

Directory

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ACCOMMODATION

Sleeping listings in this guide are mostly divided into three price categories, based on the cost of a standard double room at its most expensive; budget (up to €60), midrange (€60 to €150), and top end (€150 plus).

There's not a marvellous range of characterful accommodation in Finland. In towns, the norm is comfortable, functional hotels and hostels rather than whimsical converted castles or cosy cottages. There are many places that only open in summer.

As most hotels in Finland cater to business travellers, nearly all of them offer heavily discounted rates at weekends (normally Friday,

PRACTICALITIES

- Helsingin Sanomat (www.helsinginsanomat.fi/english) is the main daily paper in Finland. There's an English version online.
- Foreign newspapers and magazines are widely available
- The national radio broadcaster is YLE (www.yle.fi), which has a number of stations including the popular YLE X, formerly Radio Mafia, and devoted to nonmainstream music.
- Capital FM (94.5MHz) in Helsinki broadcasts 24-hour excerpts from world news stations.
- National TV networks broadcast plenty of English-language programs, subtitled in Finnish.
- Finland uses the VHS-PAL 525 system. V-8 videos are not commonly available in Finland.
- The electric current is 220V AC, 50Hz, and plugs are of the standard northern European type with two round pins that require no switch.
- Finland uses the metric system (see the conversion table in the inside front cover of this book). Decimals are indicated by commas.

Saturday, and Sunday nights) and during summer (usually late June to mid-August). The price for a double room is often halved at these times: good news for the visitor.

Helsinki has a hotel booking service; in other places your best bet is the tourist office, which will give you lists and might phone places on your behalf.

All hotels and hostels have a huge majority of nonsmoking rooms, and many don't allow smoking at all. Smokers should request a smoking room when booking.

Campgrounds

Finland's camping grounds are a delight, and have much to offer. Even if you're not a tent and campstove person, they can be an excellent choice, as many have cabins and

cottages for rent on a nightly or weekly basis, some of which can be very luxurious.

There are over 200 official camping grounds in Finland, most situated in appealing lakeside or forested locations. The majority are only open in summer, say from late May to late August. Typical facilities include a kitchen area, laundry, sauna, playground, boat and bike rentals, a café and minigolf (a Finnish addiction!). Simple cabins usually have electric light, bunk beds and a fridge, while the larger cottages will come with fully equipped kitchen, TV, sauna, bathroom and separate bedrooms. These can be great value, particularly for families and groups.

In Finland the *jokamiehenoikeus* (right of public access) grants you legal permission to temporarily pitch your tent in a wide range of places. See p45 for more information.

Farmstays

Many farmhouses around Finland offer B&B accommodation, a unique opportunity to meet local people and experience their way of life. They offer plenty of activities, too, from horse riding to helping with a harvest. Some farmstays are independent, family-run affairs, while others are loosely gathered under an umbrella organization. In general, prices are good – from around €30 per person per night, country breakfast included. Your hosts may not speak much English, so it pays to arrange the booking through a local tourist office or **Lomarengas** (Map p64; ☎ 09-5766 3350; www.lomarengas.fi; Eteläesplanadi 22, 00130 Helsinki).

Guesthouses

A guesthouse in Finland, called a *matkakoti*, tends to be a slightly run-down establishment meant for travelling salespeople and dubious types. They're usually in town centres near the train station, are cheap and offer rooms with shared bathroom facilities.

However, there are a few guesthouses out there that just don't fit the category. These places are exceptionally clean and offer pleasant, homey accommodation in old wooden houses. Ask to see a room before paying – that's the best way to know what you're getting. Naantali and Hanko on the southwestern coast are particularly good places for guesthouses.

Most guesthouses offer a breakfast buffet, which is usually included in the price of accommodation.

Hostels

If you're travelling alone, hostels generally offer the best-value roof over your head, and can be good value for two people staying in a twin room. Finnish hostels are invariably clean, comfortable and very well-equipped, though most are in somewhat institutional buildings. From June to August, university accommodation is converted into summer hostels; these are usually great value, as you often get your own room, usually with a private kitchen and bathroom. These summer hostels are good for families, as they often have two interconnecting rooms.

Most Finnish hostels are run by the Finnish Youth Hostel Association (SRM) and are affiliated with Hostelling International (HI). The average cost is €15 to €20 per person per night. Most hostels offer private single/double rooms. If you have an HI card you'll receive a €2.50 discount per person on the rates quoted in this book. You can join HI in your own country – check the **International Youth Hostel Federation** (www.iyhf.org) for contact details of your home association – or you can join up at any HI-affiliated hostel, or at the **head office** (Suomen Retkeilymajajärjestö, SRM; ☎ 09-694 0377; www.srm.fi; Yrjönkatu 38B, 00100 Helsinki). In Finland the cost is €17 for a year's membership. You can stay at a hostel without an HI card, and there are no age restrictions.

You can also bring your own sheets (or sleeping sheet) and pillowcase; linen rentals cost €3 to €6. Sleeping bags are usually not considered acceptable substitutes, although some summer hostels will accept them (or at least turn a blind eye). Breakfast is generally not included in the price of a dorm bed (but may be with a private room), but is available for around €4 to €6. Most hostels have kitchen facilities, and many have a sauna.

The free publication *Hostellit* gives a full listing of all HI-affiliated Finnish hostels, as does the SRM website.

Hotels

Most big hotels in Finland cater to business travellers and most belong to one of a few major chains, including **Sokos** (www.sokoshotels.fi), **Scandic** (www.scandic-hotels.com) and **Cumulus** (www.cumulus.fi). **Finlandia** (www.finlandiahotels.fi) is an association of independent hotels, while many others belong to the **Best Western** (www.bestwestern.fi) franchise-style system. They can be quite luxurious, although standard rooms

are usually compact and functional. Service tends to be good and the restaurants and nightclubs are often the most popular in town. Hotels are mostly spotlessly clean, efficiently run and always have a sauna, which can be booked for private use. A shared sauna session is often included in the rate. Most hotels have suites with a private sauna.

Although full rack-rate prices are fairly high, hotels in Finland offer lower rates in summer (from late June to mid- or the end of August), and also at weekends (usually Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights). At that time you can usually get a double room in a reasonably fancy hotel from between €65 and €80. The discount for singles is marginal at all times, so you may prefer to pay extra for a double room, which are usually much larger. Similarly, many hotels have two classes of room, with a significantly better room available for a little extra money.

Most hotel rooms have tiny Nordic bathrooms; if you want a bathtub, this can usually be arranged. Many hotels have 'allergy rooms', which have no carpet and minimal fabric.

All Finnish hotels have a large, plentiful and invariably delicious buffet breakfast included in the rate.

FINNCHEQUES

The Finncheque plan, available in most chain hotels in Finland, allows accommodation in over 140 hotels at the discounted price of €36 or €45 per person in a double room. Each Finncheque is a 'coupon' good for one night's stay at a participating hotel, and any supplements are paid directly to the hotel. Single occupancy costs an extra €25, paid with a supplementary cheque. Finncheques are valid from June to September and at weekends throughout the year. In practice, as hotels offer discounts in summer and at weekends anyway, they are only really worth using in early June and September. They can be purchased at participating hotels or through a travel agency in your home country.

Self-Catering Accommodation

There are thousands of cabins and cottages for rent in Finland. They can be booked through tourist offices, mostly from €200 a week or more for four people. Rarely available on a nightly basis (but see Camping,

p328), weekend rentals are possible outside busy periods such as Midsummer.

Lakeside holiday cabins and cottages represent the classic Finnish vacation and are a terrific idea if you have a group (or family) and would like to settle down to enjoy a particular corner of the countryside. They are usually fully equipped with cooking utensils, sauna and a rowing boat, although the cheapest, most 'rustic' ones may not even have electricity and require that you fetch your own water at a well. However, this is considered a true holiday, Finnish style.

Prices are highest during Midsummer and the skiing holidays, when you'll need to book well in advance. Tax is not always included in quoted prices. Most websites and agencies specialize in a certain area: check the regional chapters. The following are a few companies that specialize in wider areas:

Ålandsresor (☎ 018-28000; www.alandresor.fi; PO Box 62, 22101 Mariehamn) On the Åland islands.

Järvi-Savo (☎ 015-365 399; www.matka-miettinen.fi; Hallituskatu 2, 50100 Mikkeli) Shares a website with Saimaatoours. Cottages in the lakes of eastern and central Finland.

Lomarengas (☎ 09-5766 3350; www.lomarengas.fi; Eteläesplanadi 22, 00130 Helsinki) The biggest selection.

Saimaatoours (☎ 05-411 7722; www.matka-miettinen.fi; Kirkkokatu 10, 53100 Lappeenranta) Shares a website with Järvi-Savo. Cottages in the lakes of eastern and central Finland.

Villi Pohjola (☎ 020-344 122; www.wildnorth.net) This arm of the Forests and Parks Service has cottages and cabins for rent all over Finland, but especially in Lapland and the north.

Wilderness Huts

See p46 for details on huts, shelters and other options on trekking routes.

BUSINESS HOURS

Banks are open from 9am to 4.30pm Monday to Friday. Shops are generally open 9am to 6pm Monday to Friday, and to 3pm on Saturday. Post offices usually open from 9am to 6pm Monday to Friday. Alko stores (the state-owned network of liquor stores) are generally open 9am to 8pm Monday to Friday (sometimes until 9pm on Thursday or Friday), and until 6pm Saturday. Many supermarkets and Helsinki department stores stay open until 9pm or 10pm Monday to Friday and open all day on Saturday and Sunday.

Finns lunch early, so restaurants usually open at 11am, closing at around 10pm, earlier for simpler places. Lunch specials run until 2pm or 3pm. Bars tend to open from 4pm to midnight, later at weekends. Any variations are noted in the reviews.

CHILDREN

Finland is incredibly child-friendly, and is one of the best places to holiday with them. Domestic tourism is largely dictated by children's needs, and child-friendly attractions abound. Even potentially stuffy museums often make a real effort to appeal to kids, with simplified child-height information, hands-on activities, or activity sheets.

Practicalities

Local tourist information booklets and brochures usually highlight attractions with family appeal; the webpage www.visitfinland.com/family also lists attractions by region.

Lonely Planet's *Travel with Children* by Cathy Lanigan is a good source of general information.

Most Finnish hotels and hostels will put an extra bed in a room for little extra cost – and kids under 12 often sleep free. Many hotel rooms have sofas that can fold out into beds or family-suites, and hostels often have connecting rooms. Camp sites are especially good, with self-catering cabins good value for families. There are always things to do and other children in these places, and some of the larger ones offer child-minding services or activity programs.

Car-rental firms have children's safety seats for hire at a nominal cost, but it is essential that you book them in advance. The same goes for highchairs and cots (cribs); they're standard in many restaurants and hotels, but numbers may be limited.

Entrance fees and transport tickets for children tend to be around 60% of the adult charge in Finland. If this is not the case, child prices are included in the text.

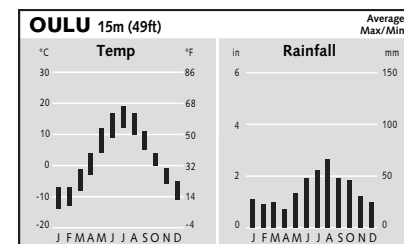
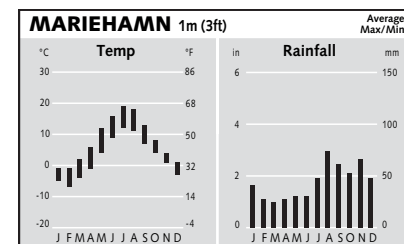
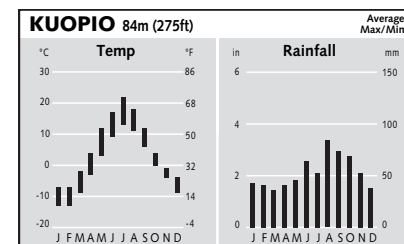
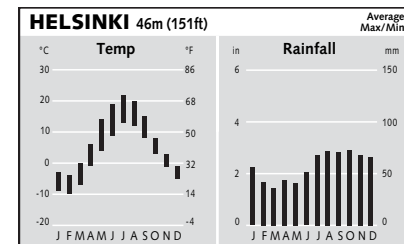
Sights & Activities

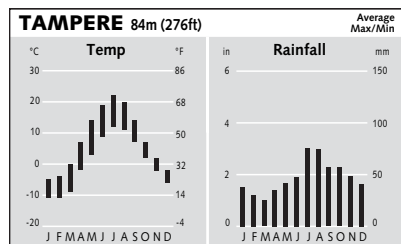
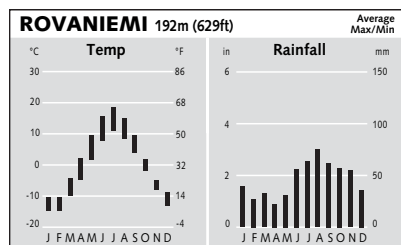
All areas of Finland have plenty to offer, depending on what appeals. Activities like canoeing and fishing are available almost everywhere, and large towns all have a swimming complex that includes water-slides, Jacuzzis, saunas and table tennis; excellent for all ages and in both summer and winter.

Finland's best kid-friendly theme parks are Moominworld at Naantali (p212), Särkänniemi (p173) in Tampere, and Wasalandia and Tropiclandia (p250) in Vaasa. For attractions in and around Helsinki, see p70.

CLIMATE CHARTS

Finland is two different places in winter and summer. Summer is fairly reliably dry and hot, although by August things can already begin to get chilly. Of course, winters are





cold, but the cold is dry. In most parts snow first falls in October and clears by the end of March, but in Lapland snow can fall as early as September and stay until late May.

These graphs tell the statistical story; see p13 for a discussion of conditions at various times of year.

COURSES

Language

There are intensive courses in Finnish each summer (June to August) at the universities in Helsinki, Oulu, Lahti, Tampere, Turku, Kuopio and Jyväskylä. For more information contact **Suomen Kesäyliopistot** (☎ 03-214 7626; www.kesayliopistot.fi; Rautatiekatu 26, 33100 Tampere).

The following universities also teach basic courses in Finnish language and culture, with classes typically running either a full term or an intensive period in August. Course fees for nonstudents are typically €80 to €150.

University of Helsinki Language Centre (☎ 09-1912 3234; www.helsinki.fi/kksc/language.services; Yliopistonkatu 5, 00014 Helsinki) One-month classes €135. There's even an online course to get you started.

University of Jyväskylä Language Centre (☎ 014-260 3751; http://kielikompassi.jyu.fi; PO Box 35, 40014 Jyväskylän Yliopisto)

University of Oulu Language Centre (☎ 08-553 3203; www.uoulu.fi/kielikeskus; PL 7200, 90014 Oulun Yliopisto)

University of Tampere Language Centre (☎ 03-355 111; www.uta.fi/laitokset/kielikeskus; Kielikeskus, 33014 Tampereen Yliopisto)

University of Turku Language Centre (☎ 02-333 5975; www.kielikeskus.utu.fi; Horttokuja 2, 20014 Turun Yliopisto)

CUSTOMS

Travellers should encounter few problems with Finnish customs. Travellers arriving from outside the EU can bring duty-free goods up to the value of €175 into Finland without declaration. You can also bring in up to 16L of beer, 2L of wine and 1L of spirits, 200 cigarettes or 250g of tobacco and 50g of perfume. If you're coming from another EU country, there is no restriction on the value of gifts or purchases for your own use, except for tobacco from new EU member states.

