

European Capital of Culture Oulu2026

Henri Turunen
Programme Manager



Now is the time to get excited!

- **Finnish culture is in the European Spotlight in 2026**
- **In addition to Oulu, 39 municipalities** from Northern Ostrobothnia, Kainuu, Southern Lapland, and Northern Savonia are committed to cultural climate change
- Joint projects for the program area:
 - **Arctic Foodlab**
 - **Art & Nature Trails**
 - **In Europe's Spotlight**



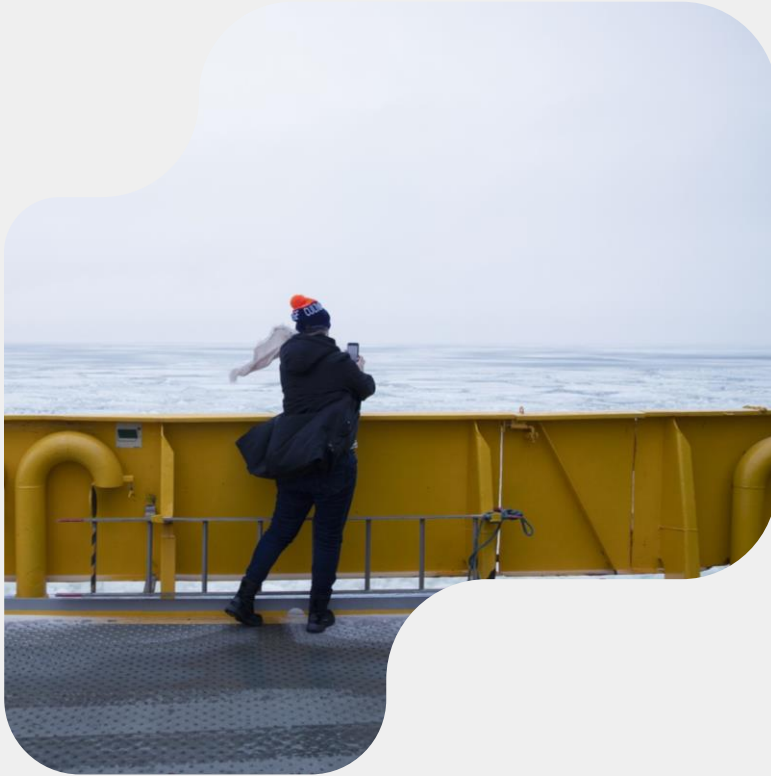


Oulu
2026

Cultural Climate Change

has begun





Brave Hinterland

Northern dimension,
arctic nature, Sami
culture



Wild City

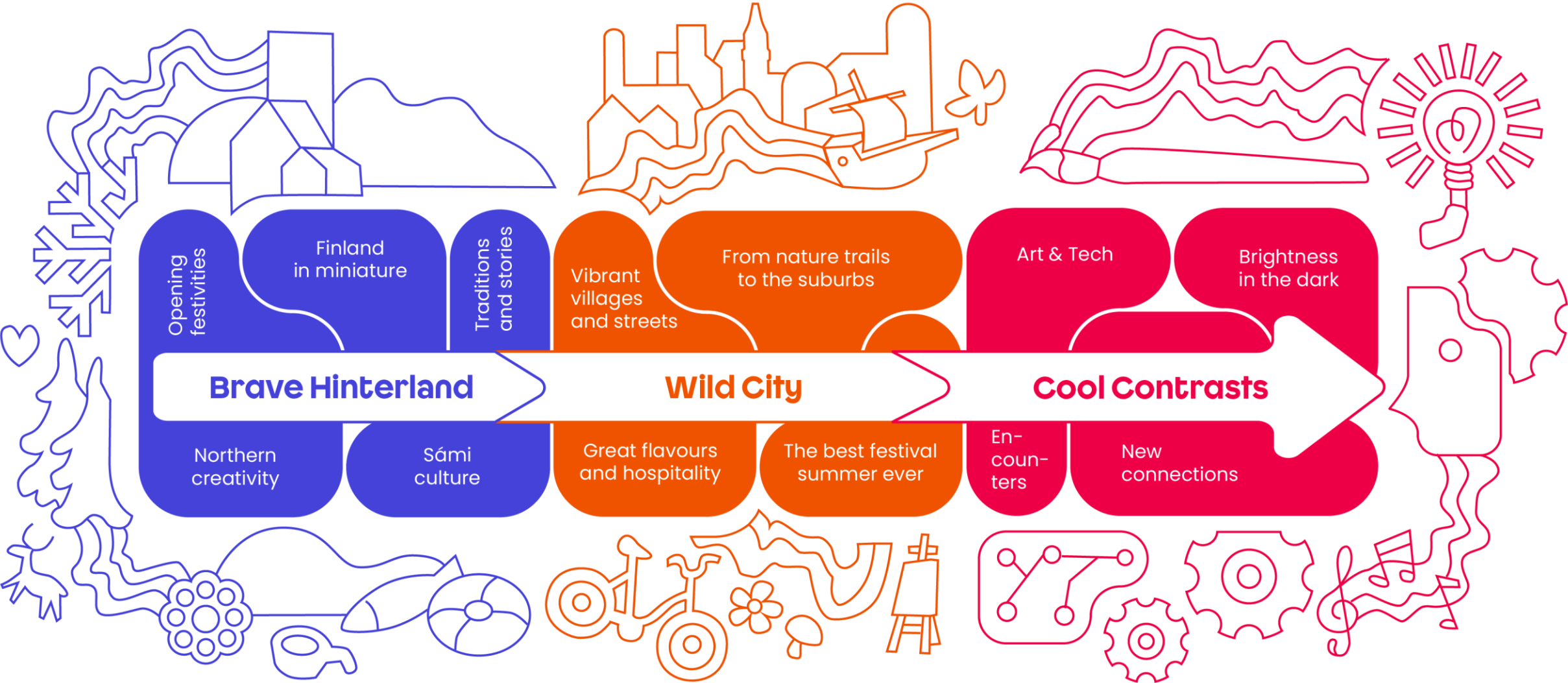
Urban culture, Community,
Festivals, Arctic Food
Culture



Cool Contrasts

Art & Tech, Media and
light art

365 days of exciting events, works of art and experiences



Budget 2021–27

€50 M

→ 2 million
event visits
→ 20% increase in
the number of
tourists

Finland
celebrates
European
Capital of
Culture
year 2026

Oulu + 39
municipalities +
hundreds of partners
all over the Europe

European visibility
for Finnish culture

”

A sneak peek into our oulu2026 program...

31.12.2025 – Jan 2026 Oulu2026 starts at New Year's eve on TV

- 31.12.2025 YLE broadcasts New Year's Oulu2026-show from Oulu
 - **Tickets:** [Lippu.fi](https://lippu.fi)
- **Oulu2026 Opening Festival in 16.-18.1.2026** Invites locals and all of Europe to join the celebration.
- This urban winter festival unveils the essence of Oulu2026, in a weather-proof way
- The vibrant festival area brings you to the heart of urban culture. The festival energy will spread throughout the city centre – there's something unique for everyone!



Layers in the Peace Machine

Opening 13.1.2026, until Dec 2026

Open Dates Tue-Sun 13:00-19:00 (TBC)
and Weekends 11:00-17:00 (TBC)

The **Peace Machine** media art-work at Oulu City Hall can be experienced as an immersive aesthetic experience. **Ekho Collective**'s art-work will be in interaction with the audience, using AI, machine learning and machine vision. The art experiences will improve Europe's cultural climate and helps us to redefine common interests and common humanity.

The inspiration for this art-work was **AI researcher Timo Honkela**'s book 'Peace Machine' which searches for new ways to resolve conflicts and promote dialogue.

