

WINTER STORAGE

There is a moderate amount of hard standing room next to the marina, with a plentiful supply of skilled labour in the town for boat maintenance

MOORING PONTOONS

HARBOURMASTER'S OFFICE

LEADING LIGHTS



GULL'S EYE

KURESSAARE MARINA ESTONIA

58.2460° N, 22.4690° E

LEADER
ESTONIA



KURESSAARE TOWN

The centre of town is about five minutes away from the marina on foot

CASTLE

The beautiful 13th century castle is conspicuous as you make your approach

NARROW CHANNEL

The entrance to Kuressaare is a long, straight channel that is maintained to a depth of 2.5m

BUOYED CHANNEL





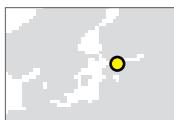
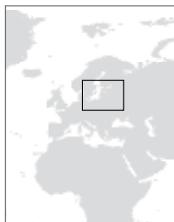
A modern 130-berth marina on the island of Saaremaa in the heart of the Baltic. *Sam Jefferson* discovers this Estonian gem

The Estonian marina of Kuressaare may, on first viewing, seem like an unusual choice for a marina guide, yet its location in the east of the Baltic just a stone's throw from Finland makes it an ideal stopover. This is especially true for those thinking of overwintering in the Baltic rather than undertaking the more ambitious 'there and back' cruise to the Baltic from UK waters. This is particularly pertinent given how much cheaper Estonia is for storage and repairs compared with its Scandinavian neighbours.

Situated at the western tip of Estonia, the Island of Saaremaa is a beautiful, sparsely populated haven in the heart of the Baltic. For centuries its economy has been built around fishing and agriculture and it retains a sleepy, bucolic feel to



58.2460° N,
22.4690° E



25

NEXT MONTH

Fambridge Marina, Essex

On sale 25 August

this day. In many ways, modern life seems to have bypassed this peaceful spot and, despite being roughly 1,000 square miles in area, the population is a modest 30,000. Kuressaare is the capital of Saaremaa and this small town is a picturesque place to visit and is dominated by Kuressaare Castle, a huge fortification constructed back in the 1300s.

The area has a history of conflict going back many years prior to this; the island first gained notoriety due to the Oeselians who inhabited the island from roughly the 2nd century BC. Also known as Eastern Vikings, this tribe seem to have specialised in piracy and terrorised

the seas of the eastern Baltic for many centuries. The country has a history of shamanism and magic, with the pagan festival of midsummer solstice still one of the main celebrations.

When Estonia fell behind the Iron Curtain in 1945, the coastal areas appears to have endured heavy treatment from the Russians due to its proximity to Finland. This meant that the coastline was treated as a no go zone, off limits to civilians. The collapse of the USSR meant independence and Estonia joined the EU following a referendum in 2003. Since then, the country has flourished and is a welcoming, outward-looking place to visit.

Regular visitor

Nicholas Hill, Huzar 30 Prospero



Kuressaare is such a delightful place that I visit it almost every year, and this time I am in company with

a dozen other British boats, as the Cruising Association Baltic Section rally is being held in Estonia this

year. The harbour is particularly popular with Finnish sailors.

The harbour is safe and secure, the old Castle is worth visiting time and again, and the harbourmaster, Oskar, is not only helpful and friendly, but comes out to meet each new arrival. The facilities are excellent, and it is a short walk into town. I know we shall come back next year.

VISIT SAAREMAA, NICHOLAS HILL



KURESSAARE MARINA

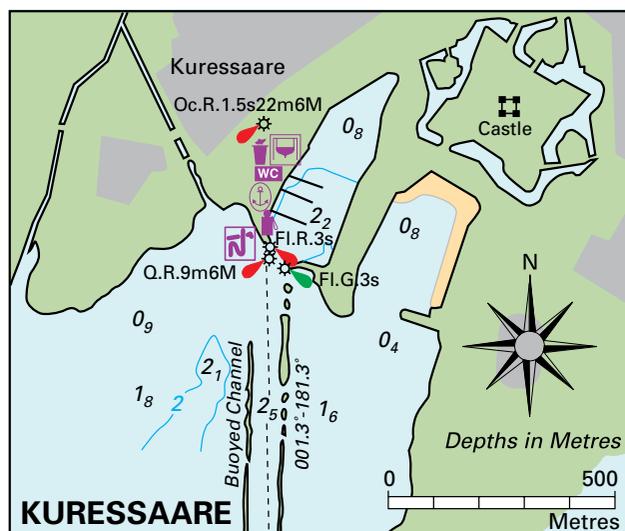
MARINA GUIDE

Kuressaare marina is a 130 berth marina which has access for yachts up to 24m with a maximum draft of 2.5m. Visitors to the marina are treated to a fine view of Kuressaare Castle from their berth and the marina is also only a five minute walk from the very centre of Kuressaare itself. It's the 'island' of Saare's capital, yet despite this rather grand title, it is about the size of a meadium sized village back in the UK and enjoys a certain sleepy, unhurried ambience. Nevertheless, it boasts a decent selection of cafes, bars, restaurants and shops. The marina is also no more than a 10 minute drive from the airport which runs a daily service to Tallinn, the capital of Estonia.

