



FINLAND
Country profile



AREA 337,030 km²

POPULATION



5.5 mln

GDP per capita
\$50,068



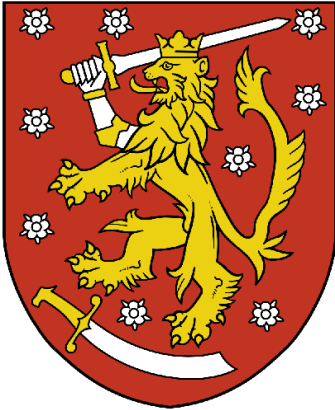
CURRENCY



1 & 2 cent coins are not used

Languages FINNISH, SWEDISH

COUNTRY BACKGROUND



The Finnish coat of arms, a crowned lion on a red field, the right forepaw replaced with an armoured hand brandishing a sword, trampling on a saber with the hindpaws, was originally created around the year 1580.



National Flag

Finland used to be a province and then a grand duchy under Sweden from the 12th to the 19th centuries, and an autonomous grand duchy of Russia after 1809. It gained its complete independence in 1917. During World War II, it was able to successfully defend its freedom and resist invasions by the Soviet Union – although with some loss of territory. In the half century that followed, the Finns made a remarkable transformation from a farm/forest economy to a diversified modern industrial economy. Per capita income in Finland is now among the highest in Western Europe. A member of the European Union since 1995, Finland was the only Nordic state to join the euro system at its initiation in January 1999. In the 21st century, the key features of Finland’s modern welfare state are a high standard of education, equality promotion, and national social security system – currently challenged by an aging population and the fluctuations of an export-driven economy.

FINLAND FACTS

Suomi

The Finnish word for the country is “Suomi,” which means marshland. The country has more than 60,000 lakes, but less than 8 percent of the country is arable.

Sisu

Finns describe themselves with the word “sisu,” which roughly translates to a combination of courage, strength and determination.



Food

Finnish foods often use wholemeal products (rye, barley, oats) and berries (such as blueberries, lingonberries, cloudberry, and sea buckthorn). Fish and meat play a prominent role in traditional Finnish dishes in some parts of the country, while the dishes in some other regions have traditionally included various root vegetables and mushrooms.

Tango

The Finnish style of tango is popular throughout Finland. Each year Finland crowns a tango king and queen who rule over the many tango events held throughout the country.



Finnish metal

Finland is the home of many metal music bands that are popular worldwide: Nightwish, HIM, Children of Bodom, Amorphis, Apocalyptica etc. Finland even won the Eurovision Song Contest with Lordi’s “Hard Rock Hallelujah” in 2006. Finnish metal usually features complex song structures and portrays strong emotions (that Finns rarely show otherwise).

FINLAND FACTS



National Character

Typical Finnish people are very patriotic, have a very strong sense of national identity and value independence very high. Finland, along with Iceland, is Nordic rather than Scandinavian.

Finns are very modest and downplay their own accomplishments. They view being humble and modest as virtues. Finns believe there is a proper way to act in any circumstance and always expect polite behaviour.



Ethnic Make-up and Religion

Finns 93%, Swedes 5%, Samis, Romas, Tatars less than 1%

Most Finns belong to the Evangelical-Lutheran Church (70%), while a fraction of Finns belong to the Orthodox Church. The Evangelical-Lutheran Church accepts the ordination of women as priests.

Language

Of the two official languages of Finland, Finnish is the first language spoken by 93% of the country's 5.4 million inhabitants. Finnish, unlike Scandinavian languages, is not Germanic but in a class of its own. Theoretically, Finnish is related to Hungarian but it sounds a bit like Estonian.

The other official language, Swedish, is spoken by around 5% of the population, most of whom live in the south west and are also speakers of Finnish. Sami is a minority language in Scandinavia that is spoken by around 2,000 people living in the north of Finland, which is 0.03% of the Finnish population.



FINLAND FACTS

Time

Finns are punctual people and, in one sense, prisoners of time. As is the case elsewhere in the world, those holding the most demanding jobs have tight daily schedules; missing appointments can cause anguish. Agreed meeting times are scrupulously observed, to the minute if at all possible, and being over 15 minutes late is considered impolite and requires a brief apology or an explanation. Concerts, theatre performances and other public functions begin on time, and delays in domestic rail and bus traffic are rare.



