



This is Helsinki
WELCOME

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This is Helsinki

Helsinki, the capital of Finland, is a Nordic, western-European city with a highly developed infrastructure and some of the world's leading high-tech capabilities. The population is well-educated, and they enjoy an excellent quality of living.

Helsinki is surrounded by sea on three sides, and the maritime environment gives the city life a special character. There are four distinct seasons, with exquisite summers, and with northern winters which are mild compared to other northern regions of the world.

The population of the Helsinki region is 1.1 million. Besides Helsinki, this region includes the cities of Espoo, Vantaa and Kauniainen. The Helsinki region is today the EU's second-fastest growing urban area, right after Dublin.

Finnish is the dominant language, while 7% speak Swedish, the second official language of Finland, as their first language. Most people speak good English, while other European languages including German and French are also spoken.

A large majority of the population are Lutheran. Approximately one percent are Orthodox. There are two Catholic congregations as well as a Jewish and an Islamic congregation.

The Helsinki population is young: people in their 30s constitute the largest group.

Helsinki is Finland's most important university city. Every fifth Helsinki resident has a university-level education.

Good transport connections

Helsinki is easy to reach by all means of transport. The international airport, which is ranked first in the world for comfort and service, is located 20 km from the centre of Helsinki. The national rail network radiates from the heart of the city. There are dozens of daily departures by ship at all times of the year.

Traffic in the Helsinki region is smooth and traffic jams are rare. The trip from the fringes of Helsinki to the city centre takes less than a half-hour; by public transport one can make it even more quickly.

Public transport functions well and dominates traffic in Helsinki and its region. The bus, tram, train and metro timetables are well-synchronized, the network is dense and the equipment is good. The taxis are likewise excellent in terms of both equipment and service.

There are rarely any breakdowns even under severe weather conditions including snowfall.

Expertise and economic life

The economic structure of Helsinki is diversified but the service sector is dominant in the manner of a typical European metropolis. More than 85% of all jobs are either in private or public services. The industrial sector accounts for 10% of all jobs. However, Helsinki is Finland's biggest industrial city, with strong electronics and shipbuilding industries.

In recent years Helsinki's growth has been based on the expansion of the information sector, especially telecommunications, information technology and new media. Of Finland's entire information sector, a third is located in Helsinki, and more than half in the Helsinki region. The region is the home of Nokia, the world's largest and most rapidly expanding mobile phone manufacturer.

Helsinki offers the best information-technology services in the world, and the city is probably the world's most digitalized capital. Mobile phone usage is the highest in the world, and the city leads in Internet banking; monetary transactions can even be handled by mobile phone.

People fare well

Helsinki's good quality of life is based on the closeness to nature, the clean environment, the excellent technical infrastructure and the respect given to traditional cultural values.

Commercial services are of the same high quality that one finds in the other Nordic countries, but price levels are somewhat lower.



Photo by Harald Reebiger

The cultural activities are abundant. In 2000, when Helsinki turned 450, the city was one of the European Cities of Culture and considerably added to its cultural offerings.

Opportunities for recreational sports are good both summer and winter. Gourmets can take their pick from hundreds of restaurants.

The health care is excellent. The City operates 32 health centres and 12 hospitals. With resources that are among the world's best, Helsinki University Central Hospital provides specialized medical care. Private medical services are also readily available.

The network of municipal services protects Helsinki residents throughout their lives and encompasses day nurseries, pre-schools, schools, health-care services, libraries, leisure-time centres, youth clubs, assisted-living homes and homes for the aged. One hot meal a day is a traditional right from pre-school through secondary school. Education is almost free from pre-school through university-level institutions. Term fees hardly exist. Substantial

**William M. Mercer
Quality of Living Survey January 2000**

Worldwide ranking

1. Vancouver	106.0	<i>The survey covered 218 cities and evaluated 39 quality of living factors including political, economic, and environmental factors, personal safety and health, education, transport and other public services.</i>
Zürich	106.0	
Vienna	106.0	
Bern.....	106.0	
5. Sydney	105.5	
Geneva	105.5	
Auckland	105.5	
Copenhagen.....	105.5	
9. Helsinki	104.5	
Amsterdam	104.5	

📍 *Life on Esplanade*



public assistance is provided even for university students' housing and living expenses.

For the average person, Helsinki is a safe city. Even small children go to school unescorted.

The William M. Mercer Research Institute described the quality of living in Helsinki in 2000 by ranking the city the world's 9th best in terms of quality of life. The survey consisted of 218 cities throughout the world.

Standards of living

In 1999 Helsinki had 327 private cars per 1,000 inhabitants – well below the national average. This demonstrates that a car is by no means essential in Helsinki.

The purchasing power of Helsinki residents is the same as those of Stockholm. Slightly less money is spent, on average, than in other Nordic capitals, but more is spent than in Brussels. Food is inexpensive. Rented housing is less costly in Helsinki than in the metropolises of central Europe.

Prices at Helsinki's hotels and restaurants are reasonable. Prices for services are lower than in Stockholm,

📍 *A view from Kiasma, the Museum of Contemporary Art*

Oslo or Paris, but higher than in Brussels, Berlin, Amsterdam or Luxembourg.

Helsinki is increasingly a city of singles. One-person households represent 47.3% of the total, while 30% of all households have two members.

From the standpoint of the job-seeker, the employment situation is good. Unemployment is about 5.4% and continues to decline. Employers, by contrast, should be prepared to compete for capable workers. High demand exists for experts in information technology. A large percentage of the women work outside the home, but the housewife (or house-husband) has a firm place in society.

Salaries and wages are of central European levels, but the cost of labour is lower than in the other Nordic countries, the United Kingdom, the United States, Spain or Portugal, when measured by relative unit labour cost.

Prices for office space in Helsinki are very competitive by European standards, and the space is well outfitted. Taxes and social contributions are at an economical European level.



A Functional City

Housing opportunities

In Helsinki the block of flats is the most common form of housing, although both terraced and single-family houses are becoming increasingly common. In 2000, 12.5% of all Helsinki residents lived in single-family homes.

Except in the core city, Helsinki's housing stock is young. In contrast to other European cities, owned housing is more common than rented housing.

The typical home is a three-room (61.5m²) flat. The basic residential amenities include district heating, running hot and cold water, and a bathroom, which in newer flats is often accompanied with a sauna – a component of the Finnish lifestyle. A new home always includes a fully equipped kitchen. The average residential space is 1.5 (32.4m²) rooms per occupant.

In the July–September 2000 period, the average cost of housing in Helsinki was over FIM 13,000 per m².

The most expensive residences are found in the city centre and along the sea. Rents for non-subsidized housing run about FIM 70 per m².

Traffic moves smoothly

A top airport

Finland is close to major world centres. For example, one can reach Helsinki by plane from New York in under eight hours; from Tokyo in nine and a half hours. Berlin is two hours away; the flight from Paris, London and Brussels is less than three hours. Both SAS and Finnair fly regularly to Helsinki from the major cities of Europe, among other points. Seven other international airlines also offer regular service to Helsinki.

Helsinki's international airport, Helsinki-Vantaa, has been ranked one of the world's best in terms of service for three years in a row by the International Air Transport Association. Ten million passengers

➤ *Mannerheimintie – Helsinki's main street*



✚ *The city seen from the sea – big passenger ships dock right in the centre of Helsinki.*

✚ *Helsinki's international airport, Helsinki-Vantaa*



Photo by Matti Tirri

pass through the airport each year. An aeroplane takes off or lands at the airport approximately every 90 seconds. There are 29 flights weekly from Helsinki to Brussels, for example.

