

Living Cultures
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KIHNU

KIHNU TRAVEL GUIDE



KIHNU
TRAVEL GUIDE
ESTONIA














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Print: Trükikoda Paar
ISBN 978-9949-88-969-3
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EUROPEAN UNION
 **Interreg**
Estonia-Latvia
European Regional Development Fund

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CONTENTS

History and culture	5	
Nature	19	
Events	31	
Active tourism	43	
The lifestyle of kihnu people	63	
Food	71	
Traditional holidays	73	
Good to know	77	
Vocabulary	80	

HISTORY AND CULTURE



In today's rapid development, Kihnu has maintained its identity and thus is a very special place. Thanks to the courage, ability and will of Kihnu people to be different, these small island folks have maintained their identity and traditional way of life. Kihnu was not only different from the rest of the world in the past but you can also clearly see it today.

The carriers and maintainers of Kihnu culture have over time been women but the first person who realised the value of the heritage and knowingly started to collect it was a Kihnu man Theodor Saar. This was during the time that Kihnu was thought to be an underdeveloped periphery, the customs and the different dialect were belittled, but this man was not ashamed of his roots, he kept his head held high and stressed the uniqueness of Kihnu and the need to maintain its culture and dialect.

FAMILY MARKS

Characteristic of the coastal folk, people in Kihnu have used and are still using family marks. These were put on tools, tableware, nets, and grain sacks – on everything that was taken out of the household. Family marks emerged due to purely practical reasons – for the owners to recognise their belongings and for strangers not to covet them.

Today, people use family marks as a distinguishing mark on mailboxes or signs of farms.



1. KIHNU MUSEUM

The museum culture in Kihnu is different and unique – the storehouses here have a lot of items that elsewhere only decorate museum showcases, old commodities are also used a lot in everyday life. That is why the local history museum in the middle of the island is the core of the big open air museum, i.e. a museum in a museum.

The handicraft skills of Kihnu women have been preserved for generations on a truly authentic level and the valuable handicraft repository is constantly updated – both the showcase of the museum and the enormous handicraft collection in storage. The spiritual culture has been inherited from ancestors; old work skills are still existent in Kihnu and this is what also makes the museum culture special.

The most important job of the Kihnu museum is storing daily changes – collecting and recording are more important than exhibiting.

The museum of Kihnu has the biggest collection of naïve paintings, the authors of which are naïve artists of Kihnu. The permanent exhibition of the museum has been set up on the basis of the life cycle of a person. Two different worlds are distinguishable: women with the home, children and animals and men with everything related to the sea. The eye-catcher of the Men's Room is a wax figure of the famous sea captain Kihnu Jõnn.





2. LIGHTHOUSE

The Kihnu lighthouse located on the southern peak of the island, on the Pitkäna Cape, was assembled in 1864 of details made in England. The height of the lighthouse is 31m above sea level and 29m above the ground.

The lighthouse that was inaccessible for 19 years was in 2013 once again opened to visitors who can now climb to the top of the lighthouse. The view is absolutely breath-taking and worth climbing up for in order to partake in all the beauty and romance the old lighthouse and the beautiful view offer. The visit is quite comfortable as the lighthouse is easily accessible, safe and secure.

The purpose of a lighthouse is first and foremost to guide ships to their home port on a stormy sea but similarly to other old houses, lighthouses without people are without a soul and tend to get neglected and decay. The reopening brought a new breath to the Kihnu lighthouse – the landscaping and the lighthouse itself are kept tidy.

There is a small shop by the lighthouse where you can buy handicraft and refresh your body with local food.



3. VANAKIRIKU MÄGI (“OLD CHURCH HILL”)

The “Old Church hill”, as the name implies, was where in the old times the church was located. However, there is no point in looking for a hill there, a slightly higher sand coast is enough to use ‘hill’ as a place name in the otherwise flat island. A burial place, which could have been the village cemetery in the 14-16th century, has been discovered on the “Old Church hill”.

Several legends and beliefs are associated with this place. The church was destroyed in a fire during the Great Northern War. The historical knowledge is accompanied by a legend that plague victims were also burned with the church to get rid of the deadly disease.

It is a naturally beautiful place with a view of the sea – people enjoy going there to walk, ponder and just to be by themselves. Maybe the “Old Church hill” attracts visitors with its mysterious aura as it really is a magical place. Once upon a time, before WWII, the walls of the burnt church were used for a fertility ritual – childless women went there to dance naked in order to get pregnant. Sadly, eyewitnesses of these magical rituals are not with us anymore and even the walls of the church are long gone.

But the mysticism related to this place has been transferred into today. It is said that the daughter of a scientist with Kihnu roots began to act strangely there: she danced and said that she could remember everything.

4. CHURCH

A rubble stone church was built in the middle of the island in 1784 – at first, as a Lutheran church but after the conversion movement (1840), it was reconstructed as an Orthodox church. It is quite unusual that a house of worship changes religion together with the people in such a way, but in this case, this is what happened. An onion was placed on top of the tower, an iconostasis was put in front of the altar, and icons were replaced. However, some Lutheran icons have still remained in the church; the other thing that the Kihnu people were not willing to give up were Lutheran songs, which have still remained in use to this day.

Even though the islanders are not very religious, the church has always had an important part in the cultural life of Kihnu. In earlier times, the church also had the aura of an entertainment establishment because it was an important place for meeting and communication. If doing manor work was reluctant to people, communal work was always done with pleasure.