Max. capacity 15-20 at the same time - 20 minutes slots
Slot reservations starting in October



JANUARY – DECEMBER 2026



Media Art from Kiasma

Open Dates Tue-Sun 13:00-19:00 (TBC)
and Weekends 11:00-17:00 (TBC)

- The Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma in Helsinki will curate an exhibition of media art from the collections of the Finnish National Gallery.
- **The Media Art from Kiasma exhibition** will open in the exhibition spaces of Oulu City Hall in 13th of January 2026, until December 2026
- The exhibition is **suitable for all ages** and is free of charge and accessible



JANUARY – MAY 2026



Borderless Sámi Culture - RISKU

The culture of the Sámi people, the only indigenous people in the European Union will be showcased in a wide range of public events and activities.

Sámi duodji, art, and events fill Oulu Art Museum from Mid-January to early May in 2026. At the exhibition in Oulu Museum of Art, the visitors get to familiarise themselves with the variety, resilience and sustainability of Sámi culture.

Ovlla opera produced by Oulu Theater will have the premier in 16.1.2026



Ovllá

An opera about the search for roots and the state-led oppression of the Sámi people.

- World premiere on the main stage of Oulu Theatre 16.1.2026 and last one 28.2.2026
 - 20 shows
- Production: Oulu Theatre, Oulu Symphony and the Sámi National Theatre Beaivváš in cooperation with Oulu2026
- Tickets:
 - A: 93 € / 88 € / 79 €
 - B: 88 € / 83 € / 75 €
 - C: 83 € / 78 € / 71 €

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[Oulu2026 Programme | Ovllá](#)



In the photo Emil Karlsen and Albert. Photo: Knut Åserud

Oulu Art Museum

In 2026, Oulu Art Museum will host international exhibitions that explore themes of social and ecological sustainability, outlining viable and even magical futures. In addition, Oulu Art Museum is involved in the public art projects of the year and in developing a programme in the entire region.

Preview of exhibition programme 2026:

16.1. – 19.4. / 3.5.2026 – *Sámi contemporary art and duodji taking over the art museum*

22.5. – 11.10.2026 – *avantgarde fashion design & new sustainable materials from Finland & Japan*

16.10.2026 - 14.2.2027

Adaptation – art, science and tacit local knowledge, look at global changes through lens-based mediums



Visits

Entrance fees (2025):

Adults: €10

Under 18 years: free admission

Opening hours (2025)

June – August

Tue-Sun 11–18

September – May Tue-Thu 9–18, Fri 11–19, Sat-Sun 11–17. **Closed on Mondays**

(note limited opening hours on public holidays)

Guided tours offered for groups, further information:

[Guided exhibition tours - Oulu art museum](#)



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JANUARY – DECEMBER 2026

Fotografiska Tallinn at Oulu2026 Exhibition Center

- Fotografiska Tallinn produces a brand-new exhibition for **Oulu2026 Exhibition Center** in Pekuri Shopping Mall
- **The exhibition is inspired by the theme of Cultural Climate Change.**
- Fotografiska exhibition is a **destination to discover world class photography in Oulu** during 2026.
- Tickets from Lippu.fi – Sales starts in December
- Opening Hours will be released in 4th of September



Frozen People

28.2.2026

Frozen People is a **festival of electronic music and northern art on the ice of Nallikari Beach** in Oulu.

The frozen sea provides the brutal and unique arctic conditions for the world's most chilling dances and art experiences.

The festival is part of the **Untamed Office project** which provides job opportunities for individuals aged 18 to 30, along with possibilities to carry out art and cultural projects that stem from their ideas.

Website: [Frozen People | Oulu Urban Culture](https://frozenpeople.fi)

Contact: heikki@urbanculture.fi



Climate Clock

13.6.2016 ->

Artworks created by world-leading international and Finnish artists will create a permanent art route around Oulu. Each unique location offers a moment of reflection and hope for the future.

Climate Clock is one of the most significant productions of the Oulu2026 European Capital of Culture year, where art intertwines with the theme of climate change, and global warming in Northern Finland.

Climate Clock is curated by **Alice Sharp**, Invisible Dust (UK).





