



Why is water safety important in Finland?

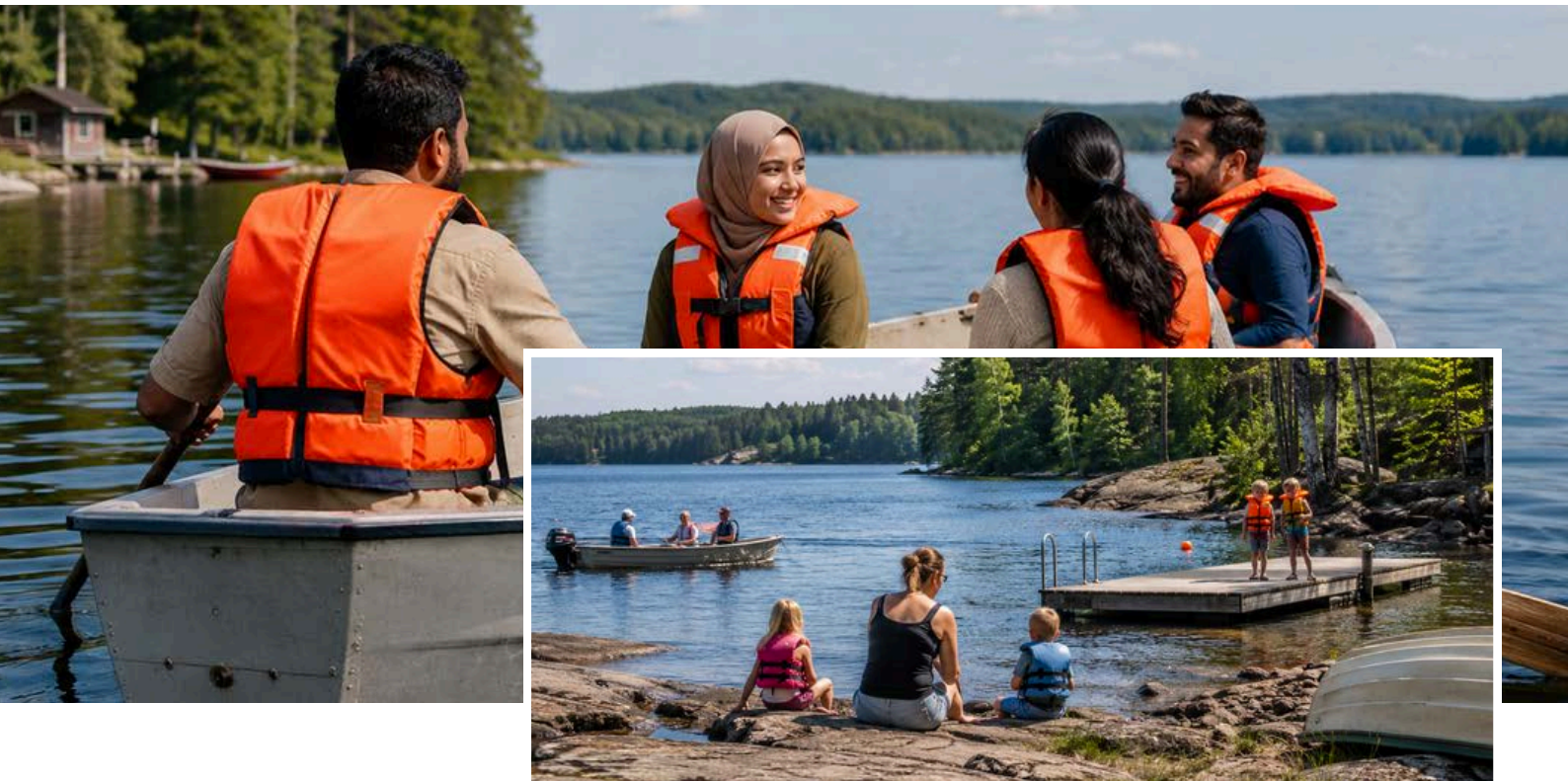


**Suomen Uimaopetus- ja
Hengenpelastusliitto**

Water Safety

Water safety means knowing how to stay safe and act safely near water.