Although technically part of the EU, arriving on or from the Åland islands carries the same import restrictions as arriving from a non-EU country. Check the latest situation on the Finnish customs website www.tulli.fi, at the border crossing or on an international ferry.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Finland is a very safe, nonthreatening country to travel in but there are some potential risks to consider.

Weather extremes, especially in Lapland, can cause unexpected danger at any time of the year. Extreme cold kills lone trekkers almost every winter in the wilderness, and cold rain can also be a problem in summer.

June and July are the worst months for mosquitoes, which are a major nuisance in the country, particularly in Lapland. Insect repellent or those beautiful hat-nets are essential.

In more remote places you may run across eccentric people, who you will have to accept as they are: sometimes suspicious of outsiders. The gloomy winter may lead to unpredictable behaviour and alcohol abuse.

In urban areas, violence mostly occurs in association with intoxicated local males, who are normally rowdy and intimidating rather than outright aggressive.

DISABLED TRAVELLERS

Finland may be the best-equipped country in the world for the disabled traveller. By law, most institutions must provide ramps, lifts and special toilets for disabled persons; all new hotels and restaurants must install disabled facilities. Trains and city buses are

also accessible by wheelchair. Some national parks offer accessible nature trails.

In general, the majority of tourist brochures and information booklets give information about disabled facilities, but it's worth getting in touch with **Rullaten Ry** (☎ 09-805 7393; www.rullaten.fi, www.accessibletravelling.fi; Pajutie 7, 02770 Espoo) before leaving home. This, the Finnish disabled travellers organization, offers advice on 'friendly' places to visit, eat and stay, as well as activities. They publish two booklets, one for all of Finland, another on just Helsinki; these can be ordered from the website. You can order a booklet on accommodation and travel for disabled persons through its website. Another booklet, available at the Helsinki tourist office, focuses just on the capital, which has *Accessible Helsinki*, a program aiming to maximize disabled access in the capital by 2011.

Näkövammaisten Keskusliitto (☎ 09-396 041; www.nkl.fi; Marjanientie 74, Iiris 00030) is the Finnish national association for the visually impaired. They can give advice on travel in the country, as well as provide details of dedicated holiday centres with a wide range of summer and winter activities on offer.

Kuurojen Liitto (☎ 09-5803 770; www.kl.deaf.fi; PO Box 57, Helsinki 00401) is the equivalent organization for the hearing impaired.

Before leaving home, get in touch with your national support organization – preferably the 'travel officer' if there is one. These places often have complete libraries devoted to travel, and can put you in touch with travel agencies which specialize in tours for the disabled.

DISCOUNT CARDS

Camping Cards

The **Camping Card International** (www.campingcardinternational.org) is basically a camping-ground ID. These cards are available from your local camping federation (the website has details) and incorporate third-party insurance for damage you may cause. Many camping grounds offer a discount if you sign in with one.

The **Camping Card Scandinavia** is a similar document, and brings a discount at most Finnish camp sites. It can be ordered (allow three weeks for delivery) from the website www.camping.fi, or a temporary version purchased in summer at most camping grounds; the cost is €6.

Hostelling Card

If you plan to stay in youth hostels in Finland, consider joining the International Youth Hostels Federation (IYHF), also called Hostelling International (HI). It's not mandatory to be a member to stay in Finnish hostels. The card also gives discounts on most lake ferries and some sea ones. See p329 for more information about becoming a member.

Seniors Cards

For a small fee, European nationals aged over 60 can get a Rail Europe Senior Card as an add-on to their national rail senior pass. It entitles the holder to reduced fares in some European countries, and percentage savings vary according to the route. Note that anyone aged 65 or over receives a 50% discount on Finnish trains and 30% on intercity buses. There are also rail passes available for travel within Scandinavia for nationals of any country who are aged over 55; inquire at your local travel agency for information. Seniors with proof of age can also receive discounts at many museums, tourist attractions and some public transport.

Student & Youth Cards

The most useful of these is the International Student Identity Card (ISIC), a plastic ID-style card with your photograph, which provides discounts on many forms of transport (including airlines, ferries and local public transport), reduced or free admission to museums and sights, and cheap meals in student cafeterias – a worthwhile way of cutting costs in expensive Finland. Because of the proliferation of fake ISIC cards, carry your home student ID or a letter from your university as a back-up. Some airlines won't give student discounts without it.

Some discounts are given on age rather than student status. If you're aged under 26, you can apply for the Euro26 card (www.eyca.org) or the International Youth Travel Card (IYTC). These cards are available through student unions, hostelling organizations or youth-oriented travel agencies. They don't automatically entitle you to discounts, and some companies and institutions refuse to recognize them altogether, but you won't find out until you flash the card.

If you are studying in Finland, a Finnish student card will get you discounts on transport and more.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES Finland's Embassies & Consulates

Visas and information can be obtained at Finnish diplomatic missions (full list at <http://formin.finland.fi>):

- Australia** (☎ 02 6273 3800; www.finland.org.au; 12 Darwin Ave, Yarralumla, ACT 2600)
Canada (☎ 613-288 2233; www.finland.ca; 55 Metcalfe St, Suite 850, Ottawa K1P 6L5)
Denmark (☎ 3313 4214; www.finamb.dk; Sankt Annæ Plads 24, 1250 Copenhagen K)
Estonia (☎ 610 3200; www.finland.ee; Kohtu 4, EE-15180 Tallinn)
France (☎ 01 44 18 19 20; www.amb-finlande.fr; 1 Place de Finlande, 75007 Paris)
Germany (☎ 030-505030; www.finnland.de; Rauchstrasse 1, 10787 Berlin)
Ireland (☎ 01-478 1344; www.finland.ie; Russell House, Stokes Pl, St Stephen's Green, Dublin 2)
Japan (☎ 03-5447 6000; www.finland.or.jp; 3-5-39 Minami-Azabu, Minato-ku, Tokyo 106-8561)
Latvia (☎ 371-707 8800; www.finland.lv; Kalpaka bulv. 1, LV-1605 Riga)
Netherlands (☎ 070-346 9754; www.finlande.nl; Groot Hertoginnelaan 16, 2517 EG Den Haag)
New Zealand (Colin Beyer; ☎ 04-499 4599, tas@sglaw.co.nz; Simpson Grierson, Level 24, HSBC Towner, 195 Lambton Quay, Wellington) This is the Honorary Consulate General, otherwise contact the embassy in Australia.
Norway (☎ 2212 4900; www.finland.no; Thomas Hefty's gate 1, 0244 Oslo)
Russia (☎ 095-787 4174; www.finemb-moscow.fi; Kropotkinskij Pereulok 15-17, 119034 Moscow G-34)
Sweden (☎ 08-676 6700; www.finland.se; Gärdesgatan 11, 11527 Stockholm)
UK (☎ 020-7838 6200; www.finemb.org.uk; 38 Chesham Place, London SW1X 8HW)
USA (☎ 202-298 5800; www.finland.org; 3301 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington, DC 20008)

Embassies & Consulates in Finland

The following is a list of foreign government representatives in Helsinki. Use the Helsinki area telephone code (☎ 09) if calling from elsewhere.

- Australia** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 4777 6640; australian.consulate@tradimex.fi; Museokatku 25B) This is the consulate; the nearest embassy is in Stockholm (www.sweden.embassy.gov.au).
Canada (Map p64; ☎ 228 530; www.canada.fi; Pohjoisesplanadi 25B)
Denmark (Map p64; ☎ 684 1050; www.denmark.fi; Keskuskatu 1A)
Estonia (Map pp60-1; ☎ 622 0260; www.estemb.fi; Itäinen Puistotie 10)

- France** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 618 780; www.france.fi; Itäinen Puistotie 13)
Germany (☎ 458 580; www.germanembassy.fi; Krogiuksentie 4B)
Ireland (Map p64; ☎ 646 006; embassy.ireland@welho.com; Erottajankatu 7A)
Japan (Map p64; ☎ 686 0200; www.fi.emb-japan.go.jp; Eteläranta 8)
Latvia (Map pp60-1; ☎ 4764 7244; embassy.finland@mfa.gov.lv; Armfeltintie 10)
Lithuania (Map p64; ☎ 608 210; www.lithuania.fi; Rauhankatu 13A)
Netherlands (Map p64; ☎ 228 920; www.netherlands.fi; Erottajankatu 19B)
New Zealand (☎ 470 1818; paddais@paddais.net; Jöhanneksenrinne 2) This is the consulate-general; otherwise contact embassy in The Hague, Netherlands.
Norway (Map pp60-1; ☎ 686 0180; www.norge.fi; Rehbinderintie 17)
Russia (Map pp60-1; ☎ 661 876; rusembassy@co.inet.fi; Tehtaankatu 1B)
Sweden (Map p64; ☎ 687 7660; www.sverige.fi; Pohjoisesplanadi 7B)
UK (Map pp60-1; ☎ 2286 5100; www.britishembassy.gov.uk; Itäinen Puistotie 17)
USA (Map pp60-1; ☎ 616 250; www.usembassy.fi; Itäinen Puistotie 14B)

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

One of the great things about travelling in Finland in summer is the myriad festivals, concerts, competitions and events that take place around the country, some conventional, some seriously wacky. On any given trip you're sure to stumble across a few full-scale festivals, but you could easily plan your trip around them, hopping from jazz to folk to dance to wife-carrying championships.

The biggest and best festivals are held between June and August, but there are events somewhere in Finland year-round. The following is a list of most of Finland's events – for more information see www.festivals.fi or pick up the free *Finland Festivals* booklet in any tourist office.

February

Runeberg Day 5 February, nationwide. People eat 'Runeberg cakes', available in all shops, to commemorate the national poet.
Laskiainen Seven weeks before Easter, nationwide. Festival of downhill skiing and winter sports. People eat *laskiaispulla*, a wheat bun with whipped cream and hot milk.

March

Pääsiäinen Easter. On Sunday people go to church or paint eggs and eat *mämmi* (pudding made of rye and malt).
Hetan Musiikkipäivät (www.hetanamusiikkipäivät.fi) Hetta village, Enontekiö; chamber music. At Easter.
Tampereen Elokujuhlat (www.tamperefilmfestival.fi) Tampere; festival of international short films.
Oulu Music Festival (www.ouulunmusiikkijuhlat.fi) Oulu; classical and chamber music.
Lahti Ski Games (www.lahtiskigames.com) Lahti; ski jumping.
Tar Ski Race Oulu; long-distance cross-country ski race.
Marathon Ice-Fishing Oulu; world's longest nonstop ice-fishing contest.
Maria's Day Festival (www.enontekio.fi) Hetta village, Enontekiö; Sámi festival of arts, sports contests.

April

Tampere Biennale (www.tampere.fi/festival/music) Tampere; new Finnish music. Held in even-numbered years only.
April Jazz Espoo (www.aprilljazz.fi) Espoo; jazz.
Reindeer Champion Race Inari; reindeer-sleigh racing.

May

Vappu May Day. Traditionally a festival of students and workers, this also marks the beginning of summer, and is celebrated with plenty of alcohol and merrymaking. People drink *sima* mead and eat *tippaleipä* cookies.
Äitienväivä Mothers' Day. Everyone takes their mother out for a buffet lunch.
Kemin Sarjakuvapäivät (www.kemi.fi/sarjis) Kemi; international comic-strip festival.
Kainuun Jazz Kevät Kajaani; international jazz, blues and rock acts.
Vaasa Choir Festival (www.vaasa.fi/choirfestival) Vaasa; European choirs.

June

Midsummer's Eve & Day Juhannus (Midsummer) is the most important annual event for Finns. Celebrated with bonfires and dancing. People head to summer cottages to celebrate the longest day of the year. It is also the day of the Finnish flag, as well as the day of John the Baptist.
Praasniekka These Orthodox celebrations are day-long religious and folk festivals held in North Karelia and other eastern provinces between May and September, most notably at the end of June.
Ilmajoen Music Festival (www.ilmajoenmusiikkijuhlat.fi) Ilmajoki; classical and folk music and folk operas.
Naantali Music Festival (www.naantalimusic.com) Naantali; chamber music.
Jutajaiset (www.jutajaiset.net) Rovaniemi; folk music and dance, Sámi traditions.

Midnight Sun Film Festival (www.msffilmfestival.fi) Sodankylä; international films.

- Riihimäen kesäkonsertit** (www.riihimaki.fi/kesakonsertit) Riihimäki; classical music.
Tampere Vocal Music Festival (www.tampere.fi/vocal) Choirs and ensemble singing.
Provinssirock (www.provinssirock.fi) Seinäjoki; rock music.
Nummirock (www.nummirock.fi) Kauhajoki; heavy metal music.
Åland Organ Festival Åland; organ music in medieval churches.
Korsholm Music Festival (www.korsholmmusicfestival.fi) Vaasa; chamber music.
Avanti! Summer Sounds (www.avantimusic.fi) Porvoo; eclectic music from baroque to rock.
International Kalottjazz and Blues Festival (www.kalottjazzblues.net) Tornio (Finland) and Haparanda (Sweden); jazz and blues.
Kuopio Tanssii ja Soi (www.kuopiodancefestival.fi) Kuopio; international dance.
Ruisrock (www.ruisrock.fi) Turku; oldest rock-music festival.
Sata-Häme Soi (www.satahamesoi.fi) Ikaalinen; accordion music.
Midnight Sun Golf Tournament (www.tornio.fi) Tornio (Finland) and Haparanda (Sweden); golf competition.
Helsinki Day Helsinki; celebrates the founding of Helsinki on 12 June.
Puistoblues (www.puistoblues.fi) Late Jun or early Jul, Järvenpää; blues and jazz.
Tar Burning Week Oulu; Midsummer festival.
Savonlinna Ballet Festival (www.savonlinnaballet.net) Savonlinna; often with top Russian troupes.
- July**
Mikkeli Music Festival (www.mikkelimusic.net) Mikkeli; classical music.
Imatra Big Band Festival (www.ibbf.fi) Imatra; big-band music.
Jyväskylä Kesä (www.jyvaskyla.fi/kesa) Jyväskylä; all the arts.
Rauma Lace Week (www.rauma.fi) Rauma; lace-making demonstrations, carnival.
Rauman Festivo (www.raumanfestivo.fi) Rauma; chamber music.
Savonlinna Opera Festival (www.operafestival.fi) Savonlinna; one of Finland's most notable festivals.
Tangomarkkinat (www.tangomarkkinat.fi) Seinäjoki; tango music.
Pori Jazz Festival (www.porijazz.fi) Pori; one of Finland's most notable festivals.
Kaustinen Folk Music Festival (www.kaustinen.fi) Kaustinen; folk music and dance.

Down by the Laituri (www.dbtl.fi) Turku; rock music.
Kuhmon Kamarimusiikki (www.kuhmofestival.fi) Kuhmo; chamber music.

Joensuu Gospel Festival (www.suomengospel.org) Joensuu; gospel music.