The airport is 19 km from the centre of Helsinki. Travel time by car or airport coach is about 30 minutes; by regular bus 35–45 minutes.

Making good transport networks even better

Finland's main road network is functional, in good condition and technically advanced. Road network development projects include the routes Stockholm–Turku–Helsinki–St. Petersburg, Helsinki–Tampere–Vaasa and Helsinki–Lahti–Oulu.

Helsinki's coach terminal and railway station serve the needs of the Helsinki region and the entire country as final destinations and points of departure. The most important rail links are Helsinki–Tampere and Turku–Helsinki–Lahti–St. Petersburg. Along

both corridors, the top speed will be raised from 140 km to 160 km per hour by 2004.

Big ships dock right in the centre of Helsinki. Passenger traffic leaves from four terminals to Sweden, Germany and Estonia. There are about 80 departures weekly in winter and more in summer. All vessels that sail in winter can accommodate cars along with passengers.

By private car or public transport

The Helsinki region's road network consists of routes radiating from the centre of the city, as well as transverse ring roads. The network of streets and main roads is extensive and of high quality.

Driving in Helsinki is easy. Rush hour traffic is light, and travel time from the city centre to the city line is a half-hour at most, even during rush hour.

The public transport system encompasses buses, trams, a metro-rail system, electric trains and taxis. In its quality-of-life survey, the Corporate Resources Group awarded the Helsinki metropolitan area's public transport a full score of ten. Almost 70% of daily trips in the city centre takes place on public transport.

Helsinki's public transport system is being improved by building new routes, by improving the information systems, and by expediting the flow of bus traffic by means of traffic-signal priority mechanisms and dedicated lanes. More parking places are being created at park-and-ride facilities.

✚ *The tram is a quick way to move about the city.*

Photo by Leevi Korhonen



Photo by Matti Tirri

Pure water

Pure, good-tasting water and effectively treated wastewater constitute the foundation of health and well-being.

The drinking water that Helsinki residents use comes from the unspoiled waters of Finland's second-largest lake, Päijänne. The water travels via the world's longest continuous underground tunnel (120 km). The city's drinking water is almost the quality of good groundwater and clearly meets both Finnish and European Union quality standards. The water is also soft: one doesn't need to use special water softeners in washing machines, and there is little need for detergents.

Helsinki's drinking water is inexpensive when compared both nationally and internationally: a litre of pure water delivered to the consumer costs only somewhat over a Finnish penny (less than EUR 0.002). The price includes waste-water management costs.

Helsinki's water management solutions are ecologically sustainable. Helsinki has invested heavily in waste-water purification and the city's environmental expertise is considered first-rate internationally. One of Finland's most important environmental facilities is the Viikinmäki waste-water treatment plant in Helsinki. Built for the most part in the bedrock, the facility processes household waste-water for about 800,000 persons, as well as industrial waste-water. The plant is one of the world's most efficient and, owing to this efficiency, the condition of Helsinki's maritime areas has improved markedly in the last few years.

A city of light and warmth

In the late autumn and early winter – the darkest time of year in the North – Helsinki lights up. The streets, parks and city-centre façades are illuminated with many and coloured lights that brighten up the city and bring warmth. In 2000, Helsinki's Cultural Year, 50 new points including bridges and monuments were illuminated anew. As the holidays approach, the Christmas lights are turned on, and hotels and many other businesses decorate courtyard trees with lights. At home, Helsinki residents place clusters of lights on their balconies and in their windows.

Heat and energy with high environmental standards

All buildings in Helsinki are efficiently heated. Indoor temperatures remain at constant comfortable levels regardless of outdoor conditions. More than 90% of Helsinki's building stock is heated by dependable and environmentally friendly district heat, which is produced centrally, in a combined process that also generates electricity. This conserves fuel. Half of the electricity and heat used in Helsinki is generated with natural gas; coal, nuclear, hydroelectric and wind power are also part of the production structure.

- ✦ *The sea extends to the city centre.*
- ✦ *The smokestack of the Hanasaari power plant symbolizes clean air. District heating is an efficient method to provide heat without air pollution.*



Photo by Helsinki Energy

A leading-edge high-tech city

The Helsinki region has been one of Europe's fastest-growing urban regions for some years. The rapid economic growth has been based on the dynamism of information-intensive sectors in particular. The springboard for the growth has been Helsinki's many research institutes, universities and the city's information sector companies.

Many concentrations of expertise have emerged in the Helsinki region as high-tech business operations in such fields as information technology (IT), biotechnology, economic sciences and the applied arts have sprung up around educational institutions. The City of Helsinki has also taken note of IT's potential in the planning of the residential neighbourhoods that surround these areas. For example, in the Arabianranta district, which is focused on the applied arts, every home in the residential neighbourhood adjoining the campus will be linked to a fibre-optic network constructed by the City. An ecological residential area is meanwhile being built adjacent to the Helsinki Science Park.

The IT cluster has created an abundance of new jobs and business activity in Helsinki. In the 1990s, the information sector accounted for two-thirds of personnel growth in Helsinki's entire business sector, and one-third of the increase in total sales. Thanks to the IT cluster, it is anticipated that employment and the economic output will continue to grow faster in the Helsinki region than in most other European regions. Of Finland's total sales in the information sector's service and content-production subsectors, 70% originates in the Helsinki region.



Photo by Uuno Sailla

Thanks to district heating, Helsinki's air is good to breathe – buildings do not have smokestacks, and the exhaust gases from the tall smokestacks of the power plants go through exacting purification processes. Thanks to the combined production of electricity and heat, and the district heating system, the utilization coefficient for energy use – 90% – is excellent by international standards.

The combined production and district heating have served as a model for many other major cities. Helsinki has carried out energy-production consulting projects aimed at environmental conservation in the Baltic countries and elsewhere in Finland's neighbouring regions. Helsinki Energy, Helsinki's

utility company, received the UN's Environment Award in 1990.

In Finland, electricity is another dependable and popular source of heat. In Helsinki, it's the natural alternative in areas where the transfer distances for district heat are great.

Helsinki's electric lines, as well as the district heat mains, are for the most part placed underground. Overhead lines do not criss-cross the streets. As a result, even severe weather conditions cause no breakdowns in energy supply.

Along with their bills, Helsinki Energy customers get a report once a year on how their residences' electricity consumption has developed.

Price of electricity in Europe



Source: www.energia.fi

- ✦ *In Finland, the price of electricity is very low by European standards because of the efficient production processes.*

Digital? Of course!

The vigorous IT sector makes its presence felt in Helsinki's streets. More than 70% of all Finns carry a mobile phone – the largest percentage in the world. More than two-thirds of all Helsinki school children have one – close to 40% of all ten-year-olds. Text messaging is extremely popular. The mobile phone culture has given rise to completely new content production, exemplified by companies that design infotainment services for mobile phones.

Finland is also at the forefront globally in the number of Internet connections. In 2000, 95% of all businesses employing more than 20 persons utilized e-mail; 93% of them used the Internet. Of personnel in Helsinki businesses, more than two-thirds used computers daily in their work. The greatest number of users were in the service sector. In traditional industry, 60% needed computers in their work.

