or found on the landscape.

**The Hiking Trail of the Piusa River** begins from the ruins of Vastseliina Castle. This 15-kilometre trail is the longest of the Setomaa hiking trails and runs mostly on the **Piusa River landscape reserve**. The trail passes many old mill spots and reaches the highest sandstone outcrop in Estonia – **Härma walls i.e. Keldri walls**. The sandstone wall, which is 150 metres in length and 43 metres in height can be admired from the oxbow which is directly opposite, but you can also enjoy a wonderful view from the top of the outcrop.

There is also an option to do a shorter hike to the Härma walls: you can leave your car by the **lower Härma wall i.e. Kõlgusniidu wall**, the bend of which has the **Härma campfire site**. Kõlgusniidu wall (20.5 metres) is considered to be one of the most beautiful sandstone outcrops in Estonia: its bright colours and compact pyramid-like shape give the sandstone wall an impressive picturesque look.

The river section in the protected area has altogether 14 Devonian sandstone outcrops. Most of them are located on the right shore of the river, only two are on the left. **Make campfire site** is located in the road section between Möldri and Savikoja.



27. **Pechersky Monastery.** The **Orthodox monastery** is located in the heart of Pechory. The monastery, which grew out of a cave-like dwelling of a few eremitic monks was established in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and it is the centre of the entire religious life of Pechory and people are willing to travel here. The well in the monastery's yard provides holy spring water, therefore it would be useful to bring an empty bottle. The most important holiday of the monastery is St Mary's Day which is celebrated on 28<sup>th</sup> of August.



*GOOD TO KNOW: When going to an Orthodox church or monastery, men have to take their hat off, but women have to cover their heads. When going to a monastery, women have to have a knee-length skirt (these can be borrowed near the monastery gates), smaller churches do not frown upon pants. During the service people have to stand instead of sitting: women to the left, men to the right. The same routine applies for all other churches in Setomaa as well.*





28. **Pechory.** The town of Pechory has many buildings which originate from the time when Pechory belonged to the Republic of Estonia (1920–1940): a bank, secondary school and hospital building, a building of the Defence Forces and St Peter’s church. In May 1939, a fire that started in Pechory destroyed a large part of the city.

The “department store” which comprises of various small shops has the name of a so-called shopping street and it is located in the centre. There are many distinctive small shops which sell candies, textiles and stronger liquors. A market square is located in the centre of the city.

The **Pechory Town Museum** and the recently opened **Monastery Museum** are also located in the town. A pilgrimage centre has recently been built by the road leading to Tartu, which has a little shop focusing on orthodox symbolism and a small café. Setos have their own church in Pechory: **Varvara Church**, a modest wooden church which is located by the small square and where you still can hear people speaking Seto language.





29. **Izborsk (Irboska).** It is believed that the Russia began in Izborsk: according to the legend, three Varangian brothers arrived in Russia in 862, one of whom – Truvor – remained to rule Izborsk. In any case; Izborsk was one of the most important centres of Russia for a long time. At the moment, the former power of Izborsk is remembered by the mighty castles which are restored. The **Izborsk Castle** is located at a very picturesque place: in the primeval valley of Izborsk-Malõ, on the shore of Izborsk Town Lake. There are various springs running by lake shore which are called **Slavic springs**.







30. **Malõ (Mõla).** The primeval valley of Izborsk-Malõ has another historically important centre, the Malõ village. The **Malõ church and cemetery** are located deep in the primeval valley. Many Setos who lived nearby are buried in the cemetery – this can be seen from the tombstones when walking around the cemetery. The holy day, which is called Malõ Day is still an important holiday for Setos who originate from there.



31. **Radaja.** Radaja (Sigovo in Russian) village has two museums on both sides of the street. Both are **Radaja museums** - one of them is a branch of the Izborsk museum and the other one is a private museum - they show and collect local Seto heritage. Since 2008, **Radaja Festival** is celebrated on 28<sup>th</sup> of August in the Radaja National Museum (see p. 95).



