Of the 9,400 Kuhmo-dwellers, 2,200 live in Perukka (“remotest corner”). Perukka starts about 3 kilometres from the Kuhmo town square. And there is plenty of it: Kuhmo spreads over half a million hectares, of which a little over a tenth is protected, and the forest areas are dotted by 600 lakes. Lakes such as Lentua, Ontojärvi, Lammasjärvi, Juttua and Änätti are fishermen’s favourites, as are the more than a hundred rapids that offer fine challenges to rapids kayakers. Kuhmo witnessed many of the fiercest battles of the Winter War, and the Winter War Museum provides a human perspective on the border municipality’s history.

If culture is your thing, you have come to the right place. In Kuhmo, you are following in the footsteps of writers Riikka Pulkkinen and Veikko Huovinen, philologist and poetry collector Elias Lönnrot, composers Krzysztof Penderecki and Kaia Saaristo, and painters Louis Sparre and Akseli Gallen-Kallela. Don’t be surprised to meet a carbon copy of Aino, Väinämöinen or Joukahainen from the Finnish epic Kalevala, because this is where the descendants of models in Gallen-Kallela’s famous paintings live. In Lentua, you can admire the landscape of the Aino triptych or visit Konsta’s contemplation rock, because the famous novel Havukka-ahon ajattelija was not only situated in Kuhmo, but also partly filmed there. Kuhmo Chamber Music has claimed its place among the top festivals in the world after over 40 years of determined work, and the folk music festival Sommelo appears on the list of world’s 25 top ethno festivals. In Juminkeko and Kalevala Spirit, you can experience Kalevala with all your senses.

Much of the life in Kuhmo is funded by the Japanese, Africans and Central Europeans since forest cluster, forestry, sawmills, the wood product industry and haulage are the biggest employers.

Technology used in the family-owned Kuhmo Oy is difficult to match in each branch and log is modelled for optimised sawing yield, as measured in Euros too. In tow of Kuhmo Oy, other progressive wood product companies have been founded. There is a Kuhmo-origin wooden house in the heart of London, and Europe’s largest log house, situated in Senftenberg, Germany, is an export from Kuhmo. Energy efficient construction is expedited by the Woodpolis network formed by ten wood product companies from the Kainuu region and surrounding areas. The breakthrough was the approximately 40 million Euro order for eco-efficient wooden houses in Horkastes, Helsinki. In bioenergy, Kuhmo stands among the top in Finland of all the primary energy used in Kuhmo, more than 60% is from renewable sources.

The City of Kuhmo is proud to welcome you, your family and your company. Elves are said to have roamed in Kuhmo’s Lentiira from around 500 B.C., making Kuhmo an elf city. Rejoice like a child, enjoy like an elf. We will do our best to make you at home.
Kuhmo, situated in the midst of pristine waters in the Kainuu region, is a good place to live. Kuhmo offers natural beauty coupled with a high quality of life. Unique nature and vibrant cultural life keep one active throughout the year.

Thanks to the internationally acclaimed Chamber Music Festival, Kuhmo, also known as the meeting point of eastern and western cultures, has risen to music lovers’ awareness. The event, which started as a small village festival and now hosts some of the world’s most famous chamber musicians, is an excellent example of the Kuhmo spirit.

In Kuhmo, activities come in abundance. Fishing, hunting, zumba, yoga, ice hockey and craft clubs – in Kuhmo, there are hobbies for the whole family. Health and wellness services promote wellbeing and provide additional energy for daily life. Local activities are supplemented by those offered by the Vuokatti travel centre. And thanks to the vicinity of the Russian border, even the Viennese Karelian folklore villages are within everyone’s reach.
Kuhmo offers something for everyone, because there is space to be and to live. The possibilities of the surrounding nature, vivid cultural life and high quality basic services mean a firm base for the Kuhmo way of life, where activity and joviality go hand in hand.

For families with children, Kuhmo provides a good and clean place to grow, and a great start to life. For the elderly, Kuhmo is a great place for stimulating and safe retirement. Basic services are in place, and there is no need to worry, for example, about day and health care.