In contrast to many North American and central European cities, Helsinki has few Internet cafés. The reason is clear: the Internet is at home, at the workplace, at the library and, with the new mobile phone services, in one's pocket.

Finland is becoming a leading-edge information and expertise society. This society does not function solely on the terms of the market economy, however; the City wants to ensure that no group of citizens is left behind as the information society evolves. Via a broad information network created by the City, all schools are connected to the Internet. So are all libraries, where citizens enjoy free Internet access.

Biotechnology

Biotechnology is a growing and one of the most promising sectors of Finnish society and the economy. A solid foundation for the growth of the country's biotechnology industry is provided by high-quality research and expertise in the life sciences, advanced infrastructure, improving venture-capital financing and a positive public attitude.

Dozens of hi-tech ventures have been launched in Finland in the last three years, and new ones are being launched at a pace of one a month. The country's biotechnology industry now ranks sixth in Europe: of Europe's biotechnology companies, 10% are Finnish. The areas of greatest strength are pharmaceuticals, biomaterials, diagnostics, and industrial enzymes.



Photo by Aija Lukky

Biotechnology centres in the Helsinki region

The Helsinki Science Park, located in the Viikki district of northern Helsinki, furnishes a creative environment for emerging biotechnology companies and for research groups in cellular biology, biochemistry and molecular biology.

The science park embraces the University of Helsinki's Institute of Biotechnology, two university faculties – Sciences as well as Agriculture and Forestry – and individual companies. It is a centre of excellence in biotechnology, medical and pharmaceutical technology, molecular biology, food technology, plant breeding, environmental technologies, agriculture, and forestry. At the moment the



Photo by Eva Sumiloff



Photo by Matti Tirri

➤ *The Lasipalatsi media centre: one can pop in to use a computer.*

science park is home for over 1,000 research scientists and technicians. Together with partners and associates, the Helsinki Science Park helps companies enter into fruitful cooperation with other researchers in the park and with the industry.

Located on the University of Helsinki's Meilahti campus, Biomedicum is a newly established centre for medical research and training. The National Public Health Institute, also located in Helsinki, produces human vaccines. The Technical Research Centre of Finland and the Helsinki University of Technology work closely with the biotechnology industry.

Care for the environment

Clean air

Helsinki's air is cleaner than that of any other European city of the same size. This is largely thanks to a prohibition of rubbish burning, use of natural gas, and flue gas scrubbers at the energy plants. The city's advantageous seaside location also keeps the air clean.

➤ *Helsinki is a city of science.*

➤ *Helsinki's sky – bright and pure*

Sulphur dioxide concentrations have decreased in 40 years to a tenth of their former levels. The atmospheric lead concentration has decreased over 20 years to less than 1% of its former level. Concentrations of all other air pollutants originating in Finland (nitrogen oxides, particulates, and hydrocarbons) are also decreasing.

The impacts of air pollution on public health have been studied in greater detail than in any other city in the world. Helsinki has also assumed responsibility in the reduction of greenhouse-gas emissions.



Photo by Matti Tirri



✦ *The market square in summer – health and abundance*

The status of maritime waters close to Helsinki's shore has improved in the last few years. Helsinki's swimming beaches have been found pure. Helsinki purifies its own wastewater and that of nearby municipalities effectively. The treated wastewater is conducted through a tunnel in the bedrock out to the open sea.

A safe city

The police are the public institution most respected by Finns, who place firm trust in the police's incorruptibility and fairness.

It is the objective of the Helsinki police to make personal movement in public places safe and undisturbed. The police have succeeded fairly well in fulfilling this objective, and serious breaches of order have not occurred in the last few years.

The bulk of the police's field work consists of preventive measures and visible surveillance. Major public events such as the May Day and New Year's Eve observances draw tens of thousands of people to the city centre. Considering the number of people, disturbances have been few, and the police have not had to use any substantial force. Security arrangements for major international events, summit meetings and sports programmes have been handled discreetly and professionally.

It's safe to move about on Helsinki's streets. Yet, one should be aware of one's immediate surroundings and not leave valuable items visible in the car.

Helsinki's crime rate has remained almost constant from year to year, with a slight increase in robberies. The increase in crime is mostly related to drugs. In cooperation with the Customs, the Frontier Guards, and the other police departments in the metropolitan area, the Helsinki police have worked intensively and productively to control drug-related crime.

Confirmed security

The latest research indicates that people feel safe in Helsinki.

According to the International Crime Victimization Survey of 1996, Finland is the safest country in the world with respect to break-ins and attempted



✦ *Helsinki is a safe city. Mounted police as part of a parade.*

break-ins. In a year, burglaries were committed or attempted at only slightly more than 1 % of all residences in Finland. In four years break-ins have decreased by half. Elsewhere in Europe one is six times more likely, on average, to be a burglary victim. According to the same survey, the overall risk of becoming a victim of various crimes was clearly lower (under 20%) in three countries – Finland, Austria and Northern Ireland – than elsewhere. More than four-fifths of Finns feel no sort of insecurity in walking alone after dark in their home neighbourhoods.

Rescue Department and civil defence

The task of the City of Helsinki Rescue Department is to prevent accidents and provide assistance when fires, accidents and medical emergencies occur. The operating principle is the recognition and elimination of risk factors at an early phase.

Aid for everyday accidents and medical emergencies arrives quickly. Rescue personnel maintain a 60-second departure readiness and, on average, reach those in need of aid within six minutes after the emergency call comes in. Help is available by ringing the emergency number 112.

By virtue of its expertise, readiness and swiftness, the Rescue Department has achieved results which, compared internationally, place Helsinki at the forefront of the field. Surveys have likewise indicated that those served are very satisfied with the Rescue Department's services.

The City of Helsinki works in close cooperation with State and volunteer organizations to be prepared for possible disasters and states of emergency. A rescue service organization of 2,500 persons is available for disasters; one of 6,600 for states of emergency. Civil defence shelters accommodating a total of 775,000 persons have been built, and the shelters are to be expanded and modernized.



Photo by Matti Tirri

Photo by Virppi Räsänen



Photo by Merja Huuvinen

✦ *The City of Helsinki Rescue Department ready to help*

✦ *A swimming pool in eastern Helsinki. A civil defence shelter turned into a spa.*

Safe food

Food in Helsinki is safe and of high quality. Municipal food control functions effectively. The control emphasizes highly perishable foods. Microbiological tests are carried out by the City of Helsinki Environmental Laboratory, which is outfitted with the best possible equipment.

According to the EU's Hygiene Directive, food hygiene is the responsibility of the concerned businesses. In October 2000, this in-house control was implemented in 91 % of production facilities, 85 % of institutional kitchens and 74 % of sales outlets in Helsinki.

Helsinki has improved food control through regular collaboration with major cities of the Nordic countries. Experiences have also been exchanged with Holland and the United Kingdom. Helsinki serves as the lead city on the Eurocities organization's Food Control Subcommittee.

Efficient waste management

Helsinki residents have positive environmental attitudes. Collection systems for glass, metal and toxic wastes are in use. Organic wastes are separated and composted throughout Helsinki. About 40 % of the city's wastes are presently recycled.

Green areas and the sea

About a quarter of Helsinki is covered by green areas. Attempts have been made to avoid building in such areas and, as the population growth continues, residential builders have begun to develop former industrial and harbour areas.

