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A brief history of six ancient Finnish castles

The *Ancient Castles* stamp booklet presents the following six ancient Finnish castles, each of which has its own interesting history.

Suomenlinna

Construction of Viapori Castle was started in 1748 by A. Ehrensvärd. The fortress surrendered to the Russians in 1808, and when Finland became independent, it was named Suomenlinna. In the early years of independence, it served as prison camp and closed military zone. The area started to be developed for tourism in the late 1950s, and now Suomenlinna, which lies directly in front of Helsinki, has become a popular tourist destination and is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Further information: www.suomenlinna.fi/en

Häme Castle

Häme Castle was founded in the late 1200s and was converted into a residential castle in the 1700s. The castle served as a prison from 1837 to 1972. Restoration work began in 1953 and was completed in 1988. Today, the castle serves as a museum and hosts a variety of exhibitions and events.

Further information: www.nba.fi/en/museums/hame_castle

Raseborg Castle

Raseborg Castle was built in the 1370s in Snappertuna. The castle, which had been used to defend Swedish trade interests, was abandoned in the 1550s and it fell into decay. Restoration work began in the late 1800s and continued until the end of the 1980s. The castle is now open to the public during the summer.

Further information: www.raseborg.org/slott/eng/

Kastelholm Castle

Kastelholm was originally built to defend the Åland Islands in the late 1300s. The castle became the seat of the crown's fief-holders and bailiffs. Later, Kastelholm Castle was used as a royal hunting lodge, and later still as a prison. The castle lost its administrative significance the 1600s and is now a museum.

Further information: www.kastelholm.ax/en/

Olavinlinna Castle

Construction work on Olavinlinna, the castle of St. Olaf, started in 1475. The castle's purpose was to combat Russian attacks and to maintain control of the Savo region for the Swedish Crown. During the 1700s, Olavinlinna Castle alternated between Swedish and Russian hands, which is evident in the varied architecture of the castle. Today, the castle is open to the public and is famous for the Savonlinna Opera Festival.

Further information: www.nba.fi/en/museums/olavinlinna_castle

Turku Castle

The construction of Turku Castle began in the 1280s at the mouth of the river Aura, as an administrative castle for the Swedish Crown. Later, it became John III's residential castle during his period as Duke, the Governor General's official residence and later on a prison. Today, Turku Castle is a monument building, museum and hosts valuable celebrations. Further information: www.turunlinna.fi/en/index.html