Finland has a lot of water. There are about 188,000 lakes (inland waters) and a long coastline. Altogether, Finland has 313,000 kilometres of shoreline. People can do many different activities near water. That is why it is important to know how to stay safe there.



Many people in Finland live near water

The sea, lakes and rivers are an important part of Finnish lifestyle and culture. That is why everyone who lives in Finland should understand what water safety means.

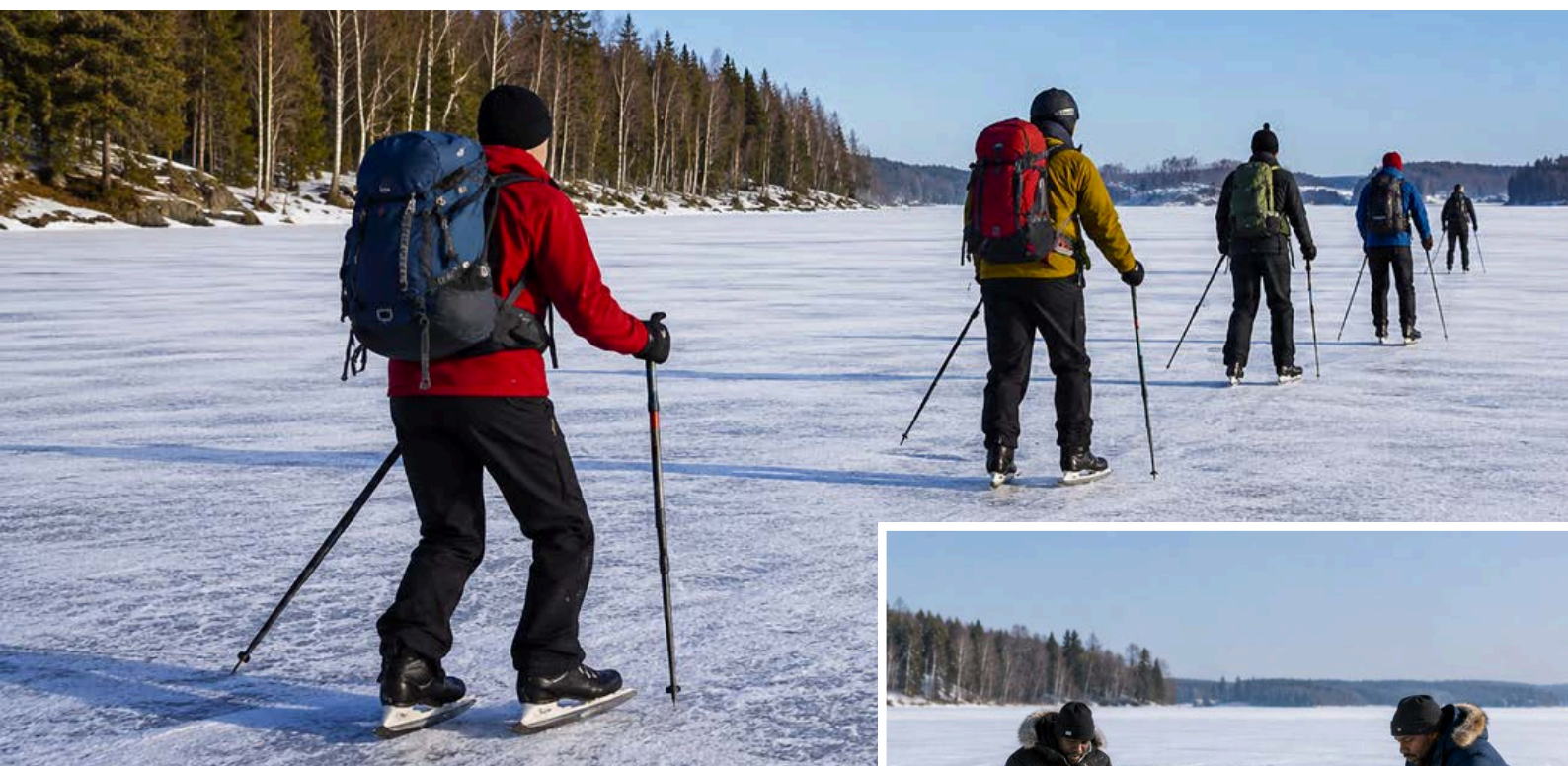
Almost everyone in Finland spends time near water. Finland has many summer cottages, and they are an important part of Finnish lifestyle. Many cottages are located by a lake or the sea.