Lieksan Vaskiviikot (www.lieksabrass.com) Lieksa; brass music.

Työväen Musiikkitapahtuma (www.valmu.com) Valkeakoski; workers' music.

Joutsa Folk Festival (www.joutsa.fi/jouto) Joutsa; traditional Finnish summer festival.

Wife-Carrying World Championships (www.sonkajarvi.fi) Sonkajärvi; unusual husband-and-wife team competition with international participants and beer prizes.

Evakon Pruasniekka Iisalmi; traditional festival of the Orthodox church.

Kotka Maritime Festival (www.meripaivat.com) Kotka; music, sailing races and cruises.

Sleepyhead Day Naantali; on 27 July the laziest person in the town is thrown into the sea.

Kihaus Folk Music Festival (www.kihaus.fi) Rääkkylä; widely acclaimed festival of modern and experimental Finnish folk music and dancing.

August

Taiteiden Yö A night of art, held in Helsinki and other towns in late August. Street performances, fringe art and concerts – a good atmosphere and exciting.

Lappeenranta Music Festival (www.lemi.fi) Lappeenranta and Lemi; festival of international music.

Tampere International Theatre Festival (www.teatterikesa.fi) Tampere; international and Finnish theatre.

Katrina Festival (www.katrina.aland.fi) Åland, chamber music.

Lahden Urkuvikko (www.lahtiorgan.net) Lahti; organ music.

Hamina Tattoo (www.haminatattoo.com) Hamina; military music. Even years only.

Turku Music Festival (www.turkumusicfestival.fi) Turku; classical and contemporary music.

Lahti Jazz Festival (www.jazztori.com) Lahti; jazz.

Häme Castle Children's Festival (www.hippalot.net) Hämeenlinna, dance, theatre and other performances.

Elojazz & Blues (www.welcome.to/jazz20) Oulu; jazz and blues.

Helsinki Festival (www.helsinkifestival.fi) Helsinki; all-arts festival.

Air Guitar World Championships (www.airguitarworldchampionships.com) Oulu.

Neste Rally Finland (www.nesterallyfinland.fi) Jyväskylä. Finnish round of the World Rally Championship. Lots of fun.

September

International Roma Music Festival (www.romani-taitenkeskus.com) Porvoo; Romany concerts and carnival.

Lahti Sibelius Festival (www.lahti.fi/symphony) Lahti; orchestral performances.

October

Oulaisten Musiikkiviikot (www.musiikkiviikot.fi) Oulainen; eclectic music.

Baltic Herring Market Helsinki; traditional outdoor herring market.

November

All Souls' Day The first Saturday of November sees people visit the graves of deceased friends and relatives.

Oulu International Children's Film Festival (www.oulu.fi) Oulu; international children's films.

Tampere Jazz Happening (www.tampere.fi/jazz) Jazz and world music.

December

Itsenäisyyspäivä Finland celebrates independence on 6 December with torchlight processions, fireworks and concerts.

Pikkujoulu 'Little Christmas'; parties are organized in the weeks leading up to Christmas and much *glögi* (hot punch) is consumed.

Joulu Christmas is a family celebration.

FOOD

The Food and Drink chapter (p52) discusses what to expect in restaurants and bars in Finland. Restaurant reviews in the book are divided into three price categories: budget (most mains under €10), midrange (most mains €10 to €20), and top end (most mains over €20).

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

Finland is one of the more tolerant of destinations for gay and lesbian travellers; fittingly enough for the nation that produced the artist Tom of Finland. Although there is no parallel to the lively and active gay communities of Copenhagen or Stockholm, Helsinki has a good selection of bars and clubs (see p70). In smaller towns and in rural areas attitudes lag behind a little.

In 2001, the Finnish government passed a law allowing gay and lesbian couples official recognition and most of the rights of married couples. Current information is available from the Finnish organization for gay and lesbian equality, **Seksuaalinen tasa-vertaisuus** (SETA; Map pp60-1; ☎ 09-681 2580; www.seta.fi; Hietalahdenkatu 2B 16, Helsinki).

Other useful websites:
<http://ranneliike.net> Events, links, and information.

www.finnqueer.net Online journal discussing issues and news.

www.sappho.net Finnish lesbian site with information and links.

www.z-lehti.fi Finnish gay & lesbian magazine. Currently in Finnish but English content planned.

HOLIDAYS

Finland grinds to a halt twice a year: around Christmas (sometimes including the New Year) and during the Midsummer weekend at the end of June. Plan ahead and avoid travelling during those times. Most hotels and restaurants close over these periods too.

Every town and city in Finland puts on a barrage of festivals between mid-June and mid-August, so accommodation will be tight if you coincide. Anyone who has been in Finland on vappu (May Day) will know it's a big day for Finns and the breweries.

Public Holidays

The following are public holidays celebrated throughout Finland:

New Year's Day 1 January

Epiphany 6 January

Good Friday 14 April 2006, 6 April 2007

Easter Sunday & Monday 16–17 April 2006, 8–9 April 2007

May Day 1 May

Ascension Day May

Whitsunday Late May or early June

Midsummer's Eve & Day Weekend in June closest to the 24th

All Saints Day 1st Saturday in November

Independence Day 6 December

Christmas Eve 24 December

Christmas Day 25 December

Boxing Day 26 December

School Holidays

Schools are on holiday in summer from early June to mid August; they also are off for a week in late February, a week in late October, and two weeks over Christmas. It's traditional for classes to go on school trips in late May and the first few days of June, which can mean that budget accommodation is heavily booked out in some areas.

INSURANCE

Citizens of the European Economic Area (the EU plus Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein) are entitled to free medical care in Finland (see p355).

For citizens of other countries, travel insurance is a good idea, as it is for anyone who wants to cover theft or loss. Read the fine print carefully as activities like canoeing, skiing, etc might not be included.

See p350 for car insurance.

INTERNET ACCESS

The good news is Internet access is free and widely available in Finland. Every public library in every town has at least one Internet terminal (big libraries have up to a dozen) that can be used free of charge. The downside is that there's a time limit – normally 15 to 30 minutes. If you want longer, you may have to book a slot. You're also restricted by library opening hours, which vary but are typically Monday to Friday only.

Many tourist offices have an Internet terminal that you can use for free (usually 15 minutes), as do a handful of businesses such as cafés in larger cities. Because of this free access, dedicated Internet cafés are not so common in Finland, but you can find a few in Helsinki, Turku, Tampere and a few other towns. They charge €2 to €5 per hour. Check at www.netcaféguide.com for a list.

If you are travelling with your own computer, things are fairly bright. Wireless Internet access is very widespread; most business hotels, and many restaurants, cafés and bars offer free access to customers and guests. You'll need a wireless LAN card for your laptop. Some hotels also offer cable modem access (usually for a fee); otherwise use a phone socket. See the websites www.kropla.com or www.teleadapt.com for help doing this. If your ISP doesn't have global access numbers (CompuServe, AOL and AT&T are examples of ISPs that do), it will be cheaper to use a roaming service such as **Netaway** (www.netaway.com) than make international calls to your home ISP.

LAUNDRY

Laundrettes are thin on the ground in Finland. Check the local telephone book – they are listed as *Pesuloita*. *Itepalvelupesula* denotes self-service laundrettes. Most camping grounds and many hostels have self-service laundry facilities. Hotels typically offer (expensive) laundry and dry-cleaning services.

LEGAL AGE

- Voting: 18
- Driving: 18
- Sex: 16 for all
- Drinking: 18
- To buy spirits: 20
- Nightclub entry: varies, but can be up to 25

LEGAL MATTERS

Traffic laws are strict, as are drug laws. Fines for minor offences (such as speeding) are based on the offender's income and assets. This system has led to some well-documented and slightly absurd situations where high-flying Finns breaking the speed limit have been fined as much as €170,000! However, police usually treat bona fide tourists politely in less serious situations. Fishing without a permit is illegal.

MAPS

Almost all local tourist offices offer free city and regional maps that are adequate for finding your way around. Trekking, canoeing and road maps are available from **Karttakeskus Alekski** (Map p64; ☎ 020-1340460; www.karttakeskus.fi; Aleksanterinkatu 26, 00100 Helsinki) who produce and sell the largest variety of Finnish maps, and will also ship maps abroad.

Karttakeskus' 1:800,000 AT road map (*Autoilijan Tiekartta*; €11) of the entire country is sufficient for most basic road travel. There is also a series of 19 GT road maps at a scale of 1:200,000. These maps are very clear and show practically all the places that you might be interested in, including hostels and wilderness huts. For extensive driving you're best off with the GT road atlas (€45), updated annually.

Karttakeskus has produced approximately 40 titles for trekking areas, including walking-track presentations of town areas (in 1:25,000 to 1:50,000 scale) and national park maps (1:50,000 to 1:100,000). For the highest level of detail and accuracy, there are 1:20,000 maps available as well. Prices are around €12. Maps for lakes and waterways are also available.

MONEY

Finland uses the euro. Euro notes come in five, 10, 20, 100, 200 and 500 denominations and coins in five, 10, 20, 50 cents and €1 and €2. Euro coins from other countries are legal tender, but 1 and 2 cent coins aren't used.

Swedish krona (including coins) are accepted on Åland and in western Lapland, and Norwegian krona can be used in areas near the Norwegian border in northern Lapland.

ATMs

Using ATMs with a credit or debit card is by far the easiest way of getting cash in Finland. The ATMs have a name, Otto, and can be found even in small villages. Finnish ATMs accept foreign bank cards with Cirrus, Maestro, MasterCard, Visa, Visa Electron, Plus and Amex symbols. Withdrawals using a foreign ATM incur a transaction fee (contact your home bank for details) so it makes good sense to withdraw a reasonable amount each time. The exchange rate is usually better than that offered for travellers cheques or cash exchanges. Keep a copy of the international number to call if your cards are lost or stolen.

Credit Cards

Finns are dedicated users of plastic. Credit cards are accepted and used virtually everywhere – purchasing a beer in a bar with a credit card is not out of the question and it's a common way to pay for accommodation and restaurant meals. Credit cards such as MasterCard and Visa are accepted at most hotels, hostels, restaurants, shops and department stores, and you'll usually need one if you want to hire a car.

Many Finnish petrol stations are automatic. They accept cash (euro notes) and credit cards, but many accept only Finnish-issued credit and debit cards, so are useless to foreign travellers without cash. Don't rely on them.

Moneychangers

The best way to carry and obtain local currency is by using an ATM or credit card, just as most Finns do. Another option is travellers cheques and cash, which can be exchanged at banks. In the big cities independent exchange facilities such as **Forex** (www.forex.fi) usually offer

better rates than banks. Finnish post offices also provide banking services and tend to keep longer hours than banks, particularly in remote villages. Airports and international ferries have exchange facilities. For more exchange rate information, see the Quick Reference page on the inside front cover.

Taxes & Refunds

The value-added tax (ALV), usually of 22%, is included in marked prices but may be deducted if you post goods from the point of sale. Alternatively, at stores showing the 'Tax Free for Tourists' sign, foreign visitors who are not EU citizens can get a 12% to 16% refund on items priced over €40. Present the tax-refund 'cheque' to the refund window at your departure point from the EU (eg, airport transit halls, aboard international ferries, at overland border crossings). For more information on VAT refunds contact **Global Refund Finland** (☎ 09-6132 9600; www.globalrefund.com; PO Box 460, 00101 Helsinki).

Tipping

Tipping is not an essential part of the culture and Finns generally don't, unless rewarding exceptional service. In big cities hospitality staff at decent restaurants will expect it. You will pay service charges in restaurants as percentages; these are generally included in the quoted menu price. You might tell the taxi driver to '*pidä loput*' ('keep the change'). Doormen at fancy clubs and restaurants may also expect a small tip, but this is often a mandatory payment in the form of a 'coat charge'.

Travellers Cheques

Travellers cheques aren't nearly as convenient as using ATMs. Most banks in Finland will exchange travellers cheques but charge commission fees of up to €7. Exchange offices, such as Forex in Helsinki, Turku, Tampere and other big cities, exchange cheques quickly at good rates for a flat €2 fee. There are no American Express offices that change travellers cheques in Finland. Thomas Cook, represented by Travelex, has offices in Helsinki and Turku.

Cheques denominated in US dollars or pounds sterling are easily cashed but it makes sense to buy your cheques in euros so the currency doesn't have to be converted when you cash them in Finland.

PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEO

Finland's seasonal extremes – snow and little sunlight in winter, followed by almost continuous daylight in summer – can pose challenges for the inexperienced photographer. In particular, the risk of underexposure is great when shooting snowy landscapes – you should know how your camera works, and whether you'll need to correct for this.

Print and slide film is readily available in Finnish cities, and film processing is speedy, fairly cheap and of high quality. A roll of standard 36-exposure print film costs around €5 to €7. Anttila department stores generally offer good prices on film. Any photo shop will happily burn digital photos onto CDs and many will include a CD in the cost of developing a regular film.

POST

Stamps can be bought at bus or train stations and R-kiosk newsstands as well as at the *posti* (post office; www.posti.fi). Post offices sell packing material of various sizes.

Postcards and letters weighing up to 20g cost €0.65 to anywhere in the world (including within Finland) by *lentoposti* (air mail).

Poste restante is located at main post offices in cities. Postcodes in Finland are five-digit numbers that follow this logic: the first two numbers indicate towns and areas, the next two identify the post office in the town or area, and the last number is always 0, except for a post office box or poste restante, in which case the last number is 1. The main post office is always 10 in all large towns, so the postcode for the main post office in Helsinki is 00101, for Turku 20101, for Tampere 33101, for Savonlinna 57101 and for Rovaniemi 96101.

International parcel post is expensive in Finland; a 5kg package to Europe, for example, will cost around €35.

SHOPPING

On the whole, prices in Finland are lower than in other Nordic countries – which isn't to say that there are any real bargains here, particularly on those items for which Finland is famous: glassware, pottery, woollens and various handicrafts made from pine or birch.

If you're heading to the Baltic countries such as Tallinn, Estonia – which can be visited on a day trip from Helsinki – you'll find

that prices there are cheaper still, and for many of the same types of items of more or less the same quality.

Lappish, or Sámi, handicrafts include jewellery, clothing, textiles and hunting knives, as well as other items made from local wood, reindeer bone and hide, metals and semiprecious stones. Duodji are authentic handicrafts produced according to Sámi traditions. A genuine item, which can be expensive, will carry a special 'Duodji' token. Sámi handicrafts can be found at markets and shops in Helsinki and throughout Lapland, but for the widest selections visit the Sámi villages of Inari (p322) and Hetta (Enontekiö; p308).

Trekkers will want to purchase a *kuksa* (cup) made in traditional Sámi fashion from the burl of a birch tree. These are widely available throughout Finland, at markets and in handicraft or souvenir shops. Quality of workmanship varies, as does price, but the typical *kuksa* costs about €20.

Local markets are good places to purchase colourful *lapaset* (woolen mittens), *myssy* or *pipo* (hats) and *villapusero* (sweaters), necessary for surviving the cold Finnish winters, as well as *raanu* or *ryjy* (woven wall hangings). A good hand-knitted sweater sells for at least €200. Local folk – particularly in Åland – will often 'knit to order', taking your measurements and then posting the sweater to you in two or three months, once it's finished. It's possible to find cheaper, machine-knitted wool sweaters in Finnish markets, but check the labels – they probably were made in Norway.

