

MASTER'S GUIDE

Vessel Traffic Services

The provisions on vessel traffic services are laid down in the Vessel Traffic Service Act 623/2005 and in the Government Decrees on Vessel Traffic Service 763/2005, 1798/2009, 1304/2011 and 1216/2018.

PARTICIPATION IN VESSEL TRAFFIC SERVICES

Vessels of 24 metres in length overall or more are obliged to participate in the vessel traffic services.

When navigating in the VTS area, vessels are required to maintain a continuous listening watch on the working channel used in the area. Furthermore, vessels are obliged to obey the rules relevant to the traffic in the VTS area. More detailed instructions about the required reports and working channels can be found in the regional VTS guide.

Vessels navigating in the VTS area, which are not obliged to participate in the vessel traffic services, are recommended to maintain a listening watch on the working channel in the VTS area or sector in question.

OPERATIONAL HOURS AND LOCATION OF VTS CENTRES

In Finland the vessel traffic services (VTS services) are operated by Fintraffic Vessel Traffic Services Ltd (Fintraffic VTS). VTS centres are located in Turku, Helsinki and Lappeenranta.

The sea areas at the Finnish coast are divided into six VTS areas. These are Bothnia VTS, West Coast VTS, Archipelago VTS, Hanko VTS, Helsinki VTS and Kotka VTS. In addition, Saimaa VTS operates in the Saimaa deep water fairway.

Along the coast VTS services are provided 24 h/day throughout the year. There may be operational interruptions due to technical problems or an unexpected shortage of personnel. Information about the interruptions is given as navigational or local warnings. Saimaa VTS only provides services during its period of operations. The period of operations is largely equivalent to the opening hours of the Saimaa Canal, but Fintraffic VTS will provide information about when the operational period begins and ends.

SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE VTS CENTRES

Vessel traffic services include information, navigational assistance and traffic organization.

VTS Areas along the coast provide all three service levels as described below. Saimaa VTS provides the service Information.

To improve safety and to create a consistent maritime situational awareness, English is used as the primary communication language in the VTS areas along the Finnish coast. As required, vessel traffic services are provided also in Finnish, Swedish and English.

Information is given to all vessels whenever necessary, at set intervals, when they report or when a vessel so requests. The information to vessels comprises matters which affect the vessels' safe and smooth navigation. Examples of such information are other vessels in the VTS area, circumstances as well as the condition of the aids to navigation and fairways. The VTS monitors the vessel movements and when necessary informs vessels about any dangers threatening them. The service Information is provided in all fairway sections in VTS Areas.

Navigational assistance can be given to identified vessels on request or when deemed necessary by the VTS. Navigational assistance is only advisory and normative; the master of the vessel is still responsible for the manoeuvring of the vessel. Navigational assistance may include information about the vessel's position and bearings/courses over ground to for example the fairway centre line or the pilot boarding place. Bearings or COG's can also be given so that vessels can pass navigational hazards, for example shoals, at a safe distance. The information provided is based on the data received from the radar or the AIS system used in the VTS centre. Navigational assistance is provided in the VTS areas along the coast at open sea, from the open sea to the vicinity of pilot boarding places and outer anchorages.

Vessel traffic is organized in order to improve traffic flow and safety. To organize traffic, there are areas within the VTS areas with permanent meeting and overtaking prohibition. In addition, traffic can be separated in the permanent overtaking and meeting prohibition areas as well as near the pilot boarding places, considering the traffic situation and weather conditions. The aim is to prevent dangerous meeting and overtaking situations and congestion.

The services provided in the different VTS areas are described in the regional part of the Master's Guide.

INCIDENTS

In exceptional situations, such as extraordinary weather conditions, search and rescue situations or any other incidents in which vessel traffic is restricted or put at risk, the VTS can temporarily close a fairway or fairway section, issue speed limits or instruct vessels to anchor.

Vessels must immediately report all incidents relating to maritime safety to the VTS centre. Vessels involved in an accident or in imminent danger at sea should first contact the MRCC (tel. +358 294 1000). In the Lake Saimaa region, vessels should contact the emergency response centre (tel. 112) or the VTS centre.

THE MASTER OF THE VESSEL – RESPONSIBILITY AND OBLIGATION TO REPORT

The vessel's participation in the vessel traffic services does not affect the master's responsibility for manoeuvring the vessel. If the master of the vessel, for a valid reason relating to the vessel's safety, is unable to participate in the vessel traffic services, or to follow the instructions given by the VTS in exceptional situations, he must immediately inform the VTS about this.

