



# FINLAND



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## 1 CONTACT ADDRESSES

**Location:** Scandinavia, Europe.

Matkailun Edistämiskeskus (Finnish Tourist Board)

**Head Office:** Töölönkatu 11, PO Box 625, 00101 Helsinki, Finland

**Tel:** (9) 417 6911. **Fax:** (9) 41 76 93 33. **E-mail:** mek@mek.fi

**Web site:** <http://www.mek.fi>

**Tourist Information:** Eteläesplanadi 4, 00131 Helsinki, Finland

**Tel (9) 41 76 93 00 or 41 76 92 11. Fax:** (9) 41 76 93 01.

Embassy of Finland

38 Chesham Place, London SW1X 8HW

**Tel:** (020) 7838 6200 or 7838 6212 (consular section). **Fax:** (020) 7235 3680 or 7838 9703 (consular section). **Web site:** <http://www.finemb.org.uk>

**Opening hours:** 0830-1630 Monday to Friday; 0900-1200 and 1400-1500 (visa applications).

Finnish Tourist Board

30-35 Pall Mall, London SW1Y 5LP

**Tel:** (020) 7365 2512 or 7930 5871 (trade and press only). **Fax:** (020) 7321 0696. **E-mail:** mek.lon@mek.fi

**Web site:** <http://www.finland-tourism.com> or <http://www.mek.fi>

**Opening hours:** 0900-1800 Monday to Friday; 0900-1700 (trade and press enquiries).

British Embassy

Itäinen Puistotie 17, 00140 Helsinki, Finland

**Tel:** (9) 22 86 51 00. **Fax:** (9) 22 86 52 62 or 22 86 52 72. **E-mail:** info@ukembassy.fi

**Web site:** <http://www.ukembassy.fi>

**Consulates in:** Jyväskylä, Kotka, Kuopio, Mariehamn (Åland Islands), Oulu, Pori, Tampere, Turku (Åbo) and Vaasa.

Embassy of Finland

3301 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20008

**Tel:** (202) 298 5800. **Fax:** (202) 298 6030. **E-mail:** info@finland.org

**Web site:** <http://www.finland.org>

**Consulates General in:** New York (tel: (212) 750 4400) and Los Angeles (tel: (310) 203 9903).

Finnish Tourist Board

655 Third Avenue, 18th Floor, New York, NY 10017

**Tel:** (212) 885 9700 or 885 9737 (trade and press only). **Fax:** (212) 885 9739. **E-mail:** mek.usa@mek.fi

**Web site:** <http://www.finland-tourism.com>

Also deals with enquiries from Canada.

Embassy of the United States of America

Itäinen Puistotie 14B, 00140 Helsinki, Finland

**Tel:** (9) 171 931. **Fax:** (9) 174 681. **E-mail:** arc@usembassy.fi

**Web site:** <http://www.usembassy.fi>

Embassy of Finland

Suite 850, 55 Metcalfe Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 6L5  
**Tel:** (613) 236 2389. Fax: (613) 238 1474.  
**E-mail:** finembott@synapse.net  
**Web site:** <http://www.finemb.com>  
**Consulates in:** Calgary, Edmonton, Halifax, Montréal, Québec, Regina, St John, Sault Ste Marie, Sudbury, Thunder Bay, Timmins, Toronto, Vancouver and Winnipeg.

Canadian Embassy  
**Street address:** Pohjoisesplanandi 25B, 00101 Helsinki, Finland  
**Postal address:** PO Box 779, 00101, Helsinki, Finland  
**Tel:** (9) 171 141. Fax: (9) 601 060. Web site: <http://www.canada.fi>

**Country dialling code:** 358.

## 2 GENERAL

**Area:** 338,144 sq km (130,558 sq miles).

**Population:** 5,159,646 (1998).

**Population Density:** 16.9 per sq km.

**Capital:** Helsinki. Population: 532,053 (1996).

**Geography:** Finland is situated in Scandinavia in the far north of Europe. Bounded to the west by Sweden and the Gulf of Bothnia, to the north by Norway, to the east by the Russian Federation and to the south by the Gulf of Finland, it is the fifth largest country in Europe. There are about 30,000 islands off the Finnish coast, mainly in the south and southwest, and inland lakes containing a further 98,000 islands. The Saimaa lake area is the largest inland water system in Europe. 10% of the total land area is under water, and 65% forest, the country being situated almost entirely in the northern coniferous zone. In the south and southwest the forest is mainly pine, fir and birch. In Lapland, in the far north, trees become more sparse and are mainly dwarf birch. 8% of the land is cultivated.

**Government:** Republic. Head of State: President Tarja Halonen since 2000. Head of Government: Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen since 1995.

**Language:** There are two official languages: Finnish, spoken by 93.6% of the population, and Swedish, spoken by 6% of the population. About 1700 people speak Same (Lapp). English is taught as the first foreign language.

**Religion:** 90% Evangelical Lutheran, 10% others including Finnish Orthodox, Baptists, Methodists, Free Church, Roman Catholic, Jews and Muslims.

**Time:** GMT + 2 (GMT + 3 from last Saturday in March to Saturday before last Sunday in October).

**Electricity:** 220 volts AC, 50Hz. Continental 2-pin plugs are standard.

**Communications:**

**Telephone:** Full IDD is available. Country code: 358. Outgoing international code: 990, 994 or 999. For international number enquiries and tariff information within Finland, callers should dial 020 208. Calls made in telephone boxes require Fmk5 and Fmk1 coins.

**Mobile telephone:** GSM 900 network covers nearly the whole country. GSM 1800 networks also in Helsinki, Turku and Tampere.

**Fax:** Many hotels and businesses have fax facilities. Also available in post offices in Helsinki.

**Internet/E-mail:** ISPs include Sonera (web site: <http://www.sonera.fi>) and Kolumbus (web site: <http://kolumbus.fi>). Public access is available in cybercafés. There are also many internet booths in Helsinki.

**Telegram:** These can be left with the nearest post office or hotel desk.

**Post:** Letters and postcards sent by airmail usually take about three days to reach destinations within Europe. Stamps are available from post offices, book and paper shops, stations and hotels. Visitors can have mail sent to them Poste Restante, Central Post Office, Mannerheimintie 11, 00100 Helsinki, which is open 0800-2100 Monday to Friday; 0900-1800 Saturday; and 1100-2100 Sunday. Generally, post offices are open 0900-1700 Monday to Friday, closed Saturday. During winter many town offices are open 0900-1800.

**Press:** There are over 90 daily newspapers including: Aamulehti, Helsingin Sanomat, Iltasanomat and Iltalehti. Seura is a weekly illustrated news magazine and is one of several periodicals. Kauppalehti is one of the leading business newspapers. There are no English-language newspapers published in Finland, but most UK and American daily newspapers are available.

**BBC World Service and Voice of America frequencies:** From time to time these change.

**BBC:**

MHz 17.64 15.56 9.410 6.195

**Voice of America:**

MHz 15.48 11.97 9.770 0.792

### 3 PASSPORT

	<i>Passport Required?</i>	<i>Visa Required?</i>	<i>Return Ticket Required?</i>
<b>British</b>	Yes	No	No
<b>Australian</b>	Yes	No	No
<b>Canadian</b>	Yes	No	No
<b>USA</b>	Yes	No	No
<b>OtherEU</b>	1	No	No
<b>Japanese</b>	Yes	No	No

**PASSPORTS:** Passports valid for at least 3-6 months required by all except the following nationals provided they hold a valid national ID card:

- (a) 1. nationals of EU countries (except Greece, Ireland and the UK), including the French Overseas Departments of Guadeloupe, Martinique and Réunion but excluding Greenland and the Faroe Islands;
- (b) nationals of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, San Marino and Switzerland.