Religious holidays are still celebrated in Setomaa. The holidays begin with a morning service at the church which is followed by a procession around the church and then people go to the cemetery to eat and drink on the graves of their loved ones. Many places celebrate *kirmask* after the holy day. *Kirmas(k)* i.e. the village party does not have a certain start time and everyone who wants to celebrate can join. There is no specific schedule but there will be some singing and if an instrumentalist comes, there will be some dancing as well.

Exciting festivals, concerts, performances, sport competitions and other cultural events take place in Setomaa all year round. Setomaa's museums organise a number of interesting thematic days and different events. In order to keep yourself updated with Setomaa's events, follow the calendar ([visitsetomaa.ee](http://visitsetomaa.ee)) or visit Setomaa's Facebook page ([facebook.com/visitsetomaa/](https://facebook.com/visitsetomaa/)).



*GOOD TO KNOW: Church holidays are the holidays of Seto community. If you wish to take part in the holiday, join with a small group and be polite and discreet. Small groups are welcome to kirmask.*





6th –7th of January

**WINTER HOLIDAYS** / Seto Christmas. Bigger celebrations take place in Obinitsa (at Taarka's Tarõ) and Pechory, where Estonian Setos also participate in the celebrations. Among the special activities of winter holidays is the Slavification of Christians: children, especially boys, go from house to house, they have candles in their self-made domes to proclaim the birth of Christ.

February/March (moveable feast)

**SHROVETIDE (MAASENITSA)** / a week before the start of the Great Lent. People sleigh and have fun, bigger celebrations take place in Obinitsa, Värskä and also in Izborsk.

April/May (moveable feast)

**EASTER** / This is the biggest holiday in Setomaa – it is more important than Christmas and St John's Day and it is celebrated all around Setomaa. People in many villages (e.g. in Obinitsa) gather together for Easter by the munaloomka (a special place for egg rolling). Munaloomka is the square where the egg rolling game is played. In the past, egg rolling was a game for men but today, everyone can join. Careful, it can be addictive!

6th of May

**ST GEORGE'S DAY** / Church holiday of Värskä.



### May

**SETO LACE DAYS** / Värška Farm Museum. Crocheting Seto coloured lace is a very time-consuming and distinctive form of handicraft where handicraftsmen use colour combinations clearly characteristic to Seto (red and white plus bright colours such as green and purple, yellow, orange etc.) The purpose of having Seto Lace Days is to keep the tradition of crocheting lace alive and show that everything can be decorated with lace! Every year there is a thematic competition and all museum visitors can see and evaluate the participating works in May.

+372 505 4673, [setomuuseum.ee](http://setomuuseum.ee)

### Mid-June

**SÕIR DAY (Pressed Curd Cheese Day)** / Saatse Museum. The Saatse area has been very famous for its dairy products, especially pressed curd cheese. On *Sõir* Day, there is a workshop dedicated to boiling sour milk cheese and a competition to find the best sour milk cheese master. Concerts and workshops are also held. +372 5342 1428, [setomuuseum.ee](http://setomuuseum.ee)

### End of June

**SETO FOLK** / Värška Festival Grounds. This festival unites music and hiking. Seto Folk is especially loved by families with children because it is an event offering a diverse programme so there is just enough of everything for every taste. [setofolk.ee](http://setofolk.ee)





### June/July

**SETO LEELO DAY** / Värska. Seto Song Festival takes places every three years. This is a day where Seto singing i.e. *leelo* exclusively can be heard. Seto choirs from all over Estonia gather together and it is a great opportunity to see Setos in folk costumes and in their natural environment.

### 7th of July

**OLD ST JOHN'S DAY** / Church holiday of Miikse, Treski *tsässon's* day. The traditional bonfire is lighted in both places on 6<sup>th</sup> of July.