The master must notify the VTS of the following events taking place in the VTS area or its vicinity:

- any incidents or accidents affecting the safety of the vessel, such as collisions, grounding, damage, malfunction or breakdown, flooding or shifting of cargo, any defects in the hull or structural failure
- any incidents or casualties affecting the safety of the vessel, such as failures likely to affect the vessel's manoeuvrability or seaworthiness, or any defects affecting the propulsion system or steering gear, the electrical power generating system, navigation equipment or communications equipment
- any circumstances liable to cause pollution of the waters or shore, such as the discharge or threat of discharge of polluting materials into the sea

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- any slick of polluting materials and containers or packages seen drifting at sea

When vessels agree on matters concerning traffic situation, they shall discuss it on the VTS channel.

REQUEST FOR ACCESS TO VTS RECORDS

The traffic image of the VTS area and the related VHF radio communication is saved in the VTS centres. The records are stored for at least 30 days.

Access to records is priced on commercial grounds. Access to records for use by authorities is free of charge. Provisions on the conditions for access have been laid down in the Act on the Openness of Government Activities (621/1999).

PILOTAGE

Vessels must use a pilot on public fairways which are located in Finnish waters and the part of the Saimaa Canal leased by Finland and which have been defined as fairways requiring pilotage, if pilotage is required by the hazardous or harmful nature of the cargo or the size of the vessel. The Pilotage Act gives further provisions regarding the vessels for which pilotage is compulsory.

If a vessel has been granted a Pilot Exemption Certificate or it has been granted exemption from compulsory pilotage, the master of the vessel shall, upon entry into a VTS area, report the number of the exemption to the VTS centre. This report can also be submitted in advance. An advance notice can be made for several voyages at the same time.

Pilotage order

Finnpilot Pilotage Ltd is responsible for the pilotage in Finland. Pilot orders shall be submitted to Finnpiilot's Pilot Dispatch Centre.

West Coast Pilot Dispatch Area (Rauma, Pori, Kristiinankaupunki and Kaskinen) and Bothnia Pilot Dispatch Area (Vaasa, Pietarsaari, Kokkola, Kalajoki, Raahe, Oulu, Kemi and Tornio)

Internet: <https://finnpilot.fi/en/for-customers/pilot-dispatch/>

Email: pilotdispatch.westcoast@finnpilot.fi ja pilotdispatch.bothnia@finnpilot.fi

Tel: West Coast +358 (0) 29 525 3450 and Bothnia +358 (0) 29 525 3440

ANCHORING

A vessel must always notify both the VTS and the Finnish Border Guard when anchoring in Finland's territorial waters. The vessel must make the notification either itself or through its agent. In addition, a vessel anchoring in territorial waters is required to make an electronic customs declaration, even if the vessel is not going to call at a Finnish port.

After leaving a port in Finland, the vessel must also check with the Finnish Border Guard whether anchoring in Finnish territorial waters is possible. Also in this case, a vessel remaining at anchor must make an electronic customs declaration.

WINTER NAVIGATION 1.11.-31.5.

The Finnish Transport Infrastructure Agency publishes instruction “Finland’s winter navigation” every year on its website <https://vayla.fi/en/transport-network/waterways/winter-navigation>. Information about new instructions will be given in a press release.

All vessels arriving for the first time of the icebreaking season to a Finnish or Swedish assistance area will be asked the following question:

“Will you commit to compliance with the general instructions on icebreaker assistance published by the national maritime authorities?”

The answer to the question is “yes” or “no”. The answer “yes” entitles icebreaker assistance and does not incur any expenses for the vessel. The answer “no” will affect the provision of future icebreaker assistance to Finnish ports.

The vessel or the shipping company can send the answer in advance by e-mail to Turku Radio (turku.radio@fintraffic.fi) which forwards the information to authorities. Shipping companies can send a combined answer in advance for all their vessels operating in the area.

Vessels are requested to report observations of ice accretion to the Finnish Meteorological Institute primarily by filling in the form on the website <https://virpo.fmi.fi/reports/> or by email to Turku Radio.

BALTIC SEA WASTE FEE

In the Baltic Sea region, a waste fee is always charged from vessels during port visits. MARPOL I, IV and V waste may be left at ports without an additional fee, as the obligatory waste fee also covers the reception of these types of waste. Delivering this waste at port is highly recommended, as the Baltic Sea is classified as a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area. Vessels should notify the port of their waste at least 24 hours before arriving at the port or, if the journey will take less than 24 hours, no later than when leaving the previous port. More information is in the Baltic Sea Waste Fee brochure, which can be found on Fintraffic VTS’s website at <https://www.fintraffic.fi/en/vts/masters-guide>.

NEW DEPTH REFERENCE LEVEL N2000 (BSCD2000) FOR CHARTS

Finnish nautical charts and fairways are currently in the process of switching over to a new harmonized reference level for depth information that is tied to the national N2000 height system. The current reference level for depth information in sea areas is based on mean water level, and it will be replaced with a reference level that is tied to the N2000 vertical coordinate reference system. The migration to the new depth information reference level will affect the depth and fairway information presented on nautical charts.