Young Kuhmo dwellers can enjoy a variety of sports facilities, such as an indoor swimming pool and an indoor ice hockey rink, youth centre and activities organized by various sports clubs which are easy to join. The architecturally significant and impressive library building on the banks of the Pajakkakoski rapids offers both reading experiences and temporary exhibitions. The Music School provides high quality teaching that can be complemented by spring for the senior secondary school’s music programme, which in addition to the traditional graduate’s cap equips the students with a lot of experience and learning in music. And who knows, musical skills might even land you a summer job – every year the summer musician programme employs about 20 young musicians.

Kuhmo is a favourable environment for safe growth, jovial life and successful entrepreneurship.
Entrepreneur and writer Katariina Sarvela “jovialied” her life a few years ago by moving from Jyväskylä to Kuhmo. Hurried rhythm of life, work stress and breast cancer diagnosis made Sarvela look for a new direction in her life.

– The first year I reserved for myself. I concentrated in writing, which helped me to go through my past life, says Sarvela, who has taken a liking to Kuhmo’s peaceful pace of life.

Magnificent nature and its quietness are a great source of energy for Sarvela, matron of the “Finnshui” Siirtola farm.

– I feel that in today’s big cities people are far too busy. I was too. There was no time to stop and enjoy life around me. Here the proximity to nature has a great psychological effect, because the hurried rhythm of life seems to calm all by itself, is how Sarvela shares her experiences.

But the Kuhmo-style joviality is not mere natural calm. It also entails a sense of activeness. Peace-loving Kuhmo dwellers are an outgoing and entrepreneurial lot.

– Kuhmo is an exceptionally great place, because in addition to nature, our vivid cultural life offers a lot to see and to do. I often go to concerts held at the Kuhmo Arts Centre. It could actually be said that I lead a more active cultural life here in Kuhmo than earlier when I lived in bigger cities, Sarvela laughs.

Sarvela is very hopeful about the future of Kuhmo and believes that the lively city situ-ation and amongst gorgeous nature will expand its population. People have started to opt for remote work through which it is possible to get more out of life. In smaller places money simply gives you more — specifically more value for life.

– As far as my own future is concerned, I see it very much in Kuhmo, because I immensely enjoy the environment and meaningful work Kuhmo has to offer, Sarvela says happily.
Kuhmo is a cradle of cultural activities. Versatile events, traditions and of course the far-famed Kuhmo Arts Centre and its 250 yearly events – all are here. The most anticipated concerts of the year include those by Sinfonietta Lentua.

The Kuhmo Chamber Music Festival, organized since the 1970’s, has steamed ahead year after year by trusting in the charm of chamber music. In July, Kuhmo hosts chamber music stars from all over the world, not forgetting the local masters.

Internationality is counterbalanced by traditions, where the spirit of national epic Kalevala is strongly present. The epic folklore is on display at the Kalevala Spirit Experience Park and the Juminkeko Information Centre, which also hosts temporary exhibitions. The annual Sommelo folk music festival with its lamentations and poem singing has a strong Kalevala feel to it. The tight bond between culture and nature manifests itself clearly in traditional foods such as rönttönen (small open pie) and muikkukukko (a type of rye bread pie stuffed with revealed that are made with nature’s own ingredients.

At Christmastime Kuhmo transforms into a true elf city where traditions are seen and heard through events, concerts and sales. The charming Christmas Tale at the Kalevala Spirit Experience Park is filled with red elf hats and old Finnish traditions.

Kuhmo Arts Centre hosts 250 events every year! Photo: Pekka Ayrnhm. The program of the annual folk music festival Sommelo has a strong feeling of Kalevala. Photo: Klaus von Matt/Sommelo. Rye pie at Hotel Kalevala. Photo: Salla Pappila.
In the mid-1990’s, the Kuhmo Music School got a new accordion teacher, who over the years has enriched the local cultural life with his talents and actions.

– I can still vividly remember travelling by train from Helsinki to Kajaani, and from there by car to Kuhmo. I did not know the area, so for me moving to Kuhmo was a big leap into the unknown. After all these years, however, I can say that I have not regretted my choice, not even for a second, laughs Jukka-Pekka Kuusela, who nowadays works as a conductor.