### 12th of July

**FEAST OF SAINTS PETER AND PAUL** / Uusvada village holiday (St Peter's Day). A village party i.e. *kirmask* is held.

### Last Friday in July

**ST PARASKEVA'S DAY** / Church holiday of Saatse.



## First Saturday in August

**SETO KINGDOM DAY** / The biggest and most important get-together for Setos. Seto Kingdom was first declared in 1994 in Obinitsa and since then, they have kept the tradition of having a big celebration for the Kingdom Day in a village in Setomaa. Every year, a different village has the task of holding a celebration. Many competitions are held on the Kingdom Day. They include finding the best lead singers, strongest men, best craftsmen and musicians of Setomaa. The most popular one is the competition of food and drink masters: in exchange of a moderate fee, visitors can taste different bread, pressed curd cheese, pies, beer, wine and moonshine brought to the competition. The most exciting thing to look at is the army parade: battalions are marching one after another, groups are wearing costumes and carry forks, hoes, ladles and other nifty weaponry.

Just like in every real Kingdom, Setos also have their own king: the Seto epic's hero Peko. According to the legend, Peko is resting in the sand cave of Pechory and cannot rule the Kingdom himself. Therefore, Setos are ruled by an elected representative representative - the Regent of the King (*ülembsootska*). The central event of the Kingdom Day is the election of the representative: candidates will stand on a block of wood and people will line up in front of the candidate they like. The one who has the most people lined up in front of them by the end is the new regent until next year's Kingdom Day. Simple!











2nd or 3rd weekend in August

**SETO KÜLÄVÜÜ'S CAFÉ DAY** / This day is an excellent opportunity to peek into Setos' farm yards and see how they actually live behind the high gates. Housewives have prepared their best dishes, most delicious cakes, warmest soups and fluffiest buns. On this day you can taste true Seto flavours and also those that have been combined with the modern ones. But the basis for all of these foods is local raw ingredients: you can be sure that everything gathered from the gardens, fields, forests and lakes tastes fresh and delicious. [visitsetomaa.ee](http://visitsetomaa.ee)

19th of August

**TRANSFIGURATION DAY** / Obinitsa holy day which is followed by the Lepa *kirmas* on 20 August.

Last Saturday in August

**LÜÜBINITSA ONION AND FISH FAIR** / The fair was born out of the need to market local production more. The main fair good is the good old Peipsi onion, this can be bought in kilos or in beautiful garlands. Besides garlic and fish, you can also find buns, pies, drinks and industrial goods. The fair also has some live music, just like any other true fair would.







### 28th of August

**ST MARY'S DAY** / Pechersky Monastery's most important holiday. On the eve of the holiday, people cover the road from the monastery's gates to the main church – a so-called blood path – with flowers. After the service of St Mary's Day, a mighty procession is held around the monastery.



### 28th of August

**RADAJA FESTIVAL** / Radaja (Russia). The festival is called “The gathering of Seto families”. People come from Tallinn, Tartu, Pechory and Seto villages all around Estonia and Pechory region so the historic Seto village is filled with Setos again for one day.

### 28th of October

**LINDORA FAIR** / Lindora has hosted a fair on that day for at least a hundred years, probably even longer. This is one of the most authentic fairs in Estonia. One can trade both food and handicrafts on the crossroad of Lindora and in the forest. Other goods include pigs, sheep, cats, dogs, chickens and geese.