Children in municipal day care	22,364
• Finnish-speaking	89%
• Swedish-speaking	6%
• Other languages	5%
In municipal day nurseries	
• Children under school age	19,159
• Per 100 children aged 1 to 6	55
In municipal family day care	
• Children under school age	2,305
• Per 100 children aged 1 to 6	7
Aid for home care of children	
• Families receiving aid	6,911

31 December 1999

The welfare state at your service

A day-care place for all children

Helsinki provides good day-care services. The social services system is able to offer all Helsinki children a day-nursery placement or, according to the family's preference, aid for either home care or family day care. There are no children waiting in queues for day care. At the end of 1999 there were only 199 children queuing for an improvement in their day-care arrangements.

According to client surveys performed by the City of Helsinki Social Services Department, Helsinki parents are satisfied with the City's day care. Parents expressed appreciation especially about their children's enjoyment of the care, and the personnel's skills and desire to serve.

Your own physician at your own health centre

Helsinki residents are served by 32 health centres. For every resident, the primary place of care is his or her own designated health centre. They also have their own designated physician and nurse. Every Helsinki resident has the right to see his or her physician, or at least to be put in touch with, or receive care instructions from, that physician within one to three days of contacting the health centre. The health centres make use of a diversity of examination and testing possibilities, and the patient can as needed be referred elsewhere for further tests and care.

A telephonic service is available for the entire population of Helsinki with round-the-clock advice on health



Photo by Kari Autero

✚ *Helsinki provides excellent modern health care.*

✚ *Helsinki is also a garrison city. The Helsinki Guards Band marching past the Presidential Palace.*



Photo by Matti Tirri

City health centres	32
Health centre physicians	264
• Physicians per 1,000 inhabitants	0.5
Health centre visits	2,550,000
• Visits per 1,000 inhabitants	4,666
Beds in health centre hospitals	2,408
• Beds per 1,000 inhabitants	4.4
Beds for specialized medical care	1,117
• Beds per 1,000 inhabitants	2.0
Care-days for specialized medical care	341,500
• Care-days per 1,000 inhabitants	625

1999

services. The telephonic service provides up-to-date information on health-care services, as well as advice on health promotion and care for illness. The service number also offers patient guidance and help in obtaining health care.

In addition to municipal services, the city has an abundance of private health-care providers.

From pre-school to university

Pre-school education

At age six – in the year before entering basic school – every child has the right to the pre-school education provided free of charge by the City. The schooling is given for four hours a day, normally in day nurseries, in which the child's other care arrangements can also be attended to. Other care is subject to charges.

Pre-school education in English, French and Russian is also available in private day nurseries and schools.

Basic-school education

All children living in Finland must receive education. They attend a nine-year basic school. A child has the right to attend school in his or her own area of residence. A place may, however, be obtained in another school space permitting.

The distance to the local school is generally short in case the child can attend a Finnish-language school. If the school is more than two kilometres from home, the City arranges for free transportation on the public transport system.



Photo by Matti Ikonen

✚ *It is only a short, safe journey to the local school.*

The City owns most of Helsinki's schools. In these public schools, instruction, meals, school books, school supplies and health care are free to the pupil. Most private schools function on the same principles. The German School, the English School and the International School of Helsinki charge term fees.

There is no need to place a child in a private school in Helsinki. All the schools offer high-standard instruction. They may also have special classes in such subjects as music, mathematics, foreign languages, and dance or physical education. The language of instruction is Finnish or Swedish. Some English-language instruction is offered at three City schools and Helsingin suomalainen yhteiskoulu (Helsinki Finnish Coeducational School).

Helsinki also has foreign-language schools. At the English School and the International School of Helsinki, instruction takes place in English. At the German School pupils study in Finnish and German; at the French-Finnish School, in Finnish and French; at the Finnish-Russian School, in Finnish and Russian. Helsinki also has a Finnish-language Christian school, a Finnish-language Jewish school and three Steiner schools.

Academic secondary education

The 9-year basic school is followed by voluntary “lukio” – academic secondary education – which is normally a 3-year period of education. In addition to regular academic secondaries, Helsinki has specialized ones that emphasize mathematics and natural sciences, music, the visual arts, expressive skills, sports, languages, literature, economics, or media studies.

At most academic secondaries, instruction, meals and health care are free to the pupil. Pupils pay for their own books and supplies. The German School, the English School and the International School of Helsinki charge term fees.

Normally instruction is in either Finnish or Swedish. One can study in English at the Kulosaari Secondary School, the Helsingin suomalainen yhteiskoulu, the English School and the International School of Helsinki. The German School offers academic secondary instruction in German.

Academic secondary study ends with a baccalaureate, whose successful completion is a requisite for further studies at institutions of higher education. Universities may also have entry examinations. An international baccalaureate may be taken at the Helsingin suomalainen yhteiskoulu. At the English School, the student may take the SAT and TOEFL exams required by U.S. universities and participate in the U.S. Advanced Placement programme. At the French–Finnish High School, the student may take the French Delf and DalF exams. At the German School, students can take the German *Reifeprüfung* examination and the exam for the Cambridge first certificate in English.

Vocational training

The City of Helsinki operates three vocational colleges: the Helsinki City College of Technology; the Helsinki City College of Culinary Arts, Fashion and Beauty; and the Helsinki City College of Social and Health Care. All told, the vocational colleges offer 47 training programmes in technology and transport, social and health services, culture, tourism, nutrition and domestic science.

The basic degree programmes last three years and qualify one for further studies at university-level institutions. For international students, the vocational colleges offer Finnish-language instruction, remedial instruction in the student’s own language, and academic guidance services.

Apprenticeship training

Apprenticeship training provides the students with practical skills needed in working life. For the most part, the training takes place on the job and is based on an apprenticeship agreement between employer and employee.

The training is organized by the Apprenticeship Centre, which has been developing international training modules that conform to the Europass certificate, in use in all EU member countries.

Polytechnics

The objective of polytechnic education is to provide vocational skills and a degree to students who often work full time. Polytechnics provide students with vocational skills and a degree, and cooperation with the working community is close even while the studies are in progress.

There are 31 polytechnics in Finland, eight of them in Helsinki including Helsinki Polytechnic. Helsinki

Photo by Mediatek/Pyia



Photo by the University of Helsinki

Business studies may be pursued at the Helsinki School of Economics and Business Administration and the Swedish-language Swedish School of Economics and Business Administration. The Helsinki University of Technology is the country’s most important university-level institution for technical instruction. The Academy of Fine Arts, the Sibelius Academy, the University of Art and Design Helsinki and the Theatre Academy of Finland provide the highest instruction in the arts.

Completing a lower university-level degree programme takes about three years; a higher degree requires about five. Students can also complete postgraduate studies for licentiate’s and doctor’s degrees.

Student places are available for almost a third of the graduates of secondary education in Finland. In the last ten years, the number of university students has increased by about 40%. However, entry into universities is very competitive, and universities organize various types of entrance examinations.

An ideal city for visitors

Growing tourism figures

Helsinki attracts a growing number of tourists each year. In 1999 overnight stays in Helsinki lodging establishments increased 5.8%. Almost 1.4 million of the 2.4 million overnight guests were international visitors. For the first time, the United Kingdom rose to the number-one spot among countries of departure, with 160,000 overnight stays. The next biggest countries of departure were Russia, Sweden, the United States and Germany. Overnight stays by travellers from Italy, France and Spain also increased. The occupancy rate of Helsinki hotel rooms was 68.5%.

