



ESTONIAN SWEDISH JAALA

Jaala is a traditional two-masted sailing ship of the Estonian Swedes originating from the little Ruhnu island in the Gulf of Riga, used from 1860ies to 1920ies. Jaala had a really peculiar silhouette and could be recognised from far away– its sternmost mast was in the centre of the ship and leaned backwards, the shorter foremast, that holds the foresail and the spritsail, stood straight. Jaala was mainly used for seal hunting, but quite often it took its owners to trading trips to Estonian islands, to Riga, as well as to the coast of Finland and Sweden. The authors of this small sailing ship, the Estonian Swedes were Swedish farmers who inhabited parts of Western-Estonia and many of our islands roughly a millenia ago living here alongside with native farmers but under their own laws until the turmoils of the Second World War.

Jaala, built with the initiative of the Aiboland Museum, stands in the harbour of the ancient bishop' s town Haapsalu. It offers day-trips and longer packages to the islands of Väinameri sea and sometimes even across the borders. The merry jaala crew tells you about the navigation and culture of the coastal swedes and takes you to see the ancient territories of this interesting minority.

Technical information and construction

Jaala is a beautiful coastal ship with high fore and graceful figure. Its average length was around 10 meters and width 3 meters. Most of the ship is not under the deck, only the fore is partly covered and some boards on both sides of the forecastle offer shelter. Building of jaala is such an intricate art that for that a professional shipwright was called from Sweden. At first keel and stems were hewn to the right size and joined with ribs of the ship made out of curved wood. To ensure both halves of the ship to be even the master used actual-sized measure-patterns. Planks are fixed around the hull skeleton using the steam-bending technic. Like many other wooden vessels jaala gets its finishing touch by tarring.

Interesting facts and stories

- The Estonian Swedes who built jaalas lived according to their own Swedish law in Estonia for roughly a millenia. Often they used to sail to the Swedish king on jaalas to claim their rights, news of last of such trips are from the XVIII century.
- Taking into account the history of jaala also the first journey of “Vikan”, built in 2003, was to the court of the king of Sweden to deliver a letter to his majesty.

[Jaala routes](#)

www.vikan.ee

CONTACT +372 55 183 86 | E-MAIL: info@historicships.ee | EMAJÕE 3, 51008 TARTU, ESTONIA