VALGÕ SUULLIIM	2.30
VERREV SUULLIIM	2.00
SÄVVUTÕT LIHA LEEVÄGA	1.00
SÕIR 50g	
PESSET TŠIALIHA	5.50
PESSET TŠIALIHA TUTUGA	6.00
SÄVVUTÕT LIHA MUNAGA	6.00
SÄVVUTÕT LIHA SIBULIDIGA	5.50
HEERINGE HÄMMÄTUS	4.00
PRAADIT LEIB MUNAGA	2.00
KAMA ROSINIDIGA	1.50
KAMA UBINIDIGA	1.50
PLIIN MIIGA	2.00
PLIIN SAHVTIGA	2.00
PLIIN KONDENSPIMÄGA	2.00
<b>TÄÄMBÄNE SÜÜK</b>	
LIHAPALLI SUPP	3.50
PRAADIT KALA	4.80
MASSA-LIHA HÄMMÄTUS	4.00
KIISLA	1.50
KOHOPIIMÄ-KAMA VATT	2.00



## WHERE TO EAT?

Dining areas are lined along the *Seto Külävüü* route.

**Inara Vanavalgõ kohvitarõ (café)** / Mikitamäe. The hostess of the café is a well-known master of dumplings and pressed curd. Vanavalgõ is cosy, the reception is hospitable, one can taste traditional Seto dishes. Open upon reservation. +372 516 8422

**Lahe Cafeteria** / Väraska Sanatorium. Café is open in the evenings, dance nights take place a couple times a week. Light warm food. Buffet upon reservation. +372 5598 0989, [spavarska.ee](http://spavarska.ee)

**Näki Café** / Väraska Water Park. A light and quick bite during the opening hours of the water park. +372 5598 0989, [spavarska.ee](http://spavarska.ee)

**Tsäimaja** / Väraska farm museum. A rich menu where you can find both real Seto foods and homemade dishes. The menu is in Seto language, providing a good opportunity to practice it. Open daily, during the winter period closed on Mondays and Sundays. +372 505 4673, [setomuuseum.ee/tsaimaja](http://setomuuseum.ee/tsaimaja)

**Home restaurant Maagõkõnõ at Toomemäe farm** / Saabolda. Home café which offers high-quality Seto and other food. Hostess of the café has received the title of pie-baking champion of the Seto Kingdom multiple times. Homemade liquor is also included, e.g. spruce or rhubarb wine. Upon reservation. +372 5341 8777





**Piusa Visitor Centre's Café** / Light and quick bite during the opening hours of the Visitor Centre. Open during summers.

**Iti Leeväküük** / Obinitsa (the village centre building). The charming hostess is a magnificent baker, she makes delicious breads and homemade foods. During the summers, the café is open on weekends, other times upon reservation. +372 5455 1080

**Taarka Tarõ** / Obinitsa. A cosy family restaurant created in an old farm house which offers Seto foods. The recipes have been passed down from generation to generation. You can order pressed curd cheese, root beer, pies and real Seto soups, oven dishes and other Finno-Ugric dishes. In addition, you can immerse in the culture. +372 5620 3374, [taarkatare.com](http://taarkatare.com)

**Vastseliina Castle Tavern** / The Castle offers food inspired by the medieval age, emphasis is on freshness and local raw ingredients. During the summer, it is open from 10 am to 6 pm, otherwise upon reservation.

+372 509 6301, [vastseliinalinnus.eu/pidusook](http://vastseliinalinnus.eu/pidusook)

**Piiri café** / Luhamaa border crossing point. Hot food, fresh sandwiches, pies, cakes. +372 5308 4833, [piirikohvik.ee](http://piirikohvik.ee)

Accommodation is lined along the *Seto Küläviüü* route.

**Eve Holiday Centre** / Võõpsu. Accommodation on the shore of Võhandu river. It offers many river-related activities such as water sports and fishing. *Camping, tent sites, sauna.*

+372 5665 1353, [evepuhketalu.ee](http://evepuhketalu.ee)

**Mäe Nature House** / Mikitamäe. A simple place to stay overnight, well-suited for nature lovers. *Camping site, smoke sauna, Finnish sauna, swimming place.*

[loodusegakoos.ee](http://loodusegakoos.ee)

**Rõsna Holiday Centre** / Holiday Centre located on the shore of Lake Pskov. *Camping sites, smoke sauna, Finnish sauna, swimming place.* +372 5375 8479