Some 4.5 million travellers arrive by sea in Helsinki every year. Cruises to and from Sweden and Tallinn enjoy favour. About 200 international holiday cruise ships call at Helsinki in summer, introducing more than 100,000 tourists to the city. Another 4.5 million travellers arrive by air every year.

Hotels in the heart of the city

Helsinki has 44 year-round hotels that are of standard quality or higher. These have a total of 14,000 beds. The hotels include numerous first-class establishments offering high-quality service. Room

✚ *New doctoral degree awardees. Helsinki is Finland’s main university locale.*

✚ *There are diverse alternatives for vocational training.*

Polytechnic’s fields of training are technology and transport, social and health services, tourism, nutrition, domestic science, and culture. There are 27 training programmes and dozens of degrees.

In addition to degree programmes, Helsinki Polytechnic offers vocational specialization studies and supplementary and updating training to persons already in the labour market.

University-level institutions

Finland has a total of 20 universities. The most important locale for university-level training is Helsinki, and the University of Helsinki is the country’s leading institute of higher education (founded in Turku in 1640 and moved to Helsinki in 1828). It has 36,000 students, 63% of them women and more than 1,500 international. There are nine faculties – theology, law, medicine, humanities, mathematics and natural sciences, education, political science, agriculture and forestry, and veterinary science.



Photo by Matti Tirri

✦ *The terrace of the Kappeli restaurant, a summer oasis*

prices, which are reasonable by international standards, include a generous breakfast. Almost all of Helsinki's hotels are located within 1.5 km of the city centre. Best Western, Holiday Inn, Intercontinental, Sheraton Luxury Collection, Radisson SAS, Ramada and Scandic are the international hotel chains represented in Helsinki.

The city centre has recently seen the opening of many new hotels, including the reborn, nostalgia-rich five-star Kämp. Other first-class hotels have their own unique features, such as the Lord Hotel's special castle-tower saunas or the beautiful views of the sea at the Kalastajatorppa.

For longer stays in the city, high-quality furnished rooms are available.

A popular city for congresses

Finland is a popular country for international meetings and congresses, and its capital is the country's favourite host city for these. In 2000 about 110 international congresses with almost 31,000 participants were held in Helsinki – a safe, dependable venue with excellent air connections from Europe and elsewhere.

A number of first-rate meeting facilities are available for large groups including the Helsinki Fair Centre, Finlandia Hall and the Marina Congress Center. The big hotels have excellent facilities for meetings with up to a couple of hundred participants. Many city centre hotels provide pleasant, intimate meeting facilities for smaller groups.

Meeting equipment that conforms to the latest technical standards guarantees the success of the gathering. Finns are famous for their good organisational skills. As a city for congresses, Helsinki placed 11th in the Union of International Associations' world rankings for 1999. In a similar comparison by the International Congress and Convention Association, Helsinki took fifth place.

Much to offer to visitors

Helsinki has more than 700 restaurants that cater to diverse tastes. These include gourmet establishments and speciality restaurants full of atmosphere. The types of cuisine range from East to West.

Helsinki is a maritime city, and the fish delicacies are of the highest order. Fresh vegetables, berries and new potatoes are traditional summer favourites. In summer, many restaurants open their terraces for diners; dinner can even be enjoyed amidst the pleasant ambience of a sea cruise. A large number of kerbside cafés meanwhile offer a chance to relax while watching the bustle of the city.

Besides dining, Helsinki offers many alternatives to spend an evening. Cultural offerings range from an evening at the Finnish National Opera to a visit to Kiasma, the Museum of Contemporary Art. There are jazz clubs and night clubs, dancing, gambling at the Casino Ray, and much else.

Helsinki's recreational alternatives are varied. Here you can have a genuinely active holiday or enjoy the seaside city in peace and quiet. Cultural experiences including more than 70 museums and architecture from different eras, as well as excellent shopping opportunities await you. Just a short ferry-ride from the historic centre of Helsinki, the fortress island of Suomenlinna is one of Helsinki's most popular tourism attractions, where one can witness over 250 years of Finnish history.

There are many fascinating places to visit in Helsinki's immediate vicinity such as atelier homes, manor houses and wooden house milieus; also a downhill ski area and Europe's biggest water park. Helsinki is also an excellent base for short trips to Lapland and Finland's Lake District. The neighbouring countries are easy to get to – there are good air and ship connections to Stockholm, Tallinn and St. Petersburg.

✦ *Fun in snow*



Photo by Matti Tirri



Photo by Matti Tirri

✦ *Winter gives many opportunities for outdoor activities. One could even hike across the sea to the Suomenlinna fortress island.*

✦ *The European Council summit meeting during Finland's EU presidency took place at the Helsinki Fair Center in December 1999.*

International congresses in 1999

Congresses by continent (%)

- 1. Europe..... 56.9
- 2. North America 16.2
- 3. Asia 13.4
- 4. South America 5.0
- 5. Africa..... 4.7
- 6. Oceania 3.8

Leading congress host countries / host cities

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. USA | 1. Paris |
| 2. France | 2. Brussels |
| 3. Germany | 3. Vienna |
| 4. United Kingdom | 4. London |
| 5. Italy | 5. Berlin |
| 6. Holland | 6. Copenhagen |
| 7. Belgium | 7. Amsterdam |
| 8. Spain | 8. Sydney |
| 9. Austria | 9. Washington, Strasbourg |
| 10. Australia | |
| 11. Switzerland | 11. Helsinki |
| 12. Canada | 12. Budapest |
| 13. Finland | 13. Geneva |
| 14. Japan | 14. Singapore, Prague |
| 15. Denmark | |
| 16. Sweden | 16. New York |
| 17. China | 17. Rome |
| 18. South Africa | 18. Stockholm |
| 19. Greece | 19. Barcelona |
| 20. Norway, Hungary | 20. Maastricht |

Union of International Associations (UIA)



Photo by Suomen Messut, Heikki Tuufi



What's Best in Helsinki

The environment

Magnificent, clean nature

Of all Europe's capitals, Helsinki is probably the closest to nature. The city boasts well-preserved islands, beautiful bays and broad green areas that reach right into the city centre. The enjoyment of nature is generally free. The right of public access allows everyone to enter all natural areas outside of population centres.

Helsinki has more than 300 islands, and boating is popular. There are public boating lanes to many islands used for recreation. Helsinki's land area of 686 km² includes 38 km² of forests and 18 km² of parks. The parks range from formal classical parks to the elongated, 10 km² Central Park, which winds north from the heart of the city.

Helsinki's territory embraces 38 nature reserves. Nuuksio National Park and extensive hiking areas lie a half-hour's drive from the city centre. One occasionally even sees bears here, but Helsinki is safe in terms of animals: there are no dangerous wild animals, and Helsinki does not even have annoying mosquitoes in summer. Considering the northern conditions, Helsinki has astoundingly diverse flora and fauna.

Fishing is a popular pastime, and the Helsinki area's fisheries are bountiful. The city's sea areas produce many local species. Fish from the inner bays is of a good hygienic quality. Also the fruit, vegetables and berries that grow in the area contain no elevated levels of toxic substances and are thus safe to eat.

Four distinct seasons

Helsinki lies within the Northern Hemisphere's temperate climatic zone. Thanks to the warm GulfStream, the climate is warmer than at comparable latitudes in North America, for example. In summer Helsinki's average temperature is 16–17°C, but on hot days the mercury can reach 30°C and even higher. The average temperature in the winter months is between -3 and -5°C, and the weather varies from a few degrees above zero to biting frost.