People in Finland swim and travel by boat a lot. Children often start swimming and taking part in water activities from a young age.

In summer, more people want to spend time near water or go swimming. More people also drown during the summer. It is dangerous to drink alcohol while boating or to travel in a boat without wearing a lifejacket.

In winter, lakes and the sea freeze

Winter in Finland is cold, and many lakes and parts of the sea freeze over. People in Finland walk, ski and skate on the ice. Every year, some people fall through the ice into the water. This happens when the ice breaks. It is important to know when the ice is safe and when it is not safe. It is also important to know what to do if the ice breaks and you fall into the water.



Swimming pools are important in Finland

In Finland, we believe that physical activity is important. Exercise helps people stay healthy and feel better.



Many people in Finland go to swimming pools regularly. There are many different activities you can do at a swimming pool. In Finland, it is very important to learn how to swim. A swimming pool is a good place to learn.

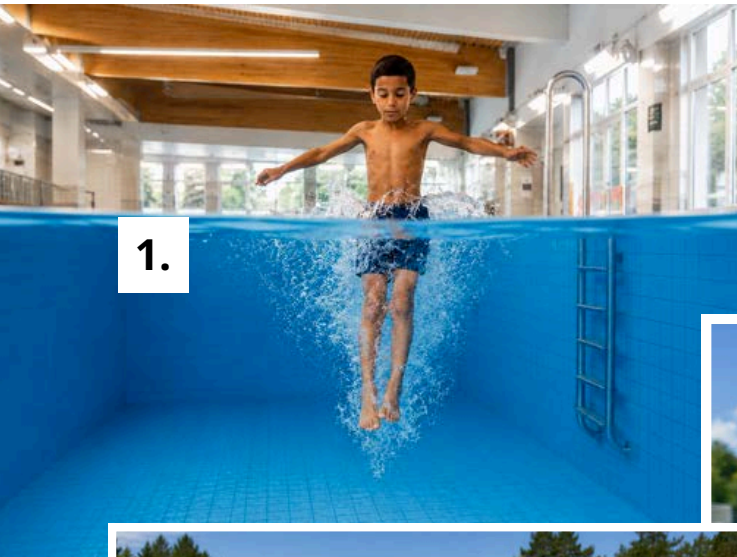
It is important that everyone can use swimming pools. This includes children, adults, older people, women, men, people from Finland, people from other cultures, people with disabilities, and people without disabilities.

You can also learn to swim outdoors in Finland. However, the water is warm only during the summer, and the Finnish summer is short. That is why there are many indoor swimming pools in Finland.

Swimming skills: What does it mean to be able to swim?

A person can swim if they can:

1. jump into water where they cannot touch the bottom with their feet.
2. swim 200 metres without stopping.
3. swim 50 metres on their back.



If you cannot swim, you can learn at a swimming school. You can ask about swimming lessons at a swimming pool or search for them on the internet. There are swimming schools for both children and adults. Many schools take children to a swimming pool for swimming lessons, for example five times. However, children do not usually learn to swim well if they only swim with their school once or twice a year. It is important that children also practise swimming outside school. Many children also attend swimming school. Children must never go to a swimming pool or a beach alone. They should always be with an adult.

