

TALLINN

The first written record of Estonia's capital dates back to 1154, making Tallinn the oldest capital in Northern Europe. Being named the European Capital of Culture 2011 is the culmination of its colourful history. Today Tallinn is home to just over 400,000 people. Tallinn's Old Town is one of Europe's best-preserved walled medieval cities and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The focal point of the Old Town is the 600 year old Town Hall in Town Hall Square. The open observation platform at the top of the Town Hall's slender tower, topped by the iconic 'Old Thomas' weathervane, gives a wonderful view of the cobblestone square below and the distinctive spires and red roofs of the Old Town. 'Old Thomas' is also Tallinn's most important symbol and features in numerous legends.

But Tallinn is about much more than history. It is a place where many different people meet, bringing with them a wonderful blend of modern cultures. The narrow winding streets and mysterious archways



Tallinn's Town Hall Square

offset a modern and youthful side to the city. It is this blend of cultures, ancient and modern that provides Tallinn's alluring colour and vibrancy.

Most tourists will find plenty to see in a fairly compact area around Tallinn's centre. Other major sights are only minutes away by car and the passenger port and airport are approximately 15 minutes from the centre.

Between the Old Town and the port is the Rotermann Quarter, an area of centuries old, renovated industrial buildings now rubbing shoulders with cutting edge, contemporary architecture. The Quarter houses shops, boutiques, restaurants, offices and apartments and a colourful farmers market where locals and tourists can buy fresh Estonian produce.

The baroque Kadriorg palace, built by the Russian Tsar Peter the Great in the 18th century, is the most outstanding landscaped park in Estonia and is a short walk or tram ride from the centre.

Tallinn's controversial new KUMU Art Museum is the largest multifunctional art centre in Scandinavia and the Baltics. Its permanent

exhibition traces the history of Estonian art since the 18th century while temporary exhibits comprise both foreign and Estonian modern and contemporary art.

A visit to the Song Festival grounds should not be missed by budding culture vultures. Built in the middle of the 20th century, they are now the home of the Song Festival which is featured on the UNESCO list of intellectual heritage and perhaps Estonia's best-known event. Every five years thousands of singers, dancers and instrumentalists fill the area under the distinctive arch. The song and dance festival, held in July 2009, drew over 37,000 performers.

TARTU

Tartu is a university city in the heart of southern Estonia. One of its many iconic images is the fountain in Town Hall Square with its graceful statue of students kissing under an umbrella. Two of the city's great international symbols are the main building of the University of Tartu and St. John's Church (Jaani kirik), first mentioned in historical annals in 1323 and housing around 1,000 well-preserved terracotta sculptures.

The University was founded by King Gustav II Adolf of Sweden in 1632 and today its 17,000 students add colour and life to this otherwise tranquil city. Life sparked in the various lecture halls spills over to the streets, parks and cafes where students, professors, artists, philosophers and young Bohemian poets mingle with locals and tourists.

A focal point of the city is Toomemägi, the site of an ancient citadel on the Emajõgi River. Today this fortress hill is a beautiful tree lined English-style park that offers lovely views of Tartu below.

The park footpaths lead to the Tartu observatory and the red-brick ruins of the Dome Church, once the largest cathedral in Eastern Europe whose construction dates back to the second half of the 13th century. Its restored choir building is now the home of the University of Tartu Museum.

Aside from enjoying its narrow cobbled streets, colourful and historic buildings, parks, bars and cafes, there are several museums in Tartu,



Fountain on Tartu's Town Hall Square

including a 19th century middle class citizen's home, the University and National Museum, the City Museum in a mansion, just across the river from the Old Town, the lovely Toy Museum and even a KGB Museum.

Also look out for Tartu's answer to the Leaning Tower of Pisa, the Leaning House, built in the 1790's partly on the old city walls, partly on wooden piles, that collapsed, giving it its 'lean'.