The geologic and climatic conditions are stable. The ground does not shake, since Helsinki stands solidly atop ancient bedrock in the middle of a continental plate. Major floods, circular storms and other natural catastrophes do not occur. Snow accumulations don't cause problems in Helsinki, either. The accumulation is greatest at the end of March, when it averages 32 cm.

The strong seasonal changes give their own spice to the climate. The face of the landscape changes from season to season. In summer there's plenty of light: in the middle of the night the sky gets only slightly dark. The longest days last almost 19 hours. In autumn the climate continues to be pleasant, and the autumn splendour of the foliage enhances the city's beauty. In the heart of winter, there are about six hours of daylight from sunrise to sunset.

Get more information on the Internet –

- **On Finland's climate:** <http://virtual.finland.fi/info/english/ilmaeng.html>
- **Weather information for Helsinki at 10-minute intervals:** www.hel.fi/port/passenger/marineweather
- **Finnish weather forecasts in brief:** www.weather.fi

Over 450 years of colourful history

Helsinki came into being by royal decree in 1550, as a trading town. Finland was then part of the Kingdom of Sweden, and King Gustav I Vasa wanted a competitor for Tallinn, the wealthy Hanseatic city across the Gulf of Finland from Helsinki.

Great-power politics and wars have shaped the destiny of Finland and Helsinki down through the centuries. In the early 1700s Russia succeeded in expanding to the west, acquiring some of Sweden's eastern territories. The eastern frontier of Sweden – of Finland, in effect – moved to within a mere hundred kilometres of Helsinki.

In 1748, construction of Suomenlinna, one of the world's largest maritime fortresses, began off Helsinki. The project received financial support from France. Situated directly off Helsinki, the fortress has had great meaning to the city through the centuries – first economically but later politically and culturally. Today Suomenlinna is on UNESCO's World Heritage List.

Helsinki becomes capital

In 1809, as a result of a war between Sweden and Russia, the Russian Empire annexed Finland as an autonomous grand duchy. Finland retained its Nordic social system and Lutheran religious tradition.

Helsinki became the capital of the Grand Duchy of Finland in 1812. Construction work began in Helsinki to create an entirely new city. Helsinki's historic Empire-style centre was designed by the Berlin architect Carl Ludvig Engel. St. Petersburg served as the model. Rising alongside Senate Square, Helsinki Cathedral became the symbol of Helsinki.

By the turn of the 20th century, Helsinki had evolved into a contemporary city with modern urban amenities. Finland's cultural life flowered in the visual arts, music and architecture. The national spirit was strong, bolstered by the music of Jean Sibelius, the paintings of Albert Edelfelt and Akseli Gallen-Kallela, and the architecture of Eliel Saarinen.

From independence to the trials of war

In December 1917, as the Russian Revolution raged, Finland declared itself independent. Helsinki's growth as the capital continued in the 1920s and 30s.

Finland's self-esteem rose with the young country's success in sports – on the Olympic stage in particular where Paavo Nurmi “ran Finland onto the world map”.

In the late 1930s an impressive new stadium was built in Helsinki. Helsinki was chosen to host the 1940 Summer Olympics

The war destroyed Finland's Olympic dreams. The Soviet Union attacked the country. In the so-called Winter War of 1939–40, Finland fought for its existence. Helsinki was a frequent bombing target. In the summer of 1941, following a brief interlude of peace, Finland was in war again. In the winter of 1944, Helsinki's fate hung in the balance as the Soviet Union directed vast bombing raids at the city. Thanks to effective air defence, Helsinki survived without major damage. On the fronts, the Finnish army likewise succeeded in fending off the massive attacks of summer 1944, and Finland avoided Soviet occupation.

📌 *Helsinki was founded by King Gustav I Vasa of Sweden in 1550, and Tsar Alexander I made Helsinki the capital of the Grand Duchy of Finland in 1812.*



📌 *Suomenlinna – the “Gibraltar of the North” – was built in the late 1700s to defend Helsinki.*



Photo by Matti Tirri

Culture and leisure time

Compared internationally, Helsinki scores high as a city of culture. Together with a large university-student population, the highly educated people of the region demand and appreciate high-quality cultural and leisure-time offerings. The area residents are indeed active consumers of cultural services.

Helsinki celebrated 2000, the year of its 450th anniversary, as a European City of Culture. The gala year's approximately 500 events rounded out the city's already lively range of events and cultural attractions in splendid fashion. Helsinki's theme – Knowledge, Technology and the Future – illustrated the city's position as a young and dynamic high-tech com-

✦ *The tower of the Olympic Stadium, a functionalist symbol of the city*

✦ *Paavo Nurmi bringing the Olympic flame to the stadium in 1952*



Photo by HKO

part in Finnish, but there are also Swedish-language performances. International theatre groups visit Helsinki frequently.

For a city of its size, Helsinki offers an extraordinary wealth of classical music. The Helsinki region boasts four symphony orchestras. In addition, Helsinki is home to the Finnish National Opera and to the Avanti! Chamber Orchestra, which specializes in new music. A variety of festivals and competitions add to the offerings.

As in other artistic fields, Helsinki is the country's most important centre for education in the visual arts, a fact reflected in the lively offerings in those arts. There are numerous art museums maintained with State, City and private funds. The best-known are the Museum of Finnish Art and the Museum of Contemporary Art. The city also boasts a large number of galleries.

Helsinki is a good city for children. Cultural and leisure-time offerings for children are abundant, and there are programmes in all the city's neighbourhoods.

Marshal Gustaf Mannerheim, wartime chief of staff and later president, rose to become an icon of the Finns' struggle and heavy sacrifices to retain independence. To symbolise his significance, marshal Mannerheim's statue occupies a central section of Helsinki today.

Big achievements in a small country

Finland – and Helsinki – finally got their chance to host the Olympics in 1952. The success of the Games bolstered faith in the future.

The 1950s were a time of brisk creativity. The concept of Finnish design was born and names like Tapio Wirkkala and Timo Sarpaneva became known internationally. Architect Alvar Aalto meanwhile designed buildings in Finland and around the world. One of the most famous of them is Finlandia Hall – Helsinki's concert and congress hall.

Today, Helsinki is an important city for music. Recent years have seen the completion of a new opera house and a new arena, where international stars have performed before large audiences. World-famous Finnish conductors and opera singers such as Esa-Pekka Salonen and Karita Mattila appear alongside top international names on Helsinki's stages.



Photo by Suomen Urheilumuseo

✦ *Helsinki Philharmonic honouring its audience. The city has three symphony orchestras.*

✦ *The Sofiankatu "street museum"*

munity whose cultural life is characterized by experimental and new-media artistic offerings, as well as by the classical arts.

In terms of cultural-infrastructure investment, such as municipal spending for culture, and the number of museums, symphony orchestras, libraries and theatres, Helsinki ranks high. There is also much private-sector activity in art galleries, cinemas, clubs, and performance venues.

Plenty of offerings for an active populace

Helsinki has 62 cinemas. These have a total of 10,385 seats. The average Helsinki resident attends a cinema almost five times a year.

Dance is a popular pastime – and profession, too. Seven professional dance theatres are active in the city. There are also a significant number of freelance dancers who put together temporary groups.

