



# Kotka

—National Urban Park—  
Tells the story of the city

The Finnish Candidate for the Landscape  
Award of the Council of Europe 2019

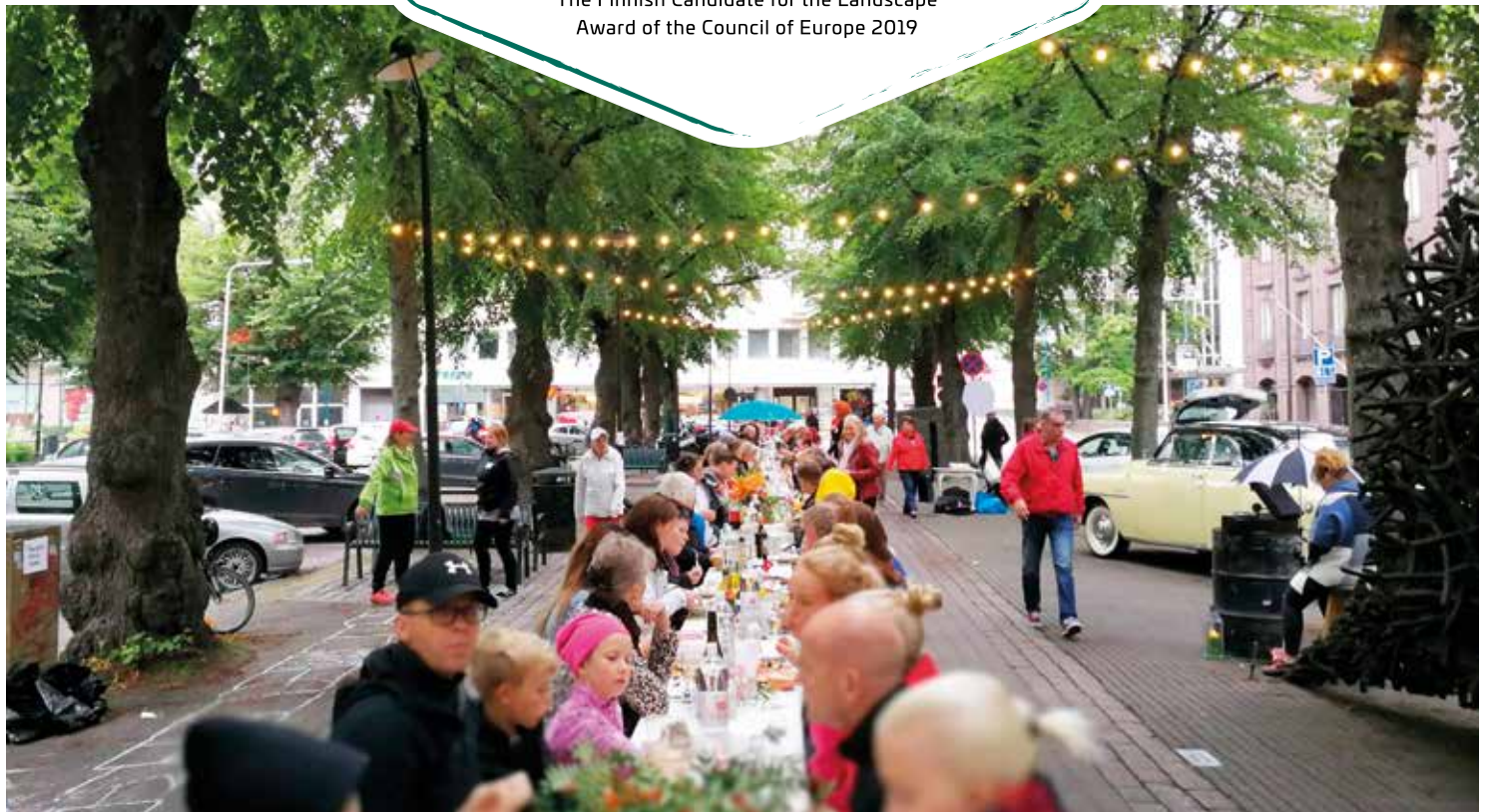




Photo: City of Kotka





# Kotka National Urban Park tells the story of the city

*Kotka National Urban Park is not just a park, it is a combination of nature, park architecture, history and built heritage. It weaves together the best aspects of the urban landscape and brings people together.*

*According to the National Urban Park concept, it begins from the city centre. The National Urban Park is easily accessible and can be used by anyone 24 hours a day and 365 days a year. It is an everyday living room, where people of all ages meet and spend time together.*

*We invite you to enjoy and experience the story of Kotka.*





# Cities must apply for the status

The status of National Urban Parks is specified in the Land Use and Building Act. Cities must apply for the establishment of a National Urban Park and commit to its preservation. The application is prepared in cooperation with residents and those who own land or property in the park area. The Ministry of the Environment makes the decision on establishing a National Urban Park.