PÄRNU

Pärnu, known as Estonia's summer capital, is a city in south-western Estonia on the coast of Pärnu Bay. The city has long been a popular summer holiday resort and offers many hotels, restaurants and large golden beaches. Pärnu is also popular with sailors and recreational sea-farers being built on the mouth of the Pärnu River, which flows through the city.

Pärnu is also Estonia's most popular health tourism destination. The predecessor of the present Pärnu Mud Baths was built in the early

19th century and today attracts an international clientele seeking alleviation from a myriad of ailments by therapies that include massage, mud, hydrotherapy and inhalation.

Pärnu County has a 242 km coastline and the city's gently shelving white sand beach, with its adjacent boardwalk, is a major draw for summer visitors. The surrounding countryside attracts those seeking active holidays with kayak trips on rivers and the sea, riding, fishing, hunting trips, adventurous bog or canoe trips.

Lush green parks and a historic centre add to Pärnu's appeal, as do its first-rate museums and galleries, with colourful boutiques and shops found in the Old Town. It's still possible to see parts of the old medieval city moat and the Tallinn Gate, built in 1690, and the Red Tower, the last remnant of the 15th century citadel.

Cultural events take place in St. Elizabeth church, with its trademark rooster, and in Pärnu Concert Hall. The city has a long tradition of cultural events including an opera festival, a nude art exhibition and an anthropological film festival.



Beach of Pärnu

SETUMAA

This is a distinctive region with influences from both Estonian and Russian culture, where the Setus speak a dialect that even other Estonians find difficult to understand.

Also endemic to the region is the Setu traditional costume, colourfully embroidered with bright aprons, and worn with large jewellery, usually necklaces and a conic brooch with silver coins attached.

Folk song is still an integral part of the Setu culture and is known as leelo (which means song). A leelo choir comprises a lead singer and a vocal group. The lead sings the verses which are then repeated by the group.

The Setu Museum in Saate displays over 20,000 folk artefacts, the Setu Farm Museum in Värskas is home to farm architecture from a century ago, old tools and handicrafts and the Setu Museumitarõ in Obinitas recreates Setu family life, traditions and customs from the decades between the world wars.

Setumaa offers good hiking, biking and car touring opportunities but not all roads are straight and graded. Their true charms can best be experienced on the narrow winding village roads and forest by-ways.

Setumaa's centre, Värskas, on the Estonian side of the border is known for its mineral water and curative mud, the effect of which can be experienced at the long established Värskas Sanatorium and at the new Värskas mineral water spa located next door to the Sanatorium.



Festivities in Setumaa

NARVA

Narva is the third largest city in Estonia, located close to the Russian border on the eastern side of Estonia. The city is built on the Narva River which flows from Lake Peipus.

Founded by the Danes in the 13th century, in the 16th and 17th centuries Narva became an important port, a wealthy merchant town and one of the most charming cities in the Baltics. Having been the focal point of many fierce conflicts it was flattened during the Second World War, yet has managed to retain some of its historic skyline.

A focal point is the Friendship Bridge, linking Narva with the Russian town of Ivangorod. Narva and Ivangorod castles stand on either side of the river and are a reminder that Narva is truly a crossroads between east and west.

Upstream is the historical Kreenholm textile plant, one of the largest mills in 19th century Europe. The Narva Alexander cathedral, built for Kreenholm's 5,000 Lutheran employees, makes up a part of the factory complex. Consecrated in 1884, the cathedral suffered serious damage in World War II but has since been restored and today has an active congregation.



Viljandi Folk Festival

VILJANDI

Viljandi is an ancient town of green parks and wooden buildings in southern Estonia situated on a hill above a picturesque lake.

The town's many church spires and its famous Water Tower are reflected in the lake, adding to the beauty of Viljandi's lovely, natural setting. The best views of the town and the surrounding countryside can be enjoyed from the top of the Water Tower.

The lake is popular with holiday makers, fishermen, walkers, picnickers and sports enthusiasts. Beside the lake are tennis courts, diving towers, playgrounds, boat hire and catamaran trips. A hiking path runs around the lake and a run around the lake takes place each May.