**VISAS:** Required by all except the following for a period of up to 3 months:

- (a) nationals shown in the chart above;
- (b) nationals listed under passport exemptions above (including nationals of the French Overseas Departments of Guadeloupe, Martinique and Réunion but excluding nationals of Greenland and the Faroe Islands);
- (c) nationals of Andorra, Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Bermuda, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Estonia, Grenada, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Israel, Jamaica, Korea (Rep. of), Latvia, Lesotho, Lithuania, Malawi, Malaysia, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Namibia, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Poland, Seychelles, St Vincent & the Grenadines, Singapore, Slovenia, Swaziland, Trinidad & Tobago, Uruguay and Vatican City.

Visas are required for stays exceeding 3 months and by all who wish to work during their stay except nationals of Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

**Types of visa and cost:** 30-day: £16. 31-90 day: £19 (single-entry); £22 (double-entry).

Multiple-entry: £32. Transit: £7. These prices are subject to frequent change and should be checked on applying for a visa.

**Validity:** Transit visas are valid for up to 5 days. Single-entry and double-entry visas are valid for up to 90 days. Multiple-entry visas are valid for up to 1 year. Applications for renewal or extension should be made to the Embassy or Authorities in Finland.

**Application to:** Consulate (or Consular section at Embassy); see address section.

**Application requirements:** (a) 1 application form (in duplicate). (b) 2 identical passport-size photos. (c) Valid passport. (d) Valid re-entry permit into the UK (for applicants applying at the Finnish Embassy in London). (e) Possible invitation from either a family or company in Finland. (f) Fee (non-refundable; payable in advance in cash or by postal order only). Postal applications need to be accompanied by a £3.50 handling charge.

**Working days required:** 1-2 days. Some applications may be referred to the Finnish Ministry of the Interior. Allow 2-3 weeks.

**Temporary residence and work:** Apply to Finnish Embassy. Work permits and Residence permits should be arranged well in advance. EU nationals are allowed to live and work in Finland without visas or permits for up to 3 months; for periods exceeding 3 months, they can obtain a residence permit (a work permit is not required) from the local police station which normally lasts for 5 years.

**Note:** Those wishing to visit the CIS from Finland are advised to obtain their visa in their country of origin; applications made in Helsinki take at least 8 working days.

## 4 MONEY

**Currency:** Markka (Fmk) = 100 penni. Notes are in denominations of Fmk1000, 500, 100, 50 and 20. Coins are in denominations of Fmk10, 5 and 1, and 50 and 10 penni.

**Single European currency (Euro):** The Euro is now the official currency of 12 EU member states (including Finland), although it is currently only used as 'written money' (cheques, bank transactions, credit cards, etc). The first Euro coins and notes will be introduced in January 2002; the Finnish Markka will still be in circulation until July 1 2002, when it will be completely replaced by the Euro. 1 Euro = Fmk5.94573.

**Currency exchange:** Foreign currency and travellers cheques can be exchanged in banks and at bureaux de change at ports, stations and airports.

**Credit cards:** MasterCard, American Express, Diners Club and Visa enjoy wide acceptance. Check with your credit card company for details of merchant acceptability and other services which may be available. Up-to-date information is available in Helsinki from American Express (tel: (9) 61 32 04 00) or Diners Club (tel: (9) 693 991).

**Travellers cheques:** Eurocheques are also accepted in banks and some shops. To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travellers are advised to take travellers cheques in Pounds Sterling.

### Exchange rate indicators

The following figures are included as a guide to the movements of the Markka against Sterling and the US Dollar:

DateMay '00Aug '00Nov '00Feb '01£1.00=9.889.6410.049.45\$1.00=6.666.426.936.47

The following figures are included as a guide to the movements of the Euro against Sterling and the US Dollar:

DateMay '00Aug '00Nov '00Feb '011 Euro=£0.60£0.62£0.59£0.621 Euro=\$0.89\$0.93\$0.86\$0.92

**Currency restrictions:** Unrestricted import and export of local currency. Export of foreign currency is limited to the amount imported.

**Banking hours:** 0915-1615 Monday to Friday (regional variations may occur).

## 5 DUTY FREE

The following items may be imported into Finland from non-EU countries without incurring customs duty:

200 cigarettes or 50 cigars or 250g of tobacco or 100 cigarillos; 2 litres of alcoholic beverages of less than 22% by volume or 1 litre of alcoholic beverages of more than 22% by volume or 2 litres of wine or 5 litres of beer; 50g of perfume and 250ml of eau de toilette; non-commercial goods to a value of Fmk1100.

The following items may be imported into Finland from EU countries without incurring customs duty:

300 cigarettes or 150 cigarillos or 75 cigars or 400g of tobacco; 1 litre of alcoholic beverages of more than 22% by volume and 3 litres of alcoholic beverages of less than 22% by volume and 5 litres of wines and 15 litres of beer.

**Note:** The import of alcoholic beverages over 22% is only allowed for persons aged 20 years or over; alcoholic beverages up to 22% may be imported by persons aged 18 years or over.

**Restricted items:** The import and export of certain foods, plants, medicines, firearms and works of art are subject to certain restrictions and formalities. The import of drinks containing more than 60% alcohol by volume is prohibited. Contact the Finnish Tourist Board for further details (see address section).

**Abolition of Duty-free Goods within the EU:** On June 30 1999, the sale of duty-free alcohol and tobacco at airports and at sea was abolished in all 15 EU member states. Although there is now no legal limit on the quantities of these goods travellers may import into most EU countries (provided they are for personal use only), Denmark, Finland and Sweden will still be imposing limits until 2004.

## 6 PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Jan 1 2001 New Year's Day. Jan 6 Epiphany. Apr 13 Good Friday. Apr 16 Easter Monday. May 1 May Day. May 24 Ascension Day. Jun 22-23 Midsummer's Eve and Day. Nov 3 All Saints' Day. Dec 6 Independence Day. Dec 24-25 Christmas. Dec 26 Boxing Day. Jan 1 2002 New Year's Day. Jan 6 Epiphany. Mar 29 Good Friday. Apr 1 Easter Monday. Apr 30 May Day. May 9 Ascension Day. Jun 21-22 Midsummer's Eve and Day. Nov 2 All Saints' Day. Dec 6 Independence Day. Dec 24-25 Christmas. Dec 26 Boxing Day.

## 7 HEALTH

	<i>Special Precautions</i>	<i>Certificate Required</i>
<b>Yellow Fever</b>	No	No
<b>Cholera</b>	No	No
<b>Typhoid and Polio</b>	No	-
<b>Malaria</b>	No	-
<b>Food and Drink</b>	No	-

There are no vaccination requirements for any international traveller. Campers and trekkers should take precautions against tick bites and consider immunisation against tick-borne encephalitis.

**Health care:** There is a reciprocal health agreement with the UK. For UK nationals on a temporary visit, an E111 form is not required. Production of a British passport or NHS card is sufficient to obtain medical treatment. Other EU nationals generally need to present an E111 form. There are charges for visits to the doctor, hospital and dental treatment, and prescribed medicines. Some of these charges may, however, be partially refunded by the Finnish Sickness Insurance Department (Kansaneläkelaitoksen Paikallistoimisto - KELA). On production of the required documents, visitors seeking treatment will generally be charged Fmk50 for a visit to a doctor at a municipal health centre, Fmk100 for a visit to a hospital outpatient clinic and Fmk125 per day for hospitalisation (charges may vary depending on the municipality). Those receiving private treatment should keep the receipt and submit it to the local KELA office as they may be

entitled to a partial refund. For emergency dental treatment, visitors should contact the dentist on duty at the municipal health centre. A standard fee will be charged. Prescribed drugs may be obtained from any pharmacy and are charged at the full amount, though costs may be partially claimed back from the local KELA. For most prescribed medicines, a 50% refund is available on amounts exceeding Fmk50. For emergencies, dial 112. For general information about health care and doctors who make house calls, dial 10023 (24-hour helpline; obtainable in Finland only). The pharmacy at Mannerheimintie 96, Helsinki (tel: 0203 20200); is open 24 hours.