Independence Day

December 6 is Independence Day, an occasion marked with solemn ceremonial observances. It is a day for remembering those who fell in the wars to protect Finland's independence, which was achieved in 1917. In the evening, the President of the Republic hosts a reception for some 2,000 guests – including the diplomatic corps accredited to Finland – and watching this reception on TV has evolved into a favourite pastime for the entire nation.



Christmas

Christmas, and Christmas Eve in particular, is very much a family festival in Finland, usually spent at home or with relatives. Customs include lighting candles by the graves of deceased family members. Finns wish each other 'Merry Christmas', but equally often they wish 'Peaceful Christmas'. Christmas Day is generally a quiet day and social life does not restart until Boxing Day.



FINLAND FACTS



Traffic

You must keep your headlights on at all times. In Finland, traffic fines are based on two factors: the severity of the offense and the driver's income. The most expensive speeding ticket ever given was in 2003. The fine: 170,000 Euros for driving 80 km/hr in a 40 km/hr zone.



Ice swimming

Ice swimming is quite a popular winter sport in Finland. It is done when the water is frozen over. This requires breaking the ice to make a pool. There are also competitions for winter swimming. Many winter swimmers swim with standard swimming costumes rather than with wetsuits or other thermal protection.



Shoes

When we enter into any Finnish home we always take our shoes off.

FINLAND FACTS

Phones

There are no public payphones in Finland! There are over 5 million mobile phones in Finland for a population of 5.4 million.



Reindeer

In Finland, anyone living within the area of Finnish reindeer husbandry who is a citizen of the European Union has the right to own reindeer. The total area of reindeer husbandry in Finland is approximately 33 % of the surface of the country. There are over 200,000 reindeer in Finland.



Fashion

Marimekko is one of the staples in Finnish fashion. One of their most monumental pieces was the Unikko, which contained large 70s style floral and retro prints. Marimekko can be found in over 20 countries worldwide, and has over 800 retailers.



FINLAND FACTS

Squeaky cheese

Finnish squeaky cheese is a fresh cheese traditionally made from cow's beestings, rich milk from a cow that has recently calved. Reindeer or even goat milk can also be used. Commercially available versions are typically made from regular milk, and they lack some of the colour and flavour because of this. The cheese originally comes from Southern Ostrobothnia, Northern Finland and Kainuu. It is eaten warm and often as a dessert with cloudberry jam.



Karelian pasty

In the most familiar and common recipe for the pasties, they are made from a thin rye crust with a filling of rice. Butter, often mixed with chopped boiled egg, is spread over the hot pasties before eating.

Coffee

Finnish people are among the biggest coffee consumers in the world. Finns consume an average of 12 kilograms of coffee per capita annually, which is more than twice the amount of most other Europeans. Not only do Finns drink more coffee than other nationalities, but they also prepare it differently. In Finland, coffee is roasted lighter than in Southern and Central Europe. In fact, the Finnish coffee is known to be the lightest roast in the world. An average Finn drinks around 4-5 cups of coffee per day.



PUBLIC HOLIDAYS



1 January: New Year's Day

*Uudenvuodenpäivä,
Nyårsdagen*

Traditionally, the president gives a speech to address citizens at noon.

6 January: Epiphany

Loppiainen, Trettondedagen
Epiphany is celebrated to commemorate the visit of the Biblical Magi to the Baby Jesus.

Moveable Friday in spring: Good Friday

*Pitkäperjantai,
Långfredagen*

Good Friday commemorates the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

Moveable Sunday in spring: Easter Sunday

Pääsiäispäivä, Påskdagen

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is celebrated on Easter Day.

Moveable Monday in spring: Easter Monday

*2. pääsiäispäivä,
Andra påskdagen*

Easter Monday is the day following Easter Day.

1 May: May Day

Vappu, Valborgsmässoafton

May Day is a versatile festival: it is a celebration of spring, youth and work.

Moveable Thursday in spring: Ascension Day

*Helatorstai,
Kristi himmelfärds dag*

Ascension is a Christian holiday marking the day resurrected Jesus was taken up to heaven.

Friday 19 June - 25 June: Midsummer Eve

*Juhannusaatto,
Midsommarafton*

It is the time of summer solstice. In the evening, people traditionally make bonfires.

Saturday 20 June - 26 June:

Midsummer Day

*Juhannuspäivä,
Midsommardagen*

A lot of the Midsummer festivities take place in the countryside.

Saturday 31 October -

6 November: All Saints' Day

*Pyhäinpäivä,
Alla helgons dag*

All Saint' Day is a day to honor the saints and deceased loved ones.