The management and use of National Urban Parks is governed by the management and use plan, which the city must draft in cooperation with the regional environmental centre and in interaction with the residents of the municipality.

There are nine National Urban Parks in Finland. In the National Urban Park network, cities and parks compliment and support

each other, and each city has its own special meaning in the shared entity. Member cities of the network tell the local story and the story of Finland through changes in livelihoods, cultural challenges and natural and park environments. National Urban Parks highlight local cultural history and help people understand the roots that affect the present better.

---

**The built heritage is an integral part of the Kotka National Urban Park. Alvar Aalto designed working class residential area which was built for the workers of the Sunila pulp factory between 1930's and 1950's. The residential area is designed to be close to nature, the houses blend in the pine trees and green fields.**

**Photo: Tapio Heikkilä**

# The green heart since 1980's

The National Urban Park in Kotka is a story of a fort and border town born for the utilisation of the fruits of the Baltic Sea and the Kymijoki river, which has later grown to become a versatile port and industrial city thanks to water power and excellent harbours, and then gone on to become a modern city of parks celebrating the diversity of nature.

The Kotka National Urban Park includes sea areas in the eastern part of the Gulf of Finland, parks in the city centre and built quarters as well as shores of the Kymijoki river. It connects the most significant sites in Kotka to make a uniform network, which is easy to take both in terms of time and landscape.

Diverse parks form the core of the Kotka National Urban Park. Kotka has been determined in developing its parks and green

areas since the 1980s, subscribing to the principle of not allowing the industrial and harbour town to look industrial. The adoption of the concept of the National Urban Park into the Land Use and Building Act in 2000 meant that Kotka was given a new opportunity to develop the city's atmosphere. The research aimed at establishing a National Urban Park was started in Kotka in 2004, and the status was granted in 2014.

On the following pages, you can read more about the highlights of the Kotka National Urban Park.

---

**The combined area of the Kotka National Urban Park is approximately 2675 hectares, two thirds of which is sea area. Map: City of Kotka.**









# Sapokka Water Garden

Kotka started its successful journey to becoming a town known for its parks with building the Sapokka Water Garden. When park planning started in the late 1980s, Sapokka was in poor condition; it was a weedy, polluted bay and it had even been at the receiving end of untreated wastewater at some point.

In accordance with the park plan the area was subjected to sizable cleaning efforts before construction could begin. The polluted land was removed and water circulation was ensured.

Water, the dominant element of the Sapokka Water Garden, is highlighted in various ways. The park includes both calm and even pond waters as well as streams bubbling along joyfully. However, the pride of the park is a massive waterfall, which acts as the water circulation and oxidation

system for the entire bay, in addition to being an aesthetically pleasing element.

Seawater is pumped onto waterfall rock to a height of 20 metres from 500 metres out at sea. The beaches of the Sapokanlahti bay were carefully constructed, focusing on Finnish rock and flora.

The Sapokka Water Garden was awarded the national environmental award in 1993, even though the park was not completely finished then. Since then, the park has received many more awards and is one of the best-known tourist attraction parks in Finland.