The big turning point in Kuusela’s life came in 2000, when Sinfonietta Lentua was founded to perform at the county governor’s Millennium party. Kuusela conducts the orchestra whose many Kuhmo-born members had to leave Kuhmo for work, but thanks to Sinfonietta Lentua have now been able to return home. The orchestra has musicians also from Petrozavodsk, making Sinfonietta Lentua an excellent example of genuine and successful neighbouring area cooperation.

– Cultural life in Kuhmo is very active, which is a big enrichment for the local people. Here it is not only possible to enjoy cultural experiences but also participate in them, Kuusela explains the strengths of Kuhmo.

Kuusela frequently also conducts orchestras in Central Europe, China and especially Russia, where he was appointed the principal conductor of the Murmansk Philharmonic Orchestra in 2009.

City of friendly people

The friendliness of the local people has made Kuusela feel at home in Kuhmo. A pleasant work community and good students both get praise.

– These things have been just right here. I find it great that in Kuhmo there is no risk of getting lost in the masses, so to say, because everyone knows everyone at least at some level. Here people really look after each other, Kuusela ponders.

Compared to bigger cities, in smaller cities it is much easier to get things done, something that Kuusela has also noted.

– In Kuhmo, I can handle all practical matters in a single day, because everything is so close. This was not the case when I lived in Moscow, for example, where distances are long, Kuusela shares his experiences.

In addition to culture vultures, Kuusela recommends Kuhmo to those who like being in nature. The surrounding nature offers excellent opportunities for hunting, fishing and hiking alike.
History feeds modern development. At the turn of the 20th century, Kuhmo was the tar capital of Finland, leading the way to the woodworking industry. The founding of Kuhmo Oy in 1955 left a permanent mark on local life as the wood product industry together with agriculture and forestry still have a firm footing in the area.

After decades of producing timber for the world, Kuhmo remains the centre of the wood product industry in the Kainuu region. Tens of forestry and woodworking companies utilise the forests and inherent expertise of the area. Success comes from strong traditions and innovative development work.

For Kuhmo, internationalization is old news. Its era of globalization had already started 150 years ago through commerce. Today exports include not only products, but also knowhow developed by, for example, the expert organization Woodpolis.

For Kuhmo, internationalization is old news. Its era of globalization had already started 150 years ago through commerce. Today exports include not only products, but also knowhow developed by, for example, the expert organization Woodpolis.
In 2006, wood and forestry-driven Kuhmo saw the founding of Woodpolis, an expert organization specialized in timber construction. The network consisting of local wood industry entrepreneurs seeks to market local expertise and create new jobs.

In Woodpolis’ R&D, the key words are ecological and innovative construction. Its success derives from the local wood raw material, which is ideal for construction, and the knowhow of the companies.

Woodpolis offers companies R&D and training services in the modern production environment. Results of the product development can be admired not only in various parts of Finland, but also abroad, including Germany which now hosts one of the largest log houses in Europe.

Woodpolis is backed by solid expertise and collaborates closely with, for example, Aalto University and Kajaani University of Applied Sciences.

Ecologically minded city

Kuhmo is known as an ecological city that favours renewable forms of energy. Cooperation between Kuhmo Osuuskeskus and Kuhmon Lämpö Ltd produces bioenergy at the Kuhmon Lämpö Ltd’s steam power plant where sawdust from the Kuhmo Oy sawmill is used for combustion.

The gold from our forests has turned from black to green - Woodpolis refines it into innovations.

Forest of many possibilities
Kuhmo is a great place to be and to live. So says also Tuomo Kyllönen, Managing Director of Peura-Trans Oy, who has lived in Kuhmo almost all his life. Peura-Trans, founded in 1989 to provide domestic and international transport services, also has its roots deep in the Kuhmo soil.

– Peura-Trans was founded when the local sawmill created a need for transport services. The same sawmill remains a customer, but over the years we have added almost 400 others, Kyllönen sums up Peura-Trans' development.

Although Peura-Trans transports to all over Europe, its headquarters are still in Kuhmo. In Kyllönen’s opinion, the location has had more advantages than disadvantages.

