



# 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; 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, and although they may love to get naked together in the sauna, fifty years of Soviet rule in Estonia have separated the two. For the last 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).

With a newfound confidence, singular Estonia has crept from under the Soviet blanket and leapt into the arms of Europe. The love affair is mutual. Europe has fallen head-over-heels for the charms of Tallinn and its Unesco-protected Old Town. Put simply, Tallinn is now one of the continent's most captivating cities. And in overcrowded Europe, Estonia's sparsely populated countryside and extensive swathes of forest provide spiritual sustenance for nature-lovers.

## When to Go

The most clement weather is from May to September, and while it can get a little crazy in Tallinn and Pärnu (especially in July and August), it's still the best time to visit. Almost all festivals are scheduled for summer, with the biggest celebrations saved for midsummer's eve.

Fans of cross-country skiing should make for Otepää, the unofficial winter capital from December to March. Yuletide in the real capital is unforgettable, with Christmas markets and a 570-year-old tradition of raising a Christmas tree on Tallinn's main square.

## Arriving in Estonia

Most visitors to Estonia arrive in Tallinn, either at the airport or (in the case of ferries from Helsinki) the harbour. Both are close to the centre of town (the ferry terminals are within walking distance); taxis to the centre should cost less than €10 or you can catch a bus for around €2. Crossing from Latvia by car, motorbike or bus is a breeze as both countries are part of the Schengen Area, so there are no border checks. The main border checkpoint from Russia is at Narva. Buses connect Estonia with both countries. Trains from St Petersburg stop in Narva and Tallinn, while trains from Rīga stop in Valga; the stations are near the centre of each city.

### LANGUAGE

<b>Hello</b>	<i>te-rre</i>	<i>Tere</i>
<b>Goodbye</b>	<i>head ae-gah</i>	<i>Head aega</i>
<b>Yes</b>	<i>yah</i>	<i>Jah</i>
<b>No</b>	<i>ay</i>	<i>Ei</i>
<b>Thank you</b>	<i>ta-nahn</i>	<i>Tānan</i>
<b>You're welcome</b>	<i>pah-lun</i>	<i>Palun</i>
<b>Excuse me/I'm sorry</b>	<i>vah-bahn-dah-ge</i>	<i>Vabandage</i>
<b>Cheers!</b> (literally 'to your health')	<i>Ter-vi-seks</i>	<i>Terviseks!</i>

## Essential Food & Drink

- » **Rukkileib** Rye bread, an Estonian staple, served with most meals and usually free at restaurants.
- » **Kama** Light meal or drink made from buttermilk combined with a mixture of boiled, roasted and ground peas, rye, barley and wheat.
- » **Suitsukala** Smoked fish; usually trout or salmon.
- » **Sealiha ja kartul** Pork and potatoes, prepared in a hundred different ways.
- » **Kana ja kartul** Chicken and potatoes, for when you're porked out.
- » **Kasukas** Layered salad of Russian origin containing beetroot, potato, carrots, salted herring, boiled egg and yoghurt.
- » **Vana Tallinn** A syrupy, sweet liqueur of indeterminate origin, best served over ice, in coffee or to disguise bad Russian sparkling wine. There's also a cream version.

## RESOURCES

**VisitEstonia.com**  
([www.visitestonia.com](http://www.visitestonia.com))

**Tallinn Tourism** ([www.tourism.tallinn.ee](http://www.tourism.tallinn.ee))

**Estonia Public Broadcasting News**  
(<http://news.err.ee>)

**Estonica**  
([www.estonica.org](http://www.estonica.org))

## Fast Facts

- » **Area** 45,227 sq km
- » **Capital** Tallinn
- » **Population** 1.3 million
- » **Telephone country code** ☎372
- » **Emergency** ☎112

## Exchange Rates

<b>Australia</b>	A\$1	€0.73
<b>Canada</b>	C\$1	€0.71
<b>Japan</b>	¥100	€0.96
<b>Latvia</b>	1Ls	€1.42
<b>Lithuania</b>	1Lt	€0.29
<b>New Zealand</b>	NZ\$1	€0.55
<b>Russia</b>	R100	€2.38
<b>UK</b>	£1	€1.16
<b>USA</b>	US\$1	€0.74

For current exchange rates see [www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com).

## Set Your Budget

- » **Budget hotel room** €20-45
- » **Two-course evening meal** €10-35
- » **Museum entrance** €1-5
- » **Beer** €3
- » **Tallinn transport ticket** €1