The church in Kihnu has remained and remains thanks to the local people who visit it often. And not just visit but still follow traditions and customs. For example, women are always on the left and men on the right, and if a stranger violates that rule, they are immediately led to the correct side.

A strong tradition is to go to church during Christmas and Easter, children are baptised at the church, marriages are blessed there and loved ones are sent to their last journeys. But this is not all; there are more church holidays that bring Kihnu people to church.



5. CEMETERY

The Kihnu cemetery has remained authentic and that is why it has been recognised as a cultural heritage monument by The National Heritage Board. In spite of changes, the cemetery has maintained its uniqueness, historical integrity, and a distinctive milieu. The special value of the graveyard lies in the fact that it has not been vandalised, ruined by stacking bodies or with redesigning.

The graves are under tall pine trees and surrounded by a fence stacked from ground rocks. Near the main entrance, there is a tall gravestone made of black granite for Enn Uuetoa (better known as Kihnu Jõnn); the ashes of the famous captain were brought from Denmark and reburied to his home soil in 1992. Karl Jerkwelt, a carpenter from Saaremaa who worked on Kihnu Jõnn's last ship *Rock City*, is buried next to the famous captain. Since the burial traditions in Orthodox religion and the Lutheran religion differ – the Orthodox tend to have an Eastern funeral and Lutherans a Western one – the captain and the carpenter who were of different religions have also been buried in different ways – one has his feet in the East and head in the West and the other *vice versa*.



6. LÜLLEMÄGI (“LÜLLE HILL”) AND LÜLLE LÜLL

Lüllemägi was the birthplace of the proud and mysterious Kihnu hero Lülle Lüll. Even though he is tall and big, this strongman should not mistakenly be confused with Kalevipoeg or Suur Tõll, because he is not from a legend, but he was a real historical figure of flesh and blood.

Lüll was a brave man, who was not familiar with servility; he was a free soul who confronted the violence with which the manor treated the common folk. It is notable that the Kihnu hero was not born in Kihnu, but he ran away from something and settled there. Lüll was immensely rich, in Kihnu alone he had three farmhouses and an enormous fortune, which is said to be buried in the forest to this today.

It is said that the strongman still haunts in Lüllemäe – he must be keeping his eye on the hidden treasure.

There is a strange road in Lüllemäe, which is said to be an endless road and where it is not recommended to go walking during the night. This road in the forest seems wide and rich but you can never reach the end. It is said that a local woman, Järsumäe Virve (also known as Kihnu Virve), has gotten lost there twice, walked the entire night and escaped from the sorcery only in the morning.



7. KIHNU JÖNN’S STONE

The memorial stone dedicated to the sea captain Kihnu Jõnn alias Enn Uuetoa marks the birth and home place of the legendary “Wild Captain”.

Kihnu Jõnn, otherwise known as **Enn Uuetoa** (1848–1913), was a well-known sea captain. He would captain large ships without the help of a compass or a sextant. He mainly steered older ships, with which other captains did not dare to go to sea. Kihnu Jõnn went down with his ship the *Rock City* off the coast of Denmark one stormy autumn day in 1913.



The nature of Kihnu is designed, decided and determined by sea. This is reflected in an attractive coast and numerous islets that are homes to nesting birds. The best way to explore Kihnu and its nature as well as to see, hear and feel is with a bike.

ISLETS – PARADISE FOR BIRDS

The shallow and rocky coastal sea is surrounded by reefs and islets. There are 56 islets altogether, eight of them are bigger and there you can go without getting your toes wet, even on high tides. Kihnu Strait is an internationally important nesting, moulting and migration area and this is why all the islets have been taken under nature protection and you cannot go there during nesting season (from April until the middle of July).

The answer to the question how many birds are there in Kihnu is simple: The sky is full of them. But if to be more precise, in 2017 the Environment Agency counted a record number of nesting birds on the islets of Kihnu: only in Imutlaid, there were 4,300 pairs of birds – altogether, 24 different species, mainly terns and gulls. The colony of the Caspian tern that has made itself at home on the islet of Sangelaid, is a real rarity.

The invasion of cormorants is intensively growing. In 2017, 2,906 cormorant nests were counted on the three bigger islets. Kihnu is the place where bird-watching records for the most Eurasian Sparrowhawks and siskins seen in a single day have been set.



THE SYMBIOSIS OF MAN AND THE MERGANSER

If someone visits Kihnu for the first time, they might wonder why there are doghouses on trees, as the local dogs do not actually climb trees. These are actually birdhouses, more specifically, man-made nesting boxes built for the most important bird in Kihnu tradition – the merganser (a half-domesticated water bird). The merganser can be considered as a theme bird of Kihnu. Kihnu people and mergansers have developed a silent agreement: man will build a living place for the bird and receive eggs in return. It is important to make clear that by picking the eggs, the number of birds does not decrease; on the contrary, if all the eggs are left in the nest, the mother bird would not be able to incubate them all. Locals know that a good number of eggs in the nest is 10–15 eggs. Then the mother bird will be able to incubate all sons.

COWS ARE WORKING ON COASTAL MEADOWS

Coastal meadows were close to being forgotten completely in Kihnu because there are no more animals kept in farmhouses – but coastal cows are now eagerly working on the coast. Highland and Hereford cattle are taking care of the coastal pastures; sheep are also helping on the areas with sparser reed. There are about 150 cows and over 300 sheep in the eager work collective. The animals have a lot of work to do because the coastal meadows have developed considerable reed overgrowth.