– In our case location does not make that much of a difference, but in people’s minds the Kainuu region and Kuhmo have been seen in a positive and sometimes even slightly exotic light, Kyllönen says.

For an entrepreneur Kuhmo offers a variety of services such as financing, information and advice. For Kyllönen, however, the attractive living environment and leisure activities offered by the city and the surrounding nature are of equal importance.

Kyllönen would like to see more entrepreneurs in Kuhmo because in his opinion there is space and opportunity for many different sectors. The recipe for success has also already been proved.

– You have to believe in yourself and your own abilities. By this I don’t mean ignorance, but common-sense confidence and boldness. You have to strive forward and learn from your mistakes, which for an entrepreneur are inevitable. Perseverance might be the key here, Kyllönen pondered.

Vartius international frontier station is a gateway to Russia.
In Kuhmo, you are greeted by lush forests and clean waters – shaded with colours of culture. The rich cultural heritage of the Kuhmo area manifests itself in events, sights, and local hobbies.

Artists have always been intrigued by the magic, allure, and mysticism of the wilderness. They, in turn, have helped the rooting of internationally acclaimed cultural events in Kuhmo.

During the Winter War, Kuhmo was one of the key battlegrounds, and forests in the area still bear numerous marks of the 1940s battle. Tales of the Winter War are passed down to future generations by the Kuhmo Winter War Museum and field fortifications restored at the original battle sites.

Harmony of the rugged wilderness
The abundance and unique landscape of the forest is easily accessible via numerous hiking tracks, from which it is equally easy to divert to one of the many free-flowing waterways. Extensive outdoor routes are in use throughout the year, only the means of movement vary from season to season. Game areas, fishing waters, and generous mushroom and berry fields start almost at your doorstep. The variety of nature can also be discovered on one of the guided tours.

Inhabitants of the rugged Kuhmo forests can be met at the Petola Nature Centre. Experience the magnificence of our large carnivores. Taiga is also home to the splendid Finnish forest reindeer and our largest carnivores that can be observed and photographed here better than anywhere else in Finland – by amateurs and professionals.

Kuhmo is the meeting point for not only the northern and southern forests, but also for the features of the eastern taiga which manifest themselves in full splendour in the many nature reserves. Captivating nature can be admired, for example, in Ystävyyden puisto, or the Park of Friendship, which is part of the Finnish-Russian Friendship Nature Reserve.
Kuhmo’s nature is great in its uniqueness. It offers a lot to do, see and experience, and sometimes even a livelihood. Renowned nature cinematographer Kari Kemppainen has captured events of the forest for over 20 years now.

— Nature has interested me since I was a little boy. In the beginning of the 1990’s, I moved to Kuhmo which has superb nature to shoot, Kemppainen explains.

Through Kemppainen’s films, tales of untamed Kuhmo nature have found their way into people’s homes. When asked why Kuhmo is such a popular photography and observation destination, he does not have to think twice.

— For large carnivore observation Kuhmo is the best place in Finland, if not in Europe, as bears, wolves and wolverines all inhabit the area. In addition to large carnivores, there are elk, beavers and Finnish forest reindeers in the area. And thanks to the displays of capercaillies and black grouse, bird watching is also growing in popularity, lists Kemppainen.

Diverse nature with its changing seasons, magnificent scenery and all animal species of the northern coniferous forest belt, those are the trump cards of Kuhmo nature that people from all ends of the world come to see.

The Boreal Wildlife Centre, founded by Kemppainen together with Jani and Markku Määttä, offers services for animal observation and photography. The hides are located in Kuhmo’s Viiksimo area.

— Abroad, nature and animal observation are very popular and a large proportion of our customers are from overseas. For them the nature of Finland in Kuhmo is an awe-inspiring experience, because for city people just sitting for an hour in a silent wilderness is something amazing. Of course our clientele also includes locals who are interested in nature and photography, Kemppainen adds.

Kemppainen has succeeded in capturing many great nature moments. When photographing animals, experience and inventiveness are important, he says.

— Autumn is a great season for photography as all the spectacular colours make the setting even better. When luring animals, one has to be cunning, so I have for example mastered the call of a female elk to lure males out to be photographed, Kemppainen laughs.

B&W

Kari Kemppainen