#### Travel - International

**AIR:** The national airline of Finland is Finnair (AY).

**Approximate flight times:** From Helsinki to London is 2 hours 55 minutes, to New York is 8 hours, to San Francisco is 10 hours 10 minutes, to Singapore is 14 hours, to Toronto is 8 hours 45 minutes and to Zurich is 2 hours 55 minutes.

**International airports:** Helsinki (HEL) (Helsinki-Vantaa) (web site:

<http://www.ilmailulaitos.com/english>) is Finland's principal international airport, 20km (12 miles) north of the city (travel time - 25 minutes). Coaches operate to the city every 15 minutes. A bus service runs two to four times an hour (up until 2300) from the airport to Asemaukia 3 (next to the main railway station); the journey time is 35 minutes. Taxi services are available. Some Helsinki hotels run courtesy coaches. Airport facilities include a bank (0600-2300), duty-free shop, car rental, hotel reservation service, VIP lounge, a 24-hour electronic information system with four channels, conference rooms, restaurants, cafés and cafeteria bars.

The other international airports are Turku (TKU), 8km (4 miles) from the city; Tampere (TMP), 15km (9 miles) from the city and Rovaniemi (RVN), 10km (6 miles) from the city.

**SEA:** Car ferries sail daily from Stockholm and other Swedish ports on the Finnlines, Silja, Anedin, Birka, Eckerö and Viking Lines. Other major Finnish ports are Turku, Naantali and Vaasa. There are also ferry services to Finland from Lübeck and Travemünde (Germany), St Petersburg (Russian Federation) and Tallinn (Estonia). Cruise lines with ships putting in to Finnish ports include Birka Line, Costa, Crystal, Cunard, Eckerö Line, Fred Olsen, Kristina Cruises, Norwegian Cruise Line, P&O, Princess, Radisson, Seabourn and Silversea.

**RAIL:** Rail-sea links exist from Hamburg, Copenhagen and Stockholm to Helsinki or Turku. There is a rail connection between Haparanda/Tornio in the north from Sweden, and daily trains to Moscow and St Petersburg.

**ROAD:** Most direct road routes include sea ferry links from Sweden or Germany, though there is a northern land link via northern Norway or Sweden to Finnish Lapland, which involves travel within the Arctic Circle. Coach: There are coach services from many European cities, including direct services from London to Helsinki or Turku and Gothenburg with a sea link from Sweden.

**Note:** Travellers who need a visa to enter the Russian Federation (see Russian Federation section) should obtain it in advance in their country of origin as it takes at least 8 working days to obtain a visa in Helsinki.

#### Travel - Internal

**AIR:** There are 23 domestic airports in Finland. Finnair runs an excellent network of domestic services (tel: (9) 800 3466, 24-hour information line; toll free in Finland).

**Cheap tickets:** There are a variety of money-saving offers available. These include: Nordic Air Pass which permits the traveller to purchase 4-10 flight coupons at a cost of US\$90 each for use

in Scandinavian countries and the Baltic States on selected airlines; Family discount (one full fare plus 25-75% discounts for other members); Group discounts which vary between 15% and 35%, depending on the size of the group; Senior Citizens' fares giving special rates (with some restrictions) for persons over 65; Junior fares giving special rates for children aged 12-16; and Youth fares giving special rates (with some restrictions) for persons aged 17-25.

There are special 'Midnight Sun' packages to Rovaniemi (Lapland) in June and July. For further **information contact Norvista, 3rd Floor, 227 Regent Street, London W1B 2PD (tel: (020) 7409 7334; fax: (020) 7409 7733; e-mail: reservation@norvista.co.uk; web site: <http://www.norvista.com>); or the Finnish Tourist Board (see address section).**

**RIVER/LAKE:** Traffic on the inland waterways is serviced by lake steamers and motor vessels. There is a wide choice of routes and distances. Popular routes are the 'Silver Line' between Hämeenlinna and Tampere; the 'Poet's Way' between Tampere and Virrat, and the Saimaa Lake routes. There are regular services also on Lake Päijänne and Lake Inari. On Lake Pielinen there are regular services, also by car ferry. Overnight accommodation in small cabins and meals and refreshments are available on lake steamers.

**RAIL:** There are 6000km (3700 miles) of rail network with modern rolling stock. Rail travel is cheap and efficient. Recent years have seen extensive improvements and high-speed trains now travel at speeds of up to 150kph (94mph). Seat reservations are required for 'EP' express trains. Main rail connections run car-sleeper trains. Seats can be booked for a small extra charge. Tickets are valid for one month. Return fares are exactly double the price of a single fare. Children under 6 years of age travel free of charge, children aged 6-16 pay half price.

**Cheap fares:** Special tickets offering discounts are available including: Group tickets (minimum of three people), giving 20% discount, valid for one month; Finnraill pass, giving unlimited travel for 3, 5 or 10 days within a period of 1 month, first- or second-class; Finnish Senior Citizen's Rail Card for persons over 65 years of age can be bought at any Finnish rail station, entitling the holder to a 50% discount (passport has to be shown); Scanrail Card, valid for 21 days for travel in the Scandinavian countries with reductions of 25-50% for young people according to age; Inter-Rail Ticket, valid in Finland as well as the rest of Europe; Eurail Passes are also accepted. For further details and reservations, contact the Finnish Tourist Board (see address section) or **Finnish Railways, Vilhonkatu 13, 00101 Helsinki (tel: (0) 307 2010; fax: (0) 30 72 01 11; web site: <http://www.vr.fi>).**

**ROAD:** There are 77,000km (47,000 miles) of road. The main roads are passable at all times and are surfaced with asphalt or oil and sand. There are weight restrictions on traffic from April to May in southern Finland, and from May to early June in northern Finland. Traffic drives on the right. Horn-blowing is frowned upon. In some areas warnings of elk, deer and reindeer crossing will be posted. Drivers involved in an elk or reindeer collision should report the event to the Police immediately. Bus: This is an excellent means of transport. There are more than 300 express services daily from Helsinki and connections can be made to the most remote and isolated parts of the country. In Lapland, buses are the major means of surface travel. Bus stations have restaurants and shops. Baggage left at one station is dispatched to its destination, even when bus transfers and different bus companies are involved. One child under four is carried free (children aged 4-11 years pay half fare). Seats for coaches can be reserved in advance by paying the full fare and reservation fee. Timetables are widely available. Cheap fares: Group tickets are sold for groups travelling at least 80km (50 miles) and including at least three persons (at least one of whom is aged over 12 years). The state post office also runs a bus service with routes that serve the rural areas. (Up-to-date details of bus services may be obtained from the internet (<http://www.matkahuolto.fi>)). Taxi: Available in every city and from airports or major hotels. Taxi drivers are not tipped. Taxis have a yellow taksi sign which is lit when the taxi is vacant. They can be booked at taxi ranks or signalled from the street. Fares are more expensive at night

(2000-0600), Saturday (1600-0600) and Sunday. A typical 5-km (3 mile) daytime journey in Helsinki costs approximately Fmk44. Car hire: Cars can be rented in Helsinki and other places. Normally, the hiring party should be at least 19-25 years of age and have a minimum of one year's driving experience. The rates usually include oil, maintenance, liability and insurance, but no petrol. A few caravans are for hire. Regulations: Seat belts must be worn by the driver and all passengers (front- and back-seat). Children under 15 years of age must travel in the back. Outside of towns, car headlights must be kept on at all times. In towns they must be used in dim, dark or rainy conditions. Cars towing caravans may not exceed 80kph (50mph). Cars and caravans must have the same tyres. Studded tyres are allowed from October 1 to April 30 or when weather conditions are appropriate. During December and January snow tyres are recommended for vehicles under 3.5 tonnes. It is possible to hire tyres. Further information can be obtained from Autoliitto (Automobile and Touring Club of Finland), Hämeentie 105A, 00551 Helsinki (tel: (0) 9725 84400; fax: (0) 9725 84460). If involved in an accident, immediately contact the Finnish Motor Insurer's Bureau (Liikennevakuutuskeskus), Bulevardi 28, 00120 Helsinki (tel: (9) 680 401; fax: (9) 68 04 03 91). Documentation: National driving licence or International Driving Permit and insurance required.

