

## The legends of Kalevipoeg come to life

Kalevipoeg theme park was opened to visitors in Kääpa village, Saare rural municipality, Jõgeva County, on 13 May 2007. The former Kalevipoeg Museum is now also an attractive open air museum showing Estonian folk culture dating back a century or more.

Kalevipoeg theme park has become a centre of Kääpa village. The theme park consists of Kalevipoeg Museum, the treasury and Kratiküla (Kratt village). The park gives an overview of the epic Kalevipoeg making it possible to feel and see the hero's might. In Kratiküla, visitors can feel themselves at home. You can do things you normally would not or dare not to. Kratt taxi drives you around the interesting places. You can meet different kratts (a kind of Estonian golem) in Kratiküla: Marakratt (an impish kratt), Piakratt, Supikratt (kratt of soups), Krattide Perenaine (mistress of the kratts), Tehnokratt (Technokratt), Meisterkratt (master kratt) and Iluskratt (a beautiful kratt). Handicraft is sold in the treasury.

In addition to bringing the folk tales and legends of Kalevipoeg to life, the theme park has a mission of teaching traditional handicraft skills. There have been workshops for boiling soap of mutton fat and for thread dyeing with plants. Clay modelling courses have also been very popular. There have also been Kalevipoeg Days and strongman competitions. On the Wooden Sculpture Day, sculptors cut out wooden characters from the stories of Kalevipoeg.

The museum also houses a collection of books of the epic Kalevipoeg that has been published 26 times in Estonia. The art collection preserves reproductions and originals of artworks depicting Kalevipoeg. "We have 60 artists who have recorded everything relating to Kalevipoeg," Viivi

Lani, Head of the Museum, says. Many people are pleasantly surprised to find their childhood Kalev chocolate wraps or pennants of collective farms and games named after Kalevipoeg in the museum. The museum also sells 1 m long Kalevipoeg swords as souvenirs.

The former house of the Cossacks has now been elaborately renovated; a new ancillary building and some small structures needed in the farm have been added. The table, chair, and a carriage of the size of Kalevipoeg are impressive sights. A picnic place and a parking lot have been built as well as some attractions for children.

"Besides the texts related to Kalevipoeg, the visual culture and material signs connected to these texts are very important," activist Ants Paju emphasises when explaining the need for Kalevipoeg theme park. "This material culture is best displayed here, at the place of Kalevipoeg's footsteps," he adds.

According to project manager Andri Plato, local businesses now have the possibility to offer their services. These services include handicraft, guided tours, catering, canoe trips, and accommodation. The idea of using Kalevipoeg's stories for introducing Jõgeva County to visitors came from the County Government. Thanks to Kalevipoeg theme park project, the region has now got a real centre for treating and developing this subject.

Andri Plato emphasises the importance of project preplanning when preparing such projects. "This is especially true of these projects which use non-standard solutions. Communication with the financier is also a very important factor if it becomes evident that changes need to be made in the project."

Kalevipoeg theme park is constantly evolving to keep the visitors happy. Future plans certainly include building the Hell of Kalevipoeg, developing Kalevipoeg's sword and its location

and modernising the museum. The whole Kääpa village and its residents are included in the project.

### Program for Strengthening of the Competitiveness of Regions



ERDF support:

776 669 kroons

Applicant: foundation Kalevipoja Koda

Supported activities:

- Acquisition of immovable property
- Renovation of the building
- Planning of the theme park area, establishment of green areas and building of the boundary fence
- Acquisition of small structures related to Kalevipoeg
- Building storehouses and sheds
- Building a parking lot
- Installing metal signs

Total project cost: 976 669 kroons

Project duration: 2006