There are also pastures full of junipers, especially in the southern and western coast.



PINE FOREST – A POWERFUL SIGHT

Even though it might seem that the island is full of forests, firewood is brought from the mainland and only maintenance logging is done in the forest. Pine is the tree of Kihnu but a big part of local heath pine forests have been planted; at the end of the 17th century, only 2–3% of the island was covered with forests.

The northern part of the island consists mainly of pine forests, the southern side of mixed forests. Spruce is a rarity on the island and those few trees have also been planted by humans. In addition to the need to get everyday wood, trees were planted to fix dune sand. Humus will also form under the forest, which provides a good growing ground for vegetation.

Unfortunately, today we cannot say that Kihnu forests are so clean that there are not even branches on the ground. A majority of the forests belong to the State Forest Management Centre, who does not allow cleaning the broken branches to create a mould layer and soil more full of humus. Nevertheless, you can still see women raking the forests and picking cones. When cleaning up the forests they are also collecting firewood for themselves. There are a lot of dry sandy pine forests in Kihnu – it is a powerful sight.



KAKRA SÄÄR

If you walk forward from the Rock City beach, the road will lead to a beautiful place, which is called the tip of Pill and that is where the 4 km long Kakra säär begins. The legend has it that Kihnu and Tõstamaa men decided to jointly build a bridge there. The men from Kihnu started with the work but when they saw that the mainland men were slacking, Kihnu men also stopped working.

ANIMALS

Foxes, raccoon dogs, rabbits, and weasels are the terrestrial animals that can be found in Kihnu. The number of hedgehogs has decreased lately. The reason for that is the abundance of foxes and diseases spreading among hedgehogs.

Since mainland is not far, wild boars or elks might sometimes swim or in winter time walk to the island over the frozen water. If an elk does wonder to the island, then it will, of course, become instantly famous as such a big animal is an important figure on the island.





PLANTS

In the spring, you can see orchids on coastal meadows and on the side of roads as the limey soil of Kihnu is a suitable habitat for orchids. It is, however, not allowed to pick these flowers.

One of the rarest species that can be found in Kihnu sand dunes is the sea holly, which is a rear coastal plant that has survived in Estonia from earlier climatic conditions dating back thousands of years. Kihnu has the biggest growth places of this protected plant in Estonia, if elsewhere the plant grows individually, then in Kihnu it grows in shrubs. There are altogether 6.2 thousand individual plantss in four growing places.

This attractive sea holly should not be mixed up with sea kale. There is so much of the latter growing on the Kihnu coast that in early spring, it decorates the beach with its white flowers. Because of its maritime climate, spring arrives to Kihnu a few weeks later than to the mainland but, springtime in Kihnu is something else. In early spring, you can see either blue or gleaming forest grounds depending on whether it is the blooming period of the hepatica or the anemone. While spring is picking up speed, the sense of smell is also switched on – Kihnu is drowning in lilacs and smells intoxicating, and the same happens during the blooming period of the lily of the valley.

If you buy primula tea from the pharmacy, the flowers have probably been picked by Kihnu women but there are still enough primulas to decorate the Kihnu meadows with yellow. There are many herbs on the island and a lot of them also make it to the pharmacy.

LINDENS OF MÕISAASEME

The oldest trees of Kihnu are the lindens of Mõisaaseme, which are also under nature protection. Out of the three trees that were planted on the former yard of the main manor building, a large tree with the circumference of 3.7 m and height of 18 m is the one that is best preserved. The second one that is almost as high as the first tree has broken into three parts - two larger and one smaller bough. The third linden has been destroyed.

The manor buildings have also been demolished, only the granary has preserved and today, it is used as a dwelling. There is not much information about the manor but after its demolition, a school building was built in the middle of the island from its logs.

BOULDER NAMED LIIVA-AA KIVI

Although the sea and the coast of Kihnu are very stony, there are not a lot of boulders. In a young pine forest in Linaküla, lies the island's largest and the only boulder that has been taken under nature protection – a boulder named Liiva-aa kivi. The boulder that was carried to Kihnu during the ice age has a circumference of 9.78 m and a height of 2.44 m. According to the legend, the “undergrounds” (mysterious elf-like creatures that live beneath the ground) live under the boulder – people have heard noises from under the boulder. It is also said that Mulgi witches use the boulder to dry themselves during night-time.





There is a reason that people say that Kihnu summer is as colourful as the Kihnu skirt – there are many different events so there is enough for everybody. Although the concerts of the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra (ERSO) and the Estonian National Male Choir (RAM) welcomed by full halls have been rarer than the performances of lovely amateur dance groups, still, both are represented – the more serious culture events as well as simply fun entertainment. There are obviously more events in the summer and that is why it is a good idea to first look at the summer cultural calendar if you are planning a trip to Kihnu. Some bigger festivals and parties take place every year at the same time. This is the time the ferry *Kihnu Virve* has a lot of busy days as there are a lot of travellers wanting to go to the island.





KIHNU SEA FESTIVAL

The Kihnu Sea Festival has developed into the event that people look forward to the most. The three-day party, which is always on the second weekend of July is dedicated to the fishermen's day but includes everything that is important in Kihnu traditional culture: handicraft, art, singing, dancing, music and traditional food.

The Kihnu Sea Festival was born in 2010; the party is named after a famous song by the local folk singer Järsumäe Virve and of course, Virve herself is there to perform that song.