Two elements:

1) Public engagement artwork:

[Tellervo Kalleinen & Oliver Kochta-Kalleinen](#), Studio Kalleinen Finland

2) Permanent artwork commissions:

Oulu City, Kauppurien aukio - [Rana Begum](#) (UK)

Haukipudas, Kiviniemi Marina - [Superflex](#) (Denmark)

Yli-Ii, Kierikki - [Ranti Bam](#) (Nigeria/UK)

Ylikiiminki - [Takahiro Iwasaki](#) (Japan)

Oulunsalo, Local History Museum - [Gabriel Kuri](#) (Mexico)

Kiiminki, Koiteli - [Antti Laitinen](#) (Finland)

Best Festivals in Europe

This program showcases the [unique festivals of the Oulu2026 region](#), inviting all Europeans to join our northern festivals.

These events range from veteran machinery days to musical experiences, and from poetry weeks to film festivals held in the dim light of an old locomotive hall.

The events encapsulate the magic of our northern region and reflect the Cultural Climate Change throughout the Oulu2026 region.



Art li Biennial

11.6.-31.7.2026

In Art li Biennial the municipality of li becomes the cradle of international high-quality contemporary art.

The next Art li Biennial will be organised in 2026 and is part of the official European Capital of Culture year program. While we wait for the event, we can explore li's stunning environmental art park any time of the year.



Solstice

18.-20.6.2026

Solstice Festival is a gathering for people who enjoy music, art and nature, preferably combined. It takes place during midsummer in northern Finland.

The festival site, Rukatunturi, is an arctic fjeld which rises half a kilometer above sea level, giving people picturesque views over pine trees and lakes. Midsummer combined with the northern location means the sun doesn't set at all, creating a unique atmosphere – a celebration of light and life.



Haapavesi Folk

25.-27.6.2026

Haapavesi Folk Music Festival has delighted and amazed its audience with diverse music for over 30 years. In addition to folk music, genres such as ethno, bluegrass, fado, Irish folk music, jazz, and many others are played in the summer nights of Haapavesi.

The festival is held in the middle of the beautiful Northern countryside, and is definitely the Finnish summer experience you don't want to miss. The Folk courses held before the festival are a definite recommendations for any musicians.



Kajaani Poetry Week

1.-5.7.2026

Kajaani Poetry Week is a celebration of literary and performing arts, where you can enjoy poetry, music, and theater. Combining the new and the old, the traditional and the surprising, the festival evokes emotions and thoughts year after year.

In addition to unexpected program numbers, many eagerly anticipate the annual poetry events at the statue of Eino Leino, arguably the most famous Finnish poet, who was born in Kajaani, and the unveiling of the Poetry Stone.



Wanha Woima Days

3.-5.7.2026

Wanha Woima Days is the summer event for anyone looking for fun for all ages. In addition to various engines and machinery, there is plenty to see and Finnish traditions to enjoy.

You can marvel at and admire the traditional work showcase events and join around 20 000 guests who head for Oulainen each year for this celebration of Finnish traditional machinery and craft. The event is not specifically designed for anyone but is intended for everyone!



Puolanka Pessimism Festival

Early July

The Pessimists of Puolanka will gather pessimists from across the country and Europe in Puolanka in 2026.

This multidisciplinary production will culminate in a spectacular performance of music and performing arts, inspired by the original Pessimism events in Puolanka throughout the years.



BEST FESTIVALS IN EUROPE

Kuhmo Chamber Music

12.-25.7.2026



In over 50 years, Kuhmo Chamber Music has grown to become one of the world's foremost music festivals.

The 2026 Kuhmo Chamber Music will be in the Spotlight of Europe. The festival will be held on July 12-25, 2026. The programme will include 60 concerts, around 300 compositions, which will be performed by over 100 international artists.

The highlights of the Festival will include three commissioned works by composers living in Finland. The themes of the works will come from the Oulu2026 themes.



