

Mulgimaa

The famous wealth of Mulgimaa was based on flax cultivation which became more popular in the beginning of the 19th century. People in the Mulgi area of southern Viljandi County were the first Estonian farmers who bought their farms from the manor lords after the abolition of serfdom. Each parish of Mulgimaa now boasts a grand wooden sculpture greeting visitors.

1. Just after leaving the town, you can tackle the „**Green Rails**“ either on foot or on a bike – it is a hiking trail along the old narrow-gauge railway embankment. Trails with varying length welcome you to explore the routes to Kivi Farm, Loodi railway station and from there to Öisu, Halliste, Abja-Paluoja and all the way to Mõisaküla.
www.greenrailways.eu
2. **Heimtali Community Museum** in the old village school shows examples of ethnic handicraft collected at the initiative of textile artist Anu Raud, see old household items and see what a century-old classroom looked like.
www.erm.ee/et/content/heimtali-muuseum | Tel +372 439 8126
3. **Heimtali manor complex** is located on the edge of Raudna primeval valley. The manor complex from the 19th century consists of the classicist main building, the steward's house and **circular stables** now converted into a sports hall. Heimtali Park was established in the latter half of the 19th century by the von Sievers family. The forest park is a broadleaf wooded area with numerous springs on the slope of a deep gulch.
heimtali.vil.ee/mois/ | Tel +372 435 1098
An auxiliary building of the manor now houses the **Heimtali Creative Workshop** where visitors can try out making clay ceramics.
Tel +372 5665 3819
4. **Heimtali Distillery**, later also the manor's creamery, is attractive for its beautiful natural surroundings and four corner towers – ventilation chimneys. Next to the distillery, you find the Heimtali study trail presenting the most common deciduous trees in Estonia. The study trail consists of two routes with different length.



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5. The northern part of the Loodi Nature Park is in Viljandi primeval valley which is claimed to be the oldest primeval valley of the Sakala region. There was an Estonian fort at **Sinialliku Hillfort**, built in the 12th-13th century. The spring water has a bluish tinge due to blue-grey sediments in the bottom. The spring **Siniallikas** (Blue Spring) is a well-known sacrificial spring with allegedly healing water. Sinialliku hiking trail leads to the spring. You can reach the trail either from the old Sinialliku railway

station or from its other end at Karksi-Nuia – Viljandi road. If you choose the latter alternative, you will first reach a large campfire site with enough camping space for a larger group.

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6. On the ground floor of the house with the cheerful blue roof is **Mulgi Clay Workshop**. Here you can experience the fun of crafting with clay and buy beautiful things!

www.mulgisavikoda.ee | Tel +372 5661 6526

7. **The beautiful garden of Risttee Farm** is open for visitors by prior arrangement.

www.ristteetalu.eu | Tel +372 5566 1092

8. **Loodi-Püstmäe** has one of the in Estonia oldest (planted in 1820) and largest **European larch stands**. Some trees are up to 42 metres high.

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At Püstmäe Farm in Loodi village, you can visit the **Fairytale Farm** where the hostess tells fantastical and instructive stories.

www.piretpaar.com/jutumaja | Tel +372 51 40 242

9. The old **Loodi Manor** now houses a workshop for those interested in ethnic woodcarving. In an auxiliary building is **the World's Loneliest Lamp Shop** that sells or exhibits lamps in various shapes made from a single piece of wood, made by a local master craftsman.

www.paikeseppu.ee | Tel +372 58 191 202

10. The beautiful surroundings of **Loodi Reservoir** behind the manor is perfect for recreation, not only for local people but also for visitors. Beside the recreation area begins a **hiking trail** to the picturesque Paistu primeval valley with numerous outcrops. The largest is called **Loodi Hell** where a spring flows from a cave in its lower part. The 'Hell' can also be reached from the road to Paistu. Signs lead the visitor to the parking lot; the distance from there to the outcrop is just about twenty metres.

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11. **Paistu Virgin Mary Church**. The earliest references to Paistu Church date from 1329, the time of a Lithuanian plundering. The stone church, probably built in the end of the 13th century, had no tower. The archaic eight-part ribbed vault of the chancel is preserved; its painting imitating a starry sky was completed in 1903. A tower was built in 1862-66. Legend has it that the place got its name from the tower that could be seen

from afar (paistma – to be visible). In the current centre of Paistu, you can see a big wooden sculpture – „**Sitting Mulgi Man**“

- 12. Holstre–Polli Leisure Centre** has skiing, hiking, orienteering and mountain biking trails with various length and complexity that are tended year-round. There are grilling sites and covered sitting areas for relaxing and picnics.

www.holstrepolli.ee | Tel +372 436 7829



- 13. General Johann Laidoner's birthplace**, with a monument and an avenue, is located on the other side of Lake Viljandi, by the ring road of the town.