6 December:

Independence Day

Itsenäisyyspäivä, Självständighetsdagen

Finland declared its independence on December 6th, 1917.

24-26 December: Christmas

Joulu, Jul

Christmas is a family holiday spent together with family and loved ones.

IMPORTANT TIPS

Silence

Finns place great value on words, which is reflected in the tendency to say little and avoid ‘unnecessary’ small talk. They are better at listening than at talking.

Finns rarely enter into conversation with strangers, unless a particularly strong impulse prompts it. Finns are curiously silent in the metro, the bus or the tram. In lifts, they suffer from the same mute embarrassment as everyone else in the world. However, a visitor clutching a map will have no trouble in getting advice on a street corner or in any other public place, since the hospitality of Finns easily overrides their customary reserve.

Introducing yourself

When introducing themselves, Finns will say their forename followed by their surname. Women who use both their maiden name and their husband’s surname will state them in that order. Although Finns are conscious and proud of any official titles they may have, they rarely mention these when introducing themselves. In contrast, they do expect to be addressed by their title in professional and official contexts.

Tipping

Tipping has never fitted very comfortably into the Finnish way of life. This may have originally been due to the traditions of a religion which emphasized frugality; today, the rather blunt reason for not tipping is that the price paid includes any unusual instances of service or politeness i.e. the attitude is that “service is included”. However, nobody will object to being tipped, very few will mind not being tipped.

IMPORTANT TIPS

Dining and Entertainment

The sauna is an esteemed Finnish tradition. Business discussions may be held in a sauna, or a business lunch may be preceded or followed by a sauna.

All Finns go to sauna naked. You do not have to go to sauna naked, but it is considered strange not to. You may wrap a towel around yourself or wear a bathing suit.

Finns insist on punctuality for social occasions.

imately one to two hours after dinner. Never leave until coffee/dessert/cognac is finished. Business can be discussed at any time during lunch, but is not discussed during dinner, only after coffee.

Checks in restaurants are never split. If you make the invitation, you pay.

Gifts

When invited to someone's home, always bring a small gift for the hostess.

Give: flowers (odd numbers are best; white and yellow flowers are for funerals only; tulips are a favorite), wine, chocolates.

Do not give: potted plants.

Gifts are normally not exchanged in business meetings, but small gifts may be appropriate at the successful conclusion of negotiations.

Give: books, cognac, local/national gifts, recordings, art, glass, liquor (very expensive in Finland).

Helpful Hints

Do not show emotions in public.

Never ask personal questions, such as those related to someone's religion, job or political party.





PEOPLE IN FINLAND

Independent & Reliable

Loyalty, reliability, self-sufficiency and independence are highly valued. Finns are proud of their heritage and current society (they are leaders in peace conferences and international peace initiatives). They enjoy nature and proudly protect their environment, which is one of the cleanest in the world. Finns value their privacy and appreciate others respecting it.

Meeting and Greeting

Shake hands with everyone present – men, women and children – at a business or social meeting. Shake hands again when leaving.

Body Language

Keep some physical distance from Finns. Respect their shyness and desire for privacy. If you try to engage a Finn in conversation on a bus, restaurant or other public places, they may see it as unusual.


- Do not hug, kiss or touch a Finn unless you know them well.
- Maintain eye contact when speaking to someone.

Corporate Culture

Finns take punctuality for business meetings very seriously and expect the same from you;

- Call if you will be more than five minutes late.
- The Managing Director is the decision maker.
- Finns do not make small talk; they get right to business.
- Doing business in Finland takes time and patience.
- Two- to three-minute pauses of silence are common. Don't interrupt this silence.

SOCIETY



According to UNICEF, Finland ranks fourth in the world in child well-being (behind the Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark).

In 1906, Finland was the first nation in the world to give full suffrage (the right to vote and to run for office) to all adult citizens, including women.

Finnish women were the first in Europe to gain the franchise, and by the 1980s they routinely constituted about one-third of the membership of the Eduskunta (parliament) and held several ministerial posts.

In the 1980s, about 75% of adult women worked outside the home; they made up about 48% of the work force.

Finnish women were as well educated as their male counterparts, and, in some cases, the number of women studying at university level, for example, was slightly ahead of the number of men.

In addition to an expanding welfare system, which since World War II had come to provide them with substantial assistance in the area of childbearing and child-rearing, women had made notable legislative gains that brought them closer to full equality with men.

The Equality Law that took effect in 1987 committed the country to achieving full equality for women.