The seaside festival area has cafés, food and craft fair, and workshops. The entertainment for children is diverse: puppetry, circus, trampoline and different attractions. The museum, the lighthouse, and the church are opened during the whole party. And of course, there is also a competitive moment – sporting events in the sea as well as on land.

An attractive and even a little scandalous event is the parade of motorcycles, which is a little different each year – the main attention is either on helmets designed with national patterns, prominent riders or the different bikes themselves.





END OF SUMMER PARTY

The Kihnu Community Centre waves goodbye to summer on the last Friday of August. A known and popular Estonian band is invited to perform in order to enjoy the end of the summer while at the same time being a part of a different culture.

KIHNU HERRING HIKE

The Herring Hike that takes place on the first Saturday of May is the opening event of the summer tourism season. The name of the event says exactly what it is – the day includes a hike and the main focus is on herring. It is also the peak of herring catching season and so, this is the right time to promote national fish and eat it for free.

Participants can buy a wristband for a reasonable price, which has all the Kihnu farms marked, where you can taste smoked herring, herring rolls, Kihnu bread and homemade non-alcoholic drinks. The stomach will be full and as a thank you, all the participants have to do, is choose their favourite food from each category. The owner of the wristband can participate in study kitchens, which of course are also herring-themed, for example building a smoker, smoking, salting, filleting and fishing for herrings.

The Kihnu Food and Craft Fair is opened the entire day and the active day ends with a dance party.





KIHNU VIOLIN FESTIVAL

The Kihnu Violin Festival is aimed at a certain group of people, for those who have chosen that they like violin play to be exact. The festival has been created in particular so that leading Estonian violinists could teach violin to Kihnu children and thus, add extra value to violin play. However, all interested in violin are invited and that is how it has always been. Teachers from Estonian music schools come with their students and even some groups from neighbouring countries have visited the festival. Almost always, there are also kindergarten children and adults amongst the students.

Two-day workshops fill the Kihnu schoolhouse and museum with violin sounds. What is taught in the workshops is later presented during the evening concert and the work and dedication are always rewarded with a treat. For example, so far, there have been concerts by the loved Curly Strings and Naised Kõõgis and world-famous bands Frigg and Otava Yo.

The very last cherry on top is the dance party – no other way would be possible in Kihnu.

THE NIGHT OF ANCIENT BONFIRES

The Night of Ancient Bonfires at the end of August, considering its essence suits Kihnu very well. Even though on this night, bonfires are lit all over Estonia, it has a very clear and specific meaning for the islanders – the signalling lights of the sailors are important in Kihnu and the lights are lit for the memory of those, who have been left to travel the seas forever...

The Night of Ancient Bonfires in Kihnu has developed into a nice and heartfelt bonfire night where people can ponder together and simply spend time by the sea. Music and singing are also part of that night in Kihnu.



KIHNU DANCE DAY

The Kihnu Dance Day is the most genuine event on the island that introduces traditional culture. The seminars in the first part of the day are filled with presentations related to Kihnu, which are prepared by either the locals or people closely related to Kihnu, who know the topic thoroughly. The topics have been, for example, singing games, sailors' songs, and games of Kihnu and there are enough research topics left for years.

The second part of the day consists of teaching Kihnu dances to those interested. Actually, only the steps are learned, because in order to dance like the locals you must be local or at least live there for decades. Even Kihnu roots do not count – if dance skills are learnt from elsewhere, the style will be different.

There is a village dance party in the evening with performances by guest groups and together, people will dance the dances they learned during the day.

Kihnu Dance Day is purely a national event where people celebrate traditional dance. Kihnu dance is popular and every year there are new people wanting to learn the steps. But exactly like the locals, you cannot do it anyway.



CAFÉS DAY

A new event has been added to the summer culture calendar – the Kihnu Cafés Day that takes place on the first weekend of June. The event has gotten a humorous name, Kihnu Keretäüs (“Kihnu Bellyful”), so if all the other cafés days popular in Estonia offer food, then in Kihnu you also get a bellyful.

A number of temporary cafés are opened in home yards or in other interesting places for one or two days. There, you can enjoy local food and a culture program. There are also activities for children.

Fish is definitely an important raw material during Kihnu cafés days, especially since the herring catching season is still going.

All guests of the island are also welcome to join the evening dance party. That is why the cafés are open the next day as well, so you can get another bellyful and buy some to go.

KIHNU TRAVEL WHEEL

The Kihnu Travel Wheel is an ideal round route to discover the cultural and natural sights of the island by bike, foot or even with a nostalgic sidecar motorcycle. The Kihnu Travel Wheel, which is designed by cultural leaders and tourism entrepreneurs of Kihnu, introduces the cultural space, landscapes and sea views acknowledged by UNESCO. Kihnu Travel Wheel is something through which the people of Kihnu, invite you to experience their valued home island.

The shape of the wheel has an important place in the cultural heritage of Kihnu. It symbolizes the traditional circular Kihnu wedding dance, the steering wheel of a ship as well as a bicycle (the most suitable vehicle for travelling on the route). The themed route itself can also be looked at as a wheel, as it is a circular route.

Kihnu Travel Wheel route is passable all year round but the best time to visit is from April to October.

The route on a bike takes about 4–12 hours, by foot it takes about twice as long, i.e. 8–24 hours.



The “official” starting and finishing point of the route is Kihnu Port but since it is a circular route, it can actually be started and finished wherever. Most of the route has signposts.

