

Helsinki Tour



VISUAL TRAVEL TOURS

Maps Show You Where... We Show You Why!

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Tour Summary

Helsinki is a seaside city, and one of the world's most northerly capitals. Its summers are usually comfortably warm and its days glow with up to 19 hours of daylight. Almost everybody speaks English. It is the capital of Finland, which *Newsweek* magazine recently rated the best country in the world in which to live. Mercer ranked Helsinki the world's second safest city. Its people are friendly, and it has an interesting history, great architecture, intriguing music, and unique foods. Even near its harbor, there are fascinating shops to visit and parks in which to hike. Join me on this unforgettable tour!

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Helsinki's Handsome Harbor



Arriving in Helsinki by sea in summer is an exciting introduction to this seaport capital. First you pass some of its many islands and

then the cannons of an ancient Swedish fort. These guns are so close to the channel you can almost touch them.



An old Russian church on the left rises above the horizon. It also functions as a lighthouse. It used to have distinctive onion-domes on top, but then Finland gained independence from Russia and the fort did away with symbols of this enemy.



A few minutes later, the mainland comes into view. The harbor is alive and constantly changing. There are many-tiered ocean liners, sightseeing ships, and sailboats. You might see humongous private yachts too. The ocean liners are overnight ferries to

Sweden and Estonia that stay in Helsinki all day. They are every-day reminders of the country's maritime connections.



To the right on the highest point of the cape is the imposing Russian Orthodox Church, with its lovely domes still intact and begging for a visit. The church is filled with lighted candles, paintings, and incense. A couple of modern buildings provide sharp contrast to the 19th-century facade.



Look to the left, beyond the tented stalls of the outdoor market and the neo-classical government buildings. There you will find the imposing, gleaming white Lutheran Cathedral. It was also built by the Russians and its lovely green domes are sprinkled with gold stars. Its statuesque appearance calls out for a visit as well.



Out of view from the water but also close by is Helsinki's welcoming statue, a symbol of its rebirth. It is near a wide, tree-lined esplanade lined with upscale shops and

interesting hotels. The stores sell Finland's famous, unique designs. This is no copy-cat cruise-ship city!



You can stroll in nearby sylvan settings or take convenient trams to museums and concert halls. Helsinki is full of beautiful green parks. It is a compact city, where most people live in apartment buildings and don't find the need to own a car.



The city comes alive in summer with outdoor bars and cafes, many of them overlooking the sea. This is when many of the festivals are scheduled, with more music, dancing, and revelry than usual. You might want to time your trip to include a festival, in which case you can expect to dance the night away!



During your trip you can relax inside or outside in a Finnish invention, the sauna. They are a serious institution here, a place to meet with friends. There is even a well-established technique to get the most out of the experience: it is customary to beat yourself with birch twigs to stimulate your

blood circulation. Here's the gang at one of Helsinki's oldest saunas; the city has thousands.



Finland's health and education systems rank among the best in the world. Universities are free. Helsinki is very clean and the crime rate is low. Don't hesitate to ask the locals for their opinions about their country and the reasons behind its success.

Many people - especially the young ones - speak English and other languages, so there's no problem communicating.



From the harbor you can hop on ferries to restaurants, the fort, and the zoo. You can go by sea to some of Finland's old wooden towns, with magical names like Porvoo. Helsinki is a city for family vacations as well as honeymoons. We start our first tour at the striped building on the right.



Finland is famous for its unique, creative designs. Recently, it's built the world's largest cruise ship, and you've probably heard of Nokia cell phones. While you are in Helsinki, you might want to browse through the many unique stores which carry local creations. There are several

conveniently located within walking distance of the harbor.

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