**URBAN:** Efficient and integrated bus, metro and tramway services, suburban rail lines and ferry services to Suomenlinna Islands are operated in Helsinki. A common fares system applies to all the modes (including the ferries) with a zonal flat fare and free transfer between services. Multi-trip tickets are sold in advance, as are various passes. The peninsular location of the city has led to an emphasis on public transport. Tram no. 3 passes most of the main tourist attractions - a free brochure in English is available for those who wish to take the trip. **Helsinki Card:** This is available for one, two or three days. Once purchased, it gives free travel on public transport and free entry to about 50 museums and other sights in the city. The card comes with a guidebook giving details of the museums, sights and other discounts on offer. Enquire at the Tourist Board for prices and further details.

**JOURNEY TIMES:** The following chart gives approximate journey times (in hours and minutes) from Helsinki to other major cities/towns in Finland.

Air	Road	Rail	Tampere	0.35	2.50	1.48	Turku	0.30	2.40	1.50
Rovaniemi	1.15	13.30	9.07							

## 8 ACCOMMODATION

**HOTELS:** There is usually a sauna and often a swimming pool in Finnish hotels and motels. The price level varies from district to district, being higher in Helsinki and some areas of Lapland. Many hotels and motels usually include breakfast in their rates. The service fee is usually included in the bill. This is 15% of the room rate; for meals and drinks it is 14% on weekdays and 15% on Friday evenings, Saturdays, Sundays, holidays and the eve of holidays.

Advance reservations are advisable in the summer months. Details of hotels are listed in the brochure Finland Hotels, available from Finnish Tourist Board offices. See also their publication Finland Handbook (trade only) which gives, among other invaluable information, full details of accommodation in Finland and addresses of booking agencies. Accommodation at reduced rates is often possible, especially for groups and during weekends. Reductions are also possible for guests participating in special schemes run by hotel chains throughout Scandinavia. The Finland Handbook gives details. Information can also be obtained from the Finnish Hotel and Restaurant Association, Merimiehenkatu 29, 00150 Helsinki (tel: (9) 622 0200; fax: (9) 62 20 20 90).

**Summer hotels:** During summer (June 1 to August 31), when the universities are closed, the student accommodation becomes available to tourists. Rooms are modern and clean and become

the 'summer hotels' of Finland. They are located around the country in major cities. The price level of 'summer hotels' is less than that of regular hotels.

**BED & BREAKFAST:** There are approximately 100 bed & breakfast host families in Finland. Accommodation ranges from rooms in main buildings to cottages and outbuildings. Children aged under 4 years are free of charge; those aged up to 11 years pay half the price. A list of B&Bs can be supplied by the Finnish Tourist Board (see address section). See also the brochure Finland Country Holidays - Bed & Breakfast, published by Lomarengas, who can also take bookings (tel: (9) 57 66 33 30; fax: (9) 57 66 33 66 or 57 66 33 55; e-mail: sales@lomarengas.fi). The brochure also includes information on farm holidays.

**FARMHOUSE HOLIDAYS:** More than 500 farmhouses take guests on a bed & breakfast and full- or half-board basis. They are in rural settings and almost always close to water. The guest rooms may be without modern conveniences, but are clean and there is usually a bathroom in the house. Some farms also have individual cottages for full-board guests, or apartments with kitchen, fridge and electric stove for those wishing to cater for themselves. The guests can join the farm family for meals, take a sauna twice a week, row, fish, walk in the forests or join in the work of the farm. Full-board rates include two hot meals, coffee twice a day and a sauna twice a week, children 50-75% reduction. The majority of farms are in central and eastern Finland, some on the coast and in the Åland Islands.

**Grading:** Farmhouses are graded on a scale from 1 to 5 stars.

**SELF-CATERING:** There are over 200 Holiday Villages in Finland, many in the luxury class with all modern conveniences. These villages consist of self-contained first-class bungalows by a lake and offer varied leisure activities, such as fishing, rowing, hiking and swimming. The best villages are open all the year round and can be used as a base for winter holidays and skiing. Some of the villages also have hotels and restaurants. Those in the top-price bracket have several rooms, TV and all modern conveniences.

There are also approximately 5000 individually-owned holiday cottages for hire, ranging from the humblest fishing hut on the coast or in the archipelago to the luxury villas of the inland lakes. They are all furnished and have cooking utensils, crockery and bed-linen as well as fuel for heating, cooking and lighting and in many cases a sauna and a boat. Most cottages inland are near a farm where the tourist can buy food. Reductions are available out of season. Enquire at tourist offices for details.

**Grading:** Classification is from 1 to 5 stars.

**YOUTH HOSTELS:** There are about 160 youth hostels in Finland. Many of them are only open in the summer from June 10 to August 15, and about 50 of them are also open in winter. Some of the hostels are in empty educational establishments, with accommodation and fairly large rooms, but a lot of them also offer 'family rooms'. The hostels do not in general provide food, but coffee and refreshments are available at most and some have self-service kitchens. There are no age restrictions and motorists may use the hostels. Sheets can be hired. For more information, contact The Finnish Youth Hostel Association, Yrjönkatu 38B-15, 00100 Helsinki (tel: (9) 565 7150; fax: (9) 565 71510; e-mail: info@srm.inet.fi; web site: <http://www.srmnet.org>).

**Grading:** Youth hostels are classified into four categories according to their facilities.

**CAMPING/CARAVANNING:** There are about 350 campsites in Finland. The majority have cooking facilities, kiosks and canteens where food, cigarettes and sweets can be bought. Campsites are generally along waterways, within easy reach of the main roads and towns. Camping anywhere other than in official campsites is forbidden without special permission from

the landowner. The camping season starts in late May or early June and ends in late August or early September. In southern Finland it is possible to sleep under canvas for about three months and in the north for about two months. Most campsites have indoor accommodation, camping cottages, and holiday cottages suitable for family accommodation. Prices depend on the classification of the campsite and are charged for a family, ie children, two adults, car, tent and trailer. The charge includes the basic facilities such as cooking, washing, etc. If a camper has an international camping card (FICC) a national camping card is not required. Further details can be obtained from: Camping Department, Atomi Tier 5C, 00370 Helsinki (tel: (9) 622 6280; fax: (9) 654 358; e-mail: info@camping.fi).

**Grading:** Sites are classified into 5 grades.

Further details on accommodation and grades of accommodation are given in the publications Finland Hotels and Finland-Budget Accommodation available from the Finnish Tourist Board.

## 9 RESORTS & EXCURSIONS

Over the country as a whole there are marked differences in climate and landscape, with corresponding regional variations in traditions, culture and food. Seasonal variations are particularly marked in the north; in Lapland, for instance, the winter sports season lasts until May, and the midnight sun shines night and day for the whole of June and part of July. Autumn is also worth seeing, for in September the first frosts produce the vivid colours of 'Ruska'. In southern Finland spring comes earlier and summer is longer. At midsummer, daylight lasts for 19 hours and there are generally many hours of warm sun.

### Helsinki Metropolitan Area

There are approximately half a million inhabitants in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area, making it the most densely populated region in Finland. The area comprises four towns, Helsinki (the capital), Espoo, Vantaa and Kauniainen. However, only half of the 800 sq km (300 sq miles) that it occupies is actually developed. The rest consists of parks, forests, shoreline, and lakes. In many places there are historical sights - old manors and churches - as well as buildings by the best-known of Finnish architects including Dipoli Hall at the Helsinki University of Technology in Otaniemi, an internationally acknowledged 20th-century masterpiece. The year 2000 marks Helsinki's 450th anniversary and is also the year when the city will assume the title of European City of Culture (along with 8 other European cities).

