

The Cultural Trail of the Old Ähtäri City Centre

Welcome to the cultural trail of the old Ähtäri city centre which you can tour by foot (with or without poles) or by bike! The trail starts and finishes at Pirkanlinna Culture Centre, and it covers the cultural attractions of Ähtäri city centre. The length of the trail is approximately 5.5 kilometres.

The cultural trail is presented on the map. It is also possible to follow the trail with your mobile phone using the Sports Tracker application. The cultural trail was completed in 2014 as part of a project to promote health and well-being from travel.

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Print the map of the cultural trail with you. There is also maps in a mail box at front of the Pirkanlinna Culture Centre.

1. Pirkanlinna Culture Centre

Designed by architect Saara Juola, the building was completed in 1985. The style of the building represents the 1980s modern architecture of the city centre of Ähtäri.

The main library and reading hall, conservatory and adult education centre are situated in Pirkanlinna. In addition, the building houses a café, youth facilities, dance hall and an auditorium which also functions as a movie theatre. "The Play of the Wind", an outdoor sculpture by local sculptor, professor Eero Hiironen (1938–2018) can be seen in the yard facing Ähtärintie.

2. The Trenches

The trenches in Ähtäri were built in 1916–1917 during the First World War. The trenches were part of the fortification plan of the Russians to defend St. Petersburg. Three trench lines were built on Finnish terrain, and it is told that they are the second largest defence structure in the world after the Great Wall of China.

There are plenty of trenches still in Ähtäri. The ones following the course of the railway can be seen in the terrain from one of the rest stops of the cultural trail located on the hill of the co-educational school. The trenches are protected by the Relics Preservation Law and cannot therefore be destroyed, covered or dug without the permission of the Finland's National Board of Antiquities and Historical Monuments.

3. Pirkanpohja Art Centre

The Pirkanpohja Art Centre consists of the Blue House, the Red House and the Sculpture Park. The collections are built around the works of professor and sculptor Eero Hiironen (1938–2018) as well as high quality European art.

The Blue House was built in 1934 and designed by architect Elsi Borg. Originally the building was to be a parish meeting house but it also functioned as a church in 1935–1937 after the third church in Ähtäri burned down. Eero Hiironen bought the house in the early 1970s as his home and atelier, and since then, it has served as a space for changing exhibitions.

The Red House was designed by architect Kimmo Levanto. It was commissioned as an art centre by the city of Ähtäri in 1995.

Further information

www.ahtari.fi/pirkanpohja.fi

4. Ähtäri Railway Station

The railway line of Ostrobothnia was completed in 1883 and the same year, the first train arrived steaming in Ähtäri with passengers on board.

The stations of Myllymäki and Inha were built first and opened for traffic straight away. The station at Ähtäri was preceded by a railway point or traffic junction called Alhbergin vekseli in 1886 which was located approximately half a kilometre further north from the current station. The Ähtäri railway station was completed in 1896, though it was called Ostola until 1925. The name of the Inha station was also initially Etseri.

The colour scheme of the Ähtäri station differs from other stations on the railway line. It is similar to the colours of the railway line of Oulu: light-coloured but with darker frames and corners.

5. The Veteran Houses of Puistotie ("Baton alley")

These single-family wooden houses, which are typical of the era of reconstruction after the Second World War (1939–1945), have been given their own road. The housing type is called comrades-in-arms or veteran houses. There were many sizes of the house plans of the agricultural bureau.

Chauffeurs, caretakers, carpenters and policemen were given their own plots in Ähtäri. Two policemen lived as neighbours – hence the nickname. One of them was also aptly named Kyttä, "cop". The local jail was in the outbuilding opposite Kyttä's house. The main house has burned down but the outbuilding is still standing.

6. The Winter War Memorial

The old Shelter House stood on the opposite side of the Itä-Ähtärintie regarding the monument, along the Suojankuja- road, that today has white terrace houses. People from Ähtäri and also from neighbouring towns Soini and Lehtimäki who were leaving for the Winter War (1939–1940) would gather at the Shelter House. The monument was put up by the war veterans of Ähtäri in 1991.

THE CHURCH ROAD

The Ähtäri city centre was originally near the church on Hankolanmäki so that Alkulantie acted as the main road. The buildings along the church road, which date back to the end of the 1800s and early 1900s, bring to mind the old centre: Ollinkulma, Alkula, Tötterman, Mimmilä, Kuntala, and the pharmacy. The houses are privately owned.

The church district is one of the six local sites in Ähtäri to be classified nationally as an area of significant built cultural heritage.

7. Ollinkulma

The building is from 1865 but it was moved into its current location from Markunniemi on the shore of Ouluvesi in the year 1913 to provide lodgings for the town doctor. Ollinkulma was a day care centre for twenty years from the end of the 1980s until 2008. The building is privately owned.

8. Alkula

The Building originates from the turn of the twentieth century. The name Alkula dates back to 1916–1948 when the house was a Savings Bank. The bank manager was Kaarlo Alkula who was also noted for being the city manager. With the help of bank teller Juho Aatto Mäkinen's cultural history hobby, the community stayed up to date. His command of seven languages and his work as a translator into Finnish provided the citizens of Ähtäri with all the new ideas in the world.

Before the bank, the building housed a branch of a pharmacy in Alavus called "Roos' Pharmacy", and later the city post office.

