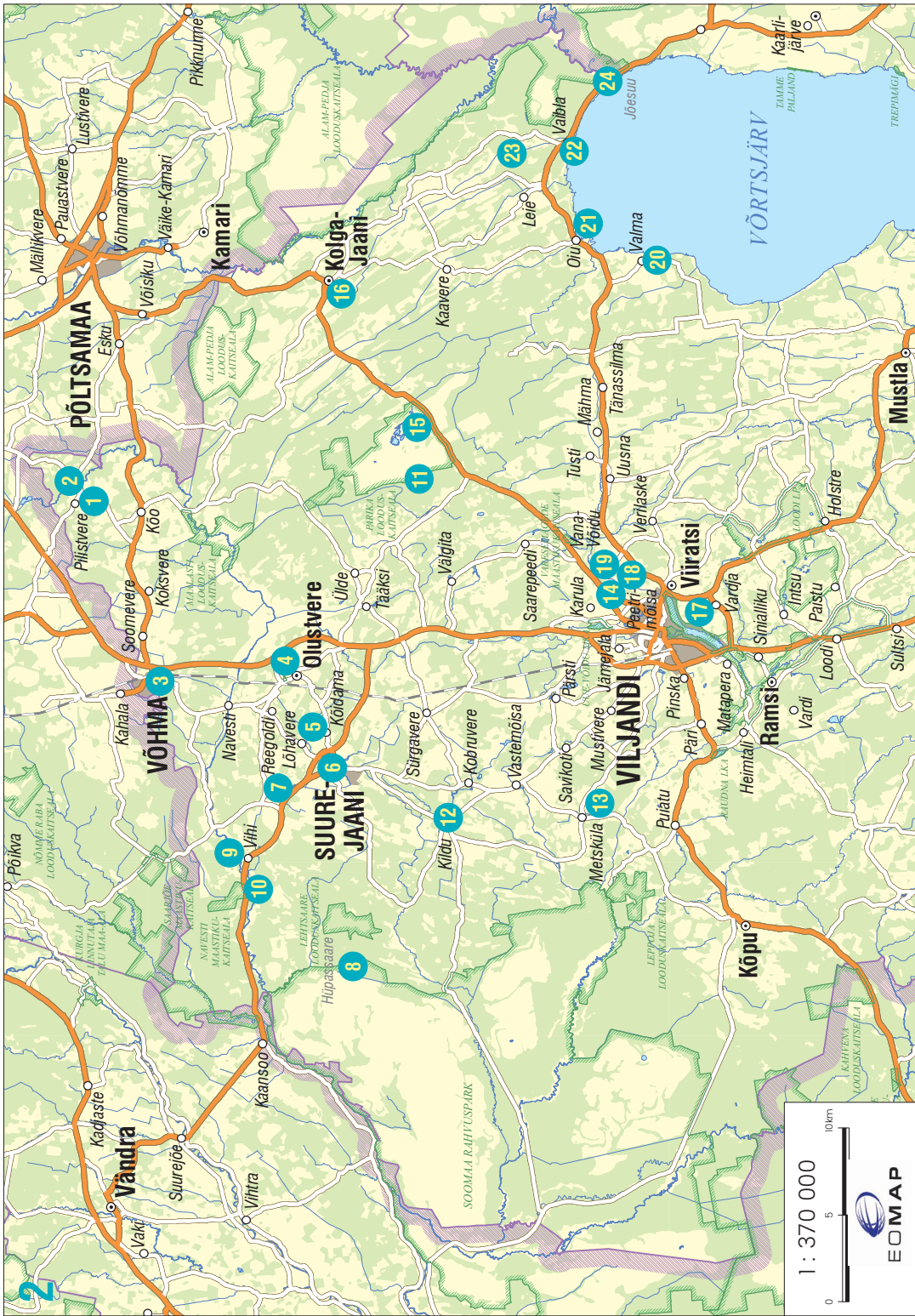



# Sakalamaa

The Sakala region was the home of the first Estonian that history knows by name – Lembitu, chief of Sakala.