Raahe Jazz on the Beach

23.-25.7.2026

The program of the event is contemporary and emphasizes the experimental side of jazz.

For many, the best part of Jazz on the Beach is the surprises and experiences offered by top-class performers, the summer evenings scented by the sea, and the perfect setting for refreshing old acquaintances and encountering unforgettable moments.



BEST FESTIVALS IN EUROPE

Air Guitar World Championships

28.-29.8.2026

Contestants around the world put their best on stage shamelessly with their invisible instruments.

This phenomenon promoting world peace with a smile has inspired both filmmakers and doctorate researchers. You can't hold a gun while you play the air guitar. The Air Guitar World Championships has been arranged in Oulu since 1996.



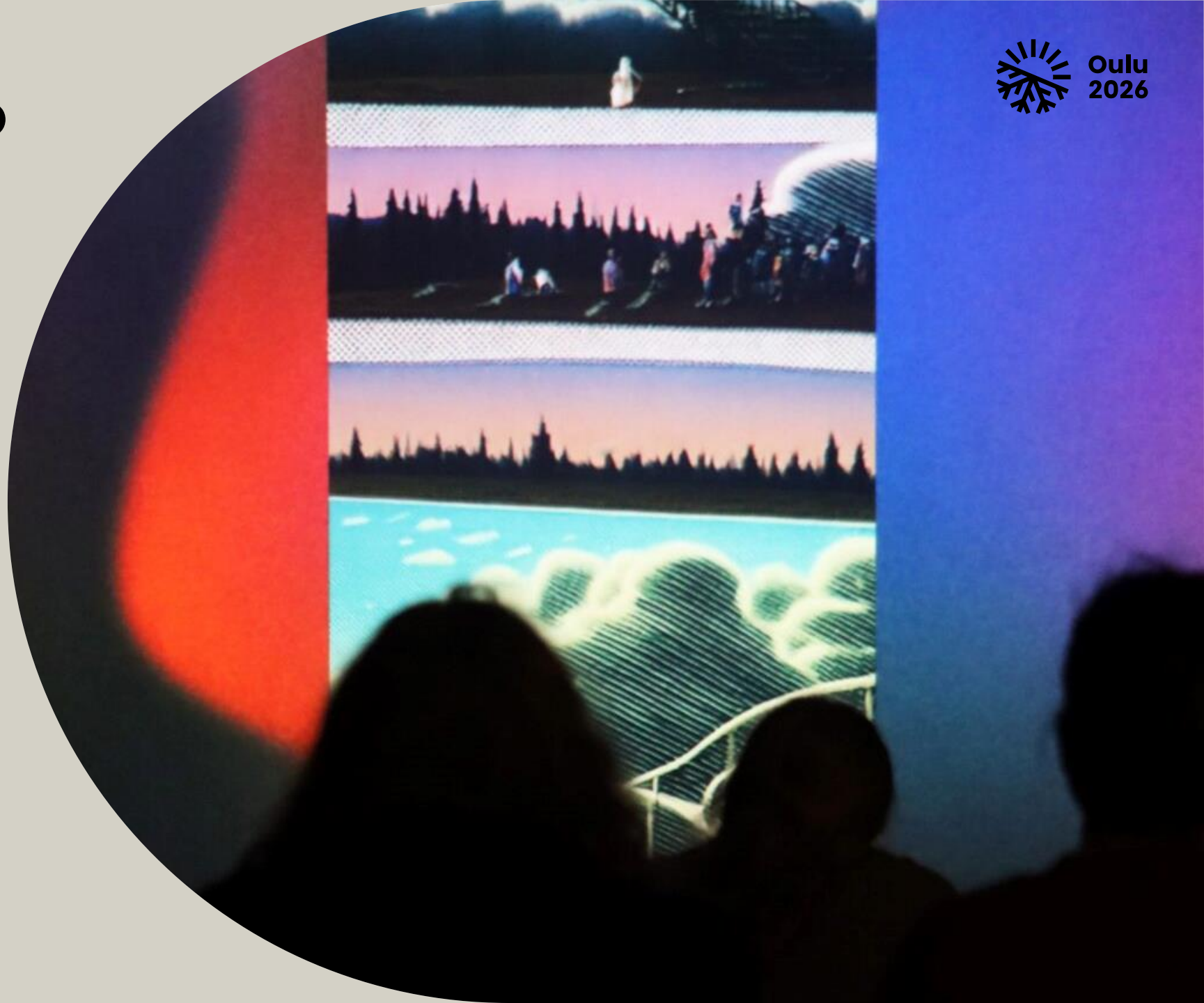
BEST FESTIVALS IN EUROPE

Oulu Music Video Festival

20.-23.8.2026

The world's oldest music video festival has been held since 1994. The Oulu Music Video Festival has spotlighted both domestic and international music videos and showcased fascinating pop culture phenomena through film and special screenings.

The festival clubs and other side events have turned the festival into a popular celebration attracting thousands of guests. The festival culminates in the Pumpeli Gala, which awards and celebrates the best Finnish music videos and their creators.



Kuusamo Nature Photo

11.-13.9.2026

Kuusamo Nature Photo Festival is held in Kuusamo amidst the most stunning northern autumn foliage. It is the most important event of the year for many nature photographers in Finland, drawing both professionals and passionate hobbyists to Kuusamo.

The festival inspires, encourages, surprises, teaches, creates connections, and brings people close to the original nature with the most advanced photography techniques.



The Irish Festival of Oulu

23.-27.9.2026

The Irish Festival of Oulu is the world's most northerly Irish cultural festival recognised nationally and internationally for its versatile and inclusive programme of world class traditional Irish music, dance and multi-disciplinary culture events.

Since 2006, over 100 000 participants have attended the festival. Simply put, the festival performers, audience and staff come together for one long week to celebrate life through Irish music, dance, and culture.



JANUARY 2026 -



Art & Nature Trails

Explore Oulu2026 region!

There are a multitude of Art & Nature Trails in the Oulu2026 area for visitors to slowly wander, discovering along the way glorious nature sites, cultural and historical locations and areas and original events.

