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East Karelia

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia
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East Karelia (*Finnish: *Itä-Karjala**, *Karelian: *Idä-Karjala**), also rendered as **Eastern Karelia** or **Russian Karelia**, is a name for the part of [Karelia](#) that since the [Treaty of Stolbova](#) in 1617 has remained [Christian Orthodox](#) under [Russian](#) supremacy. It is separated from the western part of Karelia, called *Finnish Karelia* or historically *Swedish Karelia* (before 1808). Most of the East Karelia is now part of the [Republic of Karelia](#) within the Russian Federation. It consists mainly of old historical regions of [Viena](#) and [Aunus](#).

19th century [ethnic nationalist Fennomans](#) saw East Karelia as the ancient home of [Finnic](#) culture, "un-contaminated" by both [Scandinavians](#) and [Slavs](#). In the sparsely populated East Karelian backwoods, mainly in [Vienan Karelia](#), [Elias Lönnrot](#) collected the [folk tales](#) that ultimately would become [Finland's national epic](#), the [Kalevala](#).

The idea of annexing East Karelia to Finland ("[Greater Finland](#)") was widely supported in newly independent Finland. It was especially popular during the [Continuation War](#) when it seemed possible through German assistance. Most of East Karelia was [occupied by Finnish forces 1941–1944](#). The war was accompanied by hardship for the local ethnic Russian civilians, including forced labour and internment [in prison camps](#) as enemy aliens. After the Continuation War, calls for annexation of East Karelia have virtually disappeared.

After Karelia was divided between Finland and Russia in 1918, the Finnic peoples that made up most of the population of East Karelia were promised far-reaching cultural rights. However, these rights were never realised and under [Stalin](#) ethnic Finns were persecuted and an intensive [Russification](#) began. After the fall of [communism](#), there has been a revival in Finnish culture in East Karelia.



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This page was last modified on 26 February 2013 at 01:33.

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