- 14.** Before Mustla, approx. 20,5 km from Viljandi, a sign directs to the left to **Lusika Farm** which has even received an award from the Estonian president for its beauty. Walking trails and ritual sites are open for visitors by prior arrangement.

lusikatalu.pri.ee | Tel +372 505 2697

- 15.** An Estonian flag is now flying at a height of 28 metres from the tip of the chimney of the one-time Mustla Dairy, presently **Mulgi Majakas**, which is the third tallest Estonian flag flying in Estonia, behind only Pikk Herman and the observation tower on Suur Munamägi. Located in the middle of the settlement is a fun **fountain in the shape of Lake Võrtsjärv**.

- 16.** One of the most important sights in **Tarvastu** is undoubtedly **St. Peter's Church**. The older parts of the current church probably date from the 14th century. The old church consisted of a square nave and a chancel; alcoves typical of medieval altars are visible in the east wall of the chancel and in the northeast corner of the nave. After suffering damage in wars, the church was reconstructed in 1771 under the direction of master builder Johann Christoph Knaut. The church caught fire after a lightning strike in 1892; reconstruction begun in 1893 and the restored church was consecrated in December the same year. The designer and builder was Gustav Heinrich Beermann, a schoolteacher from Põltsamaa. The altar painting "Calvary" – Theodor Thieme, 1859. The organ – August Terkmann. Across the road from the church, by Tarvastu Reservoir, you can see the wooden sculpture group „Happy Mulgi Family“.

Tarvastu Manor was in its day well known for producing spirits that was even transported to Riga with horse-drawn wagons in winter. The main building of the manor has been destroyed, the old auxiliary buildings, meanwhile, are among the largest in Estonia. The sizable granary, completed in 1842, is best preserved; it was used to store both grain and vodka and the roof is still adorned with a lopsided weather vane with the



Baron's initials and the year 1842. When the manor was divided after 1920, the last manor lord Karl von Mensenkampff allegedly received a farm plot right in the manor centre and continued to live in Tarvastu up to the beginning of the war. **Tarvastu Forest Park** includes **the ruins of the local Ordensburg** and the **burial chapel** of the Mensenkampff family. The famous Tarvastu Hanging Bridge, allegedly used by the lady of the manor to get to the family tomb more easily, was gifted to Viljandi town by the manor owner in 1931.

17. After passing Mustla, it would be a good idea to stop by in Suislepa. **Uue-Suislepa Manor** was established after Tsar Paul I of Russia divided the state estate in Suislepa into two parts. The larger part was granted to Count Ernst Reinhold Mengeden, a favourite of the Tsar's, and later went to Karl Gustav von Krüdener. The beginning of the 19th century was the high point for construction of the manor centre. The fruit garden of the manor became famous for the apple variety 'Suislepp'. A memorial stone marks the place where the original tree of the variety once grew. The main building now functions as a school. Urka memorial stone, commemorating the Great Famine in Suislepa in 1695-1697, is located near the school.

www.suislepa.ee | Tel +372 525 4160

18. Now you should turn to the right from the main road, towards Kärstna. Kärstna, formerly a part of Helme Manor, became a separate estate in 1678. The main building is not dated but it probably dates from the mid-18th century, judging from its style. The current appearance of the **Kärstna manor centre** originates from the beginning of the 20th century. An oak avenue begins on the western side in front of the main building, leading to one of the finest classicist works of art in Estonia – the **memorial of General Reinhold von Anrep** on Kärstna Chapel Hill – a cast-iron lion on a huge rock, its maned head resting on its paws (sculpted by the German sculptor Christian Daniel Rauch). It was commissioned in 1844 by Lieutenant General Joseph von Anrep in memory of his father, a lieutenant general in the Battle of Austerlitz who had died in action in 1807.


Tel +372 526 2901

Some details to consider when travelling to Karksi –

19. The Karksi manor centre is not located immediately near the Karksi Castle but a couple of kilometres away, in Karksi. The sights include a park with ponds and some auxiliary buildings, the finest of which is a granary with a classicist profiled facade. The substantial L-shaped steward's house is also preserved.

