

# Marina

World [www.marinaworld.com](http://www.marinaworld.com)

July/August 2017

Issue 102



**LEADER**  
ESTONIA



The European  
Agricultural Fund for Rural  
Development: Europe  
investing in rural areas



Essential reading for marina and waterfront developers, planners and operators



*Kakumäe Marina, just west of Tallinn, is in the process of being developed. A 300-berth floating pontoon system is complete, an upgraded access road is under way and plans are in hand for varied shoreside infrastructure.*

network. The aim was to create marinas about 48km (30mi) apart to enable day sailors to cruise the coast. The project was backed by Estonian authorities, bilateral projects with Latvia, and EU funds. “We need more marinas south of Pärnu but we’ve largely achieved the aim,” Ots confirms. “Five or six years ago there were very few marinas.”

Today, there are around 2,000 regatta/advanced sailors and 25,000 registered leisure boats in Estonia, but most are motorboats or recreational fishing vessels. The majority of boats moored seasonally at marinas are Estonia-owned but visitors are given a warm welcome. “There is always space at the marinas as there are no natural harbours or safe mooring places elsewhere,” Ots admits. “A harbourmaster has an obligation to find space.”

He refers, on this basis, to the so-called ‘guest harbours’. “There are 186 ‘marinas’ in Estonia but many are very small and many are in very shallow water and only suitable for dinghies or small recreational fishing boats. Around 50 can accommodate larger boats and these are styled as our ‘guest marinas’.”

Marinas are owned by local authorities, private entities, the military and police. Private marinas are not always for public use, are mostly quite small and have sole access to the water. “Everyone in Estonia has a right of access to the waterfront but if people build a marina in front of their property it becomes private – no public right of way,” observes Indrek Ilves,

## Taking to the water

by Carol Fulford

**Bordering Russia to the east, Latvia to the south and with a northern coastline looking across the Gulf of Finland to Helsinki, Estonia has a rich and varied heritage and plenty of space within its 45,227km<sup>2</sup> (17,462mi<sup>2</sup>) mainland and island borders for a population of just 1.3 million. A battleground over several centuries for Denmark, Germany, Russia, Sweden and Poland, and conquered by Danes, Germans, Russians and Swedes not necessarily in that order and often more than once, Estonia won independence ‘in perpetuity’ in February 1920 under The Tartu Peace Treaty only to discover that ‘perpetuity’ didn’t after all last forever.**

In 1940, Estonia was annexed by the Soviet Union; in 1941 it was occupied by Nazi Germany; and in 1944 it was reoccupied by the Soviets. In the course of the collapse of the USSR, Estonia regained independence in 1991 and joined the EU and NATO in 2004. Over the past 26 years, while proudly flying the blue, black and white tricolour, Estonians have travelled, embraced the digital age with open arms – inventing Skype along the way – and benefited from EU funding to restore and restructure heritage sites. The coastline and waterfront that was locked down by the Soviet has now been returned to the people who can enjoy all the associated leisure and sporting opportunities that this brings.

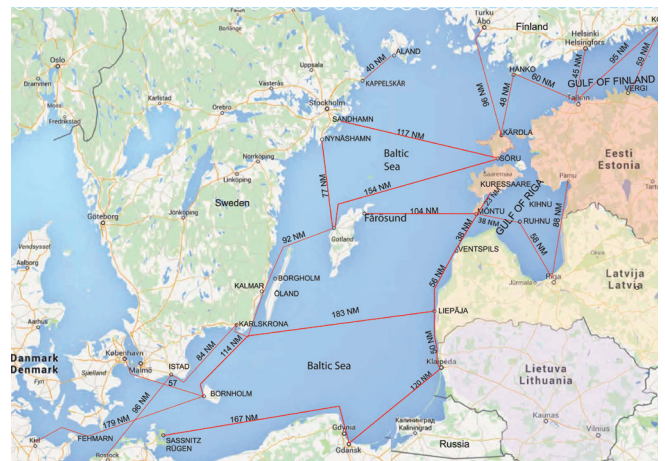
### Song of opportunity

Famous for its music festivals and huge collection of folk songs, Estonia marks time to a new post-Soviet refrain of opportunity. “We’ve lost a generation of seafarers because of the Soviet ban,” explains Jaano Martin Ots, CEO of the Estonian Small Harbour Development Centre and co-author of *Estonian Cruising Guide*. “Sailing was