The route passes through four Kihnu villages: Lemsi, Roostiküla, Linaküla, Sääreküla and the length of the route is 23 km. Kihnu Port is the starting and finishing point of the trip, the receiver and dispatcher of the visitors. There is where the exploration and treasure hunt begins.



METSAMAA TRADITIONAL FARM

The old farmhouse in Metsamaa rose as a communal traditional culture centre in 2008 and since then, the household has developed year by year and outbuildings (outdoor kitchen, sauna, barn, shed) have also been restored.

Together with the construction works, there have also been developments in the content and events related to traditional culture are organised more often. For years, there has been a music camp in August, art camp in July and as a new venture, knitting camp in June.

In the summer of 2018, Metsamaa will be opened as a visiting centre where you can familiarise yourself with rural architecture, animals, and agriculture of Kihnu as well as participate in workshops related to traditional culture. There are village parties, events related to folk calendar holidays, seminars, meetings and café evenings held in the farm. A café is open and you can see a cultural film.

Metsamaa farm is a homely and Kihnu-like place where the culture of Kihnu is well-preserved.



WORKSHOPS AT THE KIHNU MUSEUM

The workshops taking place at the Kihnu Museum gather everything that is related to Kihnu culture: handicraft, dialect, singing and dancing. It is possible to order workshops where you can learn how to use weaving looms, sew Kihnu traditional jacket or knit netting, but also ribbon plaiting, bead-making and wool carding.

The handicraft workshops that are meant for the locals are more thorough. For example, they learn bobbin lace and belt weaving in order to expand the circle of people with certain skills and keep these fading skills alive.

Visitors of the island are mostly interested in dancing and singing workshops – and no wonder, as this is fun for everybody. Families with children enjoy Sunday morning workshops where they bake traditional Kihnu bread. During the time that the dough is resting and bread cooking, they can learn ribbon plaiting and see the museum.

The newly built museum shed allows doing so-called dirtier works in better conditions: tanning, yarn dyeing, basket weaving or making shavings for kindling.

The arrangement of workshops is flexible. You just need to make your wishes heard and suitable activities are then put together.



ÜLALISTUMINE

Back in the day, ülalistumine (gathering of girls to knit together) was for younger people – handicraft was a vacation from hard work. This is the time, young women got to do something for themselves; otherwise, they only had to work for the farm and the family. The women met up on Thursday nights; after some time boys with musical instruments came to keep them company. This did not interrupt the fast working ladies but rather pushed them to work harder.

Today, ülalistumine takes place at the Kihnu Museum and is attended by mostly older women – those who were used to participating when they were young. They gather once a month and everyone brings their ongoing needlework with them. But they do not only come for handicraft, this is done at home anyway; even more important are the conversation, singing old songs and reminiscing. When they meet, they will first see if anyone has any new sock or glove patterns that are worth copying.

Kihnu women very much look forward to ülalistumine and arrange their activities in a way that nothing else would come up on that day. Sometimes they are joined by some boys with their musical instruments and then there will also be dancing.





FOLKLORE CONCERTS OF MÕNU FARM

Visitors of Mõnu handicraft farm will find themselves in a world that has been created by the magic of Kihnu women's skilled fingers. Mõnu hostess Rosaalie Karjam, Härma Roosi for the locals, is the most valued handicraft master of Kihnu, proof of this can be seen in a farm full of beautiful and high-quality handicraft: coifs, lace, sleeves, gloves, belts and socks.

Folklore concerts are also held in Mõnu farm – visitors are welcomed by a small part of the band Kihnumua, who introduce Kihnu singing, dancing and weddings traditions. The folk entertainers are competent to talk about anything that concerns handicraft, culture and traditions of Kihnu. If there are people interested, they will also talk about dyeing with plants or about making traditional leather shoes and Kihnu women know how to talk and sing while at the same time doing handicraft. The visitors of Mõnu farm are welcomed by older as well as younger women and children, which proves that folk bands have become a vital way to transfer old traditions, dances and songs to the younger generation and today's culture.

A visit to the handicraft farm has to be agreed in advance and it has to remain to the summer period.



GUIDED NATURE TOURS

It is possible to hike on the peculiar coastal line of Kihnu, which guests of the island usually might not get to visit, with an accredited nature guide. During the hike, you get to know the nature of Kihnu, which, depending on the season, offers different impressions and colours. You study the characteristic plants and trees of the island and see what can be found from the sand and what can be seen at sea. You can listen to the stories and legends of Kihnu told by the nature guide, Hille Ojala.

You can select hikes with different length and difficulty level: depending on the route, the length of the hike is 2.5–5 km and it takes about 3 hours.



KIHNU WOMEN'S WORKSHOPS

A modern Kihnu woman does not keep her diverse skills to herself and shares them with others.

At the home of **Elly Karjam**, you can take part in different workshops: making lip butter and ice cream, learning traditional Kihnu ribbon plaiting as well as learn how to knit the troi (men's woollen sweater).

At Elly's, the lip butter is made of natural fats, for example, cocoa or mango butter and beeswax to which natural essential oils are added. The process takes about an hour and the visitor leaves with their own homemade lip balm.

The ice cream is made from natural raw materials and seasonal berries. The treat is ready in about two hours and during the time that the ice cream machine is working, you can learn ribbon plaiting. Maybe harder than the plaiting is choosing the kind of ribbon to make because there are seven different Kihnu ribbons in selection.