1. On the northern border of the county lies the small Pilistvere village. The place is allegedly special for its good energy vibes. One of the local sights is **Pilistvere Church**, the rural church with the highest tower in Estonia. Its pulpit with its various ornaments is also worth seeing. The graveyard by the church is the burial place of Jüri Wilms, a statesman from the first years of the Republic of Estonia.
2. **Pilistvere Memorial** is located approx. one kilometre further away. It is a grave-shaped stone pile with a cross at one end. Estonians carry stones to the pile in memory of their family members deported to Siberia.
3. If you choose to pass through Võhma, you could visit the local candle factory to arrange a short tour and to cast a lucky candle for yourself.  
[www.valgusevabrik.ee](http://www.valgusevabrik.ee) | Tel +372 43 77075
4. A sign directs to Olustvere from the Viljandi-Tallinn road. Turning to the indicated direction, you will arrive at a beautiful, long avenue with the total length of approx. 16 km. **Olustvere manor complex** is located 3 km from the main road; it was built in the beginning of the 20th century and is one of the best examples of the Heimatschutz architecture in Estonia. The manor was the summer residence of the Fersen family who were originally from northern Germany. The manor complex now functions as the Olustvere Tourism Centre. Here you can book a guide for a tour in the renovated auxiliary buildings with a collection of taxidermied birds and an exhibition of miniature wooden horses. You can learn about the history of the local distillery in the distillery building which also houses a glass workshop and a ceramic workshop. The complex also includes a handicraft house, a smithy and a patchwork workshop; the main building houses an exhibition of antique furniture. You can try out bread-baking with an instructor at the bakery building; an exhibition in the building shows how the land was worked back in the manor days, up to actual bread-baking. The manor buildings are surrounded by a beautiful, spacious park. The oldest tree in the park is a 300-year-old forked oak tree. The tree is known as the Love Oak and people still tell interesting legends about it. The manor offers riding opportunities by prior arrangement.  
[www.olustveremois.ee](http://www.olustveremois.ee) | Tel+372 437 4280  
The **Orion Observatory** is located near the Manor and is open for everyone to explore with an advance notice. Those who are interested can see and participate in memorable physics experiments and discover the interesting world of science.  
[www.tahetorn.eu](http://www.tahetorn.eu) | Tel+372 5556 1772



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5. Driving towards Suure-Jaani, you will soon see a metal sign pointing to **Lõhavere Hillfort**. The fort of the Estonian chief Lembitu was established in the end of the 12th century. Near the hillfort stands a monument of the Battle of St. Matthew's Day in the days of the ancient Estonian freedom fight.

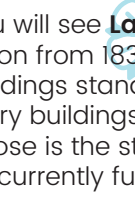


6



6. **Suure-Jaani** attracts visitors with its beautiful reservoir. It's a good place to make a longer stop and look around. The sights include the **Lembitu monument** in memory of the casualties of the Estonian War of Independence and **Suure-Jaani Church** from the beginning of the 14th century. There is a ringed cross embedded in the inner wall of the church tower, the so-called Cross of Anne. Legend has it that a woman named Anne had washed and clothed bodies of plague victims during the Livonian War and the local rural people had dedicated this cross to her. Several cultural figures have been buried at the Suure-Jaani cemetery: painter Johann Köler, famous members of the composer family Kapp, composer Mart Saar and the comital family Fersen of Olustvere Manor. If you are interested in the musical history of Estonia, you could stop by at the **house-museum of the Kapp family**. +372 5193 6420
- Walking along the avenue from Lake Suure-Jaani, you will see the **bust-portrait of the Naivist painter Paul Kondas**. The Kondas Centre in Viljandi offers a closer look at Kondas' quirky sense of humour and his paintings.

**Suure-Jaani Health Centre** welcomes visitors to enjoy bathing and sauna.

[www.tervisekoda.ee](http://www.tervisekoda.ee) | Tel +372 432 8124

7. Driving from Suure-Jaani towards Vändra, you will see **Lahmuse Manor** on the right-hand side of the road. The mansion from 1837 is inspired by the late classicist style. The central manor buildings stand around the lawn in front of the main building, other auxiliary buildings are placed further to the back – the most attractive of those is the stables with a six-pillared open front. The manor complex currently functions as a healthcare and care centre.
8. The **house-museum of composer Mart Saar** is located in Hüpasaare, right on the edge of the bog. Its most exclusive item is the organ made by Mart Saar's uncle and given to the future composer on his 8th birthday, which can still be played.  
[muuseum.viljandimaa.ee/martsaar/](http://muuseum.viljandimaa.ee/martsaar/)  
Tel +372 435 7141, +372 521 6675
- 
- 
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Hüüpassaare is worth visiting for another reason – a **boardwalk to the Kuresoo bog ponds** begins here, next to an information board about the Soomaa National Park. A hiking tour to the open landscape of Soomaa is an unforgettable experience for every nature lover.