### Finnish Archipelago and Åland Islands

Finland is surrounded in the south, southwest and west by the Baltic, the Gulf of Finland and the Gulf of Bothnia. The coastline is highly indented and its total length is 4600km (2760 miles). Around the coast is a vast archipelago of thousands of islands.

The coast and archipelago are largely composed of granite rocks, either grey or red, but these are generally low-lying. In many places there are long unspoiled sandy beaches. There are no tides to speak of, so the appearance of the seashore does not differ much from the lakeshores. In addition the seawater is not very salty as very little water of high salt content passes through the Danish straits, and the many rivers as well as the rainfall contribute more water to the Baltic than is lost by evaporation. A special feature of the Baltic is that the land is constantly rising from the sea, as much as 9mm a year in the narrow part of the Gulf of Bothnia, a long-term result of the end of the Ice Age. The archipelago can be explored by local cruises from many coastal towns.

Southwest Finland and the Åland Islands are the warmest part of the country and more deciduous trees grow here than anywhere else in the country. Fruit and vegetables are cultivated extensively and 20% of the country's fields are here.

For historical reasons a large proportion of the Swedish-speaking population of Finland lives in this region and is concentrated in the Åland Islands, the Turku Archipelago and on the south coast. The region is often spoken of as the cradle of Finnish civilisation and the area has a larger concentration of granite churches and manors than elsewhere.

**Resorts:** Resorts: Hamina, Hanko, Hyvinkää, Hämeenlinna, Kotka, Kouvola, Kuusankoski, Lohja, Mariehamn and Åland Islands, Naantali, Pargas, Pori, Porvoo, Rauma, Riihimäki, Tammisaari, Turku, Uusikaupunki.

#### Finnish Lakeland

The majority of Finland's 180,000 lakes are situated between the coastal area and the eastern frontier covering an area some 100km (60 miles) wide. The lakes are a veritable maze with their profusion of bays, headlands and islands. Sometimes they open out into broader stretches. They are linked to each other by rivers, straits and canals forming waterways which in former times were a principal means of communication. Nowadays they are attractive routes for the tourist. As the lakes are usually shallow and the surrounding land is not high the water soon becomes warm in summer. Many summer festivals of all kinds take place in the lakeland area, often in beautiful country settings.

#### Western Lakeland

**Jyväskylä, Tampere, Lahti, Hämeenlinna:** Jyväskylä, Tampere, Lahti, Hämeenlinna region. This area comprises two major waterways, the oldest of which, the Finnish Silverline, runs between Hämeenlinna, birthplace of Sibelius, and Tampere, through fertile agricultural lands which are fairly densely populated. Lahti, a winter sports centre, lies at one end of Lake Päijänne where the land is higher and steep rocky cliffs rise to as much as 200m (650ft). At the other end is Jyväskylä, famous for its modern architecture.

#### Eastern Lakeland

The eastern region is an area of interconnected lakes which is dominated by Lake Saimaa, a vast expanse of water. Dotted over their surface are no fewer than 33,000 islands and the shoreline is 50,000km (80,000 miles) long. A network of waterways joins the lively Savo towns, such as Savonlinna with its medieval Olavinlinna Castle, the best preserved in Scandinavia. The Savonlinna Opera Festival is held annually in July. In addition to operas performed to international standards, there are a number of concerts. Kuopio is known for its food speciality kalakukko.

#### Forest Finland

The remoteness of Forest Finland has meant that the beauty of the wild, vast forests, rivers and lakes has remained unspoiled. It is a popular area for canoe and hiking trips, and rapid-shooting.

**Northern Karelia:** Northern Karelia, the southernmost part of Forest Finland, lies in the 'bulge' to the east of Lake Pielinen. The Koli Heights (347m/1138ft), the highest point in Northern Karelia, overlook the lake. A large percentage of the Finnish Orthodox population lives here, and the region has preserved its own special character, customs and food. One speciality is known far beyond the region, the Karjalan piirakka, Karelian pastry. Kainuu, the district around Lake

Oulujärvi, is wild and beautiful with vast forests, marshes, deep lakes and rapids. Vuokatti, near Sotkamo village, specialises in cross-country skiing.

**Resorts:** Resorts: Iisalmi, Imatra, Joensuu, Jyväskylä, Kajaani, Kuopio, Lahti, Lappeenranta, Lieksa, Mikkeli, Nurmes, Outokumpu, Savonlinna, Tampere, Valkeakoski, Varkaus.

#### Ostrobothnia

The west coast area of Ostrobothnia with its long sandy beaches (of which the dunes of Kalajoki are the best known), is an agricultural region with a sunny climate and less rain than elsewhere. There are islands between Vaasa and Kokkola with old fishermen's villages. Hailuoto Island, with its interesting fauna, can be reached by ferry from Oulu, the area's chief commercial and university centre.

Picturesque old wooden houses are still a feature of the coastal towns. Traditions are maintained in many local festivals where Pelimannit play music handed down through the generations. A number of Swedish-speaking Finns live on the coast. Seinäjoki has administrative buildings designed by Alvar Aalto. 80km (130 miles) southeast of Seinäjoki is Ähtäri Wildlife Park. The region just south of the Arctic Circle along the eastern frontier is centred round Kuusamo. In Oulanka National Park rivers with rapids run through gorge-like valleys. Seine fishing (using vertical nets) takes place on Lake Kitkajärvi. In summer there are numerous hiking routes. Ruka Fell is a popular winter sports centre.

**Resorts:** Resorts: Kokkola, Oulu, Pietersaari, Raahe, Seinäjoki, Vaasa.

#### Lapland

Finnish Lapland is a place for those who wish to enjoy the peace and quiet of a remote area either in the comfort of first-class accommodation out in the wilds or in more primitive conditions. Lapland can offer gastronomic delights such as salmon and reindeer prepared in many ways, and the rare golden cloudberry. It is a very large area of 100,000 sq km (38,000 sq miles). Between the many rivers are vast uninhabited areas and swamps. In the valleys pine and spruce grow, but the most northerly regions are treeless tundra or low-fell birch scrub. Many fells have gently rounded treeless tops.

**There are only four towns in the province:** Rovaniemi (the provincial capital), Kemijärvi, Tornio and Kemi. The whole of the rest of Lapland is very sparsely populated with a density of only slightly over two persons per sq km. Of the 200,000 inhabitants, about 3900 are Lapps and 600 Skolt Lapps, the latter belonging to the Orthodox church. About 200,000 reindeer roam freely on the fells. They are the property of 5800 different owners. There are reindeer round-ups from September to January. Special reindeer-driving competitions take place in March with participants from all over Lapland.

**As regards scenery and communications, Lapland can be roughly divided into two areas:** Eastern and Western Lapland.

#### Eastern Lapland

**Suomutunturi:** Suomutunturi, on the Arctic Circle, is a well-known winter sports centre, as are Pyhäntunturi, Luostotunturi and Saariselkä Fells. At Porttikoski and Simo there are traditional lumberjack competitions in summer. Further north Tankavaara is a gold-panning centre. Inari village lies on the third-largest lake in Finland, Lake Inari with 3000 islands, on one of which stands an old Lapp sacrificial palace. The Sami Museum is devoted to the history of the Lapps. In the wilds lies Pielipajärvi Church. The River Lemmenjoki flows into Lake Inari and is another well-known gold-panning region. The Lemmenjoki National Park has marked routes for hikers.

## Western Lapland

The scenery differs from Eastern Lapland and the ground is higher. The fells rise in bare and impressive ranges. Among the best known are Yllästunturi, Olostunturi and Pallastunturi. All of them are winter sports centres but are attractive in other seasons and are especially popular among hikers. Haltia Fell, the highest in Finland, at 1300m (4265ft) and Saana Fell, 1029m (3376ft), lie on the border between Finland, Norway and Sweden. In the north is the Lapp village of Hetta, scene of colourful festivities on Lady Day in March.