[Journey to Discovery in Art](#) Rokua

[Sanginkontu Art Trail](#) Oulu

[Walking Withing the Frame](#) Oulu

[Art Linnakallio Symposium](#) Kempele, from August 2026



AUGUST 2026

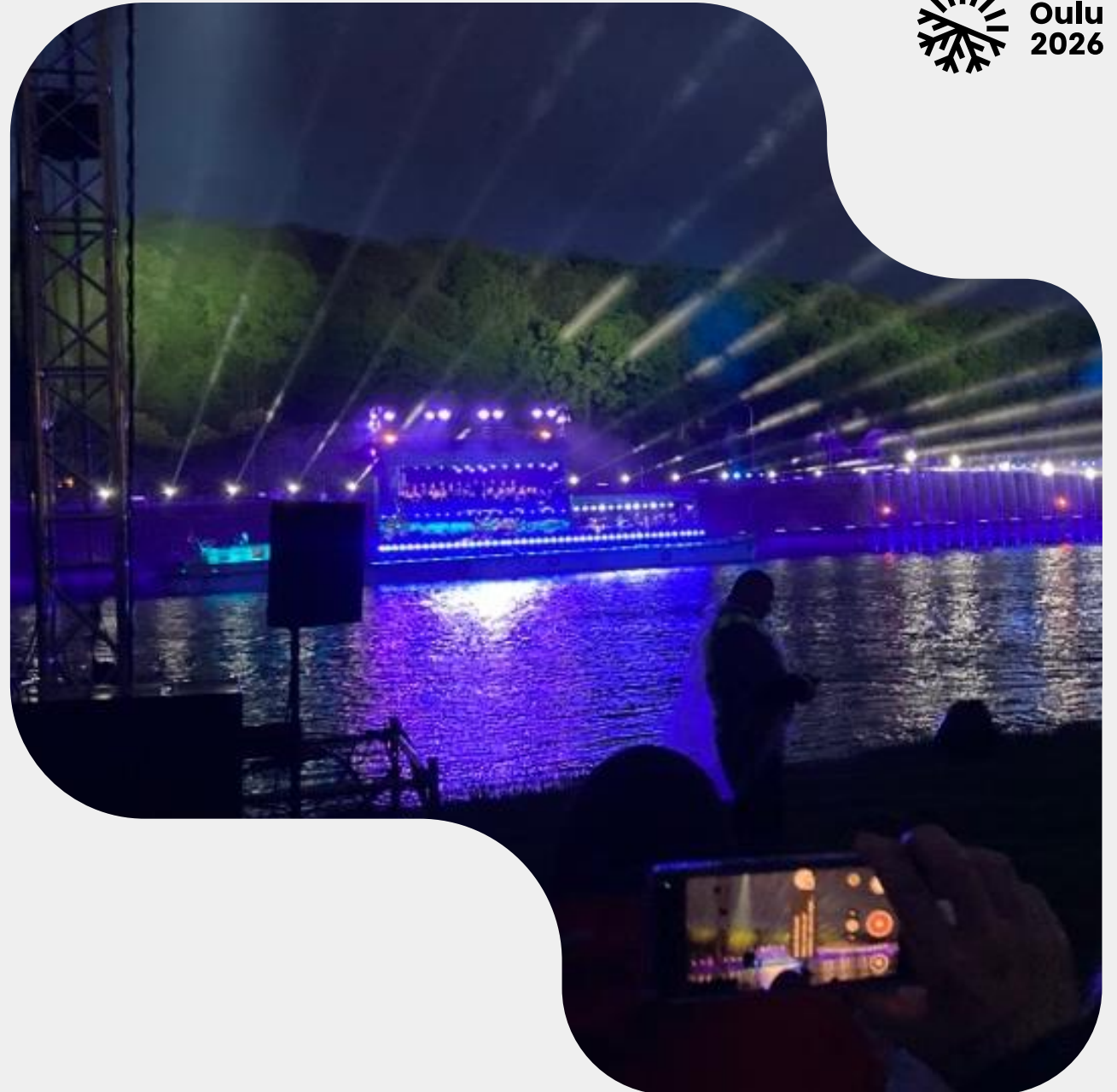


Delta Life 28.-29.8.2026

Delta Life is a journey along waterways. Along the Oulu riverfront there will be a series of immersive performances - expect unexpected pop-up-performances, workshops and community gatherings.

The Delta Life project invites an international group of artists to explore time, place and stories with locals along the shores of the rivers of the Oulu region.

<https://www.oulunjuhlaviikot.fi/>



SEPTEMBER – NOVEMBER 2026



Underground Clash (working Title)

18.9.-22.11.2026, Kivisydän Car Park

Danish Jakob Kudsk Steensen is an artist and 'digital gardener' working with environmental storytelling through 3D animation, spatial sound and enveloping installations.

Jakob brings together physical, virtual, real and imagined landscapes in mixed reality, focusing on how humans, technology and natural environments connect. This all will happen underground at the heart of Oulu City Center.

