



Finland

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Best Places to Eat

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- » Kosmos, Helsinki (p376)
- » Indigo, Mariehamn (p382)
- » Kummisetä, Kuopio (p386)

Best Places to Stay

- » Lossiranta Lodge, Savonlinna (p385)
- » Dream Hostel, Tampere (p383)
- » Hostel Academica, Helsinki (p375)

Why Go?

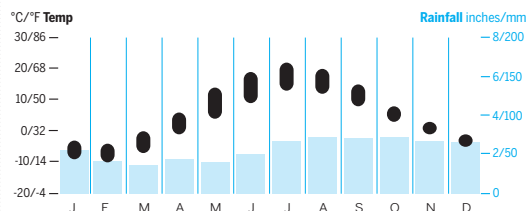
There's something pure in the Finnish air and spirit that's incredibly vital and exciting. It's an invitation to get out and be active year-round. A post-sauna dip in an ice hole under the majestic aurora borealis after whooshing across the snow behind a team of huskies isn't a typical winter day just anywhere. And hiking or canoeing under the midnight sun through pine forests populated by wolves and bears isn't your typical tanning-oil summer either.

Although socially and economically in the vanguard of nations, large parts of Finland remain gloriously remote, with trendsetting, modern Helsinki counterbalanced by vast pine- and birch-forested wildernesses in the north and east.

Nordic peace in a lakeside cottage, summer sunshine on convivial beer terraces, avant-garde Helsinki design, dark, melodic music and cafes warm with baking cinnamon aromas are other facets of Suomi seduction. As are the independent, loyal, warm and welcoming Finns, who tend to do their own thing and are much the better for it.

When to Go

Helsinki



Mar There's snow, and enough daylight to enjoy winter sports.

Jul Everlasting daylight, festivals and discounted accommodation make this a top time to explore.

Sep The stunning colours of the autumn *ruska* season make this prime hiking time up north.

Connections

Road connections with Norway and Sweden are way up in the north, but ferries (p395) are big on the Baltic; an overnight boat can take you to Stockholm or even as far as Germany. Helsinki's harbour also offers quick and easy boat connections to Tallinn in Estonia, launch pad for the Baltic states and Eastern Europe. Finland's also a springboard for Russia, with boat (p395), bus (p395) and train (p395) services available, some visa free.

ITINERARIES

One Week

Helsinki demands at least a couple of days. In summer, head to the eastern Lakeland and explore Savonlinna and Kuopio (catch a lake ferry between the latter towns). Take an overnight train or budget flight to Lapland (Rovaniemi) for a few days, visiting Santa, exploring Sámi culture and getting active.

Two Weeks

Spend a few days in Helsinki and Porvoo, then visit the harbour town of Turku and lively Tampere. Next stops are Savonlinna and Kuopio in the beautiful eastern Lakeland. Head up to Rovaniemi, and perhaps as far north as Inari. You could also fit in a summer festival, some hiking in Lapland or North Karelia or a quick cycling trip to Åland.

Essential Food & Drink

» **Offbeat eats** Unusual meats appear on menus: reindeer is a staple up north, elk is commonly eaten and bear is also seasonally available.

» **Markets** The *kauppahalli* (market hall) is the place to go for a stunning array of produce.

» **Pubs** Beer is a staple. Finns also love dissolving things in vodka; try a shot of *salmiakikossu* (salty-liquorice flavoured) or *fisu* (Fisherman's Friend-flavoured).

» **Coffee** Finns are the world's biggest coffee drinkers. To fit in, eight or nine cups a day is about right, best accompanied with a cinnamon-flavoured pastry.

AT A GLANCE

- » **Currency** Euro (€)
- » **Languages** Finnish, Swedish, Sámi languages
- » **Money** ATMs are widespread
- » **Visas** Schengen rules apply; see p1319; visas not required by most other visitors for stays of up to 90 days

Fast Facts

- » **Area** 338,145 sq km
- » **Capital** Helsinki
- » **Country code** 2358
- » **Emergency** 2112

Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	€0.74
Canada	C\$1	€0.74
Japan	¥100	€0.87
New Zealand	NZ\$1	€0.56
UK	UK£1	€1.16
USA	US\$1	€0.72

Set Your Budget

- » **Budget hotel room** €60
- » **Two-course evening meal** €40
- » **Museum entrance** €6
- » **Beer** €5.50
- » **City transport ticket** €3

Resources

- » **Finnish Tourist Board** (www.visitfinland.com)
- » **Metsähallitus** (www.outdoors.fi) Great hiking resource
- » **This Is Finland** (www.finland.fi) Informative and entertaining