

Tallinn

The 20th century was full of twists and turns for Estonia, but it's now shaken off the dead weight of the Soviet era and turned its focus to the West, and to promises of a richer, shinier future. In recent years it's claimed EU membership and become one of Europe's fastest-growing economies, and the country is now celebrating its return to the world stage – independent, economically robust and tech-savvy, and hell-bent on catching up with its Nordic neighbours in the quality-of-life stakes.

And now the world is tuning in to Estonia's irresistible blend of Eastern European and Nordic charms. Soaking up the long white nights and history of the country's capital, Tallinn, are joys to be savoured. The city fuses medieval and cutting-edge to come up with an energetic new mood all its own – an intoxicating mix of Gothic church spires, glass-and-chrome skyscrapers, wine cellars inside 15th-century basements, lazy afternoons soaking up sun and beer suds on Raekoja plats, and bike paths to beaches and forests – with a few Soviet throwbacks in the mix, for added spice.

Despite its fiercely forward focus and the boom of 21st-century development, Tallinn remains loyal to the fairytale charms of its Old Town, and compact enough to explore on foot. A visit from Helsinki is just too easy to overlook – Tallinn is so much part of the Helsinki experience, it sometimes feels like a distant suburb.

FAST FACTS

- **Population** 400,000
- **Currency** kroon (EEK): €1 = 15.64EEK; US\$1 = 11.80EEK; UK£1 = 17.41EEK; A\$1 = 8.54EEK; C\$1 = 9.80EEK; NZ\$1 = 6.65EEK; ¥100 = 12.09EEK
- **Official Language** Estonian
- **Telephone Codes** country code ☎ 372; no area code for Tallinn
- **Visas** not required for travellers from the EU, the USA, Canada and Australia



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