More information on the website <https://www.traficom.fi/en/services/sailing-directions-finnish-waters>.

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VTS AREA

The VTS Area covers the coast along the Sea of Bothnia from Hylkkari light to Vaasa including the merchant shipping lanes as well as the areas administered by the Port of Rauma, Port of Pori and the Port of Vaasa. The VTS Area does not cover the areas administered by other ports.

The boundary line of the West Coast VTS Area runs between the following corner points:

- 1) From Hylkkari light, 60°57.2'N 021°09.5'E
- 2) westward to position 60°57.2'N 020°46.5'E
- 3) to the limit of the territorial sea limit 61°07.6'N 020°46.5'E
- 4) observing the limit of the territorial waters to position 62°36.5'N 020°30.0'E
- 5) 63°21.5'N 020°30.0'E
- 6) Valassaaret lighthouse 63°25.3'N 021°04.1'E
- 7) Ritgrund lighthouse 63°25.5'N 021°30.5'E

The services provided by the VTS centres are described in more detail in the general description of the Vessel Traffic Services.

REPORTING PROCEDURES

The working channel of West Coast VTS is VHF 9.

Reports should include the following information:

- Name of the vessel
- Name of reporting point
- Destination
- Intended route. If an alternative route is selected, this must be reported

Required reports

- Upon entry into the VTS Area
- Before anchoring
- Before leaving an anchorage
- After berthing
- Before leaving port; for Port of Rauma, Port of Pori and Port of Vaasa, see chapter "Permission to depart from the ports of Rauma, Pori and Vaasa"
- At the reporting points in the area:
 - Southbound vessels shall report 20 minutes before passing Hylkkari light to Archipelago VTS on VHF channel 71.
 - Northbound vessels shall report 20 minutes before passing Hylkkari light to West Coast VTS on VHF channel 9.

PERMISSION TO DEPART FROM THE PORTS OF RAUMA, PORI AND VAASA

Before departure from Port of Rauma, Port of Pori and Port of Vaasa, vessels shall request a permission to depart from VTS. The permission to depart issued by the VTS is valid for 20 minutes. The vessel is required to give a report when underway. If the vessel's departure is delayed, it will have to request a new permission to depart.

At the Port of Vaasa, passenger vessels operating according to a regular timetable in liner service have the right of way.

AREAS WHERE MEETING AND OVERTAKING IS PROHIBITED

Meeting and overtaking is permanently prohibited in the following areas covered by West Coast VTS:

- 1) Vaasa: Nygrundin portti–Port of Vaasa between longitudes 021°18.1'E and 021°32.1'E in the 9.0 m fairway.
- 2) Kaskinen: In the fairway section Buoy Rasken–Port of Kaskinen between latitudes 62°19.3'N and 62°20.8'N in the 9.0 m fairway.
- 3) Kristiinankaupunki: Kristiinankaupunki Lighthouse–Port of Kristiinankaupunki between longitudes 021°10.2'E and 021°18.5'E in the 12.0 m fairway.
- 4) Rauma: Rauma southern fairway between longitudes 021°15.5'E and 021°23.8'E in the 12.0 m fairway.

These prohibitions do not apply to meeting and overtaking situations in which at least one of the parties is a tug or a vessel, the size of which is comparable to a tug.

SPEED LIMITS

- 1) The Rauma Valkeakari fairway (7.5 m) has an 8 kn (15 km/h) speed limit for vessels with a draught of 7 m or more.
- 2) In Vaasa the 6,5 m fairway has a 9,5 kn (18 km/h) speed limit between Nygrund-Stor Hästen.
- 3) In Vaasa the 9 m fairway has a 15 kn (28 km/h) speed limit between the breakwater and Gråsälsgrynnan.

OTHER REMARKABLE

Upon request, West Coast VTS can adjust the brightness of aids to navigation in the Rauma 12 m fairway and at the Port of Kaskinen.

HARBOUR AREAS

Pori

Vessel mooring and unmooring must be ordered from Port Control at least two hours before the required mooring and unmooring time. Icebreaking assistance must be ordered from Port Control following the guidance of the Port of Pori: https://portofpori.fi/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/J%C3%A4%C3%A4nmurto_Port-of-Pori.pdf. Sludge disposal must be ordered directly from the service provider of the Port of Pori by email: sludge@veikkolehti.fi.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Juhana Herttuan puistokatu 21
FIN-20101 Turku

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VHF channel 12



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Kvarken Ports, Port of Vaasa