discouraged during Soviet times but racing was encouraged because of the Soviet drive to win Olympic medals.” This meant that competitive sailing was permitted in Piritä near Tallinn in the Gulf of Finland but a chain was actually installed across the bay to stop people sailing out to sea and leaving the country.

Over the past few years, there has been increased interest in sailing, according to Ots, and the emphasis now is on having sailing schools at the country’s relatively new chain of marinas. Ots and others formed an association in 2011 as a lobby group to encourage government support of a marina network and then set to work establishing this

*Baltic Sea sailing distances. Courtesy: Estonian Cruising Guide*



marina manager at Kakumäe Marina. Ilves, in addition to his work developing Estonia's new flagship marina (see *Marina World* January/February 2017), is completely dedicated to promoting watersports and works enthusiastically with the Estonian Yachting Union, with an aim to boost membership to 10,000 in ten years. "At the end of April this year we held the 2<sup>nd</sup> Estonian Sailing Congress and had 200 delegates," he says. The Congress and the Union share an initiative to talk to local government to promote boating and stress the financial benefits that boating spend brings to the country. The Union has also gained government support for a travelling sailing school called 'Friends of the Sea'. This brings canoes, paddleboards, dinghies etc., for children to try out and runs courses on safety, kayak training etc., including evening courses for all ages. The cost is either minimal or free. "We are now in our second year and we hope to visit six or seven locations every year. In our first year we had 900 participants," Ilves confirms. "We have government sponsorship for three years and then will need to find a new sponsor."

## Government investment

Sixteen of the 'guest marinas' in Estonia come under the SL Marinas umbrella, a trademark of state-owned company Saarte Liinid Ltd. SL Marinas was formed out of a post-Soviet government decision in 2013 to boost tourism by building a marina at every ferry port. The company also runs all the commercial aspects of every port and harbour site. The marinas vary in size, from a single pontoon to 70



or so berths but most have access to good shoreside facilities including showers, laundry, sauna, free WiFi etc. Aside from two small guest mooring sites on Lake Peipus, the SL network is concentrated on the east coast of Saaremaa, in the Gulf of Riga region,

*Kuivastu Marina has just 50 berths but many more boats are accommodated during regattas.*

West Estonia and at ferry points at Naissaare in the Gulf of Finland and Sõru on Hiiumaa.

"We also have one new marina near Kihelkonna on the west coast of Saaremaa to add to the portfolio and have bought a private harbour on the island of Vilsandi [off the west coast of Saaremaa] as a ferry service has to be established," confirms Meelis Saarlaid, who is harbourmaster for 12 of the company's 16 marinas.

Obviously, Saarlaid travels extensively between the marina sites but meets

## Koguva Harbour

**Situated on the northern coast of the island of Saaremaa, Koguva is the best preserved nineteenth century village in Estonia, rich in architectural landmarks and with a strong historical connection to the fishing industry. A very popular summer tourist attraction, Koguva is ripe for sensitive development and Ragnar Põllu and partners at NGO Anchor saw the potential to transform the old harbour into a marina for modern fishing boats and visiting leisure craft.**

NGO Anchor bought the old fishing station when it went into liquidation and, with EU funding, has created a fisherman's museum cum restaurant. Accommodation is also available and soon to be augmented when a four bedroom boutique hotel is completed. If location says it all, Koguva Harbour *has* it all. As Põllu points out, "when the sun sinks into the sea, we've got a million dollar view."