**Resorts:** Resorts: Kemi, Kemijärvi, Rovaniemi, Tornio.

## Ski Resorts

The major ski resorts include Pallastunturi, Saariselkä, Pallas, Levi, Ylläs and Luosto/Pyhä (in the North); Rovaniemi, Ruka, Iso-Syöte, Vuokatti, Koli and Tahko (in central Finland); and Himos and Lahti (in the south). All of the major resorts are easily accessible from the nearest airports or railway stations; the number of slopes varies from 5-36 while cross-country skiing trails vary in total length from around 100-250km (63-157 miles). For further details contact the Finish Tourist Board (see address section), which also publishes a special brochure on winter activities. See also the Sports & Activities section.

## 10 SPORT & ACTIVITIES

**Winter Sports:** Winter Sports: One of Finland's most popular sports is cross-country skiing, with marked and often illuminated tracks all over the country. There are also some 120 downhill skiing resorts, offering instruction, equipment hire and extensive après-ski facilities. For details, see the Resorts & Excursions section. Many resorts have halfpipes and 'snowboard streets' for snowboarding enthusiasts. Off-piste skiing (for experienced skiers only) is available through private companies. The skiing season is from January to February (southern Finland) and December to March/April (central and northern Finland). The lakes and the ground freeze between November and May and the coastal waters freeze in December. Northernmost Finland is above the Arctic Circle and enjoys a spell of polar night (kaamos) when the sun does not rise; many skiing slopes are artificially lit during this time. Around mid-summer, several weeks of perpetual daylight or midnight sun can be enjoyed, allowing skiers to ski at night without artificial light. Dog- or reindeer sledge safaris, snowmobile tours and icebreaker cruises often involve overnight stays in log cabins or Lap tents (kota), located in the Arctic wilderness. Although remote, kotas are warm and comfortable.

**Hiking:** Hiking: Around 65% of Finland's surface area is forested. The north has coniferous forests, streams and open country; central Finland is characterised by its many lakes; the east has forests and deep gullies; and the south, though more densely populated, still offers forests and attractive coastal trails. The midnight sun period in Lapland is particularly popular. In early autumn, Lapland's trees and vegetation take on the beautiful hues and colours of the ruska season. Finland has 31 national parks, the largest of which, such as Lemmenjoki and Pallas-Ounastunturi, are in the north. There are also 7 national hiking areas, specifically designed for outdoor recreation. These offer a network of trails and extensive recreational facilities (including accommodation ranging from campsites to log cabins). Cliff abseiling, bear trails, bird- and reindeer watching (notably in Salla Reindeer Park) and pony treks are also possible. Finland hosts several international orienteering competitions every year, and races are open to all.

**Boating:** Boating: Visitors arriving in Finland under their own sail traditionally proceed past the west coast of the Åland Islands (see also Resorts & Excursions section) to either Hank, Helsinki or Kotka. Hidden rocks make the Finnish archipelago quite treacherous and only experienced sailors with up-to-date charts should navigate them. Foreign pleasure craft entering Finnish waters are subject to Finnish immigration laws. The Finnish Maritime Administration publishes a number of useful guides and brochures, including 'By Pleasure Boat to Finland'. For further information and charts, contact the Finnish Maritime Administration, PO Box 171, 00180 Helsinki (tel: 204 481; fax: 02 04 48 51 00); or the Map Centre (Karttakeskus), PO Box 40, 00511 Vantaa, Finland (tel: 20 44 51 44; fax: 20 44 59 79; e-mail: sales@Karttakeskus.fi). For information on sailing courses, contact the Finnish Yachting Association, Radiokatu 20, 00093 Helsinki (tel: (9) 348 121; fax: 34 81 23 69).

**Lake cruises:** Lake cruises: Many lakes in the eastern Saimaa Lake District are large enough for bigger vessels. Cruises ranging from a few hours to a few days are available from June to August. The Saimaa Canal, the waterway leading from the Gulf of Finland through Russian territory to the Saimaa lake region, is also open to foreign visitors (but subject to special safety and travel regulations). For details contact the Board of Management of the Saimaa Canal, Itäinen, Kanavatie 2, 53420 Lappeenranta, Finland (tel: 54 58 51 70; fax: 204 483 110; e-mail: saimaankanavan.hoitokunta@fma.fi).

**Canoeing:** Canoeing: Good areas for canoeing include Saimaa, Lake Oulujärvi and Lake Inari. Owing to strong currents, guides are recommended for trips to remote areas. City tourist offices can supply ready-planned canoeing routes. All canoeists should use charts of the coastal regions and inland waterways. Further information can be obtained from the Finnish Canoe Federation, Olympiastadion, Eteläkaarre, 00250 Helsinki (tel: (9) 494 965; fax: 499 070).

**Fishing:** Fishing: The low salt content of the sea around Finland means that those fishing in the coastal regions can catch both sea and freshwater fish. Overall, the Gulf of Finland is excellent for salmon, trout, pike and perch. The lakes and inland waterways are particularly good for trout, perch, bream and roach. For river fishing, the Tornio and Teno salmon rivers in the Gulf of Bothnia are best. Visitors over 18 years are required to purchase a general fishing licence for all areas (except the Åland Islands); they are valid for one year and can be obtained from postal bank offices and from post offices. In addition, permission from owners of fishing waters must be obtained. Fishing permits, information and maps are available from the Finnish Forest and Park Service and Information Point (Tikankontti), Eteläesplanadi 20, 00130 Helsinki (tel: (9) 270 5221; fax: (9) 644 421).

**Cycling:** Cycling: Finland has few mountains and little traffic. Some cycling routes follow old country roads and, in the cities, there are special cycling lanes. Bicycles can be taken to the start of a route by public transport. Along the cycling routes, campsites, hostels and other forms of accommodation are available. Mountain biking is popular in the lake districts, where bicycles can be hired from campsites, hotels, hostels and tourist information offices. A useful cyclists' road map (with details of bike centres and connections to ferries and boats) is available.

**Golf:** Golf: Finland has 89 golf courses. The season runs from May to October, although in some areas (such as Rovaniemi) it is possible to play snow golf in winter. The best 18-hole courses are in the Helsinki region. Visitors should bring a membership card of their own golf club.

**Horseriding:** Horseriding: There are 150 riding schools in Finland, most of them located outside the towns and cities. Harness racing is very popular, with competitions held throughout the year; the main track at Vermo, just outside Helsinki, hosts 65 races a year (the main one being the Finlandia Race in April and the Great Finnish Derby in September).

**Special interest:** Special interest: The sauna is perhaps one of the best known Finnish traditions, and the country has an estimated 1.6 million of them - nearly one for every three inhabitants. Most hotels, holiday villages, campsites and even log cabins come equipped with a sauna, usually built close to the water. During winter, when the water freezes, it is not uncommon to cut a hole (avanto) into the ice through which seasoned sauna fans may take a dip. Sauna tours, notably to the sauna village of Muurame, are possible. Health-conscious travellers can also go on a spa tour, taking in some of Finland's spas at, for instance, Naantali or Haikko. Architecture tours put particular emphasis on buildings and designs by the internationally acclaimed Alvar Aalto, one of Finland's most famous architects. Design tours, focusing particularly on glassware, jewellery and household items as well as fireplaces and log houses, often include a visit to Helsinki's Iittala Glass Museum or Glassworks.