Since joining the EU, Estonia has enjoyed a long period of investment in its infrastructure and a key part of this was to revive and regenerate the coastline after the years under the USSR when it was entirely off limits to Estonians. In Kuressaare, a new marina was at the heart of these regeneration plans. The result is a smart, modern facility

which nevertheless retains a friendly air. Mooring here is done in the usual Baltic style, with yachts tending to go stern to at the pontoons and securing the bow to a mooring buoy.

Tucked behind a long stretch of shallow water with only a narrow entrance channel, the marina offers excellent shelter whatever the wind direction. Once moored up, the marina offers all the facilities you'd expect of a modern facility, including fuel and a modest amount of storage ashore. The shower facilities are extremely smart and modern and, as a bonus, there is a sauna available on site. →



FACTFILE

KURESSAARE MARINA

kuressaare.ee/sadam

Tel: +3724533450

Mob: +3725031953

Email: sadam@kuressaare.ee

VHF: Ch 11

Wi-fi: Free

Fuel: Yes

Facilities: Toilets and showers, sauna laundry and gas all available on site

Eating: Within five minutes walk of the town centre. Waterside cafes and restaurants two minutes walk away
Repair services, plus lift out: saareyachts.com
Bicycle rental available at three euro per hour

VISITOR BERTHING CHARGES

Up to 13m:	25 euro per 24h
13m to 20m:	32 euro per 24h

Price includes water, power, waste disposal, pump out and wi-fi.

Storage ashore: 70 cents per square metre per month.
All prices include VAT

PASSAGE PLANNING

Lying at the end of a lengthy dredged channel, sailors approaching Kuressaare need to exercise caution

The coastline around Saaremaa rather bucks the Baltic trend for deep waters with steeply shelving shorelines. By contrast, the seabed off Kuressaare is often shallow for a long distance offshore and studded with rocks, so caution must be exercised. As a result, the approach to Kuressaare is via a long channel that is dredged to 2.5m and caution must be exercised in locating the entrance to this channel with novices being well advised to attempt this during daylight hours. The channel entrance is approached from the southeast, following the leading line into the neighbouring port of Roomessaare, this is well marked with leading lights and buoys. Once on that line, you are looking for a port marker (wpt 58°11.8'N, 22°30.9'E). Once this is located, head ESE to an easterly cardinal (wpt 58°11.78'N, 22°28.62'E). From here, you're looking for the fairway buoy that marks the entrance to the channel (wpt 58° 11. 78'N, 22° 28.14'E). Once this is located, the entrance is straightforward as the mile long channel is narrow (roughly 24m wide) but clearly marked thanks to regular spar buoys. It's impossible to stray outside of the channel as in many parts the banks to either side stick out of the water. If you do make the approach at night, there are leading lights into the harbour. This is not a sector light; instead you must line up two red lights; one located on the top of a nearby hotel (Oc.R.1.5s6M) and one on the pier head (Q.R.6M). By day they can be picked out, as they are a pair of white rectangles



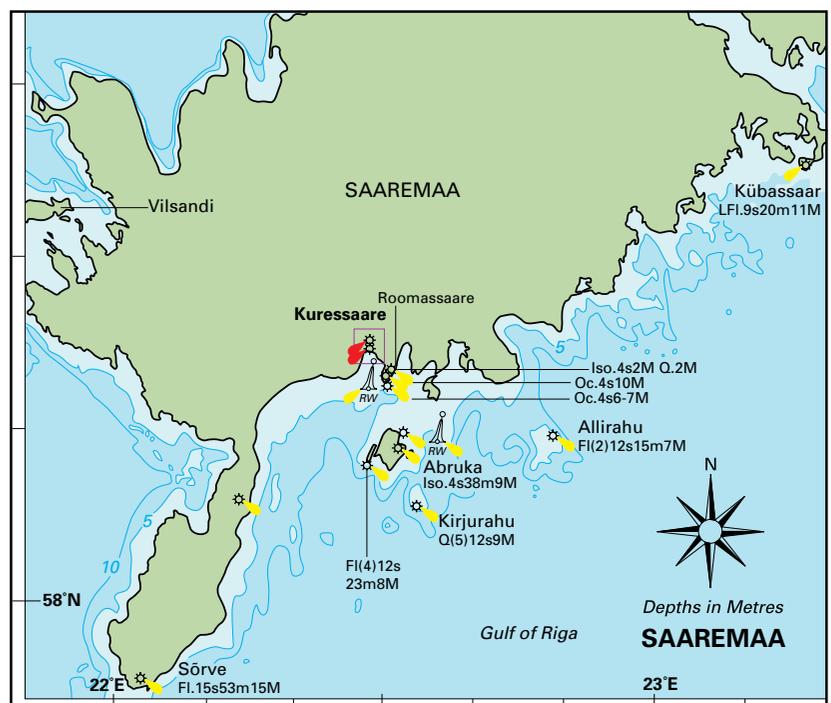
ABOVE
Sorve lighthouse at the southern tip of Saaremaa is conspicuous to yachts approaching from Latvia or Gotland

with a red stripe through them. The channel is regularly dredged and maintained to 2.5m but seagrass is common in the channel, with the result that depth sounders have been reported to read less without touching. The Baltic is not tidal but it is worth bearing in mind that barometric pressure and also wind direction can have an impact on depth.

