



HANNU ISO-OJA

JANUARY GLOW

Despite their frosty magic, Nordic winters are famous for their absence of daylight: even southern Finland only gets between five and six hours of sun in December and January. To counteract the darkness, the annual Lux Helsinki festival stages a variety of grandiose light shows around the Finnish capital. These include an eye-catching pinball installation on the front façade of the century-old New Student House, a giant beating heart in front of the Helsinki Cathedral by Spanish fashion designer Agatha Ruiz de la Prada, and a light art exhibition at Cable Factory culture centre.

Returning from last year's festival is a project entitled *Lux Ratikka* (Lux Tram) that turns a familiar aspect of Helsinki's everyday bustle – one of its ubiquitous

green trams – into a multicoloured, moving light installation. The project, powered by LED lights, was conceived by Lux Helsinki's artistic director Markku Uimonen and created by three of his lighting design students at the Theatre Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki.

"What's nice about the tram is that it's not tied to a specific place in the city, so it can bring cheer and entertainment even to people who may not even realise that Lux Helsinki is going on," says **Riikka Karjalainen**, one of the project's designers. We wanted to turn the tram into a splash of colour in a city that can otherwise feel grey at this time of year," she adds.

Karjalainen says that many of last year's challenges, such as how to make the best use of the allotted 3000 watts of electricity, have no longer presented a problem the second time around. "Last year gave us a

lot of practical information in terms of the technicalities involved," she says.

Karjalainen and co-designer Alexander Salvesen will take turns riding in the tram during the five-night run of Lux Helsinki. "It's tough to see through the windows to get a sense of people's reactions; last year I had to keep track of the GPS on my phone to know where we were at any given moment," she says. "But a couple of times when we stopped at a red light, I could hear kids' voices saying things like 'look, mom!' That felt nice."

Most of Lux Helsinki's installations will be displayed from 5–10 pm from January 4 to 8. Nightly walking tours are offered via the City of Helsinki tourist office in Finnish, Swedish, English and Russian.

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LUXHELSINKI.FI
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HELSINKI HIGHLIGHTS THIS MONTH

FOURTY travel bloggers spend a week in Finland as part of the Nordic Bloggers' Experience programme, courtesy of Visit Helsinki and Visit Finland. They will test out husky safaris, design tours and more, and attend Helsinki's Nordic Travel Fair. –*Mirva Lempiäinen*

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MATKAMESSUT.FI
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DOCPOINT festival (January 28–February 2) brings noteworthy documentaries to Helsinki cinemas each year. Its *New Finnish Films* series includes outstanding local documentaries and student films. The *Vanishing Point* series, meanwhile, is devoted to experimental documentary. This year's main guest is British documentarian Kim Longinotto.

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DOCPOINT.INFO/EN
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FINNISH CERAMICS COMPANY Arabia marks the 100th anniversary of the birth of Tove Jansson, beloved author and creator of the Moomins, with a new line of jars and a mug based on the Moomin book *The Dangerous Journey*. Two euros from the sale of each product go to support UNICEF's educational projects.

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