If you DIY, contact the nearest Käsityöasema (a centre that preserves cottage industries) and create your own handicrafts. There are hundreds of these in Finland, and many are especially geared towards visitors. You pay only for the material, plus a small fee for equipment rental.

For decades, Finland has been world famous for its indigenous glass production. The Savoy vase designed by Alvar Aalto is a good 'souvenir of Finland', although expensive. Department stores and finer shops carry it as well as other stylish vases by Iittala, Nuutajarvi and Humppila. Big roadside discount shops also stock Finnish glassware, plus designer pottery and cooking utensils; most of this is schlock.

Hunting and carving knives made by the Marttiini company are well known interna-

tionally, as are fishing lures and flies made by Kuusamo.

It's possible to find bargains on trekking goods such as jackets and down sleeping bags. Chains such as Partio-Aitta and Lassen Retkiaitta specialize in outdoor equipment, but many sports shops, such as Intersport or Kesport, also have good selections.

SOLO TRAVELLERS

Finland is one of the world's safest places, so travelling alone poses little risk. In smaller hotels and guesthouses, expect to pay 60% to 70% of the double-room rate. Many business-class hotels, however, scandalously charge the same price for a single or double room (the company picks up the tab). If this is the case, make sure you get a decent double-sized room!

Many camp sites offer cheaper rates for solo campers, but normally charge the two-person rate for cottages and cabins.

TELEPHONE

Public telephones are reasonably common in Finland, although the high level of mobile phone usage is making them redundant. The vast majority accept plastic Telecards or credit cards, but a few older ones accept coins. Phonecards can be purchased at post offices, shops and R-kioski newsstands.

International calls are expensive, but are cheapest between 10pm and 8am Monday to Friday and all day Saturday and Sunday. Large cities have telecentres where you can make international calls from booths at much cheaper rates than from public phones. Similarly, you can buy cut-rate international phone cards from kiosks; there are several varieties, with rates clearly marked.

Mobile Phones

Finland has one of the world's highest rates of mobile-phone usage, which is not surprising since Nokia is Finnish. Getting on to the mobile network is easy with the prepaid system using **Sonera** (www.sonera.fi), **Telering** (www.telering.fi) or **DNA** (www.dnafinland.fi). Bring your own phone and simply buy a starter kit from a phone shop or any R-kiosk. At the time of writing, you could get a SIM card for €17, which included €10 of call credit. You can buy recharge cards from the same outlets.

If travelling with your own phone from America or Japan, check with your service

provider that it will work in Europe's GSM 900/1800 network.

Phone Codes

The country code for Finland is ☎ 358. To dial abroad it's ☎ 00. The number for the international operator is ☎ 020208.

TIME

Finnish time is two hours ahead of GMT in winter. When it's noon in Finland it's 2am in Los Angeles, 5am in New York, 10am in London, 7pm or 9pm in Sydney and 11am in Sweden and Western Europe. Daylight Saving Time, when clocks go forward one hour, applies from late March or early April to the end of October.

The 24-hour clock is used commonly for transport times, opening hours, etc. If you see *Ma-Pe 9-20*, for example, it means that a place is open Monday to Friday from 9am to 8pm.

TOILETS

Ridiculously, toilets in train and bus stations require a fee of €1 or €2. Other public conveniences cost around €0.40.

TOURIST INFORMATION

All major Finnish towns have a tourist office with helpful, English-speaking staff, English-language brochures and excellent free maps. In summer, these offices are often staffed by university students on vacation. Most offices publish a miniguide to their town or region and all have a website (which is usually www.nameoftown.fi). Additionally, many offices stockpile brochures, maps and advice for lots of other towns and regions in Finland.

The main office of the **Finnish Tourist Board** (Matkailun Edistämiskeskus, MEK; Map p64; ☎ 4176 9300; www.visitfinland.com; Eteläesplanadi 4; 00100 Helsinki) is located near the kauppatori in the centre of Helsinki. Their website lists overseas branches that can also provide information.

VISAS

A valid passport or EU identity card is required to enter Finland. Most Western nationals don't need a tourist visa for stays of less than three months; South Africans need a Schengen visa. For more information contact the nearest Finnish embassy or consulate, or the **Directorate of Immigration** (☎ 09-4765 500; www.uvi.fi; Panimokatu 2A, 00580 Helsinki).

RUSSIAN & ESTONIAN VISAS

All foreigners require a visa to travel into Russia from Finland. Russian visas take about eight working days to process in Helsinki (you must leave your passport at the embassy) so you may want to get one before leaving home. Helsinki tour companies specializing in travel to Russia can usually expedite a visa much quicker, but for a fee.

European citizens and most Western nationals don't require a visa for a short stay in Estonia, but citizens of South Africa do (a valid Latvian or Lithuanian visa is valid). Check out the website of the **Estonian Foreign Ministry** (www.vm.ee).

WOMEN TRAVELLERS

Finland is one of the safest places to travel in the world. Women often travel alone or in pairs around the region, which should pose no problems. Outside of Helsinki, however, and especially in the north, bars can be fairly unreconstructed places, and solo women may well get a bit of hassle from drunk locals.

WORK

There is very little work open to foreigners because of high local unemployment. It's possible to get a job teaching English at a Finnish company, but standards are very high so previous experience and good references are essential. Students can apply for limited summer employment, and au pair arrangements are possible for up to 18 months.

Australian and New Zealand citizens aged between 18 and 30 can apply for a one year working holiday visa under a reciprocal arrangement.

For any serious career-oriented work, a work permit is required for all foreigners other than EU citizens. Employment must be secured before applying for the work permit, and the work permit must be filed in advance of arrival in Finland, together with a letter from the intended employer and other proof of employment. Work permits can be obtained from the Finnish embassy in your home country. A residence permit may also be required. For more information contact the **Directorate of Immigration** (☎ 09-476 5500; www.uvi.fi; PO Box 92, 00531 Helsinki).

Transport

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THINGS CHANGE...

The information in this chapter is particularly vulnerable to change. Check directly with the airline or a travel agent to make sure you understand how a fare (and ticket you may buy) works and be aware of the security requirements for international travel. Shop carefully. The details given in this chapter should be regarded as pointers and are not a substitute for your own careful, up-to-date research.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

ENTERING THE COUNTRY

Passport
EU nationals, Schengen agreement countries, and citizens of Switzerland and small EU affiliates such as Andorra and Monaco can enter Finland with a valid passport or identity card. All other nationalities need a valid passport. Most Western nationals don't need a visa; South Africans are among those that do.

See <http://formin.finland.fi> for a full list of requirements.

AIR

Direct flights to Finland are not the cheapest in Europe, but it is served by various budget carriers, including Ryanair from London and Frankfurt, Germanwings from Cologne, and Blue1 from Copenhagen and Stockholm. Most other flights are with Finnair or Scandinavian Airlines (SAS).

Airports & Airlines

Nearly all flights to Finland land at **Helsinki-Vantaa airport** (HEL; ☎ 0200 14636; www.helsinki-vantaa.fi), situated 19km north of the capital.

Other international airports include Tampere (TMP), Turku (TKU), Oulu (OUL), Vaasa (VAA) and Rovaniemi (RVN), the transport hub of Lapland.

There are good flight connections to Finland from all over the world. Finnair, the Finnish national carrier, and SAS have scheduled flights to Helsinki from most major cities in Europe, as well as from New York, San Francisco, Cairo, Bangkok, Hong Kong, Singapore, Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Osaka and Tokyo.

To Turku, Vaasa, Oulu and Tampere there are several nonstop flights daily from Stockholm.

Airlines flying to and from Finland (all phone numbers in Helsinki with an 09 code unless otherwise stated):

Adria Airways (JP; ☎ 6151 4135; www.adria-airways.com)

Aer Lingus (EI; ☎ 6122 0260; www.aerlingus.ie)

Aeroflot Russian Airlines (SU; ☎ 659 655; www.aeroflot.com)

Air Baltic (BT; ☎ 020-386 000; www.airbaltic.com)

Air Finland (FI; ☎ 251 200; www.airfinland.fi)

Air France (AF; ☎ 8568 0500; www.airfrance.com)

American Airlines (AA; ☎ 9800 14620; www.aa.com)

Austrian Airlines (OS; ☎ 020-386 000; www.aa.com)

Blue1 (KF; ☎ 06000 25831; www.blue1.com)

British Airways (BA; ☎ 6937 9538; www.ba.com)

Czech Airlines (OK; ☎ 681 2650; www.csa.cz)

European Executive Express (☎ 02 415 4957; www.european.se, in Sweden)

Finnair (AY; ☎ 81881; www.finnair.com)

FlyMe (FLY; ☎ 0100 30010; www.flyme.com)

Germanwings (4U; ☎ +49 1805 955 855; www.germanwings.com, in Germany)

Iberia (IB; ☎ 6877 8950; www.iberia.es)

Icelandair (FI; ☎ 6126 070; www.icelandair.com)

KLM (KL; ☎ 020-353 355; www.klm.com)

Lithuanian Airlines (TE; ☎ 6226 2299; www.lal.lt)

LOT Polish Airlines (LO; ☎ 6937 9036; www.lot.com)

Lufthansa (LH; ☎ 020-386 000; www.lufthansa.com)

Malev Hungarian Airlines (MA; ☎ 622 0922; www.malev.hu)

Ryanair (FR; ☎ 0600 16010; www.ryanair.com)

SAS Scandinavian Airlines (SK; ☎ 06000 53686; www.scandinavian.net)

SN Brussels Airlines (SN; ☎ 6937 9358; www.flysn.com)

Spanair (JK; ☎ 6151 4135; www.spanair.es)

Swiss International (LX; ☎ 6937 9034; www.swiss.com)

Tickets

As with most European destinations, flights are usually cheaper if they include a Saturday night stay. One-way flights are rarely good value.

Online ticket sales work well if you are doing a simple return trip on a specific date; however, online fare generators are no substitute for a travel agent who knows all about special deals, has strategies for avoiding stopovers and can offer advice.

The following are some useful websites for online purchases and price comparisons:

Ebookers (www.ebookers.com) Another good online flight booker.

Expedia (www.expedia.com) Reliable online flight agent run by Microsoft.

Flights.com (www.flights.com) A truly international site for flight-only tickets; cheap fares and easy-to-search database.

Kelkoo (www.kelkoo.com) Compares flight prices from several sources.

Opodo (www.opodo.com) Online sales from a confederation of world airlines.

Travelocity (www.travelocity.com) This US site allows you to search for fares (in US dollars) to and from practically anywhere.

WhichBudget (www.whichbudget.com) Up-to-date listings of routes flown by budget airlines.

INTERCONTINENTAL (RTW) TICKETS

Round-the-world (RTW) tickets are often real bargains. They are usually put together by a combination of airlines and allow you to fly anywhere you want on their route systems so long as you do not backtrack. There may be restrictions on how many stops you are permitted and usually the tickets are valid for 90 days up to a year. An alterna-

tive type of RTW ticket is one put together by a travel agency using a combination of discounted tickets.

Finnair is part of the OneWorld airline alliance with Qantas, British Airways, Cathay Pacific, American Airlines, Iberia, Aer Lingus and LanChile.

SAS AIR PASSES

If you're visiting more countries in Scandinavia and the Baltic, one of the airpasses offered by SAS might be right for you. They offer competitive pricing on internal and international flights in the region, bought as coupons. You must have a return ticket to Scandinavia on SAS (or partner airlines Spanair, Lufthansa, Icelandair or United) to qualify for purchase.

The Visit Scandinavia airpass is open to residents of European countries other than Scandinavia and Finland. You can buy domestic flights within Denmark, Norway and Sweden, as well as international legs between these three and Finland.

The Visit Baltic pass includes the option of flights to Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia and Ukraine. You must be a resident of a European country outside this area.

The Visit Europe pass includes flights to other European countries and is only open to non-European residents.

Asia

Most Asian countries offer fairly competitive deals, with Bangkok, Singapore and Hong Kong the best places to shop around for discount tickets. Flights from Asia to Europe tend to be cheaper in Asia than flights Europe, so it's worth purchasing the return flight while in Asia. Most airlines sell a standard European fare, regardless of the distance flown from the first stop.

Finnair flies direct from Helsinki to all three major travel hubs, as well as to Tokyo, Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Osaka.

STA Travel (www.statravel.com) is a recommended agent with branches in Hong Kong, Singapore, India, Malaysia, Thailand, Taiwan, China, Japan and South Korea among others.

Australia & New Zealand

Flying from Australia is a two-stage journey (at least), with likely stopovers in either Singapore or Bangkok, and cities in

Europe. It's also possible to go via Japan and/or Russia. Finnair flies to Sydney, in partnership with Qantas, British Airways and Cathay Pacific. KLM, Lufthansa, Austrian Airlines and a few other European airlines fly to Helsinki from Australia via London, Amsterdam, Frankfurt, Vienna and other cities.

You may want to consider a round-the-world option, which can work out not much more expensive. These are often the best value from New Zealand. Depending on which airline you choose, you may fly across Asia (Singapore Airlines, Thai Airlines, Air New Zealand), with possible stopovers in India, Bangkok or Singapore, or across the USA (United, American Airlines, Continental), with possible stopovers in Honolulu, Australia or one of the Pacific islands.

Useful agencies:

Flight Centre Australia (☎ 133 133; www.flightcentre.com.au); New Zealand (☎ 0800 243 544; www.flightcentre.co.nz) has dozens of branches throughout Australia and New Zealand.

STA Travel Australia (☎ 1300 733 035; www.statravel.com.au); New Zealand (☎ 09 309 9723; www.statravel.co.nz) Offices in most major cities.

Traifinders Australia (☎ 02 9247 7666, 03 9600 3022; www.traifinders.com.au) Reliable travel agent.

Travel Online (www.travelonline.co.nz) Good New Zealand website for checking flights.

Travel.Com (www.travel.com.au) Good Australian online site that allows you to look up fares and flights into and out of the country.

Continental Europe

Helsinki is well connected to most European capitals and major cities by a number of airlines. Particularly good are the connections with Scandinavian and Baltic capitals. The websites listed under Tickets (see p343) offer good prices and comparisons for return fares to Helsinki.

The budget airlines Ryanair, Germanwings, and Blue1 offer the cheapest fares off-season (check www.whichbudget.com for the current situation in this rapidly-changing market), but in summer you may find that the regular carriers offer more competitive fares.

STA Travel (www.statravel.com) has branches in many European nations, while **Kilroy Travels** (www.kilroytravels.com) has branches in Nordic countries and the Netherlands. Other recommended agents:

France OTU Voyages (☎ 01 44 41 38 50; www.otu.fr); Voyageurs du Monde (☎ 01 40 15 11 15; www.vdm.com); Nouvelles Frontières (☎ 08 25 00 08 25 nationwide, www.nouvelles-frontieres.fr) Reliable travel agents with online booking.

Germany Just Travel (☎ 089 747 333; www.justtravel.de) English-speaking travel agent.

Italy CIS Viaggi (☎ 199 501150; www.cts.it) Specialists in student travel.

