

Spring melts a path through frozen Finnish archipelago

May 2 2018



The ice melts around a wooden jetty in the UNESCO-protected Merenkurkku Archipelago in western Finland

Spring has started to melt a way through the giant frozen expanse of this archipelago in western Finland, as cracks in the ice turn into rust-

coloured pools around wooden jetties in a sign of the coming summer.

When the ice has finally receded, locals farther inland will break out their boats and sail to summer cabins on the islands of the Merenkurkku Archipelago in the Gulf of Bothnia.

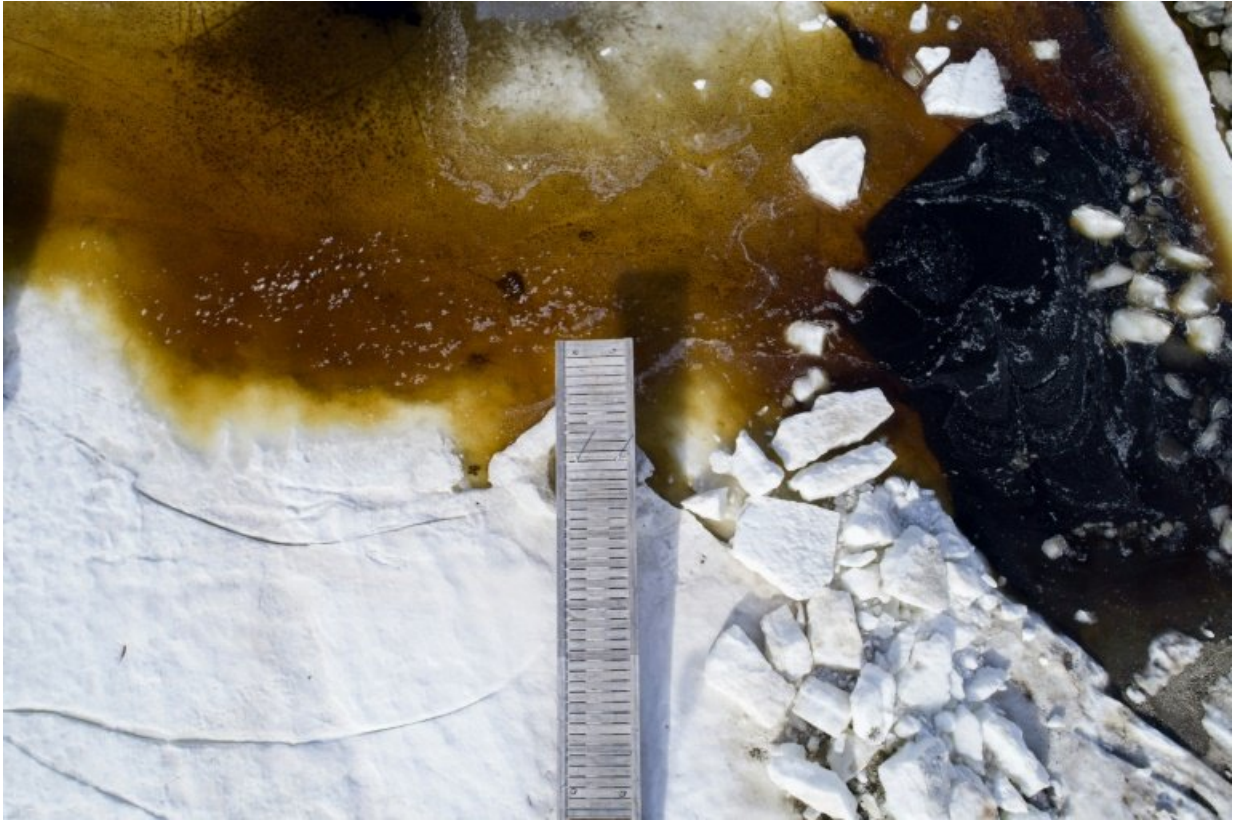
The [archipelago](#), known in Swedish as Kvarken and situated off the coast of Vaasa, has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2006, drawing tourists to its natural scenery and wildlife.

The landscape, featuring thousands of islands, is largely the result of the last Ice Age.

Due to post-glacial rebound, the landmass in this region is still rising up out of the water, by a rate of some 0.9 metres (three feet) per century.

In winter the ice can reach 50 centimetres (20 inches) in thickness, making it impenetrable to most ships.

But the first rains of April and warmer temperatures sees the ice start to thaw and boats can once again sail past these isolated shores.



The slow thaw creates strange mottled textures across the thinning ice



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