## Old City Marina

**With deep water and 110 berths, Old City Marina is perfect for anyone wanting to stay right in the centre of Tallinn. Owned and operated by the Port of Tallinn, the marina offers smart amenities and secure berths for vessels up to 50m (164ft) but, as it is in the midst of a busy port, patience is required when entering or leaving the marina.**

A mix of mooring options is offered – at fixed quays and floating pontoons. Top Marine completed the 119-berth floating pontoons in 2011 using its Heavy Duty concrete pontoons and mooring fingers. Old City is ripe for redevelopment and a master plan has been drawn up to make the best of its 54ha (133.4acre) space and better connect the harbour with the historic city.



# MARKET UPDATE: ESTONIA

*Roomassaare Harbour enjoys a good racing heritage and offers 70 berths at a 20-year-old Marinetek floating pontoon system.*

Marina World in Roomassaare Harbour, a 20-year-old 70-berth marina that has a good sailing club and racing heritage. Every summer season, the marina welcomes around 200 visiting boats – mostly from Germany – to its Marinetek floating pontoon system.

“Roomassaare enjoys a busy season but the busiest in the group are Kuivastu Marina and Ringsu Harbour on the island of Ruhnu [Gulf of Riga]. We intend to double the number of berths at Ringsu. We currently have 38,” he says.

Finding room for all at Kuivastu Marina – which opened in 2012 on the easternmost tip of Saaremaa – can be a challenging exercise for harbourmaster Olev Vahter but one suspects he takes to the task with relish. “We’ve 50 berths but during regatta time we find space for many, many more,” he chuckles. Events like the Muhu Väin Regatta (Moonsund Regatta) attract a big following. In the 2016 Moonsund event, for example, Kuivastu Marina hosted 125 boats carrying a total of 800 people. The overall visitor level for the 2016 season was 847 boats carrying a total of 2,581 boaters. Fortunately, the marina has good, modern shoreside facilities.

SL Marinas runs a customer programme with a discount scheme to encourage members to cruise between



its facilities and has been working with newly established Estonian software specialist Marina Ahoy in the development of a marina management and reservation system. Marina Ahoy co-founders Hannes Koppel and Relika Metsallik-Koppel have developed a reservations App for boaters that offers a real time overview of berth availability and self check-in options. All boaters check in and out of every marina using the system thus providing SL with valuable data on how each marina is used and streamlining reservations. All berthing fees include use of power and water so no system is required for separate billing but the team is currently

developing software to control security gate access.

## Going cruising

In cruising terms, Estonia can be divided into five geographical sectors: the Gulf of Finland; West Estonia; the island of Hiiumaa; the island of Saaremaa; and the Gulf of Riga. In addition to this, there are two major lakes – Peipus, which is bisected by the Russian border – and Lake Võrtsjärv. Estonia’s only fully navigable river, the Ema jõgi (‘Mother’ in Estonian) runs for 100km (62mi) from one lake to the other via the city of Tartu.

## Pirita TOP and Pirita KJK

**Pirita TOP (Tallinn Olympic Yacht Centre) and Pirita KJK (Kalev Yacht Club - pictured) are adjacent facilities with good infrastructure. KJK has 170 berths for boats up to 24m (79ft) and 3.5m (11ft) draft at quayside moorings and floating pontoons with fingers. TOP can berth 325 boats and accepts vessels up to 50m (164ft), 2.8m (9ft) draft.**

Kalev Yacht Club, founded in 1948, trained many Olympic sailors and has 600 club members. It has recently undergone a pontoon extension undertaken by Top Marine and is one of several marinas in Estonia to join the Helloports berth reservation system. Launched in spring this year, Helloports is operated by Estonian Small Harbour Development Centre and is part of the Smartports project. The service currently connects marinas and sailors



in Europe, North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula enabling boaters to book and pay for berths and other services at the marina of their choice. It’s simple, secure and provides boaters with a single

source of information that enables them to compare berth prices and marina facilities. The marina benefits from electronic payments and the gathering of customer data.