Netherlands Airfair (☎ 020 620 5121; www.airfair.nl) Useful flight agent.

Spain Edreams (www.edreams.es); Viajar.com (☎ 902 902 522; www.viajar.com) Two competitive online agents.

UK & Ireland

From Britain, the cheapest service to Finland is often Ryanair's daily flight from London Stansted to Tampere. There are also direct nonstop scheduled services run by Finnair and British Airways from Helsinki to London, Manchester, Dublin, and, as of April 2006, Edinburgh.

Discount air travel is big business in the UK – this is the discount centre of Europe. Advertisements for many travel agencies are in the travel pages of the weekend broadsheet newspapers, *Time Out*, the *Evening Standard* and the free *TNT* magazine. Shop around – many of the ultracheap fares you see advertised won't be available when you call, but something usually comes up.

As well as the websites mentioned above, some recommended travel agents are:

Ebookers (☎ 0870 814 0000; www.ebookers.com)

North South Travel (☎ 01245 608 291; www.northsouthtravel.co.uk) Profits go to the developing world.

Nortours (☎ 0870 7447 305; www.norvista.co.uk) Specialists in Nordic travel.

Scantours (☎ 020 7839 2927; www.scantours.co.uk) Specialists in the region.

STA Travel (☎ 0870 160 0599; www.statravel.co.uk) Branches across the UK and Ireland.

Traifinders (www.traifinders.co.uk) Check website for closest branch.

USIT (☎ 01 602 1904, 028 90 327 111; www.usit.ie) Ireland-wide specialists in youth travel.

USA & Canada

Finnair flies direct from Helsinki to New York and, in summer, to Toronto, but it's likely that you'll find cheaper fares involving a change of flight in another European city. You could fly to London, for example, and take advantage of the budget Ryanair service to Tampere.

Popular travel agents:

Flight Centre USA (☎ 1866 WORLD 51; www.flightcentre.us); Canada (☎ 1877 478 8747; www.flightcentre.ca) Offices across the USA and Canada.

STA Travel (☎ 800 781 4040; www.statravel.com) Offices in major US cities.

Travel CUTS (☎ 800 667 2887; www.travelcuts.com) Canada's national student travel agency; offices in all major cities.

LAND Border Crossings

There are ten border crossings from northern Sweden to northern Finland across Tornionjoki and Muonionjoki, and the main highway in both countries runs parallel to the border from Tornio/Haparanda to Kaarensuanto/Karesuando. There are no passport or customs formalities, and if you're driving up along the border you can alternate between countries.

Between Norway and Finland, there are six road border crossings, plus a few legal crossings along wilderness tracks. The main Nordkapp (North Cape) route goes from Rovaniemi via Inari and Kaamanen to Karigasniemi; there's also a crossing further west at Kilpisjärvi.

There are eight border crossings between Finland and Russia. Along the popular Helsinki–Vyborg–St Petersburg corridor there are two Finland–Russia road crossings: Nuijamaa (Russian side: Brusnichnoe) and Vaalimaa (Russian side: Torfyanovka).

The Russian borders are serious affairs; you must already have a visa to cross into Russia (see p341).

Bus

It's a long way to Finland by bus from the UK and central Europe – you're unlikely to save too much money over a plane fare. **Eurolines** (www.eurolines.com) don't have direct services to Helsinki except from Russia (see p346), but they may be useful if you plan to visit other Nordic countries en route.

Car & Motorcycle

Motorists and motorcyclists will need the vehicle's registration papers, and liability insurance. You may have to contact your insurer to initiate Europe-wide 'Green Card' coverage. A home licence from most Western countries is valid. Contact your local automobile association for details about all documentation.

See p346 for information about driving in Finland.

Car Ride Services

Car pooling is a good way of sharing costs, especially when travelling long distances. Useful websites to search for drivers or to enter your details for prospective passengers are:

www.allostop.com Canadian site that lists a range of European links.

www.compartir.org Spanish site with Europe-wide lifts.

www.freewheelers.co.uk British site with worldwide lifts.

www.mitfahrzentrale.de In German and perhaps the most useful site. You pay a reservation fee.

Train

The typical route to Finland from any point in Europe goes via Denmark and Sweden. There are direct long-distance trains to Stockholm from various major cities in Europe. Train passes give discounts on most ferry routes across to Finland.

Asia

TRAIN

To and from central and eastern Asia, a train can work out at about the same price as flying, and it can be a lot more fun.

Helsinki is a good place to start your journey across Russia into Asia. Frequent trains run between Helsinki and Moscow (see p346), and there are three routes to/from Moscow across Siberia with connections to China, Japan and Korea: the Trans-Siberian to/from Vladivostok, and the Trans-Mongolian and Trans-Manchurian, both to/from Beijing. There's a fourth route south from Moscow and across Kazakhstan, following part of the old Silk Road to Beijing. These trips take several days, often involve stopovers, and prices vary according to the direction you are travelling, where you buy your ticket and what is included.

For details on Trans-Siberian options see Lonely Planet's *Trans-Siberian Railway*.

Norway BUS

There's a wide range of buses from Finland to and from various points in Norway, many running in summer only. The main

operator is **Eskelesin Lapin Linjat** (www.eskelesin-lapinlinjat.com), whose website has detailed timetables.

Most crossings are in the northeast part of Finland; these routes often originate in Rovaniemi and continue via Sodankylä and Ivalo or Inari. They then proceed to Karasjok, Lakselv, Tanabru or Kirkenes. There is one daily bus in summer from Oulu to Nordkapp (North Cape) via Rovaniemi, Inari and Karasjok. On the western route, a daily bus runs from Oulu to Rovaniemi and Muonio; in summer this continues to Kilpisjärvi and Tromsø (12½ hours).

TRAIN

There is no train service between Finland and Norway.

Russia BUS

There are two daily express buses to Vyborg and St Petersburg from Helsinki, one originating in Turku. There's also one daily from Tampere and three weekly from Lappeenranta. A visa is required to enter Russia. Check current timetables on www.matkahuolto.info and book tickets at the city bus station or a travel agency. The one-way fare from Helsinki to Vyborg is €34.70 (five to six hours) and to St Petersburg it's €53.50 (eight to nine hours).

Goldlines (www.goldline.fi) run three weekly buses from Rovaniemi (€90, 15 hours) via Ivalo (€50, 7½ hours) to Murmansk.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

If you plan to drive into Russia, you'll need an international licence and certificate of registration, passport and visa, and insurance. **Ingonord** (☎ 09-251 0300; www.ingonord.com; Salomonkatu 5C, 00100 Helsinki) can arrange temporary Russian cover. Scandinavian car rental companies do not allow their cars to be taken into Russia.

TRAIN

Finland uses broad-gauge tracks, similar to those in Russia, so there are regular trains to/from Russia. Tickets for these trains are sold at the international ticket counter at Helsinki train station. The rail crossing is at Vainikkala (Russian side: Luzhayka).

There are three daily trains from Helsinki to Russia, travelling via the Finnish

stations of Lahti, Kouvola and Vainikkala. You must have a valid Russian visa, but border formalities have been fast-tracked so that passport checks are now carried out on board the moving train.

The *Tolstoi* sleeper runs from Helsinki to Moscow (via St Petersburg), arriving at the Russian capital early in the morning. One way costs 2nd/1st class €85/127. The fare includes a sleeper berth in both classes.

The *Sibelius* and *Repin* run daily between Helsinki and St Petersburg (5½ hours) via Vyborg (3¾ hours). The *Sibelius* is a Finnish day train (2nd/1st class €50.80/80.40, seats only). The Russian *Repin* has 2nd-class seats (€50.80) or 1st-class sleeping berths (€89.10). Return fares are double. There are significant discounts for families and small groups. See www.vr.fi for details.

Sweden BUS

The quickest route to Finland from southern Sweden is by ferry (see below opposite). In the north, there are buses from Sweden to the Finnish town of Tornio, which is just across the river from Haparanda in Sweden.

Tapanis Buss (www.tapanis.se) Stockholm (☎ 08-153 300); Haparanda (☎ 0922-12 955) runs express coaches from Stockholm to Tornio via Haparanda twice a week on the E4 Hwy (Skr480/€55, 14 hours).

Alternatively, pick a bus stop from where you can walk to Finland, although you can generally pick up a local bus to the station in the Finnish town or vice versa. Swedish trains travel as far north as Boden; from there take buses (train passes are valid) to Haparanda, and on to Tornio and Kemi. Inter-Rail passes cover bus travel all the way from Boden to Kemi.

TRAIN

There is no direct train service between Finland and Sweden, but train passes give discounts on ferry and bus connections.

SEA

Arriving in Finland by ferry is a memorable way to begin your visit, especially if you dock in Helsinki. Baltic ferries are some of the world's most impressive sea-going craft, especially considering they are passenger ferries rather than cruise ships.

The big ferries are floating hotels-cum-shopping plazas, with duty-free shopping, restaurants, bars, karaoke, nightclubs and saunas. Many Scandinavians use them simply for boozy overnight cruises, so they can get pretty rowdy on Friday and Saturday nights, when you may need to book in advance.

Services are year-round between major cities: book ahead in summer and if travelling with a vehicle. The boats are amazingly cheap if you travel deck class (without a cabin); they make their money from duty-free purchases. Many ferry lines offer 50% discounts for holders of Eurail, Scanrail and Inter-Rail passes. Some offer discounts for seniors, and for ISIC and youth cardholders; inquire when purchasing your ticket. There are usually discounts for families and small groups travelling together.

Ferry companies have detailed timetables and fares on their websites. Fares vary according to season. Here is a list of operators with their Finnish contact numbers:

Birka Line (☎ 018-27330; www.birkaline.com)

Eckerö Line (☎ 09-2288 544; www.eckeroline.fi; www.eckerolinjen.fi)

Finnlines (☎ 010-34350; www.finnlines.fi)

Linda Line (☎ 09-668 9700; www.lindaliini.ee)

Nordic Jet Line (☎ 09-681 770; www-eng.njl.fi)

RG Line (☎ 06-3200 300; www.rgline.com)

SeaWind Line (☎ 0800 16800; www.seawind.fi)

Silja Line (☎ 09-18041; www.silja.fi)

Superfast Ferries (☎ 09-2534 0640; www.superfast.com)

Tallink (☎ 09-228 311; www.tallink.fi)

Viking Line (☎ 09-12351; www.vikingline.fi)

Estonia

Several ferry companies ply the Gulf of Finland between Helsinki and Tallinn in Estonia. Since most nationalities (except Canadians) don't require a visa and the trip is so quick and cheap, it's a very popular day trip from Helsinki (see boxed text, p83). Competition between the companies keeps the prices low, and if you're heading to Estonia for onward travel it can be cheaper to get a same-day return ticket than a one-way ticket. Car ferries cross in 3½ hours, catamarans and hydrofoils in about 1½ hours. Service is heavy year-round, although in winter there are fewer departures, and the traffic is also slower because of ice. Cancellations occur if the sea is rough; the express boats are more

prone to this. Phone the day before to check on sailings in winter.

Ferries are cheapest: Eckerö Line has only one departure daily but is the cheapest with a return fare of €25 in high season. Tallink, Viking Line and Silja Line have several daily departures (€17 to €25, one way). Vehicle space costs around €17.

Catamarans and hydrofoils cost between €22 and €28 one way depending on the company, time of year, time of day and the day of the week. Linda Line, Nordic Jet Line and Tallink offer these routes. Tallink are somewhat pricier, at €34 to €39 for adults in summer, but have vehicle space on their fast ferry (€23 to €27 one-way for standard-sized cars).

Tickets can be booked online, at the ferry company offices in central Helsinki, from the ferry terminal, or from the Helsinki city tourist office (for a hefty booking fee).

See Visas (p341) for details of Estonian entry requirements.

Germany

Finnlines has year-round service from Helsinki to Travemünde (from €302 September to May, from €408 June to August one way plus €100 per vehicle, 34 to 36 hours) with a connecting bus service to Hamburg.

Superfast Ferries has a speedy ferry running service between Rostock and Hanko on the south coast of Finland (21 hours), Tuesday to Sunday, and daily late May to late August. The ferries all depart in the evening and the minimum one-way fare is €75 in 'airline seats', or €155 in a cabin. Vehicles cost from €116.

Sweden

Stockholm is the main gateway to Finland, due to the incredibly luxurious passenger ferries that travel regularly between Stockholm and Turku or Helsinki. There are two main competing operators, Silja Line (blue-and-white ferries) and Viking Line (red-and-white ferries), with smaller companies operating on certain routes.

The major source of income for these ferry companies is duty-free shopping. Because the ferries stop at the Åland islands, tax-free shopping is possible on board, even though Sweden and Finland are both in the European Union. Thus

Swedes and Finns can avoid the high sales taxes in both countries, especially for alcohol and cigarettes. For the traveller, this means ferry companies can afford to keep fares unusually low. Whether you choose to blow the rest of your cash on board on a megabuffet, disco dancing or a case of aquavit – well, that's up to you.

There are cabins, but you can buy a passenger ticket and sleep in the salons or any spare patch of inside deck (or just not sleep at all, as many partying passengers do). There are luggage lockers on board. Viking Line is the cheapest, but note that Friday-night departures are more expensive than departures on other days of the week. Silja line also does regular special prices.

In summer, overnight crossings (passenger ticket only) from Stockholm start at €25 to Turku (11 to 12 hours) and €46 to Helsinki (16 hours). Note that Åbo is Swedish for Turku.

All Viking and Silja ferries travelling between Stockholm and Turku call in at Mariehamn in Åland. The SeaWind Line runs the same route (11 hours, from €58 per vehicle, including one to four passengers), but stops in Långnäs. Additionally, Birka Cruises travels between Mariehamn and Stockholm, and both Viking and Silja Lines offers service between Mariehamn/Turku and Kapellskär, Sweden, a small harbour in the northern part of Stockholm province. This cuts the journey considerably; a connecting bus to Stockholm is included in the price of the ferry.

Eckerö Linjen sails from Grisslehamn, north of Stockholm, to Eckerö in Åland. It's by far the quickest, at just two hours, and, with prices starting from €5.50 return, it's a bargain, especially as the connecting bus from Stockholm, Uppsala or Gävle (Sweden) is free.

From the main Åland island group it's possible to island-hop across the archipelago to mainland Finland (or vice versa) on free ferries. See p232 for details.

RG Lines sails from Vaasa in Finland, to Umeå, Sweden (€50 to €60/SEK450 to SEK540, four hours) one or two times daily (and once weekly to Sundsvall) in summer. Finnlines run a simpler cargo ferry, which connects Naantali, near Turku, with Kapellskär three times daily.

GETTING AROUND

A thick book of timetables for all domestic buses and trains is published every year by Edita (www.turisti.fi), based in Helsinki. While all of this information is on the Internet, if you like having it at your fingertips, the tome costs €28.

A great journey planner for Finland's public transport network is online at www.matka.fi.

