

DESTINATIONS

EUROPE | FINLAND



OULU SIGHTS

As European Capital of Culture 2026, this city in central Finland is worth a visit, finds **Eddi Fiegel**



MARKET SQUARE

Much of the action in this laid-back but grand Finnish port city – which is an hour and a half south of the border with Sweden – happens at harbourside Torinranta Square, overlooking the Baltic Sea. Alongside traditional Finnish taverns, lively bars set in former warehouses and an art nouveau indoor market hall (stocked with souvenirs, handicrafts and merchants selling salmon soup), clients can spot a concrete brutalist theatre just across the bridge, a major venue for events during Oulu2026. While they're there, they should look out for 'Toripolliisi' – a six-foot-tall bronze statue of a rotund policeman that has become the emblem of the city.

PIKISAARI ISLAND

The historic, bohemian Pikisaari Island might be just one of a string of forested islands connected to Oulu's mainland by bridges, but it's among the most scenic. Many of the island's 18th-century wooden houses and 19th-century warehouses have been reinvented as artists' studios, galleries and hip restaurants and bars. Clients can get a breath of fresh air on the outdoor art and sculpture trail or look out for Oulu's oldest wooden building, built in 1739 and now a base for the free-to-enter Sailor's Home Museum.



NALLIKARI BEACH

You're never too far from a beach in Oulu, and wide, family-friendly Nallikari is a favourite with locals. It's a 15-minute bike ride from Oulu and in summer, a land train links the shore and city centre. There's no shortage of things to do, from beach volleyball to children's play areas. Otherwise, just watch the sun set over a drink or dinner at beachfront Restaurant Nallikari. Visit in winter and clients might even catch the northern lights.

KOITELI RAPIDS

Nature lovers, rejoice; Oulu lies on the edge of some of Finland's most spectacular scenery, not least the superb Koiteli Rapids, which are only half an hour by car from the city centre. Surrounded by forests dense with pines, aspens and spruce trees, the rapids rush their way around four islands linked by wooden suspension bridges. If clients are feeling active, there's kayaking, rafting or white-water swimming. Alternatively, they can take a deep breath and soak up the pine-filled air on woodland walking trails.



HUPISAARET ISLANDS

Oulu's largest city park, Ainola, sprawls across several small islands dotted around the River Oulu estuary. It's fabulously wild in parts and smartly landscaped in others, with footpaths over rippling brooks and an amphitheatre for concerts in the summer. Oulu's Art Museum is on the edge of the park and regularly hosts contemporary art exhibitions.

Book it: Regent Holidays offers a four-day break in Oulu from £975 per person in May, based on two sharing. The price includes flights from Heathrow via Helsinki and three nights' B&B at the Original Sokos Hotel Arina. regent-holidays.co.uk



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