Finland was ranked third in the Global Gender Gap Report 2017.

Finland is highly productive in scientific research. In 2005, Finland had the fourth most scientific publications per capita among the OECD countries.

GENDER EQUALITY

Equality between women and men is a crucial part of the Finnish welfare state model.

The objective is that women and men should have equal rights, obligations and opportunities in all fields of life. It is widely acknowledged that society can progress in a more positive and democratic direction when the competence, knowledge, experience and values of both women and men are allowed to influence and enrich the development.

The Act on Equality between Women and Men (609/86), in force since 1987, has three major goals:

- the prevention of sex discrimination
- the promotion of equality between women and men
- the improvement of women's status, especially in working life

The Act places a duty for promoting equality purposefully and systematically on all authorities and employers as well as in education, teaching and research. In 1992, discrimination on grounds of pregnancy and family care responsibilities was prohibited.

Since 1995, employers with 30 or more regular workers have been obliged to include measures to promote equality in annual staff and training programmes or in labour protection programmes. The Amendment of 1995 includes a quota system; in official committees and councils the proportion of representatives of either sex should not be below 40%.

The ban on discrimination in employment covers hiring, wages, other working conditions, including sexual harassment, supervision and termination of employment.

The Ombudsman for Equality monitors the observance of the Equality Act and particularly the observance of the prohibition on discrimination and discriminatory job and training advertising.

The Equality Act does not apply to:

- Activities connected with the religious practices of religious communities, or
- Families' internal affairs or people's private life

In 2004, a new Act on Equality between Women and Men has been in the process of preparation. The new Act is based on the old legislation supplemented by the EU legislation and directives.

Same-sex marriage and joint adoption by same-sex couples were approved by the Finnish Parliament in 2014, and the law took effect on 1 March 2017.

DO'S AND DON'TS



DO

Keep some physical distance from Finns. Respect their shyness and desire for privacy.

DO

Learn a few words in Finnish, even though it's hard. It's an ego-booster for a Finn to hear a foreigner speak his language.

DO

Apologize even if you are only a few minutes late. Being late for longer usually requires a short explanation. 15 minutes is usually considered the threshold between being "acceptably" late and very late. Some will leave the arranged meeting points after 15 minutes. Send a text message even if you are only a few minutes late. Being late for a business meeting, even by 1-2 minutes, is considered bad form.

DON'T

Don't visit without calling first. The door may not open without a prior notice, especially on weekends.

DON'T

Don't make empty promises. If you say to a Finn, "Let's do lunch," he or she truly believes you have set up a lunch meeting and expects to hear from you.

DON'T

Don't complain or criticise. It is never in your interest to be critical or opinionated, as any kind of negativity will offend your Finnish colleagues.

DON'T

Don't be offended if your Finnish partners seem rather blunt and to the point. This is typical in Finnish communication as Finns prefer to tell the truth directly and take pride in their matter of fact attitudes.

DON'T

Don't brag. Finns are modest and downplay their own accomplishments and hardly make a fuss about anything. In Finland, humility and grace will get you far, as they view modesty as the biggest virtue.

Do poke fun at yourself and your country but never make fun of others. Finns appreciate dry wit and enjoy self-deprecating humour. They tend to enjoy irony and have a rather subtle sense of humour.

DO'S AND DON'TS

DO

When invited to someone's home, always bring a small gift for the hostess. Give: flowers (odd numbers are best; white and yellow flowers are for funerals only; tulips are a favourite), wine, chocolates. Do not give: potted plants.

DO

It is normal to drink ridiculous quantities of alcohol in Finland, so be prepared to have an "open-minded" attitude towards it.

DO

Expect direct communication from Finns. Expect your colleagues to tell you what they think rather than what you want to hear.

DO

Wait for your turn. First listen to the speaker, wait for them to finish, and then reply. Interrupting is rude.

DO

Talk in moderate tones and do not do anything to call attention to yourself.

DON'T

Take your shoes off if you are invited to someone's home. First thing after entering a house or an apartment: shoes off.



Don't be confused if you see people walking with poles even if there is no snow on the ground. It is called Nordic Walking, and it is a very popular activity among all ages.

DO

Get to know Finns. They are good conversationalists once they get to know you and feel comfortable around you. Finns follow the news, both domestic and international, and have strong opinions about the events. No such attitude as "whatever."