# MARKET UPDATE: ESTONIA

## Gulf of Finland

The north coast of Estonia stretches for 140nm along the south coast of the Gulf of Finland; a busy waterway with deep waters. There are no natural harbours and only a few places to anchor but there are good marina facilities, particularly in and around the capital city Tallinn. The eastern border with Russia is marked by the River Narva, which is navigable for 14km (8.7mi) to the city of Narva and a tiny marina. Boaters must take great care, however, to observe correct distance from the border marker buoys so as not to enter Russian waters without permission. Between Tallinn and Narva, guest marinas are evenly spaced albeit generally small, offering from three to 40 berths.

Visitors heading for Tallinn – the best preserved medieval city in northern Europe – have several marina options, and access to all that a bustling, picturesque city can offer. The best examples include The Seaplane Harbour (Lennusadam); Old City Marina; Pirita KJK (Kalev Jahtklubi); and Pirita TOP (Tallinn Olympic Yacht Centre). Collectively, these offer over 600 berths. The floating installations were completed at Kakumäe Marina to the west of Tallinn on 1<sup>st</sup> May, offering 300 berths.

## West Estonia

An area of national parks and conservation areas, and the welcoming small island of Vormsi with its 12-berth marina, Estonia's west coast has a very jagged coastline with few bays deep enough to be entered by boat. The main city of Haapsalu, a resort area made famous by the therapeutic mud in its shallow-water bays, has three marinas: Grand Holm (70 berths); Veskiyigi (62 berths) with the long-standing Haapsalu Yacht Club; and Westmeri (70 berths). There is a 35-berth marina in Dirhami to the very north of the region and a 28-berth deep water facility at Rohuküla that has megayacht mooring.

## Hiiumaa

Hiiumaa is the second biggest island in Estonia with a jagged shoreline of 365km (227mi) surrounded by around 200 small islands and islets. Visitors enjoy beautiful hiking trails, quiet forests and excellent surfing, and the island is renowned for its historic lighthouses. There are five modern guest marinas: Heltermaa (42 berths); Kärkla Yacht Harbour, which opened in 2014 with 60 berths; Orjaku (40 berths); Roograhu (15 berths); and Sõru (15 berths).



## Kuressaare Yacht Harbour

**Developed on the original site of Saaremaa Sea Sports Club, which was built in the early 1900s as the first leisure boat harbour in Estonia, Kuressaare Yacht Harbour was designed from the outset as a visitor facility.**

The existing City-owned harbour and buildings were completed in 1999 with the help of EU funds under the PHARE programme. Access to the open sea was provided by a 2.9km (1.8mi) long canal and protection afforded by extremely costly breakwaters. "Originally, the canal was to be 50m [164ft] wide and 3m [10ft] deep but this proved too expensive," explains Oskar Jõgi, who has been harbourmaster at Kuressaare for the past 15 years. "The end result is 30m [98ft] wide and 2.5m [8ft] deep."

The marina berths were completed in 2005 using 210m (689ft) of Top Marine timber pontoons to create 133 berths. The contract was a major early commission for the Estonian pontoon manufacturer and comprises three 70m (230ft) long piers and a 90m (295ft) long quay that is generally used for extra mooring space during

events. Plans are in hand to expand the marina at the end of the pier near the fuel station but a lot of dredging will be required.

Although a visitor facility, Kuressaare remains loyal to its 'sea sports club' roots, offering club training for seven to nine-year-olds and ice sailing training, and works with the local high school helping children to learn to sail and respect the sea. The marina also hosts many nautical events including the Midsummer Eve Rally.

Kuressaare is a popular spa resort and is particularly busy during the summer season but the yacht harbour, which is within comfortable walking distance of the town centre, provides good extra revenue. "I've calculated that each person spends €180 over a two night stay and this equates to approximately €240,000 for the town from May to October," Jõgi reveals.