Elly can also be invited to the mainland to conduct her workshops. For example, she has been to children's birthday parties with the ice cream machine to spread the sugary joy.

Elly, who has weaved 100 trois herself, teaches it in Kihnu as well as on the mainland. Learning is individual and very flexible. During the weaving of one troi, meetings happen as often as the student needs.





In her workshops, **Annika Annuk** teaches Kihnu handicraft and bakes bread.

In her handicraft workshops, you can learn how to sew a traditional Kihnu jacket, gloves, and socks as well as weave garters. The handicraft of Kihnu is also popular on the mainland and that is why workshops take place wherever the handicraft master is invited.

The bread baking workshops take place in Annika's home at Pärsti-Jaagu farm. The baking of Kihnu bread is a long process and it is not possible for the students to watch it for several days.

This is why the leaven is already fermented when the students arrive and the making of different breads is half done so that the participants can take part in all parts of the process and eventually try the warm bread when it is freshly taken out of the oven.

All workshops have to be agreed in advance so that the teacher could gather the materials and also time.



REST AREA OF THE SUARU PORT

When the white ferry Kihnu Virve brings visitors to Kihnu, Suaru Port is the first place they see. Before you go to explore the island, you might want to think about the fact that there was no port in Kihnu in the old times. People and goods were transported from ships to the shore by boats and horses and there was no chance of getting to the island with dry feet.

A port was built in Kihnu only in 1938 but it cannot be compared to the port that is here today. Today, Kihnu has a nice and tidy port area, where there is a market building, children's playground and rest area.

The market offers local food, handicraft, and ice cream. Nearby, there is an outdoor café where you can have a picnic or just spend a nice time and enjoy the port buzz and the view. And the view of the sea from every direction is worth enjoying!

Children also have a lot to do at the port. Immediately, they can become sailors and pirates as there is a boat-shaped climbing attraction.

The port has an automatic petrol station that also serves yachts; there is an outside map and a tourist office, where the visitors can find all the necessary information.

The sea gate of the island is a place where everyone can feel good and say hello and goodbye to the island.

THE KIHNU GAME

One way to get to know the island and spend time with your friends all at once is to participate in an orientation game – the Kihnu Game. This is a sociable form of entertainment for a group of at least 5 people, but the more participants the more fun it is. The participants of the hiking game move around the island on bikes. Each team gets their own paper guide, i.e. a hike leader, who leads the group to different sights with its parable and introduces the life, history, and culture of Kihnu. The group who reaches the end of the path first will receive the title of the winner, but all participants have won the pleasure of fun entertainment and about 3-hours of athletic activities in nature. Everyone will also receive a Kihnu-themed prize.

HOME VISIT

The Uiõ-Matu farm family is ready to show their home to those who wish, talk about their current activities and reminisce about old times. The visitors will see true Kihnu farming with everything that accompanies it. You can see the content of a Kihnu women's casket and the richness of aprons, skirts, and scarves that it holds as well as see how a Kihnu woman weaves the kõrt, familiarise yourself with the fishing equipment of a Kihnu man and find out who drives the motorcycle/sidecar in the family. The home visit has to be agreed in advance and if you wish, it is possible to try traditional food, home-brewed beer and get acquainted with folk music.



FISHING TRIP

If you think that fish tastes good, then imagine how good does the fish taste that you have caught yourself? In Kihnu, it is possible to find out. Those interested can go on a fishing trip with a fishing leader in order to get an idea of the daily life of Kihnu fishermen. The fishing trip consists of two parts. In the first part you will sail to the sea, where fishing nets are dropped and in the second part, they are brought out. After that, the fish is collected and nets cleaned. If you are lucky, there is fish – that is the life of a fisherman. The catch belongs to the visitor fishermen who caught the fish and who get to decide if they will take the fresh fish home or have it smoked or grilled.

Both of the fishing trips take about an hour and a half. A fisherman is like a captain on a ship, who is responsible for the passengers and decides whether the weather is suitable for fishing.

TRUCK-TOUR

Visitors have always been driven around the island with trucks but, at some point, there was a real possibility that the Government of the Republic will prohibit this driving style. Nevertheless, an exception was made for small islands and so, the driving can continue. It creates nostalgia for older people and young people get a new experience with the sense of freedom that you get while riding in the bed in the back of a truck with the wind blowing in the ears.

THE LIFESTYLE OF KIHNU PEOPLE



For outsiders, it may seem that people in Kihnu maintain traditions because this is what they have agreed upon and is trendy nowadays. However, this is not the case – it is natural for the people of Kihnu to live by traditions and for them, this is the only right way to live. A Kihnu woman will wear a kört for love and not for the need to impress someone. For a Kihnu woman, her traditional clothing is the most beautiful and she is most beautiful when wearing it. However, this does not mean that they will not wear city clothes.

The fact that a Kihnu woman has about 60 aprons in her chest and that she changes them every day is of course for show. But it is necessary to show other Kihnu women how beautiful aprons one has in her chest.

The surrounding environment and the isolation of course help with the maintaining of love. This has also helped their dialect and cultural heritage to survive.

Traditional clothes of a woman include a striped kört. The pattern of stripes and the colours vary: it may be red, half-red, with a line, blue or black. Black kört indicates mourning. Depending on the age of the deceased and how close the wearer was to them, the black kört will be changed to the blue one in about 6 months, then the one with a line and then a half-red one will be worn. Widows will never wear a red kört.