The most famous legends of the region, celebrated in local song, surround the Viljandi boatman who rows the lake and longs for his beautiful-eyed girl.

Dating back to its first habitation by 14th century Hanseatic merchants, Viljandi celebrates its centuries of history each June as locals dress in period costumes and trade and haggle at a traditional fair. A Music Centre, dedicated to folk music and The Kondas Centre of Naïve Art are both open year round.

Viljandi Folk, the traditional music festival held each summer, fills the town with the sound of Estonian zither, bagpipes and melodies – a feast day for all folkies.

HAAPSALU

Known as the Venice of the North for its abundance of water, Haapsalu's warm sea water, curative mud and fresh air have made the town a much loved summer resort for centuries. Today there are three mud cure establishments in and around the town.

The town's origins date back over 700 years. Originally built on a strip of land, formed by many islets, today its narrow streets repeatedly take visitors back to the sea. Among its claims to fame is that the famous Russian composer Tchaikovsky enjoyed walking in Haapsalu and could often be found sitting on its attractive promenade, where visitors will now find the Tchaikovsky bench.

Though peaceful and tranquil for much of the year, Haapsalu is predominantly a summer town and its narrow streets, traditional wooden houses and waterfront location make it a pleasant place to be in the warmer months.

Evidence of Haapsalu castle's history can be found all over the town, while its Episcopal castle, Haapsalu Castle, has the largest single-nave cathedral in the Baltics.

Ilon's Wonderland is a fascinating and fun destination. Original works by Haapsalu-born Ilon Wikland, who illustrated the books of children's author Astrid Lindgren, are on show in the Wonderland, which also offers a glimpse of places familiar from Lindgren's work and activities.



Medieval Citadel's Dome Church in Haapsalu



The statue of an Aurochs in Rakvere

RAKVERE

Rakvere is a town in northern Estonia, 20 km south of the Gulf of Finland, dating back over 700 years to when it received city rights in 1302. Throughout a colourful history and the

scene of numerous battles, former occupants have included Danes, Poles, Swedes, Germans and Russians.

Today the most important sights for visitors are the central square, the sports centre and the ancient fort, which has been painstakingly restored. Visitors to the 700 year old Teutonic Order fort can now see an exhibition of weaponry, visit the medieval torture chamber, try their hand at archery and swordsmanship and see a working smithy.

Adjacent to the fort is a 7 m long, 4 m high bronze of an aurochs, an extinct hoofed mammal, believed to be the largest animal sculpture in the Baltics. Weighing around 7 tons, the sculpture was erected to mark the town's 700th anniversary and sits on a granite block on the edge of Vallimägi hill.

The town's cultural centre is the Rakvere Theatre, which has hosted the Baltics' international theatre festival since 1994, the biennial Baltoscandal. Other sights of interest are the War of Independence monument, designed in 1925 by Amandus Adamson, the early 15th century Trinity Church and the Rakvere Linnakodaniku (Citizen's) Museum.

LAHEMAA

Lahemaa ('Land of Bays') the largest national park in Estonia was established to promote preservation and research into North-Estonian landscapes, ecosystems, biodiversity and national heritage.

Made up of four peninsulas and numerous islets, jutting into the Gulf of Finland, the park covers an area of 72,500 ha, including 47,410 ha of land and 25,090 ha of sea.

Lahemaa's forests, marshlands and coastal areas are home to around 200 bird species and approximately 900 different plants. Animal life includes deer, elk, moose, lynx, wild boar and the brown bear, all of which can be occasionally glimpsed on the edge of the marshes and in the forests.

The region is criss-crossed by well-marked trails and tourist guides are available to take visitors on specialist tours. Two of the best wildlife walks are the 4.7 km Oandu Forest Nature Trail, which offers walkers the chance to see evidence of brown bear, moose, boar and lynx, and the 1 km Beaver Trail, starting at Oandu, taking in the beaver's dams and giving the chance to spot this elusive animal.