## Saaremaa

Estonia's biggest island at 2,992km<sup>2</sup> (1,155mi<sup>2</sup>) is also the second biggest island in the Baltic Sea. Saaremaa has long been valued as a vacation and tourism destination and its central city Kuressaare has two marinas – Kuressaare City Harbour (132 berths) and Roomassaare Marina (70 berths), which has deep waters and offers alongside berthing for vessels up to 120m (394ft).

Saaremaa has 12 marinas evenly spaced around the coast, and a 33-berth facility on the island of Abruca.

The smallest marina is Veere Fishing Harbour, which has deep water berths for just six boats but can accommodate an 80m (262ft) vessel. The recently built yacht harbour at Kuivastu has 50 berths and attracts a high level of visitors, and Mõntu Fishing Harbour at the southernmost point of the island is currently expanding its pleasure craft quay to accommodate a total of 20 boats.

## Gulf of Riga

Visiting boats can moor up at six marinas in the Estonian part of the Gulf of Riga although marinas at Manilaid,



## Kõiguste Marina

Currently offering just 12 berths but with plans for 60 and significant shoreside development, Kõiguste Marina has a five star location with unspoilt hinterland, deep clean waters and extensive birdlife. Co-owner Külli Akkermann received approval of the project as *Marina World* closed for press and hopes that building will start in September this year with a view to a grand opening for the 2018 season.

The marina – previously busy and successful before being destroyed by Cyclone Gudrun (Erwin) in January 2005 – started out in life as a Russian military site (hence the deep water) but has all the makings of an exclusive retreat.

Jansson Akkermann has plans for an office and berth holder facilities building, and a restaurant or small

*CGI for Kõiguste Marina (above) which currently offers just 12 berths (below).*



hotel. Twelve holiday homes are also under construction. In the 2016 season, 60-70 boats visited – most from Germany, some from Finland – and stayed for one or two nights.

Munalaid and Pihelgalaid have only ten berths between them. By far the largest marina is Pärnu Yacht Club at the mouth of the River Pärnu and close to the centre of Estonia's summer capital city. During high season, tourists flock to Pärnu for its sandy beaches and lively nightlife making it a popular holiday destination. The marina has 140 berths for boats up to 20m (66ft). The Estonian islands of Ruhnu and Kihnu, popular in the summer with Estonians and Latvians alike, each have small marinas.

## Building marinas

Estonian marina builder Top Marine has constructed most of the leisure harbour infrastructure in the country since the company was founded back in 1996. Now, although having built up a business that sees it exporting marina systems throughout Europe and into Asia, CEO Andry Prodel and his team retain a market leading position. The most recently completed project is Kakumäe Marina just west of Tallinn.

“For the 300 berths here, we installed 1,100m (3,609ft) of pontoons and fingers with a mix of concrete floats and concrete decking, and plastic floats with timber decking,” Prodel tells *Marina World*. “The total comes in at 2,200 tonnes of floating solutions.”

Built on the site of a former Soviet fishing boat marina with very shallow water, Kakumäe underwent a significant dredging project that essentially moved the marina basin further out to sea and used spoil to build up the shoreline. It was a radical move for Estonia. “There was some local objection but this changed when people could see that we really were going to build a marina and that the site wasn't just an excuse for a property development,” admits marina manager Indrek Ilves.

Now that the floating elements are complete, attention is being turned to constructing a new access road, sports facilities and ultimately a boutique hotel and spa.

While Kakumäe is the latest Estonian flagship for Top Marine, competitive marina builder FloatMe Marinas has hopes for a large contract for floating walkways on Lake Peipus. In business for eight years, FloatMe manufactures floating pontoons and platforms using plastic or concrete floats and local impregnated pine decking. Although enjoying a small share of the Estonian market with recent contracts such as

## Seaplane Harbour (Lennusadam)

Part of the impressive Estonian Maritime Museum, Seaplane Harbour is home to most of Estonia's historic ships and offers guest berthing for 50 vessels at a specially built pier.

Located on the west coast of Tallinn Bay, the harbour runs a tour boat and hosts nautical activities. “They bring life into the harbour,” asserts harbour master Lauri Väinsalu. “The Sail Training Association holds events here and the Tall Ship Race passes through and stops over this month [July].”