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65170 Vaasa

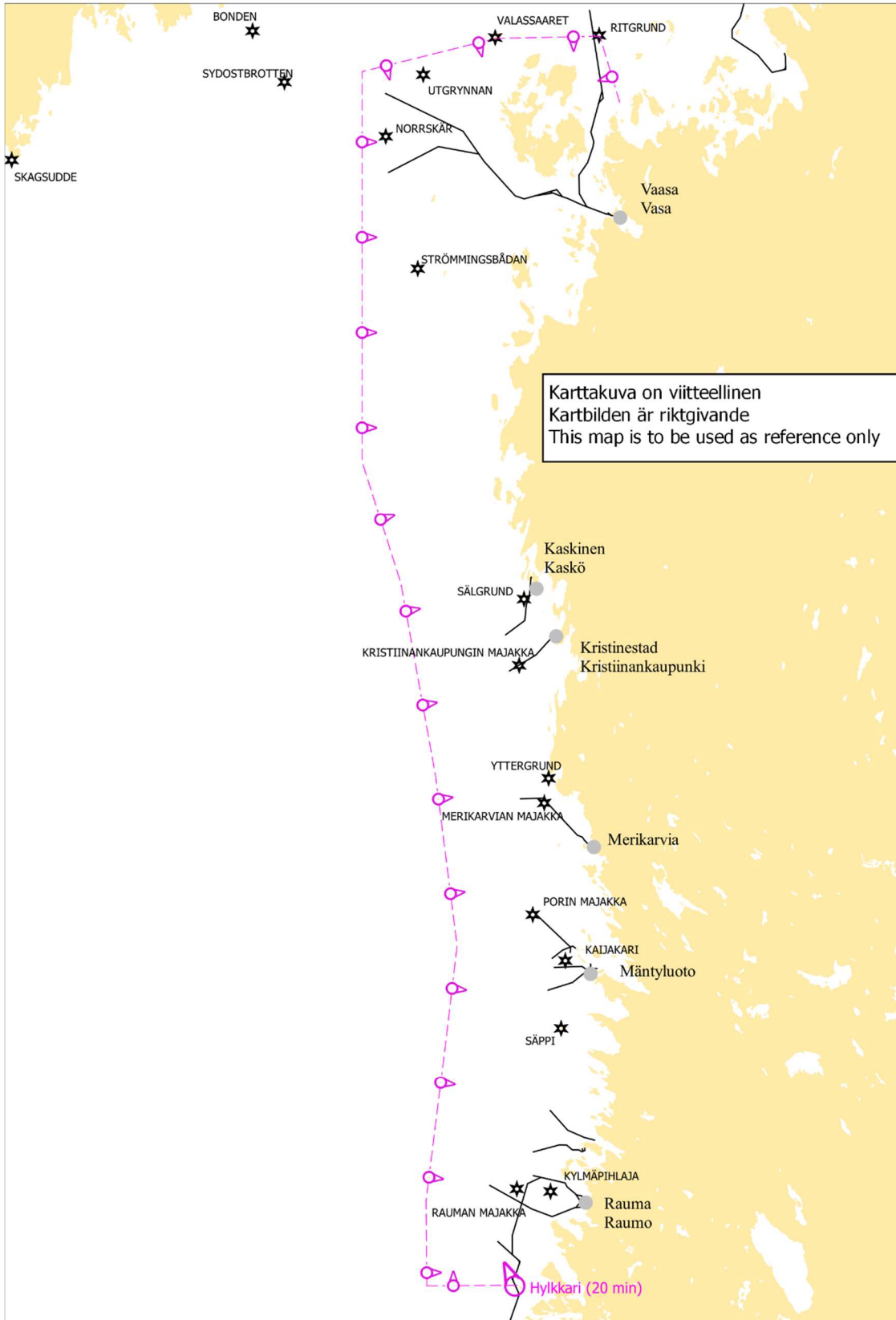
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UPDATES

Date	Changes
25.11.2020	Instructions for winter navigation
07.01.2021	Company's logo, name and e-mail addresses changed
17.03.2021	A new text about anchoring. A new link to winter navigation's website.
15.04.2021	Permission to depart at the Port of Rauma. Procedures of permission to depart described in a separate paragraph.
22.06.2021	Information about Baltic Sea Waste Fee. When vessels agree on matters concerning traffic situation, they shall discuss it on the VTS channel.
12.08.2021	Some clarifications of the VTS Area.
06.09.2021	Contact information to the Port of Rauma, Port of Pori and Port of Vaasa. A new section: Harbour areas.
31.03.2022	Information about new depth reference level N2000 for charts.
11.05.2022	Map updated.
01.11.2022	Upon request, VTS can adjust the brightness of aids to navigation at the Port of Kaskinen. A request to report observations of ice accretion to the Finnish Meteorological Institute.
16.01.2023	Contact information to Pilot Dispatch Centre updated. All phone calls to VTS will be recorded.