## 11 SOCIAL PROFILE

**Food & Drink:** Potatoes, meat, fish, milk, butter and rye bread are the traditional mainstays of the Finnish diet, but food in Finland has been greatly influenced both by Western (French and Swedish) and Eastern (Russian) cooking. Tourists can expect excellent fresh fish dishes on menus. Examples are pike, trout, perch, whitefish, salmon and Baltic herring. All are in abundance most of the year. Crayfish (a Finnish speciality) is available from July to August. One should also try reindeer meat, smoked or in other forms. Regional dishes include kalakukko, a kind of fish and pork pie, baked in a rye flour crust, and karjalan piirakat, a pastry of rye flour stuffed with rice pudding or potato and eaten with egg butter. Various kinds of thick soups are also popular.

In restaurants (ravintola) the menu is Continental with several Finnish specialities. Restaurant prices are moderate if the set menu is chosen. Most restaurants have a special menu for children, or other half-price meals. Inexpensive lunches are served at places called kahvila and baari (the latter is not necessarily a licensed bar). Information about gourmet trails may be obtained from Finnish Tourist Board offices; two are planned - for east and west Finland. The trails have been designed so that both can be covered in two to four days. Visitors on the trails will visit a variety of eating places from large chain hotels to inns and farmhouses, with the emphasis on the smaller, more personal places. Additionally in Lapland Lapi à la carte consists of three gourmet

**routes. An English route map with details is available from the Tourist Board. Drink:** Restaurants are divided into two classes: those serving all kinds of alcohol and those serving only beers and wines. Waiter service is common although there are many self-service snack bars. Bars and cafés may have table and/or counter service and all internationally known beverages are available. The Finnish berry liqueurs, mesimarja (arctic bramble), lakka (cloudberry), and polar (cranberry), as well as the Finnish vodka (usually served ice cold with meals), are well worth trying. Finnish beer (grades III and IV A), is of a high quality and mild beers are served in most coffee bars. There are strict laws against drinking and driving. In restaurants beer is served from 0900 and other liquor from 1100. All alcohol is served until half an hour before the restaurant closes. Nightclubs are open to serve drinks until 0200 or 0400. Service begins at 1100 and continues until the restaurant closes. The age limit for drinking is 18 years, but consumers must be 20 before they can buy the stronger alcoholic beverages.

**Restaurant classification:** Prices for alcohol vary according to the restaurants classification.

**E:** Elite price category.

**G:** General price category.

**S:** Self-service price category.

**A:** Fully licensed.

**B:** Licensed for beer and wine.

**Shopping:** Finnish handicrafts, jewellery, handwoven ryiji rugs, furniture, glassware, porcelain, ceramics, furs and textiles are amongst the many Finnish specialities. Excellent supermarkets and self-service shops can be found all over the country. Helsinki railway station has the first underground shopping centre in the country, where the shops are open 0800-2200 (1200-2200 Sunday and holidays). At the Katajanokka boat harbour there is a shop selling glass, china, wooden articles and textiles. Duty free: Anyone permanently resident outside the EU can claim back purchase tax at the time of departure. Repayment can be made (on presentation of a special cheque provided by the retailer) at the following gateways: Helsinki, Turku, Tampere, Mariehamn, Vaasa and Rovaniemi airports; on board ferries and ships operated by Silja Line, Viking Line, Vaasaferries and Polferries; and at the main checkpoints on the land borders with Sweden, Norway and the Russian Federation. Shopping hours: 0900-1800 Monday to Friday; 0900-1500 Saturday. Shops are generally open on Sunday from June to August. Many shops are also open 0900-2100 during the week and 0900-1800 Saturday.

**Special Events:** For a full list of special events, contact the Finnish Tourist Board (see address section). The following is a selection of major festivals and events held in Finland during 2001: Jan 26-28 2001 Arctic Rally, Rovaniemi. Feb 2-4 Championship Ice Pool Swimming; Championship Ice Sculpturing, Kajaani. Feb 15-25 Nordic World Ski Championship, Lahti. Mar 7-11 Tampere International Short Film Festival. Mar 12-18 World Cup Snowboarding Final, Ruka. Mar 16 Santa Claus Reindeer City Race, Rovaniemi. Mar 31-Apr 1 Reindeer Champion Race, Inari. May 24-27 International Kainuu Jazz Festival, Kajaani. Jun 13-17 Midnight Sun Film Festival, Sodankylä. Jun 15-19 Jutajaiset International Folklore Festival, Rovaniemi. Jun 24-Jul 2 Korsholm Music Festival, Korsholm and Vaasa. Jul 7-Aug 5 Savonlinna Opera Festival. Jul 11-15 Tango Festival, Seinäjoki. Jul 13-14 Oluset Beer Festival, Iisalmi. Jul 14 Wife Carrying World Championship, Sonkajärvi. Jul 14-22 Kaustinen Folk Music Festival, Vaasa. Aug 1-31 Neste Rally Finland, Jyväskylä. Aug 4-5 Löyly World Championship, Heinda, Lahati. Aug 7-12 Tampere International Theatre Festival. Aug 8-12 Savonlinna Film Festival. Aug 24 Finland Championship, Mobile Phone Throw, Savonlinna.

**Social Conventions:** Handshaking is customary. Normal courtesies should be observed. It is customary for the guest to refrain from drinking until the host or hostess toasts their health with a 'kippis' or a 'skol'. Casual dress is acceptable. Black tie will usually be specified when required. Finns appear sometimes to be rather reserved and visitors should not feel alarmed if there is a lack of small talk during the first half hour or so. Shoes must usually be removed when entering someone's home. Tipping: 15% service charge included in the bill in hotels. Restaurants and bars have 14% service charge weekdays and 15% weekends and holidays. The obligatory cloakroom or doorman fee is usually clearly indicated. Taxi drivers, washroom attendants and hairdressers are not tipped.

## 12 BUSINESS PROFILE

**Economy:** Finland is a highly industrialised country, producing a wide range of industrial and consumer goods. Timber and related industries are a key component of the economy, accounting for 40% of all Finnish exports, but the country is consequently vulnerable to fluctuations in world market prices and demand levels for timber, paper and finished products such as furniture. Agriculture is relatively important by the standards of most European industrialised economies and Finland enjoys virtual self-sufficiency in basic foodstuffs such as grains, dairy products and root crops. This is despite the country's climatic and geographical conditions which allow a very short growing season. The largest industrial sector is engineering, and although traditional 'metal bashing' industries have been in a strong position by world standards, there has nonetheless been a decline which threw Finland into an unprecedented recession in the early 1990s. Mining is

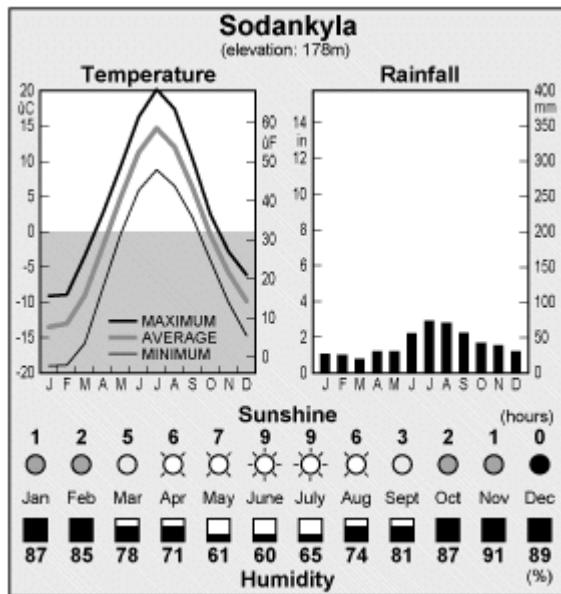
relatively small, although exportable quantities of gold are produced and diamond deposits were discovered in 1994. Industry is heavily dependent on imported components. Apart from paper and woodworking, its principal exports are machinery and transport equipment, metal ores and textiles. Engineering products and consumer goods are the country's main imported products. The service sector is notable for the spectacular growth of mobile communications to which Finns are now among the world's highest per capita subscribers. A number of Finnish companies are also prominent in parts of the worldwide telecoms equipment market. Through its geographical position and political neutrality, Finland has traded extensively with both East and West, its principal partners being Germany, Sweden and the UK. A new customs agreement was signed with Poland in November 1997. Finland is also a member of the Nordic Council and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. It was formerly a long-standing member of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) which started life as a rival trading bloc to the EU; but in 1995 Finland finally joined the European Union along with Sweden and Austria, and the first election of Finnish representatives to the European Parliament was held in October 1996. In October of the same year, Finland duly entered the ERM, and increased fiscal austerity after 1997 saw targets for both budget deficit and public debt duly met.