AIR Airlines in Finland

Finnair is the principal domestic carrier, and runs a comprehensive network from Helsinki, and from a couple of regional hubs. Standard prices are fairly expensive, but Happy Hour rates, which can be booked up to a week in advance, offer significant savings. Also check the www.finnair.fi website for *äkkilähdöt* (quick getaway) offers. Children under 12 and seniors receive a 70% discount. If you're between 17 and 24 the youth discount is 50%, but even better value is the youth stand-by fare. Available to those aged between 17 and 24, you need to arrive at the airport one hour before the flight of your choice and wait to see if there are any seats. Under this plan, any one-way direct flight costs €64 to €79 – a huge saving from, say, Helsinki to Rovaniemi (cheaper than the train). If you don't get on your desired flight, your money is refunded.

Special discounts are offered on some routes in summer, and 'snow fares' give discounts of 50% to 70% on selected flights between Helsinki and Lapland during non-holiday periods from January to May.

If you book in advance, the budget carrier Blue1 offers the sharpest rates on routes from Helsinki to a range of Finnish cities, with prices as low as €33 one way.

Airlines flying domestically:

Blue1 (☎ 06000 25831; www.blue1.com) Budget flights from Helsinki to Kuopio, Oulu, Rovaniemi and Vaasa.

European Executive Express (☎ 02 415 4957; www.european.se) Flights between Åland and Turku, as well as summer ones between Helsinki-Savonlinna/Mikkeli.

Finnair (☎ 81881; www.finnair.com) Extensive domestic network includes flights by subsidiaries FinnComm and Golden Air.

BICYCLE

Finland is largely a flat country and as bicycle-friendly as any country you'll find, with plenty of bike paths that cyclists share with inline skaters in summer. The only drawback to an extensive tour is distance, but bikes can be taken on most trains, buses and ferries. Åland is particularly good for cycling. Helmets are required by law.

For more information about cycling in Finland see p47.

BOAT Lake & River Crossings

Lake and river ferries operate during summer. Departures tend to be sporadic from May to mid-June and during August, but are very steady from mid-June to the end of July. These ferries are more than mere transport – a lake cruise, particularly from one town to another, is a bona fide Finnish experience.

Apart from two-hour cruises starting from towns such as Jyväskylä, Kuopio, Savonlinna, Tampere, Mikkeli, you can actually cover half of Finland on scheduled boat routes. The most popular routes are Tampere-Hämeenlinna, Savonlinna-Kuopio, Lahti-Jyväskylä and Joensuu-Koli-Nurmes. See Getting There & Away in the relevant town sections for details.

Sea Ferries

Several kinds of ferries operate between various islands and coastal towns, especially near Turku and in the province of Åland. See p232 and p212 for specific information.

Several cruise companies run express boats to interesting islands off the coast, particularly along the south coast. From Helsinki the foremost tour is the short trip to Suomenlinna. Likewise, there are summer cruises aboard historic steamships to mainland towns that may be reached more by car, bus or train. Popular sea routes are Turku-Naantali and Helsinki-Porvoo.

For ferries, www.liikkuajat.com is a useful timetable website.

BUS

Long-distance buses in Finland are efficient and run on schedule. They're comfortable, and the service is comprehensive, covering 90% of Finland's roads.

Compared with Finnish trains, buses are better for travelling from village to village, while trains are more convenient and cheaper for fast travel between the big centres. There are two kinds of intercity bus services: *vakiovuorot* (regular buses) stopping frequently at towns and villages, and *pikavuorot* (express buses) travelling swiftly between cities. Because there are few motorways in Finland, even express buses aren't that fast, covering 100km in less than two hours and 400km in about six hours.

Long-distance and express bus travel ticketing is handled by **Matkahuolto** (☎ 0200-4000; www.matkahuolto.fi), whose excellent website has all timetables.

Each town and municipal centre has a *linja-autoasema* (bus terminal), with local timetables displayed (*lähtevät* is departures, *saapuvat* arrivals). Bus schedules change often so *always* double-check – particularly in rural areas where there may be only one weekly bus on some routes.

Most buses run hourly Monday to Friday between major towns. Restricted services operate on Saturday and public holidays. During summer, when school services are suspended, buses are dramatically reduced. The Matkahuolto offices work normal business hours, but you can always buy tickets on the buses.

Costs

Prices in this guide refer to express services if they are available, or local services if not. Ticket prices are fixed and depend on the number of kilometres travelled; return tickets are 10% cheaper than two one-way fares, provided the trip is at least 80km in one direction. Express buses cost up to €3 more than regular buses. The one-way fare for a 100km trip is normal/express €13.70/16.20. Children aged four to 11 always pay half fare, while children between 12 and 16 get a 30% to 50% reduction. For student discounts, you need to buy a student coach discount card (€5.80) from any bus station. Proper student ID and a passport photo is required, and the card entitles you to a 50% discount on journeys more than 80km.

If booking three or more adult tickets together, a 25% discount applies, meaning good news for groups.

Following are some sample one-way fares from Helsinki:

Destination	Express (€)
Hämeenlinna	18.90
Hanko	21.30
Inari	124.00
Joensuu	63.40
Jyväskylä	39.20
Kuopio	58.50
Lappeenranta	34.70
Oulu	72.50
Pori	39.20
Rovaniemi	96.20
Savonlinna	44.50
Tampere	28.10
Turku	25.60

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Driving around Finland is hassle-free. Finnish drivers are remarkably considerate and polite – rarely will you hear a horn blast in anger and ‘road rage’ is almost an unknown phenomenon. Finland’s road network is excellent and well signposted between centres,

although there are only a few motorways around major cities. When approaching a town or city, look for signs saying *keskusta* (town centre), where you can usually find parking. Only in remote forests and rural areas will you find unsurfaced roads or dirt tracks. There are no road tolls.

Petrol is much more expensive than in the USA and generally above average compared with other European countries.

Driving Licence & Insurance

An international licence is not required to drive in Finland. However, you’ll need the driving licence from your home country to bring a car into Finland, or if you plan to rent a car – a passport alone won’t suffice. A Green Card (insurance card) is recommended but not required for visitors from most countries that subscribe to this European insurance system. Those who are from countries who do belong to the Green Card plan will need to arrange insurance on arrival. Insurance is included with car rental.

The Finnish national motoring organisation, **Autoliitto** (☎ 09-774 761; www.autoliitto.fi;

ROAD DISTANCES (km)

Jyväskylä	272																			
Kuopio	383	144																		
Kuusamo	804	553	419																	
Lappeenranta	223	219	264	684																
Oulu	612	339	286	215	551															
Rovaniemi	837	563	511	191	776	224														
Savonlinna	338	206	160	579	155	446	671													
Tampere	174	148	293	702	275	491	712	355												
Turku	166	304	448	848	361	633	858	446	155											
Vaasa	419	282	377	533	501	318	543	488	241	348										
	Helsinki	Jyväskylä	Kuopio	Kuusamo	Lappeenranta	Oulu	Rovaniemi	Savonlinna	Tampere	Turku										

DRIVING IN WINTER

Snow and ice on the roads, potentially from September to April, and as late as June in Lapland, make driving a serious undertaking. Snow chains are illegal: instead, people use snow tyres, which have metal studs. Cars hired at these times will be properly equipped; you can also hire snow tyres from garages and car hire agencies.

The cooling system of the car must have enough antifreeze to cope with the temperatures, and windscreen washer water must also have a high proportion of detergent.

Most cars in Finland have a block heater, which electrically heats the engine prior to starting it. Most public car parks have an outlet pole. In really cold weather, you should start heating the engine at least an hour before leaving: many garages have a timing mechanism. Make sure you carry jump leads just in case!

The website www.tiehallinto.fi has a fantastic system of webcams on most main roads in Finland, so you can check what condition the roads are in on your prospective route!

During winter, there are various ‘ice roads’ that are short-cuts across frozen lakes. Once every decade or so, you can even drive to Åland!

Hämeentie 105A, 00550 Helsinki), can also answer questions.

Hire

Car rental in Finland is more expensive than elsewhere in Europe, but between a group of three or four it can work out at a reasonable cost. From the major rental companies a small car, such as a VW Polo or Renault Clio, costs from €60 per day with 100km free, and €0.35 per kilometre thereafter, or €75 to €90 with unlimited kilometres. As ever, there are much cheaper deals online. At the time of writing, www.webcarhire.com was a reliable operator offering excellent rates.

Car-rental companies with offices in many Finnish cities include **Budget** (☎ 09-686 6500; www.budget.fi), **Hertz** (☎ 0800 112 233; www.hertz.fi), **Europcar** (Helsinki ☎ 09-7515 5444; www.europcar.fi) and **Avis** (Helsinki ☎ 09-441 155; www.avis.fi). There are also local operators, especially in Helsinki (p84).

Road Rules

Most Finnish roads are only two lanes wide, and traffic keeps to the right. Use extreme caution when passing on these narrow roads. The speed limit is 50km/h in built-up areas and from 80km/h to 100km/h on highways. *All* motor vehicles must use headlights at *all* times, and wearing seat belts is compulsory for *all* passengers. The blood alcohol limit is 0.05%.

Foreign cars must display a nationality sticker and foreign visitors must be fully insured – see opposite). Foreign drivers

should keep in mind that in Finland, cars entering an intersection from the right *always* have right of way, even when that car is on a minor road. Those who are used to driving in the USA and other countries where stop signs regulate every intersection will find that it takes some time to adjust to this system. Again, Finnish drivers are unexpectedly considerate and usually approach intersections with care.

See boxed text, p42 for the significant hazards posed by reindeer and elk. This may sound comical, but they are a deadly danger.

Many Finnish petrol stations are automatic. They accept euros and credit cards, but many accept only Finnish-issued credit and debit cards, so are useless to foreign travellers without cash. Don’t rely on them. If the instructions are in Finnish and Swedish only, insert banknotes and press *setelikuittaus* after the last note, then choose the pump and select the petrol type. Change is not given.

HITCHING

Relatively few Finns like picking up hitchhikers but the few friendly ones do it with enthusiasm. Drivers will ask, *Minne matka?* (Where are you going?), so you just tell them your destination. It’s fairly common in remote areas where there may only be one bus a day.

Hitching between Lapland and Sweden or Norway is only really recommended from June to August. Carry waterproof gear and expect long waits. Being positive also

helps; getting stranded on an Arctic Sea fjord is a unique experience that you will probably never forget. There's the midnight sun, fresh winds and abundant birdlife to enjoy while you wait...and wait...and wait...

LOCAL TRANSPORT

The only tram and metro networks are in Helsinki. There is a bus service in all Finnish cities and towns, with departures every 10 to 15 minutes in Helsinki and other large towns, and every 30 minutes in smaller towns. Fares are usually around €2.50, payable to the driver. See individual towns for details of local public transport.

Taxi

Hail taxis at bus and train stations or pick up the phone; they are listed in the phone book under 'Taksi'. Like anywhere, taxis in Finland are expensive – typically the fare is €4 plus a per-kilometre charge. There's a surcharge for night and weekend service.

Shared taxis often cover airport routes, and are a common mode of transport in Karelia, and, to a lesser extent, Lapland.

TRAIN

Trains of the State Railways of Finland (Valtion Rautatiet or VR) are clean, reliable and usually on schedule. They are fast, efficient and the best form of public transport for covering major routes such as Helsinki to Tampere, Kuopio, Oulu or Rovaniemi. On longer routes there are two- and three-bed sleepers and special car-carriers.

There are three main train lines: the Pohjanmaa (West) line runs between Helsinki and Oulu, and continues to Kemijärvi in Lapland; the Karelian route runs from Helsinki to Nurmes via Joensuu; and the Savonian route runs from Kouvolaa in the south to Kajaani, via Kuopio and Iisalmi.

VR Ltd Finnish Railways (☎ 0600-41902; www.vr.fi) has its own travel bureau at main stations and can advise on all schedules and tickets. Prices, timetables and other information can be found on VR's website.

Classes

VR has passenger trains in two classes – 1st and 2nd. Most carriages are open 2nd-class carriages with soft chairs. Many trains have just one 1st-class carriage, containing small compartments, each seating six passengers.

On longer routes there are night trains with single, two- and three-bed sleeping berths.

The main classes of trains are the high-speed Pendolino (the fastest and most expensive class), fast Intercity (IC), Express, and Regional trains. Regional trains are the cheapest and slowest services. They have only 2nd-class carriages, do not require seat reservations and stop frequently.

Costs

Different classes of trains are priced differently (Regional being the cheapest, Pendolino the most expensive), and a supplement is charged for travel on IC and Pendolino trains. A one-way ticket for a 100km express train journey costs approximately €13/19 in 2nd/1st class.

Children under 17 pay half fare and children aged under six travel free (but without a seat). A child travels free with every adult on long-distance trips, and there are also discounts for seniors, local students, and any group of three or more adults travelling together.

If you purchase your ticket from the conductor after boarding from a station where the ticket office was open, a €3 'penalty' is charged (€6 on Pendolino). The 1st-class fare is 1½ times the price of a 2nd-class ticket, and a return fare is about 10% less than two one-way tickets. Sample one-way fares for 2nd-class Inter-City travel from Helsinki:

Destination	Cost (€)	Duration (hrs)
Joensuu	52.70	5¼
Kuopio	47.00	5
Oulu	68.00	6
Rovaniemi	71.40	10-12
Savonlinna	47.90	5
Tampere	24.90	2
Turku	24.90	2

SLEEPING BERTHS

These are available on overnight trains in one-/two-/three-bed cabins, and cost a flat rate of €43 for a single berth (with a 1st-class ticket), and €21/11 per person for double/triple berths, in addition to the cost of an ordinary ticket. These prices rise to €60/31/16 at Christmas time. The main night train routes are Helsinki, Tampere or Turku to Oulu, Rovaniemi and Kolari.

MAJOR RAILWAY ROUTES



BICYCLES

See p47 for details on transporting bikes.

CAR

Some trains transport cars from the south to Oulu, Rovaniemi and Kolari – which is handy if you've brought your own vehicle and are keen on exploring Lapland. From Helsinki to Rovaniemi, the cost (except

during the Christmas period) is €215 for a car plus a cabin that accommodates one to three people.

Reservations

Seat reservations are included in the ticket price on all trains except regional services. Advance reservations are mandatory on IC and the high-speed Pendolino trains,

and are advised for travel on Express trains during summer.

Train Passes

International train passes accepted for travel on trains in Finland include the Eurailpass, Eurail Flexipass and Inter-Rail Ticket, but these are only worth having if you're doing a lot of rail travel in Europe.

Eurail passes (www.eurail.com) can only be bought by residents of non-European countries and are supposed to be purchased before arriving in Europe. These are valid for unlimited travel in most western and some eastern European countries, as well as Silja Line ferries between Sweden and Finland.

If you've lived in Europe for more than six months, you're eligible for an Inter-Rail pass (www.interrailnet.com), which is a better buy. The Inter-Rail pass is split into eight zones, with zone B covering Sweden, Norway and Finland. The price for any one zone is UK£145/215 (up to/over 26) for 16 days and UK£205/295 for 22 days. See your local travel agency for more information about these rail passes.

SCANRAIL PASS

Scanrail (www.scanrail.com) is the best-value international rail pass to use when travelling in Finland. It's a flexible rail pass covering travel in Denmark, Norway, Sweden

and Finland. The pass can be purchased in Scandinavia, but there are restrictions on its use in the country of purchase. For instance, if you buy the pass in Finland, you can only use it to travel for three days in Finland. It's far better to buy the pass outside the Nordic countries.