**Sadama Recreation Area** / Rõsna. Camping by the lake. Open only during summers (May to September). *Camping site, swimming place.* +372 506 3301, [sadamapuhkus.ee](http://sadamapuhkus.ee)

**Värskä Guest House** / A simple accommodation in Värskä near the Örsava Lake. +372 523 9697







**Hirvemäe Holiday Centre / Värskä.** Accommodation near the Värskä Bay. The special feature of this is the predominantly Russian-speaking service. *Camping sites, sauna, breakfast, mini golf, swimming place.* +372 797 6105, [hirvemae.ee](http://hirvemae.ee)

**Hotel of the Värskä Sanatorium and Water Park / Sauna,** *swimming place.* +372 799 3091, [spavarska.ee](http://spavarska.ee)

**Järve Holiday Centre / Võporsova.** There is only one big room in the accommodation place on the shore of the Värskä Bay. *Sauna, swimming place.* +372 527 6497, [jarvepuhketalu.ee](http://jarvepuhketalu.ee)

**Helena Holiday Centre / Kostkova.** The small holiday centre offers the opportunity to sleep in the barn or in the attic. +372 509 7865, [helenapuhkemaja.blogspot.com.ee](http://helenapuhkemaja.blogspot.com.ee)

**Koidu Home / Lobotka.** Cosy home accommodation near the Õrsava Lake. +372 5341 2864

**Luige cabin and Värskä cabins I and II / Õrsava.** *Camping site.* [loodusegakoos.ee](http://loodusegakoos.ee)

**Peko Holiday Centre / Õrsava.** Värskä orientation club's Peko Holiday Centre is located in the middle of the best orienteering forests. Suitable for people who do not mind staying in the same room with other guests. *Sauna.* +372 525 6695, [peko.ee/klubimaja](http://peko.ee/klubimaja)

**Nedsaja Cabin** / Nedsaja. A farm house without electricity specially renovated to be a guest house. +372 5346 3610

**Hundi farm** / Kolodavitsa. Near the Koidula station, log house. *Sauna.* +372 5664 9957

**Päikeseranna Holiday Centre** / Kõvera. A cosy accommodation place by the Kõver Lake between Värskä and Obinitsa. *Sauna, camping site, swimming place.* +372 506 1141

**Obinitsa Holiday Centre** / Simple accommodation in rooms of various sizes, suitable for organizing camps. *Sauna, camping site, reception hall.* +372 5196 3637, [obinitsapuhkemaja.eu](http://obinitsapuhkemaja.eu)

**Jõeveere Holiday Village** / Lindora. Accommodation in a barn. There is an interesting collection of Seto artifacts (private museum). *Camping site, smoke sauna.* +372 528 0952, [joeveerepuhkekula.weebly.com](http://joeveerepuhkekula.weebly.com)

**Tabina Holiday House** / Accommodation on the shore of Tabina Lake. Offers a chance to go on a boat ride on the lake. *Sauna, swimming place.* +372 509 0143, [tabina.ee](http://tabina.ee)

**Piusa Valley Holiday Center** / Härma. A bigger accommodation centre on the shore of Piusa River. Good also for larger events, including seminars. Trout fishing during the summer. *Camping sites, smoke sauna, Finnish sauna, swimming place.* +372 528 9134, [puhkemaja.ee](http://puhkemaja.ee)



**Kirsi Talo** / Meremäe. Home accommodation set up in a Seto farm, overnight stay at the guest room or in the barn. *Sauna, catering upon reservation.* +372 514 0506, [kirsitalo.com](http://kirsitalo.com)

**Setomaa Tourist Farm** / Kalatsova. A bigger accommodation centre at the foot of Meremäe Hill. Good also for larger events, including seminars. *Camping site, smoke sauna, Finnish Sauna, party hall, swimming place.* +372 516 1941, [setotalu.ee](http://setotalu.ee)





**Grocery stores** are located in Mikitamäe, Väraska, Saatsse and Obinitsa; nearby stores in Räpina, Orava and Vastseliina.

