

Tallinn



Just at the southern edge of Tallinn lies Lake Ülemiste. According to a legend, on the darkest autumnal night each year a mysterious old man climbs out of the Ülemiste depths, knocks on the city gates and asks whether the construction of Tallinn has been completed. The little man has sworn that, should it one day be finished, he will release the lake's waters and drown the whole city. The knowing guards therefore always answer, "No, good sir! There's still a great deal of construction taking place. Please be so good as to come again after a little while."

That's why Tallinn will never be completed. Though already eight centuries old, it's still a work in progress, forever growing and reinventing itself while never forgetting its unique heritage.



Play Store



App Store

On Town Hall Square you can find a humble apothecary that's been operating for nearly 600 years. Just a few steps away, there's an old-fashioned café where specialists make marzipan figurines by hand – edible symbols of Tallinn's fairytale charm. Nearby, in other cafés and lounge bars, the city's residents are tapping away at their laptops and surfing the Internet.

Historic. Romantic. Friendly. Relaxing. Modern. Daring. This is Tallinn.



Closer than you think



Tallinn is the capital of Estonia, a small, forward-thinking, Nordic country.



Tallinn sits on the **southern shore of the Gulf of Finland**, just 83 km south of Helsinki. **A ferry trip between the cities takes just 2 hours or less.**

The city shares a **geographical latitude nearly identical with Stockholm.**

During Estonia's **White Nights** in June the sky here stays **bright from 4 am until around 11 pm.**

This is a **green city**, proudly boasting **40km² of parks and forests** with a **2 km stretch of sandy beach** bordering its bay.

83 km
from Helsinki



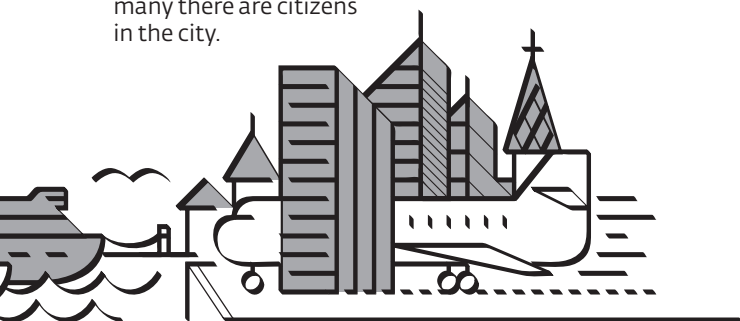


Thomas Volmer

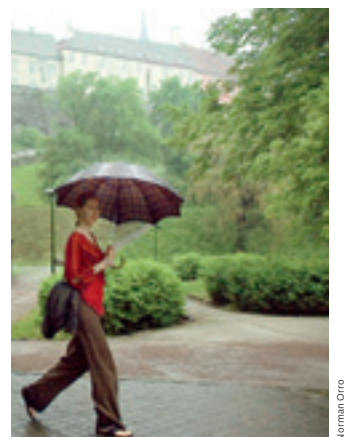
Tallinn is a **popular cruise destination** bringing nearly **420 000 passengers** to the town **each year** – just as many there are citizens in the city.

Thanks to its small size and **compact layout**, Tallinn is extremely **easy to get around**.

Lennart Meri International Airport is only 5 km from the city centre. Depending on traffic, a taxi ride from the airport to a downtown hotel can take as little as 15 minutes.

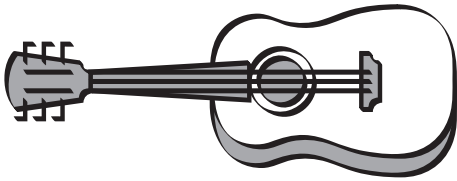


15 min
from the airport



Norman Otto

A singing nation



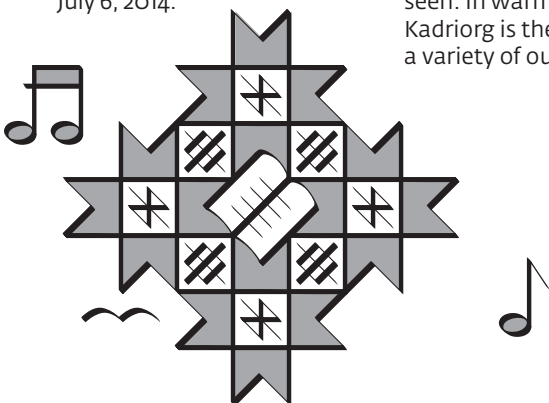
With Finno-Ugric roots that run thousands of years deep, Estonians pride themselves on being a society rich in music and creativity. This creative energy forms the local concerts, art exhibitions, festivals, plays and other events.

