

On the Road





Estonia

📍 372 / POP 1.3 MILLION

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Best Places to Stay

- Pädaste Manor (p140)
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Best Places to Eat

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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 culturally it's distinct. Its closest ethnic and linguistic buddy is Finland, and although they may love to get naked together in the sauna, 50 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 swaths 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 Tallinn is unforgettable, with Christmas markets and a nearly 600-year-old tradition of raising a Christmas tree on the main square.