The national park's main attractions are the idyllic coastal villages and manor estates. The traditional Altja coastal village maintains the character of a bygone way of life, while the Käsmu 'captains' village', once the site of a nautical school, currently houses a maritime museum. Sagadi,

Palmse and Vihula manors are undoubtedly historical and architectural pearls. Sagadi now has a forest museum, while Palmse is home to a nature centre and manorial museum complete with a stately palm garden.

Art enthusiasts will be sure to delight at the Viinistu art museum. And naturally Lahemaa is a year-round concert venue, with theatre performances and various cultural and sporting events.



Soomaa National Park

SOOMAA

Soomaa ('Land of Bogs') National Park is Estonia's second largest and its youngest national park and is located in the south west of the country. The park was created in 1993 to protect and preserve large raised bogs, flood plain grasslands, paludified forests and meandering rivers and includes Estonia's largest areas of bog, teeming with biodiversity.

Life in Soomaa depends on the weather and the elements more than in any other place in Estonia. Soomaa is famous for its great floods. When the region's small rivers can no longer drain the melt water from the Sakala uplands, the water level rises 3-4 metres and can flood an area of up to 175 square kilometres. Because the flooding occurs almost every year, this phenomenon is known as Soomaa's fifth season.

Over 80% of the area of Soomaa National Park is covered by bogs, marshes, wetland meadows and marshland forests with 537 different marshland plants, 185 birds and 43 mammal species, including roe deer, elk, wild boar, beavers, lynx, wolves and brown bears.

The Soomaa Visitor Centre can be found in the middle of the park, between Pärnu and Viljandi, and guides visitors on the permissible walking trails and areas where fishing, canoeing and other recreational activities can be undertaken, as well as offering educational programmes, presentations and lectures.

SAAREMAA

Saaremaa, a land of nature, tradition and windmills, is Estonia's largest island and is only accessible by ferry or by plane. Its relative inaccessibility and an 8,000 year history contribute to its uniqueness today. Local dialects are still spoken, islanders wear beautiful national costumes on festive occasions and stone fences and traditional thatched roof houses abound.

In the 19th century, most large farms on Saaremaa and its neighbouring islands had its own windmill. Although they are less common today they remain an important part of the island's heritage and renovated windmills are today open to visitors.



Citadel of Kuressaare



Angla's windmills

Other traditional symbols are the local sour dough black bread and the dark, home-brewed beer, which have been important parts of island life for centuries and can today be sampled throughout the islands.

Kuressaare, with its beautiful, well-preserved old town, is the only town on the island and is an acclaimed resort centre with a spa that dates back to 1824. The town's most important sights are the 14th century bishop's citadel and the surrounding city park. The citadel is the best-preserved medieval fort in the Baltics and exhibits provide an overview of the history of the island as well as that of Estonia. The fort's tower café boasts a superb view and in summer handicraft shops, events, concerts and song festivals take place in the courtyard.

Saaremaa's flora and fauna is very diverse with more than 200 of the local species under protection. Besides the Viidumäe nature reserve and Vilсандi National Park, Saaremaa has around 100 protected sites, boulders, marshes, large trees and intact parks. One of the most unusual attractions is the Kaali crater. This vast 'hole', 100 m in diameter, was formed when a meteorite fell on the spot around 3,000 years ago. The Kaali visitor centre provides an opportunity to learn more about meteorites and geology.

Other sights of interest are the 17th century Kihelkonna bell tower, the Loona manor, the ruins of the Order citadel at Maasi, the Mihkli farm museum and the nearly 800-year-old Valjala church, the oldest extant stone church in Estonia.

Estonia in brief

Official name: Republic of Estonia (Eesti Vabariik in Estonian). Area: 45,227 km², 1.36 million inhabitants. Capital: Tallinn (405,000 inhabitants). Official language: Estonian, form of government: parliamentary democracy, national holiday: 24 February (Independence Day). The Republic of Estonia is a member of the European Union and NATO. Estonia is part of the Schengen Area. Estonia is in the East European time zone (GMT/BST + 02:00).