FINNISH SAUNA

“An invigorating bath originating in Finland in which the bather is subjected to hot steam, usually followed by a cold plunge or by being lightly beaten with birch twigs”

Collins Dictionary

Finland is a nation of 5.5 million people and 3.3 million saunas found in homes, offices, factories, sports centres, hotels, ships and deep below the ground in mines.

Types of saunas in Finland:


- Smoke sauna (savusauna), 80-160C: Known as the original sauna and mainly found in rural areas. Smoke fills the room as wood is burned in a large stove. Once heated, the fire is allowed to die and smoke is vented via a hole in the ceiling.
- Wood-heated sauna 70-130C: Most common type in the countryside. Stones are placed on a metal stove fired by well-dried birch wood – preferred for its good smell and long-lasting burn.
- Electric sauna 80-105C: Most common type as it is the safest and easiest to heat in homes. An electric stove is activated at the press of a button. Some apartment blocks have basement saunas that can be booked for private sessions.

The only Finnish word to make it into everyday English is “sauna”.

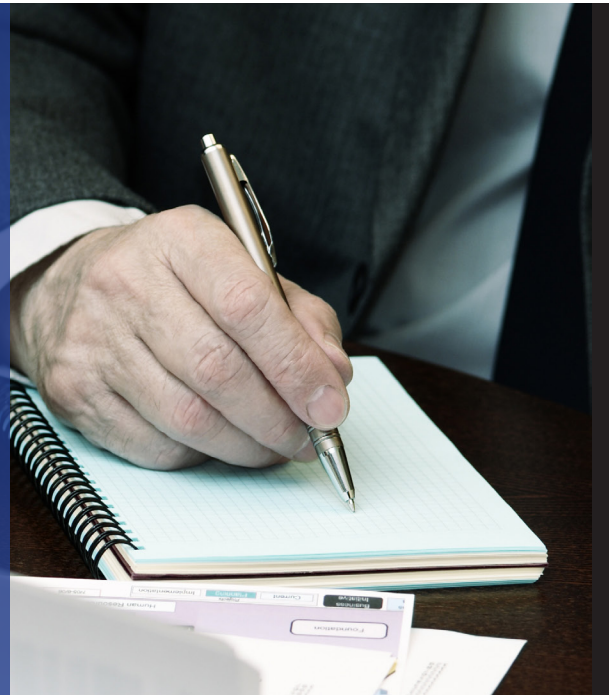
No swimsuits are needed. Men and women visit the sauna separately, unless they are members of the same family.



BUSINESS IN FINLAND



We understand that as a new person doing business in Finland it is imperative to know how you should do business effectively. So in order to do this, below are a few things you should know when meeting a Finn for the first time.



Titles

It is very important that you call the individual by their last name; if you don't possess this information, the simple Miss, Mr, and Mrs will do as well. It is considered disrespectful to call a Finn by their first name, wait for the individual to make the switch first.

Style

Do not over-dress, for the Finns take that as a sign of arrogance. When you fold your arms, you may also be viewed as arrogant.

Small talk

Finns are very reserved people and they don't like talking just for the fun of it. If you do, you will get suspicious looks.

Handshake

A handshake is customary when meeting someone for the first time.

Punctuality

Punctuality is very important for business and social occasions.

Contact

To call you over, Finns will most often simply ask you to approach them. Physical contact is not very common in Finland, so you should avoid it unless necessary.

Lingo

The main language for doing business in Finland is English and/or German.

UNUSUAL COMPETITIONS



Air Guitar Championships

Since 1996, the annual Air Guitar World Championships have been a part of the Oulu Music Video Festival in Oulu, Finland. The idea of the contest was originally coined as a joke, meant only to be a side attraction for the music video festival, but has since become a major draw in its own right.

Wife carrying championships

The event has been organized in Sonkajärvi in 1992. The number of couples interested in the world wide known event is growing steadily; qualifying games, in which physical condition and sense of humour are tested, are being organised in many countries around the world.

World Cell Phone Throwing Championships

Finland was the home of the mobile manufacturer Nokia and the event takes place in August each year in Savonlinna.

Swamp Soccer World Championships

The Swamp world soccer championship requires the body to be very physical and coordinated. The event is held in Hyrynsalmi in Northern Finland.

Mosquito Swatting Championships

Try swatting as many mosquitoes as you can, in 5 minutes.

Milking Stool Throwing Contests

Farms hosting milking stool throwing contests take place in early summer.

Anthill competition

Sitting bare-bottomed in an anthill to find out who can stay put the longest.



Language
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