9. The Tötterman House

The house was built in the 1920s as the home of sea captain Fredrik Nikolai Tötterman. Tötterman was one of the shareholders of Ähtärin Sähkö Oy, a local electric company. Following Tötterman, shoe seller Sirola lived in the house. Later there has been an ice fishing jig company, a flower and a fabric shop as well as a massage practice. The building has been extended in the 1990s.

10. Mimmilä

Mimmilä, too, was commissioned by F. N. Tötterman, most likely during 1914–1915. The house functioned as Finland's first countryside branch of Helsinki Investment Bank, called Waasa Investment Bank. It is told that after the church fire in Ähtäri in 1935, the altarpiece was stored in the bank's vault.

In addition, there has been an elementary school, and in the 1960s, the house functioned as a hall of residency for girls in vocational school. The house is named after the second wife of Tötterman, Mimmi.

11. Kuntala

Built in the 1870s from the timber of the old parsonage, Kuntala served as a township house, holding town meetings. There was also space for the library and a shop, and in wartime, many people visited the house as it served as a nation's welfare services site. At one time, Kuntala also housed a child health clinic as well as a maternity clinic. Both Kuntala and Mimmilä are owned by the city of Ähtäri, and they have been in rental use last years.

12. The Apothecary's House

The apothecary Alexis Wichman built the old pharmacy buildings into a combination of a pharmacy and his private home during 1912–1914. During the First World War, this location had a telegraph connection to St. Petersburg. After the new pharmacy was completed in Ähtäri, this house became the tax office. They used to wash the pharmacy's

bottles in the building in the yard which later housed a flower shop. Today the building is privately owned.

13. The Little Old Cemetery and the Old Sacristy

Since the mid-1600s, at least five thousand deceased have been buried at the old cemetery. The memorial for those who died in the Liberation War was possibly designed by sculptor Viktor Jansson and is located in the Little Old Graveyard. The first church of Ähtäri (sermon house) from 1657 and the second church, built between 1753 and 1756, were located at this same place. The sacristy of Ähtäri's second church was moved to its current place at the end of the stone fence to make way for the memorial.

14. The Granary

Completed in 1859, the granary was used to store grain from better crop years to be used as seed corn as well as for eating during poorer years. The Ähtäri granary was put to good use during the great famine years of 1866–1868.

The granary walls were built doubly thick, and there is a gap of 60 centimetres to prevent theft. The grain sacks were lifted into the granary through the hatch above the door with the help of a pulley block. Upstairs the grain was poured into barley and rye cribs. The builder of the granary is Herman Rämälä.

15. The Church Boats

Of the many church boats in Ähtäri, these two placed under the shelter are the only ones left: the Mytkäniemi boat which was used at Ähtärijärvi, and the Pusaa boat which was used at Ouluvesi. Their routes are marked in the map on the wall. The church boats are owned by each faction of houses in the area. There had to be a boat for each lake on the route since the neck of lands separating the lakes had to be crossed by foot.

16. The Chapel

The cemetery chapel, which was completed in 1963, is designed by architect Touko Saari. The chapel can only be used in the summer for small funerals due to its size. It also has no heating. There are refrigerated storage facilities for preserving the deceased under the chapel.

17. The Church and the Cemetery

The present church of Ähtäri is the fourth in order and it was completed in 1937, built on the same site as the church that burned two years prior. The church was designed by architect Bertel Liljeqvist.

The Ähtäri City Parish began operations as Ruovesi Chapel in 1651, and it gained autonomy in 1859. The first chapel in Ähtäri dated back to 1657 and it was pulled down due to its poor condition.

The second church, probably designed by Henrik Kattil from Vöyri, was from the year 1756 but it soon became too confined a space as the population rose. The third church was designed by C. E. Gustavson and the master builder was Jaakko Kuorikoski from Kaustinen. The third church burned down after being hit by lightning in 1935. Construction of this church started in 1846 and the church inaugurated two years later.

18. The Soldier's Graves

The 278 soldiers from Ähtäri who died in the Winter War (1939–1940), the Continuation War (1941–1944) and the Lapland War are buried here. Correction: there is 260 soldiers buried here and 18 buried to other graves. The monument was designed by Ilmari Wirkkala.

One of the monuments of the Finnish Civil War (1918) is located in the Little Old Cemetery, where the soldiers of the Liberation War are buried. The other, memorial for those who died for their conviction is designed by Ilmari Heinonen. It is located in the cemetery area behind the church.

There is also a memorial for those who never returned from the battlefields in Karelia and a memorial for loved ones buried elsewhere in front of which relatives leave candles during the holidays. The memorial stone for the third church of Ähtäri is located near to the current church.

19. Ähtäri Historic House Museum

The Historic House Museum, supported by the Ähtäri Society, is located in the town of Hankavesi, in a house that was separated from the main house of Hankola in 1800. What is now the main building of the museum was most likely built in the late 18th century. Members of the Collin family have lived here as well as two parish chaplains. The building has been in residential use but at one point, it also served as a telephone exchange (1933–1952).

In 1959, the house was taken over by the Ähtäri Society, and the museum began operating a year later. In addition to the original main building and stable, there are buildings in the area that have been relocated from other parts of Ähtäri and neighbouring areas. The latest addition to the museum grounds is a smithy from Moksu. The Historic House Museum is open during summer, other times by request.