**Pharmacy** is in Väraska, nearby pharmacies in Räpina and Vastseliina.

**ATM (Swedbank)** is located at the Väraska Cultural Centre, cash can also be withdrawn at A&O (Coop) stores.

**Gas station** is in Väraska, nearby gas stations are in Räpina and Vastseliina.

**Postal services** can be found at Väraska Cultural Centre, first floor (tourist information point) and in the stores of Obinitsa and Mikitamäe.

**Trains:** Tartu-Koidula line, during the summer the line is extended to Piusa. [elron.ee](http://elron.ee)

**Tourist information:** Setomaa tourist information online: [visitsetomaa.ee](http://visitsetomaa.ee)

Tourist information point in Väraska Cultural Centre (*Pikk 12, Väraska*), +372 5682 1268

Tourist information points are also in the Obinitsa museum and the Piusa Caves Visitor Centre.



GREETING AND COURTESY PHRASES

*Tereh!* – Hello!

*Hummogust!* – Good morning!

*Õdagust!* – Good evening!

*Hüvvä üüd!* – Good night!

*Hüvvä aigu!* – Bye!

*Aitjumma! Tennä!* – Thank you!

*Olõ' hüä!* – You're welcome!

*Anna' andist! Pallõ andist!* – Sorry!

*Minnu kutstas...* – My name is...

*Ma olõ mõtsik/seto* – I'm an Estonian/Seto

*Ma kõnõlõ kiräkiilt/seto kiilt* – I speak Estonian/Seto

*Kuis lätt?* – How are you?

*Höste lätt* – I'm fine.

EATING AND DRINKING

*hummogusüük* – breakfast

*õdagusüük* – dinner

*Jakku leeväle!* – *Bon Appétit!*

*tsäi* – tea

*taar* – root beer

*pannkuuk, pliin* – pancake

*piirak* – pie

*sahvt* – jam





*ruug* – soup  
*suulliim* – cold soup  
*hämmätüs* – sauce  
*upin* – apple  
*sitiga' või sitka'* – currants  
*kardohka'* – potatoes  
*põrkna'* – carrots  
*kurslak* – garlic  
*ritk* – radish  
*kikkasiin* – chantarelle  
*porovik* – boletus  
*kelt, keldokala* – dried fish (roach)  
*latik* – bream  
*sudak* – pike perch  
*rüäleib* – rye bread  
*vatsk* – bun  
*suul* – salt  
*tsukru* – sugar  
*luits* – spoon  
*väits* – knife

#### OTHER IMPORTANT WORDS

1...10: *üts, kats, kol', nelli, viis, kuus,*  
*säidse, katõsa, ütesä, kümme*

Days of the week: *iispäiv, tõdsõpäiv, kolmapäiv* or  
*kesknätäl, neläpäiv, riide, puulpüha, pühapäiv*

#### MAN AND NATURE

*ker(i)k* – church  
*mastõr, mastõra* – monastery  
*kirmas, kirmask* – a village party held on church holidays  
*pido, praasnik* – party  
*hamõh* – shirt  
*puut* – shop  
*tarõ* – house, also a room  
*moro* – yard  
*sann* – sauna  
*liin* – city  
*massin* – car  
*laiv* – ship  
*pini* – dog  
*susi* – wolf  
*tsirk* – bird  
*petäi* – pine  
*kõiv* – birch  
*lämmi* – warm  
*nilbõ* – slippers  
*päiv* – sun

PHOTOS BY:  
Toomas Tuul  
Kersti Virro  
Harri A. Sundell  
Ahto Raudoja  
Ivo Kruusamägi  
Evelin Urm  
Gabriela Liivamägi  
Vaido Otsar  
Silver Tõnisson