---

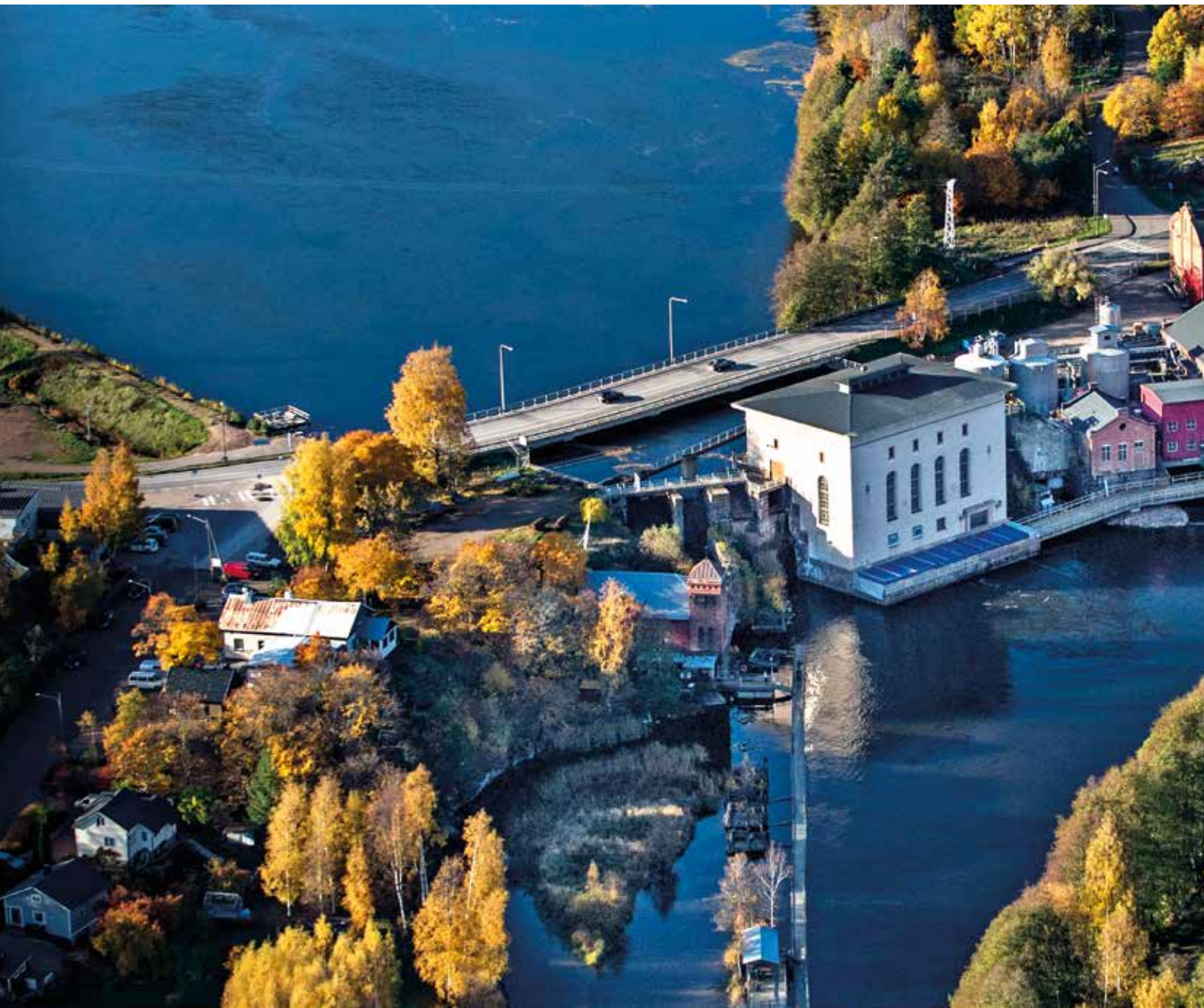
**Sapokka was turned from a polluted bay to a flourishing garden. Photo: City of Kotka**















# Korkeakoski industrial landscape

As Kotka is known as a traditional industrial town, it comes as no surprise that factories and industrial plants form a very prominent section of the landscape of the Kotka National Urban Park.

Korkeakoski bears a significant historical significance as a junction for raw wood provision for the forest industry. A former waterfall and old power plant buildings are located in the area. The Korkeakoski still water is also a popular spot for fishing. Migratory fish are able to swim from the sea to the Korkeakoski power plant dam. A new fish passage was built along the ten-metre tall power plant dam in 2016 for the migratory fish to climb the dam. Maintaining ecological passages are important parts of the developmental principles of the Kotka National Urban Park.

In addition to the power plants and factories, log floating structures, harbours and architecturally interesting working class residential areas in the National Urban Park are also signs of Kotka's past as an industrial town. A paper mill was built in Sunila towards the end of the 1930s. The person hired to design the new residential area in Sunila for the employees and the directors of the factory was Alvar Aalto, who would later become one of the most influential architects in Finland.

---

The history of industry, landscapes and architecture is part of the Kotka National Urban Park. Photo: City of Kotka.



Before



After

# Katariina Seaside Park

Katariinanniemi cape was a popular natural recreational area already in the 1860s. But because a deep natural shipping lane led to the cape, and economic issues were considered more important than environmental aspects in the 1930s, the construction of an oil harbour started on the cape.

At its largest, the oil harbour covered roughly 20 hectares of land, the entire tip of the cape, and the area was fenced in and guarded, meaning that ordinary residents could not enter. Leases with oil companies ended in 2000 and now the area has been returned





back to the use of the residents of Kotka. The cape is dedicated to Katariina Seaside Park, 20 hectares of diverse recreational park land. A few piers, concrete tanks and a huge oil storage cave remain on the cape as a reminder of its past.

The premise of the park design was to restore the cape to its natural state and expose beautiful rock surfaces. Designer was looking for that sea-side roughness, and only a small section of the park has been renovated using traditional landscaping methods. The designer of the park wanted the

view from the cape to remain open, meaning that you should be able to see the horizon from nearly anywhere in the park. The park offers something for people of all ages, and it is popular all year. An increasing number of visitors to the park come from afar, and many people even come from abroad.