If you cannot swim, do not go into water where you cannot touch the bottom with your feet.

If you can swim, you can:

- stay near water more safely.
- get out of the water if you fall in by accident.
- enjoy many different activities in and near the water.

Be careful in natural waters

Swimming in natural waters, such as the sea, a lake or a river, is different from swimming in a swimming pool.

- The water can be cold. Cold water can make it difficult to breathe, and you can become tired quickly.
- There may be rocks or mud on the bottom, and the bottom can be slippery.
- The water can become deep very quickly.
- In a river, the current can be strong. At sea, there may be waves.
- It is often difficult to see underwater, so you may not know what is on the bottom.



Do not dive into a lake, the sea or a river unless you know that the place is safe. It is important to know how deep the water is before you dive. Beaches in Finland can be very different from beaches in warmer countries. Only swim in places that you know are safe. Enter the water carefully. Never swim alone.



An adult must always watch children near water

It is very important that children are never alone near water. A child who is drowning may not shout or call for help. They may be silent. An adult must stay close enough to reach the child quickly and lift them out of the water.



If a child cannot swim, an adult must watch the child all the time. The adult must not talk to other people or look at a mobile phone while watching the child. One adult can safely watch two children. If there are more than two children, there should be more adults.

There may be a lifeguard working at the beach or at the swimming pool. The lifeguard's job is not to watch your children. Their job is to help keep the beach or swimming pool safe for everyone. The lifeguard may remind adults that they must watch their own children.

Parents and other adults are always responsible for the children in their care. If you are having a picnic at the beach with children, always make sure one adult is responsible for watching them. If adults are eating or talking, children can go into the water without anyone noticing.



When you arrive at a beach, read the information board.

It gives you important information about the beach, including any safety instructions and possible hazards.

Lifejacket

A lifejacket is very important. Always wear a lifejacket and make sure children wear one too:

- in a boat
- in a kayak or canoe
- on a personal watercraft (jet ski)



A lifejacket helps keep a person floating on the surface of the water. It also turns the person's face upwards, helping to keep their mouth and nose above the water. It is important to choose the right size lifejacket. The label shows the weight range for the person who should wear it. If the lifejacket is too big or too small, it will not protect you properly and may not be safe.



You can also practise swimming while wearing a lifejacket.

If a child cannot swim, they should wear a lifejacket at the beach or whenever they are near water.

A lifejacket and a buoyancy aid are not the same



Lifejacket

- Turns a person onto their back in the water. This helps if the person is unconscious.
- Keeps the face above the water.
- Suitable for everyone, including children.
- Important for people who cannot swim well.
- Always wear one in a boat.
- Suitable for use in cold water.



Buoyancy aid

- Does not turn a person onto their back.
- Only suitable for people who can swim well.
- Suitable for kayaking, canoeing and stand-up paddleboarding (SUP).
- Suitable for warm water.
- Not suitable for use in a boat.
- Not suitable for children.

Always choose a lifejacket based on the **user's weight**.

The weight range is usually shown on the back of the collar.

For example, the label may say **40–60 kg or 70–90 kg**. This tells you the weight of the person the lifejacket is designed for.

Lifejackets also have a marking such as **50N** or **100N**.

The letter **N** stands for **newtons**. It does not mean the person's weight.

It shows how much buoyancy the lifejacket provides.

A 100N lifejacket provides a high level of buoyancy. It contains a large amount of buoyant material, especially around the chest and upper body.

A 50N buoyancy aid is lighter and more comfortable to wear during activities.

It is suitable for:

- rowing
- kayaking or canoeing
- recreational motor boating
- water sports

A 50N buoyancy aid is a good choice when you are able to swim and the shore or help is nearby.





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