4



9. In Vihi village, you can visit **Energy Farm** specializing in medicinal plants and herbs. Besides meditative walks along plant-themed trails and beautiful natural views from the observational tower of the tea house, the farm can offer fascinating sauna rituals by prior arrangement to those who wish to experience something special.

[www.energiatalu.ee](http://www.energiatalu.ee) | Tel +372 510 6193

10. Driving further along the main road towards Vändra, you will find the starting point of the 12 km long **“Sakala Way” hiking trail** across the road from the Vanaõue Holiday Centre. The famous cultural figure C. R. Jakobson used the route between his home at Kurgja Farm and Viljandi where he worked as the editor of the newspaper “Sakala”. At the **Vanaõue Holiday Centre** it is possible to enjoy canoe trips and catch trout.

[www.vanaoue.ee](http://www.vanaoue.ee) | Tel +372 521 2148

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11. After driving 9,2 km from Olustvere towards Tääksi, you will arrive at Aimla village where signs direct you to the Parika Nature Reserve. After 2,1 km, you will reach the starting point of the 3,6 km long **Parika Väikejärv** study trail. The trail passes through a varying forest landscape and rises to a bog slope where you can have a picnic and bathe in a bog lake. The circular trail runs around the small heart-shaped lake, passing bog ponds and rich berry grounds.

8



12. **Kildu Riding Centre** offers riding and wagon tours by prior arrangement.

[www.kildu.ee](http://www.kildu.ee) | Tel +372 506 2283


13. The ornamental garden of **Nõrga Farm** offers both beautiful views for garden lovers and plants to buy.

[www.norgatalu.eu/](http://www.norgatalu.eu/) | Tel +372 515 0248

If you choose to drive towards Kolga-Jaani, you will discover more sights on your way:

- 14.** A couple of kilometres after exiting the town, a sign indicates “Peetrimõisa 2”. Turning to the left from the main road, you will reach Väikemõisa bus stop after a couple of hundred metres; a fine oak avenue leads to the left, to Väikemõisa Mansion. **Väikemõisa Mansion** from the beginning of the 20th century is an example of Heimatschutz architecture: a picturesque building with a high base wall and main story built of combined granite and brick; the upper story is plastered and constructed with a dark timber frame. Note the vaulted main entrance. A large park surrounds the house. The history of the manor begins in the late 1890s. The manor remained in the hands of its last owners, the Helmersen family, even after the Land Reform, as it was no major estate. After Viktor von Helmersen junior left in 1939, the remaining carpets, paintings, furniture and dining sets from the manor were sold at an auction. In 1948–2012, the former Väikemõisa Mansion functioned as a children’s home for young children.
- 15.** Ca 17 km from the town, a sign on the left side of the road directs to the 100 m long boardwalk and the **observation tower** at **Parika bog**, with an excellent view of the oblong, complex-shaped Lake Parika. Parika bog has developed from a postglacial body of water. The oblong, articulated relict lake is called Lake Parika. The lake has several rare water plant species, e. g. algae of the class *Zygnematophyceae*. The two small bog lakes are called Väikejärv and Pühajärv. Parika bog – mainly a wooded bog with low-growing pine trees – is one of the oldest raised bogs in Estonia. Its assumed age is approx. 9000 years.
- 16.** **Kolga-Jaani** has developed from the old parish centre. During the rule of the Livonian Order, these lands belonged to Põltsamaa bailiwick. The area was densely populated and also used to sell serfs to other regions. **Kolga-Jaani St. John’s Church** dates from the first half of the 14th century. It was a simple, unvaulted rectangular building without tower or chancel. The church was probably vaulted in the end of the 14th century. It has a medieval tabernacle and lavabo in the east wall of the church. The church repeatedly suffered damage in wars but the vaults were preserved. After the Great Northern War, the church was re-roofed first in 1742. The times of chaos before that are perhaps preserved in folk legends: one tells about how hunters found Kolga-Jaani Church in a dense forest after they had lit a fire on a higher spot and found themselves on the ceiling of the church. Others tell about people seeking shelter from robbers and wild animals on the vaults of the church. The western tower in pseudo-Gothic style was built in 1875. Villem Reimann,





one of the leaders of the Estonian national movement, was the pastor Kolga-Jaani from 1890 to 1917.