There are three versions. For travel on any five days within a two-month period, the pass costs €160/204/230 for under 26/senior/adult 2nd class travel. For travel on any 10 days within a two-month period, the pass costs €215/274/308. For unlimited travel over 21 consecutive days, it's €249/316/358.

FINNRAIL PASS

A national rail pass, the Finnrail Pass, is available to travellers residing outside Finland, and it is the best-value pass if you're not planning on travelling elsewhere in Scandinavia. The pass is good for three, five or 10 days of travel within a one-month period. The Finnrail Pass may be purchased from the VR travel agency Matkapalvelu, at major train stations in Finland, or from your local travel agency before arrival in Finland. The cost for 2nd-/1st-class travel is €122/182 for three days; €163/24 for five days; €220/331 for 10 days. As with any pass, you need to plan your trips wisely to make it pay.

Health

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Health-wise, there's very little to worry about while travelling in Finland. Your main risks are likely to be viral infections in winter, sunburn and mosquito bites in summer, plus typical travellers complaints like foot blisters and an upset stomach.

BEFORE YOU GO

INSURANCE

EU, EEA and Swiss citizens are entitled to free medical care in Finland, but you should carry proof of this entitlement. This comes in the form of the EHIC, the European Health Insurance Card, which has replaced the E111 form in most EU countries.

If you don't fall into this category, a travel-insurance policy is a good idea. Some policies offer a range of medical-expense options; the higher ones are chiefly for countries such as the USA, which have extremely high medical costs. There is a wide variety of policies available, so check the small print.

Some policies specifically exclude 'dangerous activities', which can include skiing, snowmobiling, even trekking. You may prefer a policy that pays doctors or hospitals directly rather than you having to pay on the spot and claim later. If you have to claim later make sure you keep all documentation. Some policies ask you to call back (reverse charges) to a centre in your home country where an immediate assessment of your problem is made.

Although EU citizens are covered for medical care, you may want to consider travel insurance to cover loss/theft.

IN FINLAND

AVAILABILITY & COST OF HEALTH CARE

Apteekki (local pharmacies) – of which there are many in all Finnish cities and towns – and neighbourhood health care centres are good places to visit if you have a minor medical problem and can explain what it is. Visitors whose home countries have reciprocal medical-care agreements with Finland and who can produce a passport (or sickness insurance card or EHIC for those from EU countries) are charged the same as Finns for medical assistance: €8 to visit a doctor, €21 per day for hospitalisation. Those from other countries are charged the full cost of treatment. Tourist offices and hotels can put you in touch with a doctor or dentist; in Helsinki your embassy will probably know one who speaks your language.

TRAVELLER'S DIARRHOEA

Simple things like a change of water, food or climate can all cause a mild bout of diarrhoea, but a few rushed toilet trips with no other symptoms is not indicative of a major problem.

Dehydration is the main danger with any diarrhoea, particularly in children or the elderly as it can occur quite quickly. Under all circumstances *fluid replacement* (at least equal to the volume being lost) is the most important thing to remember. Weak black tea with a little sugar, soda water, or soft drinks allowed to go flat and diluted 50% with clean water are all good.

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS Cuts & Scratches

Wash well and treat any cut with an anti-septic such as povidone-iodine. Where possible avoid bandages and Band-Aids, which can keep wounds wet.

Food

Finnish food is of a very high hygiene standard. Mushroom and berry-picking is a favourite pastime in this part of the world, but make sure you don't eat any that haven't been positively identified as safe.

Hypothermia

If you are trekking in Lapland or simply staying outdoors for long periods, particularly in winter, be prepared for the cold. In fact, if you are out walking or hitching, be prepared for cold, wet or windy conditions even in summer.

Hypothermia occurs when the body loses heat faster than it can produce it and the core temperature of the body falls. It is surprisingly easy to progress from very cold to dangerously cold due to a combination of wind, wet clothing, fatigue and hunger, even if the air temperature is above freezing. It is best to dress in layers; silk, wool and some of the new artificial fibres are all good insulating materials. A hat is important, as a lot of heat is lost through the head. A strong, waterproof outer layer (and a 'space' blanket for emergencies) is essential. Carry basic supplies, including food containing simple sugars to generate heat quickly and fluid to drink.

Symptoms of hypothermia are exhaustion, numb skin (particularly toes and fingers), shivering, slurred speech, irrational or violent behaviour, lethargy, stumbling, dizzy spells, muscle cramps and violent bursts of energy. Irrationality may take the form of sufferers claiming they are warm and trying to take off their clothes.

To treat mild hypothermia, first get the person out of the wind and/or rain, remove their clothing if it's wet and replace it with dry, warm clothing. Give them hot liquids – not alcohol – and some high-kilojoule, easily digestible food. Do not rub victims, but instead allow them to slowly warm themselves. This should be enough to treat the early stages of hypothermia. The early recognition and treatment of mild hypothermia is the only way to prevent severe hypothermia, which is a critical condition.

Insect Bites & Stings

In Finland, the mosquito breeding season is very short (about six weeks in July and August), but the mosquitoes make good use of the time. They are a major nuisance in most parts of Finland, and those in Lapland are particularly large, fierce and persistent.

The best way to handle the mosquito problem is through prevention. From June

to August, travellers are advised to wear light-coloured clothing, particularly long pants and long sleeved shirts, and avoid highly scented perfumes or aftershave. Use *ohvi* (mosquito repellent) liberally; the 'Off' brand seems to be particularly effective. If you have a mosquito net, use this too. There are net hats available in sports shops; if you don't mind how absurd they look these are useful for treks and outdoor activities.

When all else fails and the pesky suckers have had their piece of you, look for Etono, a concentrated antihistamine salve that is sold in stick form, for relief from bites. It is available at most pharmacies.

Parasites

TICKS

You should always check all over your body if you have been walking through a potentially tick-infested area – this would include rural areas of the Åland islands and in any forested areas – as ticks can cause skin infections and other more serious diseases. If a tick is found attached, press down around the tick's head with tweezers, grab the head and gently pull upwards. Avoid pulling the rear of the body as this may squeeze the tick's gut contents through the attached mouth parts into the skin, increasing the risk of infection and disease. Smearing chemicals on the tick will not make it let go and is not recommended.

Snakes

The only venomous snake in Finland is the common viper, and human deaths from viper bites are extremely rare. All snakes hibernate from autumn to spring. To minimise your chances of being bitten always wear boots, socks and long trousers when walking through undergrowth where snakes may be present.

Sunburn

You can get sunburnt surprisingly quickly, even through cloud, or in sub-zero temperatures. Use sunscreen, hat and barrier cream for your nose and lips. Calamine lotion or Stingose are good for mild sunburn. Protect your eyes with good-quality sunglasses, particularly if you are going near water, sand or snow.

Water

You can drink the tap water in all Finnish towns and villages, and it's usually delicious. Always be wary of drinking natural water; a recent survey ranked Finland's lakes and rivers among some of the most polluted in Europe. A burbling stream may look crystal clear and very inviting, but there may be

pulp factories, people or sheep lurking upstream. Many trekkers in the wilderness of eastern Lapland claim that springs there are safe to drink from without purifying – use your own best judgment as to whether you'd care to follow that advice. The simplest way to purify water is to boil it, use a water filter, or add purification tablets.

Language

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The Finnish language is a distinct national icon that sets Finland apart from all its Western European neighbours. It is not a Scandinavian language, nor is it related to any of the Indo-European languages. There are, however, many loan words from Baltic, Slavic and Germanic languages, and many words are derived from English. It is a Uralic language belonging to the Finno-Ugric family, and is closely related to Estonian. It also shares common origins with Samoyed and languages spoken in the Volga basin of Russia. Linguists have even recognised similarities between Finnish and Korean grammar. The most widely spoken Finno-Ugric language is Hungarian, but its similarities with Finnish are few.

There are some six million Finnish speakers in Finland, Sweden, Norway and Russian Karelia. In Finnish, Finland itself is known as *Suomi*, and the language as *suomi*. With 15 cases for nouns, and at least 160 conjugations and personal forms for verbs, it is not an easy language to learn. There are no articles (a, the) and no genders, but the word for 'no' (*ei*) also conjugates.

Fortunately, staff at most tourist offices and hotels are fluent English speakers; bus drivers and staff at guesthouses, hostels and restaurants may not be – though they'll often fetch someone who can help. Finns who speak Finnish to a foreigner usually do so extremely clearly and 'according to the book'. Mistakes made by visitors are kindly tolerated, and even your most bumbling attempts will be warmly appreciated. A

final note: in Finnish, *ä* is pronounced as in 'bat', and *ö* is pronounced 'er', as in 'her' (with no 'r' sound). These letters are the last two in the Finnish alphabet. Lonely Planet's *Scandinavian Phrasebook* is a handy pocket-sized introduction to Finnish, Swedish and other languages of the region.

ACCOMMODATION

I'm looking for ...	<i>Etsin ...</i>
the youth hostel	<i>retkeilymajaa</i>
the campground	<i>leirintäaluetta</i>
a hotel	<i>hotellia</i>
a guesthouse	<i>matkustajakotia</i>

What's the address?	<i>Mikä on osoite?</i>
----------------------------	------------------------

Do you have a ...?	<i>Onko teillä ...?</i>
bed	<i>sänkyä</i>
cheap room	<i>halpaa huonetta</i>
single room	<i>yhden hengen huonetta</i>
double room	<i>kahden hengen huonetta</i>

for one night	<i>yhdessä yöksi</i>
for two nights	<i>kahdessa yöksi</i>

How much is it ...?	<i>Paljonko maksaa ...?</i>
per night	<i>vuorokausi</i>
per person	<i>yhdeltä henkilöltä</i>

Does it include breakfast/sheets?	<i>Sisältyykö hintaan aamiainen/lakanat?</i>
Can I see the room?	<i>Voinko nähdä huoneen?</i>
Where is the toilet?	<i>Missä on vessa?</i>
I'm/we're leaving now.	<i>Olen/olemme lähdessä nyt.</i>

Do you have ...?	<i>Onko teillä ...?</i>
a clean sheet	<i>puhtaat lakanat</i>
hot water	<i>kuumaa vettä</i>
a key	<i>avain</i>
a shower	<i>suihku</i>
sauna	<i>sauna</i>

CONVERSATION & ESSENTIALS

Good day.	<i>Hyvää päivää</i>
Hi!	<i>Hei/Moi/Terve!</i> (less formal)
Goodbye.	<i>Näkemiin.</i>
Bye!	<i>Hei hei! or Moi moi!</i> (less formal)
Good morning.	<i>Hyvää huomenta.</i>

Good evening.	<i>Hyvää Iltaa</i>
Thank you (very much).	<i>Kiitos (paljon).</i>
You're welcome.	<i>Ole hyvä.</i>
Yes.	<i>Kyllä/Joo.</i>
No.	<i>Ei.</i>
Maybe.	<i>Ehkä.</i>
Excuse me.	<i>Anteeksi.</i>
I'm sorry. (forgive me)	<i>Olen pahoillani (anna anteeksi).</i>
How are you?	<i>Mitä kuuluu?</i>
I'm fine, thanks.	<i>Kiitos hyvää.</i>
Where are you from?	<i>Mistä olet kotoisin?</i>
I'm from ...	<i>Olen ... -sta</i>
What's your name?	<i>Mikä sinun nimi on?</i>
My name is ...	<i>Minun nimeni on ...</i>
I'm a tourist/student.	<i>Olen turisti/opiskelija.</i>
Are you married?	<i>Oletko naimisissa?</i>
Do you like ...?	<i>Pidätkö ...?</i>
I like it very much.	<i>Pidän siitä paljon.</i>
I don't like ...	<i>En pidä ...</i>
May I?	<i>Saisinko?</i>
I understand.	<i>Ymmärrän.</i>
I don't understand.	<i>En ymmärrä.</i>
Does anyone speak English?	<i>Puhuuko kukaan englantia?</i>
How do you say ... (in Finnish)?	<i>Miten sanotaan ... (suomeksi)?</i>
Please write it down.	<i>Voitko kirjoittaa sen.</i>

EMERGENCIES

Help!	<i>Apu!</i>
Go away!	<i>Mene pois!</i>
Call a doctor!	<i>Kutsu lääkäri!</i>
Call the police!	<i>Kutsu poliisi!</i>

I'm allergic to ...	<i>Olen allerginen ...</i>
penicillin	<i>penisilliinille</i>
antibiotics	<i>antibiooteille</i>

NUMBERS

½	<i>puoli</i>
1	<i>yksi</i>
2	<i>kaksi</i>
3	<i>kolme</i>
4	<i>neljä</i>
5	<i>viisi</i>
6	<i>kuusi</i>
7	<i>seitsemän</i>
8	<i>kahdeksan</i>
9	<i>yhdeksän</i>
10	<i>kymmenen</i>
11	<i>yksitoista</i>
12	<i>kaksitoista</i>

100	<i>sata</i>
1000	<i>tuhat</i>
1,000,000	<i>miljoona</i>

PAPERWORK

Surname	<i>Sukunimi</i>
Given names	<i>Etunimet</i>
Date of birth	<i>Syntymäaika</i>
Place of birth	<i>Syntymäpaikka</i>
Nationality	<i>Kansallisuus</i>
Male/Female	<i>Mies/Nainen</i>
Passport	<i>Passi</i>

SHOPPING & SERVICES

Where is the/a ...?	<i>Missä on ...?</i>
bank	<i>pankki</i>
town centre	<i>keskusta</i>
embassy	<i>suurlähetystö</i>
entrance	<i>sisäänkäynti</i>
exit	<i>uloskäynti</i>
hospital	<i>sairaala</i>
market	<i>tori</i>
police	<i>poliisi</i>
post office	<i>posti</i>
public toilet	<i>yleinen vessa</i>
restaurant	<i>ravintola</i>
telephone office	<i>Tele-toimisto</i>
tourist office	<i>matkailutoimisto</i>

I'd like to change ... some money	<i>Haluaisin vaihtaa ... rahaa</i>
travellers cheques	<i>matkashekkejä</i>

I want to make a telephone call.	<i>Haluaisin soittaa puhelun</i>
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I'm looking for ...	<i>Etsin ...</i>
the chemist	<i>apteekkia</i>
clothing	<i>vaatteita</i>
souvenirs	<i>matkamuuistoja</i>

How much is it?	<i>Mitä se maksaa?</i>
I'd like to buy it.	<i>Haluan ostaa sen.</i>
It's too expensive for me.	<i>Se on liian kallis minulle.</i>
Can I look at it?	<i>Voinko katsoa sitä?</i>
I'm just looking.	<i>Minä vain katselen.</i>

Do you have ...?	<i>Onko ...?</i>
another colour	<i>muuta väriä</i>
another size	<i>muuta kokoa</i>

big/bigger	<i>iso/isompi</i>
small/smaller	<i>pieni/pienempi</i>

more/less enemmän/vähemmän
cheap/cheaper halpa/halvempi

TIME & DATES

When? Milloin?
today tänään
tonight tänä iltana
tomorrow huomenna
yesterday eilen
all day koko päivän
every day joka päivä

Monday maanantai
Tuesday tiistai
Wednesday keskiviikko
Thursday torstai
Friday perjantai
Saturday lauantai
Sunday sunnuntai

January tammikuu
February helmikuu
March maaliskuu
April huhtikuu
May toukokuu
June kesäkuu
July heinäkuu
August elokuu
September syyskuu
October lokakuu
November marraskuu
December joulukuu

What time is it? Mitä kello on?
It's ... o'clock Kello on ...
in the morning aamulla
in the evening illalla
1.15 vartin yli yksi
1.30 puoli kaksi
1.45 varttia vaille kaksi

TRANSPORT

I want to go to ... Haluan mennä ...
How long does the trip take? Kauanko matka kestää?
Do I need to change? Täytyykö minun vaihtaa?