Helsinki is a lively theatre city. There are 14 professional theatres and as many amateur groups. There are 57 theatre halls. Presentations take place for the most



Photo by Matti Tirri



Photo by Jutta Haldén

➤ *Libraries are some of the favourite places of Helsinki residents. Finns are the most eager readers in the world.*

➤ *Helsinki City Gardens*

➤ *The picturesque Yrjönkatu public swimming pool is the country's oldest.*

The Annantalo Arts Centre, which concentrates on children's culture and is located in the city centre, is a major facility. The most popular leisure-time spot for children is Linnanmäki Amusement Park, which welcomes almost a million visitors each year.

With their diversified and comprehensive offerings, libraries are central to the life of Helsinki residents. In terms of library usage, the city may well rank as the top capital in the world, with 16.5 library loans per capita per year.

For its good work in promoting the use of IT and the Internet, the Helsinki City Library received the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's first Access to Learning Award in the summer of 2000. According to the foundation, the library is a globally inspiring and instructive example.

Festivals in various fields are held frequently in Helsinki. The largest of these, the Helsinki Festival, attracts well over 300,000 guests to its events in the late summer. Many programmes are free. The most



Photo by Roy Kato



Photo by Jussi Tiainen

important individual event is the Night of the Arts, which takes place on the last Thursday in August. Many events are unique to Helsinki. For example, during the popular Art Goes Kapakka (literally, Art Goes Pub) happenings, restaurants become venues for music and art performances. Helsinki Day is celebrated on the 12th of June to honour the city's anniversary. Other important city events linked to the course of the year include Mayday and New Year's Eve.

Cultural and sports facilities

Helsinki has cultural facilities all around the city. The most important of them are the Kaapelitehdas (the Cable Factory) cultural centre and studios, the Lasipalatsi media centre, the Tennispalatsi cinema complex and cultural centre, local cultural centres, and Finlandia Hall, all maintained by the City. The private sector offers numerous exhibition, meeting and performance facilities.

Helsinki is frequently the host of large-scale events thanks to new and upgraded facilities. The Olympic Stadium often holds major concerts. The Hartwall Arena provides a year-round venue for large indoor concerts, as well as for sports events. In the wake of these improvements,

Helsinki attracts an increasing number of world-class performing artists.

Helsinki has succeeded in getting to host an amazing number and variety of international sporting competitions. The most famous of these has of course been the 1952 Summer Olympics, but since then the city has, for example, hosted the first world championships in track and field and two European championships in track and field. In ice hockey, the city has hosted many world championships. The most recent major international sports event was the 2000 European championships in swimming.

The city has numerous top-level clubs in different sports. The most popular sport is ice hockey, in which Helsinki has two teams in the top national league. In recent years the popularity of football has increased substantially, a trend that resulted in the opening of the ultramodern Finnair Stadium in 2000. Three Helsinki teams compete in the sport's top national league.

The annual Helsinki City Marathon attracts over 5,000 runners.

Helsinki also offers splendid conditions for winter sports. The city has many ice arenas and outdoor ice tracks. The city's parks and forests are naturally open all year round for sports activities.



Photo by Matti Tirri

A city of cafés

A flourishing restaurant and café culture

Helsinki today has a lively restaurant, café and night life scene. The city has recently seen the opening of a great number of new restaurants and cafés based on new concepts. The café culture in particular has seen a great flowering in recent years. Café terraces are popular, and Helsinki café-goers have developed their own distinctive ways of enjoying coffee outside even during the cold part of the year.

Helsinki's more than 700 restaurants cover a broad range of tastes. Prices are moderate. Alcoholic beverages are likewise priced reasonably. In this respect Helsinki is very European, while it still retains its own distinctive features. The city has seen a reawakening of Finnish cuisine, and pure Finnish foods such as fish, game birds and berries have won new devotees.

Restaurants and night clubs can remain open until four in the morning, but many close at two. Helsinki remains a safe place after evening falls. The city's residents use public transport right up to the last departures in the wee hours.

A great number of shops are open until nine in the evening, a factor which contributes to the liveliness of the street life.

Shopping alternatives

In the centre of Helsinki, commercial services are situated within a compact area, and are thus easily reached on foot.

The market square in the historical centre is an important tourist attraction, particularly in summer. Esplanadi and Aleksanterinkatu form the main axis of the city centre, uniting the historical centre with the present centre. Business and mercantile life continue to be concentrated along these two streets. The Stockmann's department store is the central point for all shoppers. The selections are the country's most impressive. Three Smiths' Square, directly in front of Stockmann's, is the busiest outdoor focus of the city's life.



Photo by Matti Tirri

From the basement of Stockmann's one gains access to underground parking areas. These areas surround the city's commercial centre and thus facilitate access to the centre's services by car. The city has many pedestrian street segments and widened pavements, and in summer shops expand out into the street with their sales tables.

Wide selections

The Helsinki city centre has blossomed as a place for speciality shops – a place where all the most important international brands and products are available. Helsinki is also the best place to buy famous Finnish design – top Finnish designers' series of tableware, glass and cutlery of the Arabia, Iittala and Hackman brands, Marimekko's clothing and textiles, and Alvar Aalto's classic furniture.

On the more traditional side, two national specialities stand out: sauna supplies and the "puukko" knives. Sauna remains a quintessential Finnish



Photo by Suomen Ilmakuva Oy



Photo by JOM-Studio, Kai Lindqvist

tradition. The puukko embodies the unbroken traditions of Finnish artisans and smiths.

The Helsinki region is growing rapidly, general prosperity is increasing, and private consumption is growing. For the city centre's shops, this means increasing purchasing power. At the same time, compact shopping centres that tie together large clusters of residential areas have sprung up, and more are on the way. These shopping centres are situated so as to facilitate access by both car and public transport. The most prominent of these is Itäkeskus east of the city centre.

A significant portion of the speciality trade is focused along the ring roads, especially in the automotive, building supply, furniture and interior design sectors.

- Suburban shopping for all needs and tastes
- The market square and Esplanadi
- One of the newest places to go on a shopping spree in Helsinki is the Kämp Gallery.
- Linnanmäki Amusement Park is right in the city. Fun for all.



Photo by Matti Tirri

Architecture of the North

In international terms, Helsinki's architecture is young. The straight streets of the city centre, the spacious parks and the shorefront land parcels are the legacy of the ideals of the Empire and neo-classical eras.

Carl Ludvig Engel, the Berlin architect who created Helsinki's city center in the mid-1800s, had spent two years in St. Petersburg and thus knew the splendour of the Russian imperial capital. Helsinki became a hybrid of Berlin and St. Petersburg. The buildings, carefully designed down to small details, are all light in colour. Helsinki's distinctive colour scale has been yellow, white and grey since the early 1800s.

At the edge of the city centre, the straight-lined grandeur gives way to a varied, picturesque tableau of streets, a tableau whose models came from Vienna, shaped by the ideas of architect Camillo Sitte. Helsinki has northern Europe's greatest number of unbroken art-nouveau blocks. Architecture here has been shaped by the ideals of national romanticism. Granite, copper, wood and hand-crafted ornamentation on forest themes are characteristic.

Architecture in the Nordic countries moved on to an elegant classicism in the 1910s. Its best examples include Helsinki's Käpylä "garden city" of wooden houses designed for the working class. In Käpylä, wood, a minimalist stylistic language, earth colours and the verdant environment make up an undivided whole.