17. The **birthplace of General Johann Laidoner** is marked with a monument and an avenue on the other side of Lake Viljandi, by the ring road of the town.

On the way from Viljandi towards Tartu:



18. After Teemeistri bus stop, you can see a sign pointing to the left – to **Viiralt's Oak**. The so-called Tammekoori oak tree, depicted by the artist Eduard Viiralt on his drypoint "Viljandi Landscape", is the best known old tree in Viljandi County, despite only being the seventh largest.
19. Soon afterwards, a sign directs to the left from the main road – to Vana-Võidu. Here you can see the **main building of Vana-Võidu Manor**. The earliest references to Wõidumaa Manor date back to 1507. The manor has been owned by the families Wrangler, Albedyll, Posse and Jürgensonn. In 1834, it was purchased by Constantin von Stryk who built the most of the manor complex. The classicist mansion was built in 1830–1836. The manor park and avenue with the forest park were established during the same period. The beautiful oak avenue is 548 m long. The Stryks owned the manor until its nationalisation in 1919. From 1921, the mansion was used for an agricultural school. The school now functions as Viljandi Vocational Training Centre.
20. The old fishing village Valma is known for its eel fishing traditions. And **Valma Adventure Park**, with its thrilling climbing courses and a zipline is fun for both children and adults.  
[www.valma.ee](http://www.valma.ee) | Tel +372 50 36 906
21. Oiu is an old fishing village, first mentioned in 1599, with the well-preserved former Oiu Dairy. The historic harbour site has been reconstructed and has a lovely view of Tānassilma River and Oiu flood meadow. **Oiu Harbour** provides canoe trips and boat rent by prior arrangement. There is also a hiking trail in the vicinity.  
[www.oiusadam.ee](http://www.oiusadam.ee) | Tel +372 5349 2707
22. Vaibla is a good place for **bathing** and beach promenades.
23. **Meleski Glass Museum**. The Meleski glass factory, built in 1792, was the second largest glass manufacturing company in the Russian Empire and the largest in the Baltic countries. Mirrors from the factory were even used at the Tsar's palace. Ville Dreving's small museum-collection in Meleski includes over 1000 examples of locally manufactured glass products and other items related to the factory. The museum can be visited by prior arrangement.  
Tel +372 5648 9406





24. By the source of River Emajõgi, on Rannu-Jõesuu recreation area, there is a house built of green building materials (wood, wood chips, clay, straw) – the **Võrtsjärv Visitor Centre**. It provides information on recreation and accommodation opportunities in the Võrtsjärv area, and you can also arrange sailing boat trips on Lake Võrtsjärv and buy souvenirs made by local craftsmen. There is an **observation tower** near the Centre.

[www.vortsjarv.com](http://www.vortsjarv.com) | Tel +372 5066 426

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## Soomaa

is worth visiting in every season.

Soomaa National Park was founded in 1993 for the protection of untouched bogs, flood meadows with rich plant and animal life, wooded meadows and forests. The varied nature of Soomaa, its unique culture featuring suspension bridges and dugout canoes and its five seasons have made the area popular among nature-loving travellers as well as weekend visitors.

20 kilometres from Viljandi towards Pärnu, before entering Kõpu, there is a sign directing to the right, to Soomaa National Park. Here you begin a journey from the Sakala upland down to Pärnu lowland.

1. Before you take the turn towards Soomaa, you could stop by in Kõpu. The smallish classicist **Kõpu St. Peter's Church** (built in 1821-1825) has a brick floor and a sturdy historicist-style tower. The altar wall inside the church is decorated with half-pillars with antique form and beams. The altar painting by an unknown artist, "Let the Little Children Come to Me", has a unique narrative content. Some epitaphs of the patron family von Stryk are preserved. The **wall paintings in Suure-Kõpu Manor**, unique in Estonia, are also worth seeing. You can get more information about the Kõpu area and Soomaa at the Kõpu Visitor Centre.

[www.facebook.com/kopukylastuskeskus](https://www.facebook.com/kopukylastuskeskus) | Tel +372 433 0100,

**Canoe trips and bog hikes** can be ordered:

[www.soomaa.com](http://www.soomaa.com) | Tel +372 5061896, +372 514 7572

2. At **Uia village**, about three kilometres from Kõpu intersection, the terrain evens out. You have reached Pärnu lowland. The change in heights can be perceived both when driving and when riding a bike.