The Estonian national identity is entwined in folk song. Every five years, as part of a tradition that goes back to 1869, Tallinn hosts the **Estonian Song and Dance Celebration**, which involves as many as **37,000 performers** and more than **200,000 spectators**. The next nationwide Song and Dance Celebration takes place in Tallinn from July 4 to July 6, 2014.

Kadriorg, a quiet area of Baroque gardens, ponds and fountains, is the city's cultural nexus. This is the site of the **Tsarist-era Kadriorg Palace**, where the nation's collection of foreign art is on display, as well as the vast, new **Kumu Art Museum**, where the best of Estonian works, from the historic to the modern and funky, can be seen. In warmer months Kadriorg is the setting for a variety of outdoor concerts.

Built in 1913, the grand **Estonia Theatre** is Tallinn's prime venue for opera, ballet and symphonic performances. Most famously, it's home to the **National Opera Estonia**, **Estonian National Ballet** and **Estonian National Symphony Orchestra**, which is run by **Neeme Järvi**. During his long and successful career, Järvi has conducted several of the world's prominent orchestras and has become one of classical music's most recorded conductors. He is known for playing the works of another Estonian classical music figure, composer **Arvo Pärt**. One of the absolute giants of classical music, Pärt gave the world a compositional style called **Tintinnabuli**, which, like many Estonian creations, is both minimalist and mystical.

Like that of its Nordic neighbours, **Estonian design** has long been known both for its **simplicity** and its **fresh, off-beat style**. On the traditional end of the spectrum are the **beautiful handicrafts** that are prized by visitors from far and wide. At the same time, modern Estonian designs, as well as architectural trends, have created an enviable splash in Europe's art scene and garnered considerable praise from critics.





Marri Kadank



Ain Avik



Anu Vahtra

Tallinn's regular events and festivals:

Just before the Christmas season starts Tallinn hosts the **Black Nights Film Festival** (PÖFF), the largest film event in the Baltic states.

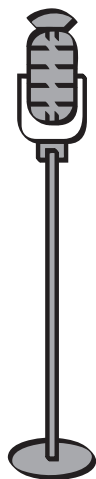
For several weeks each winter Tallinn's Town Hall Square is filled with an elaborate, traditional **Christmas Market** where visitors can buy gifts, listen to concerts or drink hot, spiced wine.

Spring in Tallinn starts off with the sounds of music, namely the **Tallinn Music Week** and **Jazzkaar International Jazz Festival**.

In summer Tallinn hosts the **Old Town Days** festival and **Medieval Days**, both of which celebrate the city's centuries-old heritage.

Tallinn Maritime Days, held in July, is a huge, sea-faring festival involving all sorts of water-related attractions.

Every August the city welcomes the **Birgitta Festival**, several days of outdoor concerts set amid the stunning ruins of St. Bridget's Convent.



The heart of Tallinn is its Medieval Old Town, a fairytale neighborhood of gabled houses, Gothic spires and cobblestone streets that dates in the 13th – 16th centuries, the days when this was a thriving, Hanseatic trade centre.

At the beginning of the 16th century, Tallinn had the **largest and sturdiest defense system in Northern Europe**.

Underneath Tallinn there are **hundreds of metres of underground passage ways**, mostly built in the 1600s during the time of Swedish rule.

At the centre of Old Town stands the impressive, early-15th-century Town Hall, **the best preserved Gothic town hall in Northern Europe**.

The Old Thomas weather vane that stands atop the Town Hall Tower is a **much-loved symbol of the city**. The original dates to 1530.

One of Old Town's prime attractions is **St. Olav's Church**. With its 159-metre spire, it was thought to be **the tallest building in the World**.



Merchants from the Brotherhood of Black Heads guild installed a spruce on Town Hall Square in 1441. This became one of the **first public Christmas trees in Europe**.

The Town Hall Pharmacy on Town Hall Square is **Europe's oldest continuously operating pharmacy**. It has been open since 1422.

The St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral atop Toompea Hill is Estonia's main Russian Orthodox place of worship. The cathedral was built in 1900, when Estonia was part of the tsarist **Russian empire**.

On the façade of the 14th-century Holy Spirit Church, you'll find an elaborately painted clock that's **the oldest public timekeeper** in Tallinn.

Tallinn's Old Town was entered on **UNESCO's list of World Heritage Sites** in 1997 as an 'exceptionally complete and well preserved example of a Medieval northern European trading city'.