Seaplane Harbour is in the midst of waterfront land ripe for redevelopment and enjoys deep water, a rare commodity in Estonia where coastal water is invariably shallow. Without a doubt, surrounding buildings in years to come will be regenerated to create a waterfront destination and more berths could be in the offing. “There's a plan to build a huge breakwater and a 2,000 berth marina in the Bay of Tallinn,” Väinsalu says. “I reckon it will happen in ten to twenty years.”



Karlova Harbour in Tartu, business partners Marek Vikat and Andres Agan are keenly eyeing export opportunities, particularly in Germany and the Netherlands.

“The problem in Estonia is money,” says Vikat. “Most of the marinas are built with EU funding and the decking for modern impregnated timber pontoon systems has a 10-15 year life. You can get the funds to build the marina but no ongoing funds to look after it.”

Despite its commendable efforts to foster young sailors and the ultimate marina customer base that this will hopefully bring, funds are core to the future of Estonian marinas. “Marinas in Estonia don’t make money – and don’t let anyone tell you otherwise!” asserts Jaano Martin Ots. “The money comes from services, like restaurants and cafés, so these are crucial.”

## Pärnu Yacht Club

**Situated in Estonia’s summer capital, Pärnu Yacht Club is a private club owned by its 217 members. It was founded in 1906 and has held regattas for over 100 years. In 2013, a 120-berth floating Top Marine Heavy Duty pontoon system with mooring fingers was installed along with appropriate dockside pedestals. Unlike many pontoon systems in Estonia, the Pärnu system remains in the water all year round.**

Pärnu is currently working on a master plan to improve its general landscaping and promenade, and augment its popular and excellent restaurant with a café. The club has also purchased the nearby quayside fuel station

## Karlova Harbour

**Although technically there are six marinas on the Emajõgi River in the university town of Tartu, Karlova Harbour is the only facility accessible to visitors and the general public, and with a recent expansion from 50 to 100 berths is by far the largest.**

Built in 2014 by the Tartu City Government and run under a concession by Seto Line, it offers good modern facilities with a café, sauna, laundry and caravan park. Investment in berth expansion earned Seto Line a concession expansion – from an initial five years to ten years (from 2016) – and the move has attracted new boaters. “We have good occupancy during the May to October season with the bulk of boats owned by locals who use them at weekends,” development manager Helen Jors confirms. “When the season ends, we lift the boats out of the water and store them in the caravan park.”

Seto Line contracted FloatMe Marinas to build the 50-berth second phase, adding four visitor piers to the original Top Marine pontoon system. The marina also has a self-service floating fuel station, pump-out point and green energy. “All heating and hot water comes from solar panels and a heat pump,” Jors reveals. “This was the Tartu Government’s first experiment with this type of system.”

Visitors and berth holders flock to the marina for many events throughout the summer. The season opens on 1<sup>st</sup> May

with song, dance and boat displays and an evening concert, takes part in the city festival at the end of August and hosts a concert every month.

The events programme reinforces the importance of ‘Mother River’. “Over the past five years, the City has taken the river



more seriously – with riverside benches, visitor docking platforms etc. More free short-stay dock spaces are planned near the city centre. In two years’ time we hope that a walkway will have been completed along the river,” Jors ventures.

In addition to running the marina, Seto Line operates two tour boats for river cruises and believes there could be opportunity for small boat hire in the future.

from the government via the City as it is the only one in the area that has water access. The investment is wise but much renovation is required.

“Our challenge is to make everything more attractive for visitors, who come here on average for three or four days specifically to visit Pärnu,” explains club commodore Väino Hallikmägi. “The club is

very good for city revenue.”

Nautical and social events also help to boost visitor levels. “We have outdoor concerts, theatre and a seasonal opening ceremony and this year we organised the Nordic Youth Championship for the second time. This is a big event that last time attracted 220 boats and around 1,000 people,” Hallikmägi confirms.