Where does ... leave from? Mistä ... lähtee?
What time does ... leave/arrive? Mihin aikaan lähtee/saapuu ...?
it se
the boat/ferry vene/lautta
the bus/tram bussi/raitiovaunu

the train juna
the plane lentokone

The train is ... Juna on ...
delayed myöhässä
cancelled peruutettu

airport lentoasema
bus station linja-autoasema
left-luggage locker säilytyslokero
one-way platform yhdensuuntainen laitur
return (ticket) station menopaluu (lippu) asema
ticket lippu
ticket office lippuautoimisto
ticket machine lippuautomaatti
timetable aikataulu

I'd like to hire a ... Haluaisin vuokrata ...
bicycle polkupyörän
car auton
canoe kanootin
rowing boat soutuveeneen
guide oppaan

Directions

How do I get to ...? Miten pääsen ...?
Where is ...? Missä on ...?
Please show me (on the map). Näyttäisitkö minulle (kartalta).
Is it near? Onko se lähellä?
Is it far? Onko se kaukana?
(Go) straight ahead. (Kulje) suoraan eteenpäin.
(Turn) left. (Käännä) vasempaan.
(Turn) right. (Käännä) oikeaan.
at the traffic lights liikennevaloissa
at the next/second/third corner seuraavassa/toisessa/ kolmannessa risteyksessä
here/there täällä/siellä
up/down ylös/alas
behind/opposite takana/vastapäätä
north/south pohjoinen/etelä
east/west itä/länsi

SIGNS

Sisään	Entrance
Ulos	Exit
Avoinna	Open
Suljettu	Closed
Kielletty	Prohibited
WC	Toilet

Glossary

Throughout Finland you will often hear the words *järvi* (lake), *lampi* (pond), *saari* (island), *ranta* (shore), *niemi* (cape), *lahti* (bay), *koski* (rapids), *virta* (stream) and *joki* (river).

You may meet many of the following terms and abbreviations during your travels in Finland. Unless otherwise noted, all entries are Finnish. See also p358.

aamianen – breakfast

aamu – morning

aapa – open bog

aatto – eve, usually the afternoon/evening before a holiday

Ahvenanmaa – Finnish for Åland (the Swedish, official and locally preferred name)

aikataulu – timetable

aikuinen – adult (plural: *aikuiset*)

aitta – small wooden storage shed in a traditional farmhouse, used for guests

ala- – lower, eg in place names; see also *yli*, *ylä-*

apotek – pharmacy (Swedish)

apteekki – pharmacy

asema – station, eg *linja-autoasema* (bus station), *rauta-tiaseama* (train station) or *lentoasema* (airport terminal)

avoinna – open, eg a shop or museum

baari – simple restaurant serving light lager and some snacks (also called *kapakka*)

barn – child (Swedish)

bensa – petrol

bibliotek – library (Swedish)

bruk – early ironworks precinct (Swedish)

bussi – bus (informal); ‘properly’ called *linja-auto*

-by – village (Swedish); as in Godby (in Åland) or Nykarleby (in Pohjanmaa)

eläkeläinen – pensioner, senior (plural: *eläkeläiset*; abbreviation: *eläk*)

erämaa – wilderness (also called *kaira* or *korpi*)

etelä – south

feresi – traditional Karelian dress for women, formerly worn daily but now worn only on festival days

gamla – old (Swedish)

gatan – street (Swedish)

grilli – stand or kiosk selling burgers, grilled sausages and other greasy snacks

halla – typically a night frost in early summer that often destroys crops or berries

hämärä – twilight

hamn – harbour (Swedish)

hautausmaa – cemetery; see also *kalmisto*

henkilö – person, as in ‘per person’ (abbreviation: *hlö* or *h*)

hilla – highly appreciated orange Arctic cloudberry, which grows on marshlands (also *lakka* or *suomuurain*)

hinnasto – price list

hinta – cost or price

huone – room

hytty – cabin, eg or a train or ship

ikäraja – age limit, eg in bars and clubs

ilta – evening

iltapäivä – afternoon

istumapaikka – seat, eg on a train

itä – east; *itään* means ‘to the east’

itikkä – mosquito; also called *sääski*

jää – ice

jääkiekko – ice hockey, the unofficial national religion; also informally called *lätkä*

jäätie – ice road; road over a lake in winter

jäkälä – lichen

järvi – lake

joiku – sung lyric poem, also called *yoik* among the Sámi

jokamiehen oikeus – ‘everyman’s right’, every person’s right to wilderness access

joki – river

joulu – Christmas

joulupukki – Santa Claus

juhannus – see Midsummer

juna – train

kaamos – twilight time, the period of eerie half-light above the Arctic Circle when the sun doesn’t rise above the horizon

kahvila – café

kahvio – cafeteria-style café, usually more basic than a *kahvila*

kaira – see *erämaa*

kala – fish; *kalastus* means ‘fishing’

Kalevala – the national epic of Finland; *Kalevala* is a 19th-century literary creation combining old poetry, runes and folk tales with creation myths and ethical teaching

kalmisto – old graveyard, especially pre-Medieval or Orthodox

kämpä – wilderness hut, cabin

kännykkä – usual term for a *matkapuhelin* (mobile phone)
kansallispuisto – national park
kantele – Karelian stringed instrument similar to a zither; its music is hauntingly beautiful
kapakka – see *baari*
karhu – bear
Karjala – Karelia
kartano – manor
kasvis- – vegetarian, eg *kasvisruoka* (vegetarian food)
katu – street
kauppa – shop
kauppahalli – market hall
kauppatori – market square (usually just referred to as *tori*)
kaupungintalo – city hall
kaupunki – city (plenty of rather small towns have ‘city’ status in Finland)
kävelyreitti – walking track; usually well signposted and marked
kelirikko – season of bad roads after the snow has melted
kelkka – sled or sledge; see also *moottorikelkka*
kello – watch, time (abbreviation: *klo*)
kelo – dead, standing, barkless tree, usually pine
kesä – summer
keskus – centre (eg, of a town)
kevät – spring (season)
kioski – small stand that sells sweets, newspapers, phonecards, food items and beer
kirjakauppa – bookshop
kirjasto – library
kirkko – church
kirkonkylä – any village that has a church
kiuas – sauna oven
kokko – bonfire, lit during Midsummer festivals
köngäs – rapids, waterfall
korpi – see *erämaa*
koski – rapids
kota – Sámi hut, resembling a teepee or wigwam (from the Finnish word *koti*)
koti – home
kotimaa – ‘home country’
koulu – school
kruunu – crown, krone (Norway’s currency)
kuja – lane
kuksa – Sámi cup, carved from the burl of a birch tree
kunta – commune or municipality, the smallest administrative unit in Finland
kuntopolku – ‘fitness path’; jogging track in summer, skiing track in winter
kuusi – spruce
kylä – village
kypylä – spa

lääkäri – doctor
laakso – valley

lääni – province
laavu – Sámi permanent or temporary open-air shelter, also used by trekkers
lahti – bay
laituri – platform (for buses or trains); wharf or pier
lakka – cloudberry, see also *hilla*
lampi – pond, small lake
lähtevät – departures
länsi – west; *länteen* means ‘to the east’
laiva – ship
lappalainen – Finnish or indigenous person from Lapland; this is a contentious term in some parts of the north, and many indigenous people will only refer to themselves as Sámi
Lappi – Lapland, a province and a popular term, usually applied to the land north of Oulu; it’s better understood as roughly the area between Rovaniemi and Sodankylä; north of this is the Sámi region called Sápmi, which many consider the ‘true Lapland’; see also Sápmi
lapsi – child (plural: *lapset*; abbreviation: *l*); *lasten* means ‘children’s’
lasku – bill; receipt
leirintäalue – camping ground
lentokenttä – airstrip or airport (terminal: *lentoasema*)
liiteri – shelter for firewood
linja-auto – bus (informally called *bussi*)
linna – castle
linnoitus – fortification
lintu – bird
lippu – ticket
lossi – a small ferry for travel across a strait
lounas – lunch
lumi – snow; often in the generic form *lunta*
luontopolku – nature trail
lupa – permit or permission

maa – country, earth, land
maatila – farm
mäki – hill
mänty – pine tree, most common and distinctive of Finnish trees; upper trunk and branches are barkless and almost orange
majoitus – accommodation
maksu – payment, charge, fare
makuu – sleep, as in *makuupaikka* (berth on a train or ship), *makuuvaunu* (sleeping car on a train) and *makuupussi* (sleeping bag)
marja – berry
Matkahuolto – national umbrella company managing the long-distance bus system
matkakoti – guesthouse, inn; also called *matkustajakoti* (traveller home)
matkatoimisto – travel agency
meri – sea
mettä – forest

Midsummer – (or *juhannus*) longest day of the year, celebrated at the end of June, beginning on Friday evening (*juhannusaatto*). Saturday, Sunday and Monday following are also serious holidays when Finland is basically closed.
mies – man (plural: *miehet*)
mökki – cottage
moottorikelkka – snowmobile (Finns often call these ‘snow scooters’ in English)
muikku – vendace, or whitefish, a common lake fish
museo – museum
mustamakkara – mild sausage made with cow’s blood, black-pudding style
mustikka – bilberry, resembles a blueberry

nähtävyys – tourist attraction
Napapiiri – Arctic Circle
nainen – woman (plural: *naiset*)
niemi – cape
nuoska – wet snow
nuotio – campfire
Norja – Norway

öljy – oil
olut – beer
opas – guide
opastuskeskus – information centre, usually of a national park
opiskelija – (high-school) student; see also *ylioppilas*
Oy – abbreviation for Osakeyhtiö, a joint-stock company; in Swedish it’s Ab, short for Aktiebolag

pää – head, end
pääsymaksu – entry fee
päivä – day; *päivittäin* means ‘daily’
pakkanen – frost; below-freezing weather
pankki – bank
pelto – cultivated field
peura – deer
pikkujoulu – ‘Little Christmas’, an informal party arranged by companies or schools leading up to Christmas
pirtti – the living area of a Finnish farmhouse; a word often affixed to a rustic restaurant or tourist attraction
pitkospuu – boardwalk constructed over wetlands or swamps
pitopöytä – major pig-out buffet table
pohjoinen – north; also *pohjois-*
polku – path
polkupyörä – bicycle
polttopuu – firewood
poro – reindeer, a generic term for the common, domesticated variety
poroerotus – reindeer roundup, held annually in designated places in Sápmi
poronhoitoalue – reindeer herding area

poronkusema – a handy Lappish unit of distance: how far a reindeer walks before relieving itself
posti – post office, mail
Praasniekka – also *Prazniek*; Orthodox religious festival that sometimes includes a *ristinsaatto* to a lake, where a sermon takes place
pubi – pub serving strong alcohol and very little food
puhelin – telephone; a mobile phone is formally called *matkapuhelin* – see also *kännykkä*
puisto – park
pulkka – boat sledge
puro – stream
puu – tree, wood
puukko – Finnish-style sheath knife

raatihuone – town hall; see also *kaupungintalo*
rådhus – town hall (Swedish)
raja – border
ranta – shore
räntä – wet snow (snowing)
rauhoitettu – protected
rautatie – railway
ravintola – restaurant, but also a bar
reppu – backpack
retkeilymaja – hostel
retki – excursion
revontulet – Northern Lights, literally ‘fires of the fox’
ristinsaatto – an annual Orthodox festival to commemorate a regional saint, involving a procession of the cross
roskakori – rubbish bin
rotko – gorge
ruoka – food
ruokalista – menu
ruokaravintola – a food restaurant
runo – poem
Ruotsi – Sweden
rupla – Russian rouble
ruska – gorgeous but brief period in autumn (fall) when leaves turn red and yellow

sää – weather
Sámi – the term for most indigenous people in the north of Finland; see also *lappalainen*
saari – island
saapuvat – arrivals
sääski – mosquito (in Lapland and Sápmi)
sähkö – electricity
sähköposti – email
sairaala – hospital
Saksa – Germany
salmi – strait
Sápmi – the area where Sámi culture and customs are still active; it is a quasi-legal territory covering parts of northern Sweden, Norway and Russia as well as the far north of Finland
satama – harbour

savusauna – ‘smoke sauna’; these have no chimney but a small outlet for smoke
savuton – nonsmoking
seisopöytä – buffet; see also *pitopöytä*
sieni – mushroom
silta – bridge
sora – gravel
sota – war
sotilasalue – military area
SRM – Suomen Retkeilymajajärjestö, or Youth Hostel Association of Finland
stad – city or town (Swedish)
suihku – shower
sukset – skis
suljettu – closed
suo – swamp, bog, marsh
suomalainen – Finnish, Finn
Suomi – Finland
susi – wolf

taide – art or skill
taival – track, trail
talo – house or building
talvi – winter
tanssi – dance
tanssilava – dance floor or stage
Tapaninpäivä – Boxing Day
tavarasäilytys – left-luggage counter
telta – tent
tervas – old pine tree stump with a high tar content and a distinctive smell. It burns well, so Finnish trekkers use it to light fires, even in wet weather (also *tervaskanto*).
tie – road
torget – market square (Swedish)
tori – market square; also called *kauppatori*
tsasouna – small chapel or prayer hall used by the Orthodox faith
tukki – log
tulva – flood
tunturi – a northern fell, or large hill, that is treeless on top (as opposed to the less dramatic, tree-covered *vaara*); most of Finland’s fells are in the Sápmi area, where many are sacred to the Sámi

tuohi – birch bark
tuomiokirkko – cathedral
tuoppi – beer-glass
tupa – hut
turve – peat

uimahalli – indoor swimming pool
uimaranta – swimming beach
uistin – lure (in fishing)
uitto – log floating
uusi – new

vaara – danger; low, broad hill (typical in Lapland Province and North Karelia)
vaellus – trek (verb *vaeltaa*)
vägen – road (Swedish)
vaivaisukko – a pauper statue outside many of the old wooden churches used as a receptacle for church donations
valaistu latu – illuminated skiing track
valtio – State or government
vandrarhem – hostel (Swedish)
vanha – old
vappaa – free, available (basic form: *vappa*)
varattu – reserved
vaunu – train carriage or wagon
Venäjä – Russia
vene – boat
vero – tax
vesi – water (generic form: *vettä*)
virasto – state or local government office building
Viro – Estonia
viisumi – visa
vuode – bed
vuori – mountain
vuorokausi – 24 hours (abbreviation: *vrk*), eg for rentals
vyöhyke – zone

WC – toilet

yli, ylä- – upper; see also *ala-*
yliopisto – university
ylioppilas – university student
yö – night

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