---

The objective of establishing a National Urban Park in Kotka encouraged the city to develop Katariinanniemi as a recreational area. Photos: Suomen ilmakuva and Airi Kattelus.

# Underwater landscape

The speciality of the Kotka National Urban Park is that also the underwater landscape, nature and cultural heritage are part of it. Up to 1990 hectares of the Kotka National Urban Park are water areas. The sea area in front of Kotka is a popular diving destination thanks to its diverse nature and exceptionally numerous cultural heritage sites.

Sweden and Russia engaged in sea battles outside Kotka in Svensksund bay in the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The battles left behind a unique cemetery of shipwrecks in the depths of the sea. Visitors may dive to the wrecks, with the exception of the Russian frigate St. Nikolai, which is protected. The Finnish Heritage Agency has included the Svensksund wreck area in the list of significant underwater cultural heritage sites.

Even if you do not have the opportunity to dive into the underwater landscapes, you can learn more about military history and underwater nature on dry land in the Kotka National Urban Park.

---

The Kotka National Urban Park also dives underwater.  
Photo: Juha Lappalainen.









## River landscapes

Nature is an integral part of National Urban Parks. In addition to the built environment, the Kotka National Urban Park contains stretches of wilderness in the form of the rapids of the Kymijoki river, shores and forests. Kymijoki river and the eastern Gulf of Finland are significant in terms of natural and cultural history, and they create the foundation for nationally recognised natural values.

The Kotka National Urban Park has been outlined from the vantage point of water areas, and indeed, one of the best ways to explore the area is from the waterways. The diverse habitats formed by extensive

sections of rapids and the still waters beneath them along with the variable shorelines are characteristic of the lower reaches of the Kymijoki river. The rapids offer excellent canoeing and fishing experiences for residents of Kotka and visitors alike.

The multifaceted blue and green areas connect the city structure with the surrounding nature, and the National Urban Park in Kotka acts as an ecological corridor from one section of the city structure to another, as well as between the national parks and nature reserves in the surrounding area.



## Langinkoski imperial fishing lodge

When Russian Czar Alexander III visited Langinkoski in 1887 with his wife to learn more about the work of fishers, they fell in love with the local nature and said that they wanted a fishing lodge to be built for them at the rapids. Their wish was granted, and the emperor's family would spend their summers in Langinkoski, picking berries and mushrooms from the forest.

Today, the imperial fishing lodge serves as a museum, where you can learn more about the history of the lodge and admire the unique landscape of the rapids, the park-like old forest and the rest of the

surrounding nature. The area around the rapids is a popular recreational area.

Langinkoski is also home to one of the 20 rock columns located around the Kotka National Urban Park. These columns are intended to increase visitors' awareness of National Urban Park and the special values it highlights in the city structure.

---

**Even the Russian emperor Alexander was enchanted by the nature and landscape of the Kymijoki river.**

**Photo: City of Kotka.**





# Koskipuisto Rapids Park

The National Urban Park keeps changing and developing constantly. In the northern parts of the Kotka National Urban Park, along the Kymijoki river, is a forest area that will be known as Rapids Park in the future.

The Rapids Park area will remain mainly wooded in the future as well, but felling trees for the sake of landscape management will be conducted to open up vistas towards the river and its rapids. A small section of Rapids Park will also be built in keeping with more traditional park planning.

First and foremost, the National Urban Park is a tool for urban planning. It can be used to develop the city as a compre-

hensive entity while observing ecological aspects, culture, landscape, functionality and the vitality of the city.

The goal is to make the Kotka National Urban Park an attraction and generate an everyday environment that offers experiences. The National Urban Park should be something that every resident of Kotka is proud of and something that strengthens their bond with their home town.


---

**Wild nature flows freely in the Kotka National Urban Park. The National Urban Park is developed constantly in order to offer enjoyable everyday environment for the citizens. Photo: Juha Kärkkäinen.**









Kotka National Urban Park defines the cultural, historical, ecological and aesthetic values that we want to preserve for future generations in our city.

Kotka National Urban Park is not a nature reserve in the traditional sense, but a living and developing entity. The National Urban Park is filled with experiences from the urban pulse of the city to the calm of the most magnificent nature experiences.

**Kotka National Urban Park brings people together.**



Ympäristöministeriö  
Miljöministeriet  
Ministry of the Environment



Printed in Helsinki, PlusPrint, 2019. Cover photo: Patricia Broas.  
Visual layout: Niina Silvasti, Visual Monkey.