Max. capacity 100 at the same time



Lumo – Art & Tech Festival

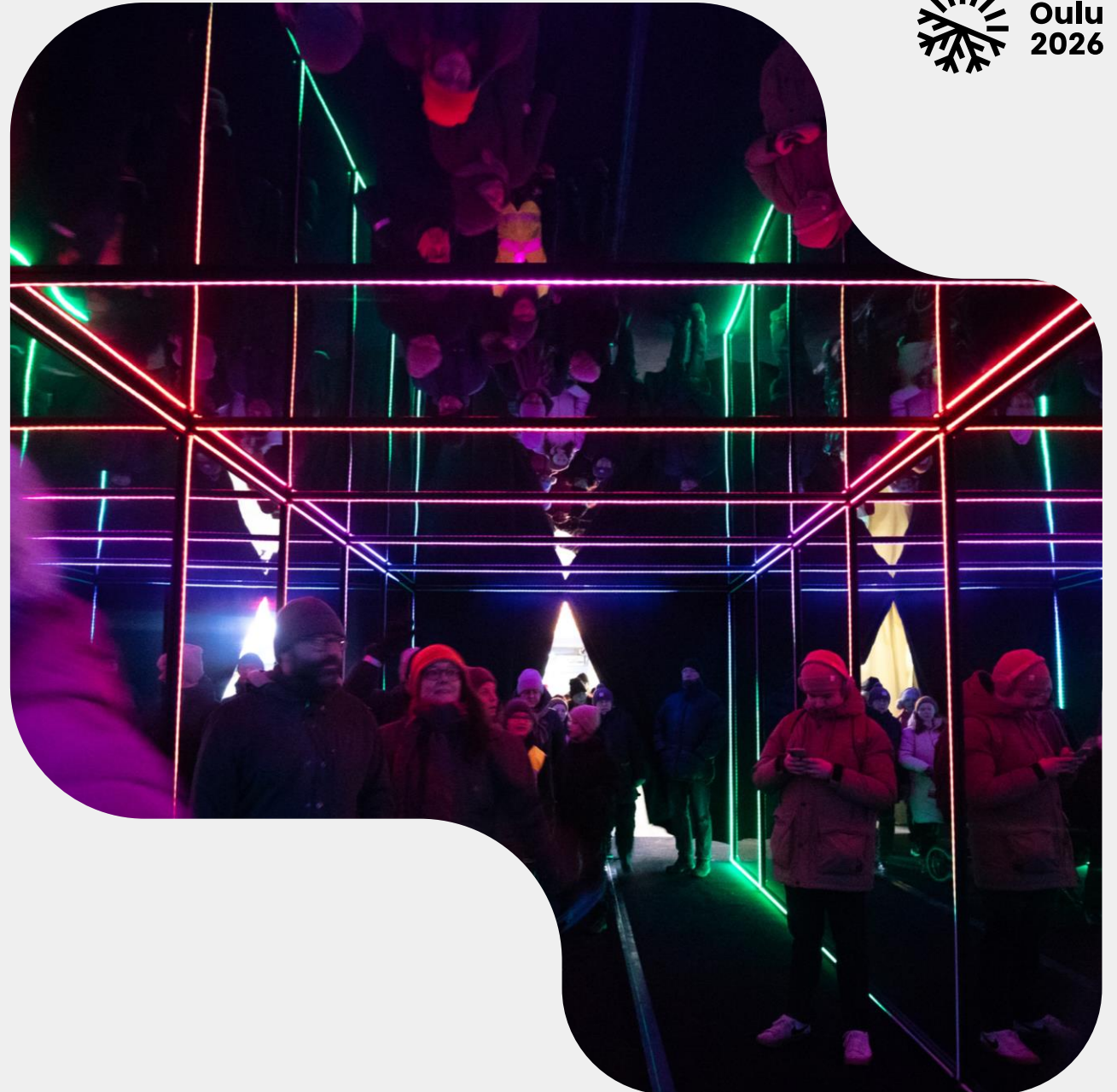
13.-22.11.2026

The City of Oulu is a member of Unesco Creative Cities 2023 – Media Arts network

The Lumo Light Festival will invite Art & Tech networks to Oulu.

The international Art & Tech Festival will showcase new innovations combining art and technology.

Oulu2026 will host an extensive networking event for European cities as well as a matchmaking event for artists, technology innovators and entrepreneurs.



Arctic Food Lab

Local flavours and gastronomic experiences!

Arctic Food Lab brings together those operating in gastronomy and food culture in the Oulu region and celebrates Northern cuisine and gastronomy.

- A registered Trade Mark
- Network of professionals and companies
- Food events & local food in cultural events

[Website: Arctic Food Lab - Oulu2026](#)
[How does Oulu taste like? -video](#)





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Pohjolan OP  **KALEVAMEDIA** 