Money and credit cards

Currency: the Estonian kroon (EEK) (1 EUR = 15.6466 EEK). Most shops, restaurants, hotels and services companies accept the most common international credit cards. Currency can be changed in banks and at bureaux de change (at the Port of Tallinn, Tallinn airport), Tallinn train station, in many hotels, supermarkets and elsewhere).

There are many cash machines in cities, but take cash for travel in the countryside. In Estonian restaurants, the service charge is included in the bill, although a 10% tip is welcomed and is seen as polite.

Shops and restaurants

Most shops are open from 9:00 – 19:00 on weekdays, but close earlier at weekends. Supermarkets and larger shopping centres are open seven days a week from 9:00 – 22:00. Souvenir shops and other tourist venues are generally open seven days a week from 10:00 – 18:00. Most sales staff in shops have a good or at least elementary knowledge of English, Finnish and Russian; some also speak German.

Telephone and Internet

Estonia's country code is + 372, and when making an international call from Estonia, one must dial the prefix 00 before the telephone number. Calls from public telephones are made with telephone cards (50 EEK or 100 EEK), which can be bought in hotels, tourist information centres, post offices, newsstands, etc. Pre-paid mobile phone calling cards (Simpel, Pop, Zen, Ultra, Smart) are available at petrol stations, newsagents, post offices, information desks in department stores and in telephone shops;

Map of Estonia



www.visitestonia.com

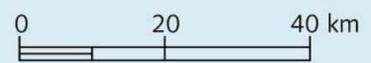
Tourist Information Centers in Estonia

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KM	Võru	Viljandi	Tartu	Tallinn	Rapla	Rakvere	Pärnu	Põlva	Petseri	Paide	Otepää	Narva	Luhamaa	Kärda	Kuressaare	Jõhvi	Jõgeva	Ida		
Haapsalu	310	77	199	254	258	101	91	203	111	314	378	155	300	314	344	34	155	266	226	176
Ida	208	147	110	137	197	194	149	248	65	216	268	164	174	340	233	210	217	302	189	
Jõgeva	119	242	79	138	51	159	136	78	171	102	150	72	93	161	153	262	320	113		
Jõhvi	206	300	197	223	136	165	216	68	251	184	234	152	178	48	240	300	381			
Kuressaare	351	76	249	295	330	216	184	315	152	355	409	248	313	429	385	189				
Kärda	344	111	233	288	292	135	125	234	145	340	402	189	306	348	378					
Luhamaa	34	307	162	104	102	291	266	227	233	59	29	205	78	286						
Narva	252	351	265	271	184	213	264	116	299	192	282	200	226							
Otepää	44	235	84	47	42	231	192	167	161	42	109	145								
Paide	171	170	72	163	103	93	64	84	99	151	201									
Petseri	65	331	179	136	98	287	262	223	257	54										
Põlva	25	277	126	89	48	237	212	174	203											
Pärnu	199	74	97	143	178	129	84	183												
Rakvere	193	232	151	212	126	99	148													
Rapla	232	106	108	199	164	48														
Tallinn	257	138	161	252	189															
Tartu	68	252	81	87																
Valga	71	217	91																	
Viljandi	128	171																		
Virtsu	262																			

LEGEND

	Tourist information		National park		More details overlay
	Harbor		Beach		Road number
	KEHRA Town		Village (over 2500 inhabitants)		Hamlet (400 – 2500 inhabitants)
	Sagadi manor		Kuremäe monastery		Panga cliff
	Setu museum		Saka cliff		Saka cliff
	Rakvere castle		Põlva peasant museum		Jägala waterfall
	Haapsalu castle		Mõniste open air museum		Keila-Joa waterfall
	Koguva village		Mihkli farm museum		Devil's Grave crater
	Vormsi church		A. H. Tammsaare museum in Vargamae		The Pit crater
	Ruhnu church		Kaali crater		Suur-Munamägi observation tower
	Muhu church		Kõpu lighthouse		Elistvere animal park
	Põide church		Valaste waterfall		Piusa caves
	Valjala church		Ontika cliff		



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