Also, a bride will not wear a red kõrt during the wedding because she is mourning her single life. The youth kõrt is not worn after the wedding, only when the woman dies is she sent to her last journey with it.

The colour of the kõrt dictates what colour jacket and apron a woman wears. The apron is only worn by married women; a mother of multiple children in an open marriage does not have the right to wear it. But if a married woman forgets to wear the apron, this means bad luck and it is best to prevent it.

The coif is s a married woman's headdress but today it is only worn for very festive occasions. The same goes for the traditional leather shoes, which a woman puts on for very festive events. Particularly festive attire is käused, i.e. the loose-end blouse with richly embroidered cuffs, on which there is a floral scarf and a lot of beads. A silver brooch is also an important part of the attire.

People from the mainland often want to know if a Kihnu woman really wears traditional clothing every day. Yes, some really wear them every day but some do not. It is certain that a Kihnu woman will wear their traditional clothing when they feel like it, not for showing off. If there is a party, a woman always wants to wear their most beautiful traditional attire.

The traditional clothing of a Kihnu man is the troi. It is a hand-knitted and fully patterned sweater that is not worn every day. The troi is a valuable and expensive present and the honorary citizens of Kihnu wear the trois gifted to them with pride.

Handicraft has always been highly valued in Kihnu and since handicraft items are in daily use, the skills have been preserved. Every Kihnu woman knows how to weave fabric and to embroider but nowadays, of course, people specialise in the handicraft that they like the most. The yarns of more talented craftsmen are finer, patterns are more complicated and their handicraft is of great value.

Dancing is in the blood of Kihnu people and the will to dance is in their feet. Kihnu people start to dance at a young age with their mothers or grandmothers at parties; lately more and more young men are seen dancing with their mothers as well. Kihnu men also know how to dance and they dance, but the overall impression of the dance floor seems to have the pattern of the kõrt. Absolutely unique phenomena in the world are the joint round dances, which are very important from the standpoint of Kihnu folk culture.



The preservation of dancing skills is supported by the fact that children are taught Kihnu dancing and singing at school and the popular folklore band Kihnumua is active where young and old dance together.

The skill to play traditional musical instruments has increased in the past decades: almost all students are learning instruments at the heritage school, a lot of them learn accordion and violin. The most popular instrument is the accordion and even though traditionally it was played by men then today it is mostly played by women.



WEDDING

The wedding ceremony is rightly considered as one of the pillars of Kihnu folk culture. It has helped the preservation of traditions, handicraft skills, and community gatherings. The primeval cultural notion that has been preserved to this day is just as a ritual where Kihnu customs, dances and songs are demonstrated along with young women's handicraft skills.

However, the Kihnu wedding does not only mean that the community has a joint party according to old traditions, but also a joint preparation for the wedding. Before the wedding, the *noõrikumaja* is arranged. This is a joint handicraft evening of the helpers of the bride where women will jointly prepare the gifts that the bride will give to the relatives of the groom and other wedding guests at the wedding. Work is accompanied by singing and the evening full of handicraft end with the play of musical instruments and dancing. People will voluntarily help with the building of dance halls and to decorate rooms, cook bread and brew beer. It is an honourable thing to help the married couple and this is done with joy and for free.

The wedding lasts for three days that are full of old rituals and the number of flags on the roof of the wedding house depends on what day of the wedding it is. If both of the prospective spouses are from Kihnu, the wedding is usually held in two places: the bride and the groom will have a separate party in their own homes.



The wedding is full of old traditions – songs will send the bride from her home, welcome the bride at the home of the groom, accompany the opening of the dowry and the distribution of the bride's gifts, ritual dressing of the bride and the first dance of the bride. Faith in the power of the word and the meaning of the ritual has preserved.

The culmination of the wedding is when the bride has distributed her gifts to the relatives of the groom and wedding guests, and the coif and apron are put on her – only then will she become a true married woman.

The wedding traditions of the second day are more fun and entertaining. This is the day of the wedding sauna, sharing of the noorikukannikas (bride's bread) and ponksipüüdmine, where candy is thrown on the lawn and water is thrown at the catchers. One must be ready for their clothes and shoes to be stolen over the night and that they have to be bought back in an auction. The third day is usually meant for cleaning up and finishing the party.

Women search out the most beautiful and valuable scarves and aprons for the wedding and different kinds of patterns and their colourfulness are admired. On the first day, the bride changes her apron two times and on the second day four times.

A wedding that follows old traditions helps to emphasise the festivity of the event, strengthen the sense of togetherness and keep traditions alive. It is very important that all people at the wedding have fun.





SEAL HUNTING

Seal hunting has been an important livelihood in Kihnu for centuries. Accurate seal hunters were valued men – seal meat, fat, and skin sold well. Kihnu people are used to eating seal meat and they consider it a treat even today and nothing was wasted as everything of the seal was used: seal fat was used for tanning skin and to rub boats and houses, the skin was used to sew clothes and shoes.

It changed in the second half of the 20th century when seals were taken under nature protection and seal hunting was banned. Today, their numbers have risen as much that both grey seals and ringed seals are calving on the islets. It is prohibited to hunt ringed seals but there is permission to hunt grey seals.

There are certain laws concerning seal hunting: man cannot touch a woman during the previous night. It is also not allowed to say seal, but one has to say *karvakala* (folk name of the grey seal). If a Kihnu person happened to eat seal meat during the prohibition period, they also had to say that they were actually eating *karvakala*.

Even today, the meals are a little different. Since they live in the middle of the sea, they eat a lot of fish, and women bake bread at home.