**Business:** Businessmen are expected to dress smartly. Most Finnish business people speak English and/or German. Finnish is a complex language related to Hungarian and Estonian; details of available courses may be obtained from the Council for the Instruction of Finnish for Foreigners, Pohjoisranta 4 A 4, 00170 Helsinki. Local tourist boards and travel agents will be able to assist in finding translation services. Punctuality is essential for business and social occasions. Calling cards are common. Best months for business visits are February to May and October to December. Office hours: 0800-1615 Monday to Friday.

**Commercial Information:** The following organisation can offer advice: Finland Trade Centre, Embassy of Finland, 30-35 Pall Mall, London SW1Y 5LP (tel: 020) 7473 000; fax: (020) 7747 3007; e-mail: london@finpro.fi; web site: <http://www.finpro.fi>; or Keskuskauppakamari (Central Chamber of Commerce of Finland), PO Box 1000, 00100 Helsinki (tel: (9) 696 969; fax: (9) 650 303; e-mail: keskuskauppakamari@wtc.fi; web site: <http://www.keskuskauppakamari.fi>).

**Conferences/Conventions:** Finland is among the world's top 20 conference destinations. In addition to conference centres and hotels there are luxury cruise ships and spas offering full convention facilities. The Helsinki-Finland Congress Bureau helps and advises conference organisers. They can be reached at Fabianinkatu 4 B 11, 00130 Helsinki (tel: (9) 668 9540; fax: (9) 66 89 54 10; e-mail: hfcb@hfcb.fi; web site: <http://www.hfcb.fi>). Information may also be obtained from the Finnish Tourist Board, who produce a brochure entitled Meeting Planner's Guide to Finland.

## 13 CLIMATE



Temperate climate, but with considerable temperature variations (see below). Summer is warm with relatively mild weather in spring and autumn. Winter, which lasts from November to mid-March, is very cold. In the north (see the chart for Sodankyla), the snow cover lasts from mid-October until mid May, but in the brief Arctic summer there may be up to 16 hours of sunshine a day. Rainfall is distributed throughout the year with snow in winter, but the low humidity often has the effect of making it seem warmer than the temperature would indicate (even in Lapland the temperature can rise to over 30°C). During warm weather, gnats and mosquitos can be a hazard, particularly in the north of the country. Bring a good supply of insect repellent. The Twilight season lasts for two months in the north during winter.

**Required clothing:** Light- to medium-weights in warmer months. Medium- to heavyweights in winter, with particularly warm clothing needed for the Arctic north. Waterproofing is essential throughout the year.

## 14 HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT

**History:** During the first millennium BC, various peoples settled in Finland including the nomadic Sami who inhabited the north of the country, the Tavastians from central Europe and the precursors of the modern Finnish race. A notable feature of this migration was that the settlers spoke a language belonging to the Finno-Ugric group (which also includes Hungarian and Estonian), which is quite distinct from the Indo-European languages spoken throughout most of the rest of Europe. During the Viking Age, between the 8th and 11th centuries, Finland - an area larger than the present country which extended as far east the Karel peninsula (now part of Russia) provided the backdrop for expanding trade and occasional wars between Swedes, Russians and Germans. Competition for influence in the area increased thereafter. The Swedes predominated until 1240 when they were defeated by a force from the Russian province of Novgorod. The Swedes were not wholly expelled from the region, however, and at the Treaty of Pähkinäsaari in 1323, Finland was divided between Russian and Swedish spheres of influence. The Swedish part - which roughly coincides with modern-day Finland, was granted the full rights

of a Swedish province in 1362. As such, it became part of the Danish-led Kalmar Union and, when Sweden broke away from the Union, remained as under Swedish control. The Russians continued to covet the territory and, as Swedish influence in Europe waned at the beginning of the 18th century, Finland was briefly occupied by the Russians. The tug-of-war between Finland's two powerful neighbours continued for the next 200 years, while the Finns concentrated on preserving their unique language, culture and institutions. In 1917, Finland was an autonomous region within the Russian Empire but, in the aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution, Finland declared independence which the new Soviet government accepted after brief efforts to re-assert control. Further fighting between the two took place on the fringes of World War II between 1939 and 1941. Under a formal peace treaty signed in 1947, the Finns agreed to cede territory to the then USSR and pay reparation. The existence of a Pact of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance between the two countries have led to the term 'Finlandisation'. Bilateral relations improved after the arrival of Mikhail Gorbachev at the Kremlin and the two countries signed a ten-year treaty in 1992. Since joining the EU in 1995, given Russia's preoccupation with its own situation and reduced international clout, the focus in Helsinki has switched principally towards Europe but also towards the development of relations with the newly independent Baltic states of the former USSR, with whom there are cultural and linguistic links. Finland's appreciation of Moscow's sensitivities remains acute, nonetheless, typified by its refusal to countenance future membership of NATO - in contrast to some of Russia's former Warsaw Pact allies, such as Poland. Domestic politics have been dominated in the last few decades by the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the Centre Party (known as 'Kesk'), which have led a long series of coalition governments and presided over the evolution of a centrist consensus in Finnish political life. In recent years, the main change in the political landscape has been caused by the emergence of the right-wing National Coalition Party (Kokoomus, referred to as 'Kok'). Finland's long-serving president, Mauno Koivisto, the architect of its delicate balancing act between East and West, stood down in 1993 after two terms. He was replaced by the SDP candidate, the former senior UN official Martti Ahtisaari. The SDP also dominated the coalition government by virtue of controlling the largest bloc of seats in the Eduskunta following the general election of March 1995. April 1995 saw a new coalition government, with Paavo Lipponen, the leader of the SDP, appointed Prime Minister. The most recent poll, in March 1999, once again returned the Social Democrat-led coalition which Lipponen continues to lead. At the beginning of 1999, Finland assumed the EU presidency for the first time and during its six-month term exercised an important (though often unnoticed) influence over events in the Balkans and relations with Russia. At the beginning of 2000, Finns once again went to the polls to elect a president. After a closely fought campaign, the victor was SDP candidate Tarja Halonen, who became the first woman to hold the office.

**Government:** The constitution allows for a President, who is head of state, and a single-chamber Assembly. The President is elected by direct popular vote for a term of six years, while the 200-strong Parliament is elected every four years.

## 15 OVERVIEW

**Country Overview:** Finland is situated in Scandinavia in the far north of Europe, bounded by Sweden, Norway, the Russian Federation and the Gulf of Finland. There are about 30,000 islands off the Finnish coast. Approximately 10% of the total land area is under water, and 65% is forest. In the north of the country, the midnight sun shines night and day for the whole of June. In the south, daylight lasts for 19 hours at midsummer.

The Helsinki Metropolitan Area comprises four towns, including Helsinki (the capital). Half of the 800 sq km (300 sq miles) consists of parks, forests, shoreline, and lakes.

In Lapland visitors can enjoy the peace and quiet of a remote area either in first-class accommodation or in more primitive conditions. Special reindeer-driving competitions take place in March with participants from all over Lapland.

Skiing is a popular activity in the winter. Ski tracks, of varying difficulty, lead through the forests and over snow to frozen lakes and the sea.

Regional dishes include kalakukko, (fish and pork pie, baked in rye flour crust) and karjalan piirakat (pasty of rye flour, stuffed with rice pudding).

Nightclubs are usually open to serve drinks until 0200 or 0300 in the morning.

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