As you approach, the castle slightly to the east of the marina

will become conspicuous. It is also illuminated by night. The entrance to the marina is marked by a green (FL.G.3s) and red (Fl.R.3s). These are located on the heads of the breakwaters. The marina is to port.

The harbourmaster can be contacted on VHF Ch11 and he can allocate you with a berth. Unless the marina is hectic, he will usually be there to help you with your ropes and into your berth during normal office hours. →

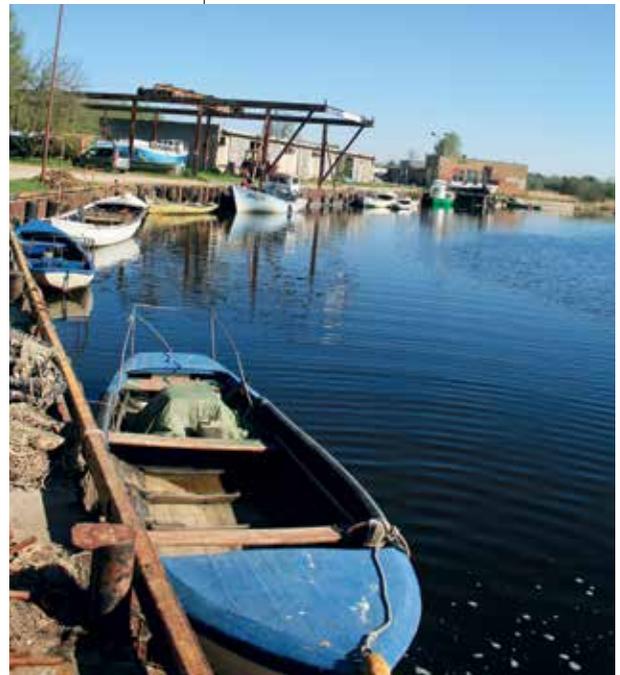




ABOVE LEFT
The spectacular port of St Petersburg is well within reach from Kuressaare, although paperwork and customs can be a headache

BELOW
Fishing boats moored in Nasva, a suburb of Kuressaare

into disrepair during the years under Soviet rule. The result is an excellent network of quiet, yet well maintained, marinas, with good facilities dotted all along the coast. Just to the north of Saare lies a fascinating mini archipelago of islands with Hiiumaa the largest. If anything, this island is even more peaceful than Saaremaa. If you want to keep things really local, then there are numerous charming and extremely peaceful marinas on Saare itself. One standout is the wonderfully ramshackle Koiguste, a couple of hours' sail to the west of Kuressaare. This charming spot is buried in the depths of woodland and offers excellent shelter, Estonia's smallest bar and, inevitably, a sauna.



CRUISING GROUNDS

In the Soviet era, Estonia was a window on the west. Now that window is wide open

From Saaremaa, the eastern Baltic is very much your oyster. For those wishing to head west, the beautiful Swedish island of Gotland is 104nm distant and is noted as one of the yachting hubs of Sweden. Stockholm and its famed archipelago of islands is also well within reach, being about 150nm to the northwest. For many years, Estonia's proximity to Finland troubled their Russian rulers, but now this is very much an asset, with the majority of visitors heading down to Saare from here. The port of Hanko in Finland is approximately 100nm from Kuressaare and this marks the entrance to the Gulf of Finland which is a noted cruising ground, with notable stopovers including Helsinki, the picturesque Estonian capital Tallinn, plus the

often spectacular Russian port of St Petersburg at the head of the gulf. Another notable cruising ground within easy reach is the Gulf of Riga. British sailor and writer Arthur Ransome first brought this area into the British sailor's conscious, writing about it in *Racundra's First Cruise*. He was particularly taken with Ruhno, a sleepy island noted for its beautiful and ancient wooden church. The island is some 38nm from Kuressaare and a picturesque stopover for yachts heading toward the Latvian coast. The Latvian capital, Riga, is a further 58nm distant. If it's a spot of local cruising you're after, then Kuressaare is a good starting point. The government programme of regenerating the coast has opened up ports that had fallen

USEFUL CONTACTS

TOURIST INFORMATION

Visit Saaremaa
+372 45 33 120
visitsaaremaa.com

CRUISING TIPS

Royal Cruising Club
Provides expert tips on cruising the Baltic
rcc.org.uk

Cruising Association

Baltic branch organises rallies and provides pilotage tips for the area
020 7537 2828
theca.org.uk