- 20. Karksi Castle Hill** is located in the most picturesque part of the area. It is assumed that there was an Estonian fortress on the steep-sloped, naturally well-protected hill, predating the crusaders' invasion. The first German stronghold, probably a timber-built one, was burned down by Lithuanians in 1298. Construction of a stone fortress probably wasn't started until the beginning of the next century. The baroque **St. Peter's Church** was built in the ruins in the 1770s, partially using the foundation of the fortress. Due to the weak ground, the church tower now leans over one metre to the west. After the Great Northern War, Empress Elizaveta Petrovna of Russia gave the free use of Karksi Manor to one of her generals, Georg Reinhold Lieven. The **burial chapel of Field Marshal Lieven**, built in 1730, is located to the north of the church.
- 21. Murri House** is an architecturally unique Southern Estonian two-story farmhouse which can be regarded as an example of the rural culture of the first decades of the Estonian independence period. The first owner of the farm was Jaan Puskar who acquired the house and the land in 1900. Unfortunately, the farm could not be successfully managed and was foreclosed by Sakala Bank in 1925. After the war, the buildings were used by Kurvitsa Horticultural Sovkhoz and Õisu Sovkhoz. The buildings and the ornamental garden are now restored.
Tel +372 56 958 776
- 22. The Oti apple tree** is the oldest and thickest wild apple tree in Estonia with its 488 cm diameter and 11 m height. Despite storm related damage suffered in 2019, the tree is still alive.
- 23. Polli Manor** was initially a pastoral manor belonging to Karksi Manor. It became an independent estate in the late 1720s. As a well-managed manor, it was particularly suitable as an agricultural study facility after the Land Reform; it became an agricultural school focusing on horticulture in 1920. The horticultural school has now developed into Polli Horticultural Research Centre but it no longer uses the manor buildings. The old manor buildings are currently being restored by the new owner.
- 24.** On the edge of the primeval valley on the outskirts of **Karksi-Nuia**, local-born playwright and writer **August Kitzberg** sits cast in bronze (monument by Jaak Soans). In front of the Culture Centre in the town centre, you can see the **wooden sculpture "Dancing Mulgi Couple"**. The 6 km long Sokaoru ski and walking trail is located to the right just before you enter the town.

Enno Allik's study and gallery is located in Karksi-Nuia, Uus St. 13. Visitors may view the exhibition and meet the artist by prior arrangement.
Tel +372 566 31522



25. Driving from Karksi-Nuia to Kõvaküla you will find the small **craft brewery Mulgi Pruulikoda**, where the local master brewer is trying to keep local beer brewing traditions alive. Stop by and maybe you will be lucky enough to taste the local handcrafted beer or even buy some to take with you.

www.mulgipruul.ee | Tel +372 502 9516

26. Heading from Karksi-Nuia to Lilli, you will find the **Lilli Nature House** in the former Polli Forest District building. The buildings date from 1865 when the owner of Polli Manor had a house built for his chief forester at the pastoral manor at Lilli. An information board shows the way to the study trail from the Nature House. The hiking trail leads along old avenues to the forest and a beautiful rowan grove. You can see the rare *Lobaria* lichen and listen to the silence of the forest. One branch of the trail leads the hiker to Virapuu Boulder, a bread-shaped glacial erratic.

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27. **Teringi study trail** begins 1,5 km from Lilli village and provides an overview of the Teringi Landscape Reserve – mosaic-like wetlands. The trail is equipped with information boards.

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28. **The monument of the 20th anniversary of the Baltic Way** was unveiled at Lilli-Ungurini border station in 2009. The monument, actually located in Latvia, depicts seven life-sized human figures cut out of a metal wall, standing in a row and holding hands. Every visitor can stand in the place of a figure and feel as if participating in the Baltic Way. On the 50th anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact on August 23, 1989, nearly two million people joined their hands in a 600-kilometre-long human chain between Tallinn and Vilnius as a peaceful protest against the Soviet occupation in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania that resulted from the pact. The Baltic Way is included in UNESCO's Memory of the World register.

