



Estonia

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Best Places to Stay

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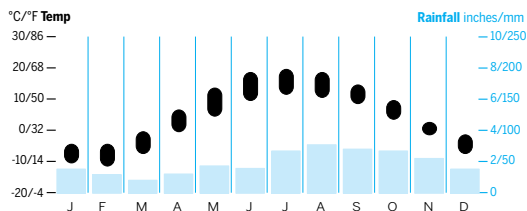
Why Go?

Estonia doesn't have to struggle to find a point of difference in Eastern Europe; it's completely unique. It shares a similar geography and history with Latvia and Lithuania, but it's culturally very different. Its closest ethnic and linguistic buddy is Finland, yet although they may love to get naked together in the sauna, 50 years of Soviet rule have separated the two. For the past 300 years Estonia's been linked to Russia, but the two states have as much in common as a barn swallow and a bear (their respective national symbols).

In recent decades, and with a new-found confidence, Estonia has crept from under the Soviet blanket and leapt into the arms of Europe. The love affair is mutual: Europe has fallen for the chocolate-box allure of Tallinn and its Unesco-protected Old Town, while travellers seeking something different are tapping into Estonia's captivating blend of Eastern European and Nordic appeal.

When to Go

Tallinn



Apr–May See the country shake off winter's gloom.

Jun–Aug White nights, beach parties and loads of summer festivals.

Dec Christmas markets, mulled wine and long cosy nights.

AT A GLANCE

- » **Currency** Euro (€)
- » **Language** Estonian
- » **Money** ATMs all over; banks open Monday to Friday
- » **Visas** Not required for citizens of the EU, USA, Canada, New Zealand and Australia

Fast Facts

- » **Area** 45,226 sq km
- » **Capital** Tallinn
- » **Country code** ☎372
- » **Emergency** Ambulance & fire ☎112, police ☎110

Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	€0.82
Canada	C\$1	€0.77
Japan	¥100	€0.83
New Zealand	NZ\$1	€0.65
UK	UK£1	€1.18
USA	US\$1	€0.78

Set Your Budget

- » **Budget hotel room** €45
- » **Two-course meal** €10–20
- » **Museum entrance** €3–5
- » **Beer** €2–3
- » **Tallinn–Tartu bus ticket** €8–10

Resources

- » **VisitEstonia.com** (www.visitestonia.com)
- » **Tallinn Tourism** (www.tourism.tallinn.ee)
- » **Estonia Public Broadcasting News** (<http://news.err.ee>)

Connections

Estonia is well connected for travel to and from its neighbours. It's an easy northern addition to Eastern European roaming, as plenty of daily buses connect with destinations in Latvia and Lithuania. There's the option of following the white nights to Scandinavia – Tallinn has daily ferry connections to and from Stockholm and Helsinki. If you're hearing the siren call of Russia, daily trains connect Tallinn with Moscow or St Petersburg, and plenty of buses run between Tallinn or Tartu and St Petersburg.

ITINERARIES

Five Days

Hit Tallinn at a weekend to get in your sightseeing and partying. Get your bearings by heading to Raekoja plats to climb up the Town Hall Tower. Follow this with an in-depth exploration of the Old Town streets down below: museums, shops, churches, courtyards – whatever takes your fancy. That night treat yourself to a medieval feast at Olde Hansa or modern Estonian cuisine at Õ. The following day, do what most tourists don't – step out of Old Town. Explore Kadriorg Park for a first-rate greenery and art fix, and/or consider a cycling tour. Finish with a walk around Kalamaja district and dinner at F-hoone. After the weekend, head east to Lahemaa National Park or southwest to the island of Saaremaa – two (or four) wheels will offer the chance to really explore.

Two Weeks

In two weeks there'll be time to explore Tallinn more deeply. If the weather's fine, opt for fun in the sun in Pärnu, then get back to nature at Soomaa National Park, and finish with a pub crawl with local students in Tartu.

Essential Food & Drink

- » **Vana Tallinn** A syrupy, sweet liqueur of indeterminate origin, best served in coffee, over ice or in champagne. There's also a cream version.
- » **Pork and potatoes** Prepared a hundred different ways.
- » **Verivorst** (blood sausage) Call it black pudding and it might sound more palatable.
- » **Rukkileib** Rye bread, an Estonian staple, served with most meals.
- » **Suitsukala** Smoked fish (usually trout or salmon).
- » **Berries and mushrooms** Seasonal delights freshly picked from the forests in summer and autumn respectively.