Perhaps it was precisely Käpylä's example that gave inspiration to the creation of the garden city of Tapiola in the 1950s and 60s. The self-assured architects of the time had free hands to build this western suburb of Helsinki. Tapiola became a social and architectural success story. In contrast with Great Britain's new towns, Tapiola's white buildings merge almost completely with the natural environment.

Alvar Aalto worked as an architect in Helsinki for more than 40 years. Almost all of the more than ten buildings he designed in Helsinki have façades of marble, red brick or copper. Wood, by contrast, serves as the interior material in many of the buildings.

Helsinki today cherishes its young building traditions carefully – to the point where the City is sometimes accused of conservatism.



Photo by Matti Tirri



Photo by Matti Tirri



Photo by ScanFoto



Photo by Unto Sällä

- ✦ *The Helsinki University Library, one of the most charming creations of architect C. L. Engel*
- ✦ *A test ground of modern architecture – Pikku Huopalahti*
- ✦ *Jugend, Helsinki's characteristic architectural style, is featured at its purest in the prestigious city section of Eira.*
- ✦ *A Jugend façade*
- ✦ *The Korona building at the Helsinki Science Park*
- ✦ *A magnificent Jugend street in Eira*
- ✦ *An example of ingenious architecture: the Temppelinaukio church – a church built in a rock*
- ✦ *Columns of Helsinki Cathedral*



Photo by Jutta Haldén



Photo by Maraku Juntunen



Photo by Suomen Ilmakuva Oy



Photo by Fred Björkstén

Life in Helsinki

The Finnish character and customs

Surveys indicate that Finns value health, family, friends, home, mental balance, a secure livelihood and an unpolluted natural environment. Finns are proud of their nationality. Surveys have found that four out of five Finns consider it a privilege to be Finnish. Other nationalities often mention Finns as generally honest, dependable, helpful and friendly people.

Finnish manners are general European, so that the visitor need not fear offending Finnish hosts if he or she follows the normal European etiquette. However, Finnish culture does have a few special features. Foremost among these is the sauna, to which hosts happily conduct their guests. Second, the conversational culture may at first confuse the guest. Finns often listen more than they speak. They may also leave long pauses in the conversation; these do not hold any negative meaning.

One favourite Finnish pastime is reading. Only the Japanese read newspapers more than the Finns do. The general enthusiasm for reading owes much to the comprehensive system of free libraries, which is one of the world's best.

Social institutions

Finns invest in skills. The level of education is high. Of the entire population, 58% hold degrees. Helsinki's strength over the rest of the country is its populace's educational level, which is clearly higher than that of the rest of the country. Almost half of all Helsinki residents have intermediate-level degrees, while 22% have university-level degrees. The educated proportion of the city's populace is increasing constantly. Men are on average more educated, but the proportion of well-educated women is growing. In the younger age groups, the women's level of education is at least as high as the men's. Helsinki residents fare well in international comparisons of education.

The Finnish social security system is comprehensive. Finns are automatically covered by the Social Insurance Institution's health insurance scheme, so that everyone is protected against the possibility of sickness. Pensioners automatically receive a national pension and, in addition, get employment pensions in accordance with their pay and number of years at work. Every child under the age of three has the right to a place in a municipal day nursery. Every family with a child receives a child's benefit, and families are also supported with home-care grants. After a child is born, either the mother or the father receives so-called parents' money for ten months. All Finnish fathers are entitled to a two-week fatherhood leave.

Every Finn is entitled to municipal health care. Its users pay a small amount for the services yearly and then make use of them free of charge. The City of Helsinki devoted almost EUR 670 million to maintaining the health of its residents in 1999. High-quality health care services are also provided by educational institutions, workplaces and other private parties in Finland.

On average, Finnish women live to age 79; Finnish men to age 69. The life expectancy of a girl baby born today is estimated at 80.8 years; of a boy baby, 73.5 years.

Politics and defence in Finland

In Finland, supreme political power is vested in a president and parliament. The president exercises the highest executive power while the parliament exercises legislative power. The president is chosen by direct popular election for a six-year term. The parliament is unicameral. Its members are elected every four years.

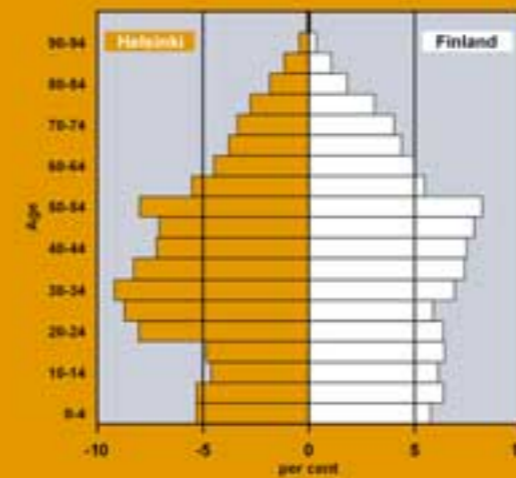
Finland has a multiparty system. Of the country's more than ten parties, the largest are the Finnish Social Democratic Party, the National Coalition Party, the Finnish Centre Party, the Left Wing Alliance, the Green League of Finland, and the Swedish People's Party. Half of all Finns say they follow politics actively. About 60% of all eligible voters



Photo by Kari Autero

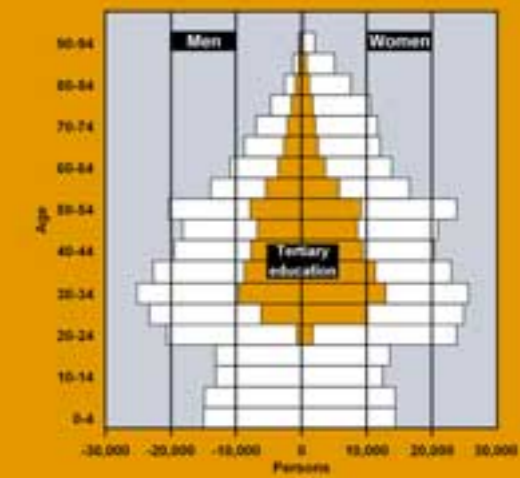
Helsinki provides good day-care services. Every child under the age of three has a place in a Helsinki day nursery.

The age structure in Helsinki and Finland, 31 December 1999.



The Helsinki region has more than one million inhabitants – a fifth of the entire country's population. For the employer, the region's age structure is more advantageous than elsewhere in Finland.

The age structure and the educational level of the population in Helsinki, 31 December 1999. Tertiary education (over 12 years)



The illustration depicts Helsinki's age pyramid, which indicates the number of men, women, and holders of university-level degrees.

normally vote. This relatively low figure does not however mean that people are politically alienated, inasmuch as direct influence has increased. Finland has a well-functioning and respected system of justice. Since the 1960s, the country has been active in Nordic legislative cooperation. The independent Supreme Court and Supreme Administrative Court exercise the highest judicial power in Finland.

Finland's Defence Forces have about a million trained reservists. Compulsory military duty lasts 180, 270 or 362 days. In view of religious or ethical conviction, a man subject to conscription may apply for unarmed military service (330 days) or alternative non-military service (395 days). On average, the compulsory military service is performed at age 20. Since 1995 women have been able to serve in the army as volunteers.



Photos by Matti Tiiri



■ The Töölönlahti bay makes water part of the cityscape. On the left is the famous Finlandia Hall by Alvar Aalto and on the right is Villa Kivi.