29. When you continue your journey from Karksi-Nuia towards Abja, the **Room-Museum of August Kitzberg** is located on the right-hand side after 3 km. The classic figure of Estonian literature worked as a municipal and court clerk. Here he got inspiration for his works (of which the play "Werewolf" is the best known). The museum provides a thorough overview of the Kitzberg family and August Kitzberg's works, you can also book a guided tour to the landscape of his inspiration.

www.mellini.ee | Tel +372 433 1116

30. A couple of kilometres further, on the other side of the road, you can see the **Lopa outcrop** – the longest cave system in Estonia. In order to find the outcrop, you'll need to locate the meadow of Lopa farm: turn to the left at Atika bus stop and then turn left again at the farm.
31. **Abja Manor** was established in the latter half of the 16th century. The main building is in classicist style and dates back to the first quarter of the 19th century. There is a preserved original cobblestone road and the main house is surrounded by a park. The manor centre is currently privately owned.
32. **Õisu Manor** was established at the turn of the 19th century. The manor house in the early classicist style is imposing with its wide, high entrance stairs with white marble sculptures. The manor complex includes various auxiliary buildings; one of the most interesting is the so-called curved stables.
Tel +372 562 40167

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The English-style park behind the main building boasts with its rich variety of species. A **hiking trail** runs next to the manor, in Õisu Landscape Reserve. The trail leads you along the 20-metre slopes of the picturesque Vidva creek with its several 8-14-metre-high red and yellow sandstone outcrops. Old oak, ash and maple trees from the days of the manor stand on the upper part of the valley slopes. The stairs, bridges and platforms of the hiking trail are recently renovated.
Tel +372 5118 697

33. **Halliste** has a nostalgic cafeteria worth visiting and having a meal when you are passing through. **St. Anne's Church** has been renovated with local initiative and effort. The original building was probably built during the latter half of the 15th century. Today, it is one of the finest and most modern churches, not least because of the altar painting by Jüri Arrak. The hiking trail leads you along the old road between Halliste Church and Abja Manor.
34. **Kulla Confirmation House**. The building from 1902 fulfilled its original function up to the establishment of the Republic of Estonia and was later used as a school house. After long, painstaking restoration, it can now be called one of the most beautiful village hall and rural library in Estonia. The simple luxury actually originates from farmers of Mulgimaa around the turn of the 20th century. Farmers used to imitate the style of the manor lords in their homes. Their lifestyle inspired the furnishings, clothes, food, manners and other aspects of the farmers' private life.
Tel +372 436 3175



35. Abja-Paluoja, the capital of the cultural-historic Mulgi area, is located by the picturesque Halliste primeval valley. The visitors are greeted by the **wooden sculpture „Mulgi Man”**. The settlement developed into a small borough of craftsmen and merchants during the 1890s and the development was fast due to the new railway. The sights include the former bank building – now the local post office – and the neoclassicist culture centre. The beautiful Abja Reservoir is within comfortable walking distance from the centre. Approx. 2 km from Abja towards Pärnu you can see the buildings of the former Abja linen factory.

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36. Mulgi Museum is located in the craftsmen's house of the former Uue-Kariste Manor and describes the daily life of the rural people of Uue-Kariste municipality through objects, photos and memories. Payment for the entrance to the museum is donation-based.

www.facebook.com/mulgikylamuuseum | Tel +372 520 4205

37. When you continue your drive towards Mõisaküla, you can see a sign pointing to the left at Laatre intersection at the 7th kilometre – to **Hendrikhansu outcrop**. After driving 5 km towards Vana-Kariste, another sign directs to the right and after approx. 500 m you will arrive at Hendrikhansu sand outcrop. The total length of the outcrop is 67 m and the height is 6,9 m. Signatures from 1800 have been found on the wall of the outcrop, reminding of sand-carved works of art with their calligraphic characters. The legend has it that the Old Nick himself used to live here and cause trouble.

38. Mõisaküla developed after the building of narrow-gauge railway between Pärnu and Valga in 1895. The town museum provides an overview of the development of the small town. **Mõisaküla Museum** has a permanent exhibition about the history of Mõisaküla from its birth, the local educational and cultural life and sports activities. As the birth and development of Mõisaküla are so closely related to the railway, a large part of the museum exhibits are railway-related. Among the most valuable items at the museum are the Olympic medals of the Mõisaküla-born Olympic athlete, the heavyweight lifter Arnold Luhaäär. Tel +372 435 5607

The sights include **Maarja-Magdaleena Church** and the **wooden sculpture „Mulgi Children”**.