Cooking certain foods on certain days of the week is something that the islanders still do: on Saturday night they make mashed potatoes and warm bread is taken out of the oven. Wednesday is also a day when mash is eaten and Sunday is soup day. There are standard meals for proposing, for the wedding and holidays, for example during a baby shower and placing the dead in the casket, people usually eat porridge, thus following old traditions.

Sea gives important additions to daily meals of Kihnu people; different fish is eaten in different ways. Very often daily food is baked potatoes with stewed herring and pan-fried meat. The highlight of a party table is meat and potatoes, which have been cooked in the same pot; meat pies are certainly baked.

From time to time, seal meat that has been boiled with unpeeled potatoes has always been a treat for Kihnu people. A newer dish is smoked seal meat but this is liked more by mainlanders rather than the locals. In the spring, they eat merganser eggs, which are especially good for baking cakes because of their dark yellow yolk.





The celebration of traditional holidays has also been re-energised. The islanders have always celebrated the Midsummer Day, St. Catherine's Day and Christmas, but some traditional holidays that were in danger of fading away are kept alive by the Kihnu Museum and Metsamaa Traditional Farm.

ST. CATHERINE'S DAY

St. Catherine's Day is always celebrated in Kihnu; it has changed over time but there is definitely a party on the eve of St. Catherine's Day. Despite the attempts to restore the tradition of having a party in all four villages at once, it has not really succeeded thus far. Depending on the year, there are usually one, two or, in a good year, three parties. The village or the community will jointly lay a rich table, musicians will play traditional musical instruments, and people will eat, dance and Catherine's mummers will make rounds to the other village's party. The Catherine's mummers sing songs and wear masks to stay unknown, at least at first. For this, the organisers have stocked necessary items to the party house: skirts, scarves, curtains, veils, hats. The Catherine's mummers are welcomed with drinks, the people of the two villages dance and sing for a while and then the visitors go back to their own party house and wait for a return visit.

MIDSUMMER DAY

Old traditions are honoured on Midsummer Day as well and if before the Midsummer Day party was celebrated in all villages separately, then now it is an over-island celebration. On that day, the whole island is like one village and the joint party is either at the Linaküla beach or Vanarahvamaja square. The Midsummer Eve culminates with the burning of the boat set as a bonfire accompanied by dancing and singing.

CHRISTMAS

The celebration of Christmas in Kihnu has become an increasingly bigger national holiday, and community-based interaction has increased. Christmas is celebrated on the island in a somewhat different manner than in the rest of Estonia.



If other Estonians use spruce for Christmas tree, the people of Kihnu bring a pine tree to their homes because there would not be enough spruces for everyone. It is interesting that Kihnu children, who know the difference between a spruce and a pine without mistaking and even with their eyes closed, will still call it a spruce after Christmas decorations have been put on it.

A sauna is heated in the afternoon of the Christmas Eve and after that people go to the cemetery to light candles on the graves of their relatives. After that, families will go to church. Compared to the old days, today, the role of the church has even increased. After the service, people spend the evening with their family behind a richly laid table, like it is custom in homes all around Estonia.

On the first and second day of Christmas people do not stay at home anymore and they will go from farm to farm to greet the landlord and landlady. This running around the village is called *latsis käimine* by the locals and for this occasion, people always have home-brewed beer to offer the visitors.

There is a nice tradition from the old times that before Christmas people bring beer, jellied meat, bread or some other Christmas food for neighbours to taste. During Christmas, bread has to be laid on the table in a way that the cut side is not towards the door.

Young people, who do not live at home anymore, as well as those living on the mainland, come back home; people communicate a lot, and dance and sing. People in Kihnu say "*Jõlus piäväd uksõd lahti olõma!*" (The doors have to be open on Christmas!)



Kihnu can be reached by a ferry from the Munalaiu port.

Ferry schedules, bus information,
and tickets are available at: veeteed.com.

Kihnu does not have an ATM.

Kihnu's cafés are not opened all year round.
Catering information is available at: visitkihnu.ee

Kihnu port has an automatic petrol station
where water dwellers can also gas up.

Kihnu has two grocery stores that are opened daily.

The best way to discover the island is by foot or bike.

There is an interactive tourist office at the port.



NUMBERS:

Emergency 112

Port captain +372 53328095

Kihnu School +372 4469933

Kihnu Museum +372 58188094

Kihnu Post Office +372 5229458

Kihnu Health Centre +372 4469907

Kihnu Community Centre +372 5186819

Kihnu Rural Municipality Government +372 4469910

FACTS:

Kihnu is the biggest and the only independent island in the Gulf of Riga.

As of 1 January 2017, there are 701 people living in Kihnu.

There are four villages on the island: Lemsi, Roostiküla, Linaküla, Sääreküla.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION:

visitkihnu.ee

rannatee.ee

kultuuriruum.ee

veeteed.com

VOCABULARY:

maessakas – a person from the mainland

marguun – big storm, gale

maesõma kiel – Estonian language

aitima – thank you

odoma – to wait

jues – swan

kört – skirt of Kihnu traditional clothing

jõlus – beautiful

lie – sandy beach

mungapõlinõ – very old

ooma – to swim

puaek – lighthouse

troi – Kihnu man's knitted sweater

vesiaol – washed to the shore

vjõllõl – dead tired

õun – potato

ülge – seal

ubavus – pastime, entertainment

laod – islets

its – momentum