Pre-Christian times

6000 B.C. – 1219 A.D.

Though traces of human settlement in the Tallinn area date back about 5,000 years, not much is known about life here before the Northern Crusades in the early 13th century. The first mention of Tallinn in historic records comes in 1154, when Arab cartographer al-Idrisi marked it on his world map. Sometime around the start of the second millennium locals had begun using the spot as a market and fishing port, and built a wooden fortress on Toompea Hill.



Jaani Heinmaa

Tallinn City Museum

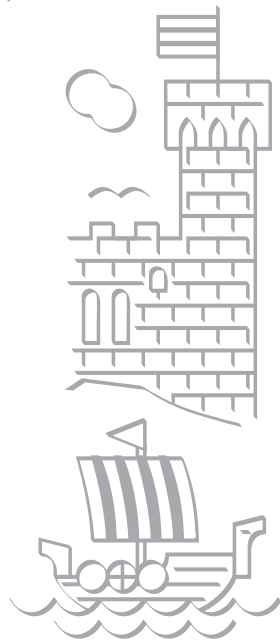
Housed in a 14th century merchant house, this comprehensive museum provides an excellent introduction to Tallinn's history from the first settlements right up to the Singing Revolution and 1991 re-independence.



Idast Benk

Great Guild Hall

An excellent place to learn more about the history of Tallinn is the Great Guild Hall, an impressive, Medieval structure that now serves as the Estonian History Museum. Films and interactive displays show how people here lived, fought and survived over the last 11,000 years.



Mari Kadavik

Toompea Castle

A wooden fortress built on Toompea Hill sometime in the 10th or 11th century was probably the first structure in what later became Tallinn. Foreign invaders replaced it with a stone building in 1227–29, and over the centuries it developed into today's Toompea Castle. Since its early days, the castle has served as the local seat of power for any empire ruling Estonia. Fittingly, the building is now home to the nation's Parliament.

Danish conquest and beyond

1219–1342

According to legend, Denmark's national flag originated right here in Tallinn. During a battle to conquer Estonia in 1219, it "floated down from the heavens" spurring the Danes on to victory. Whether it was really divine encouragement or, as some claim, the arrival of Slavic mercenaries that decided the day's outcome, that battle with the Danes marked the beginning of seven centuries of foreign rule in Estonia. Though various crowns reigned here, the city was settled by ethnic Germans and was known throughout most of its history by its German name, Reval.



Keldis Haagen

Cathedral of St. Mary the Virgin

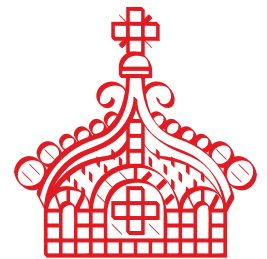
This gleaming, white church on Toompea is the main Lutheran church in Estonia. Established before 1233, it was the church of the elite, German, nobility.



Andres Treial

Danish King's Garden

One of Tallinn's most popular tourist spots is this slope of Toompea hill where, legend insists, the Danish flag came into being in 1219. It's now a relaxing, courtyard garden complete with terraced steps and picturesque views of Old Town rooftops.



EAS

St. Catherine's Passage

Easily the most photogenic of Old Town's lanes, it is home to the St. Catherine's guild, a collection of craft workshops where artists create and sell hats, quilts, ceramics, hand-painted silk and other wares.



Anu Vahtra

Dominican Monastery

Still seeming to echo with the chants of Medieval monks, the city's oldest existing building is the Dominican Monastery, which dates to 1246.

Medieval heyday

1361–1494

Tallinn's Medieval heyday lasted from the 13th to 16th centuries when the city flourished as a key Hanseatic trade centre. Merchants here grew wealthy thanks to a brisk trade in grain, linen, textiles, herring, wine, Oriental spices, Russian fur and wax, and, most importantly, salt. The grand houses, towering churches and overall look of Old Town as we know it today took their shape during this period.



Hanseatic League

In 1284 Tallinn became a member of the Hanseatic League, a network of cities that dominated northern Europe's trade in Medieval times. Under the Hanseatic system of law, the town was governed by wealthy Burgomeisters, while business spheres were ruled by powerful merchant and craft guilds, whose grand halls can still be seen in Old Town today.



Town Hall Square

Picturesque Town Hall Square has been the undisputed hub of Old Town since Medieval times. Historically it served as a market and meeting place, and was the site of at least one execution (resulting from a dispute over a bad omelette). Nowadays it's home to beautiful, gabled houses, sidewalk cafés and, in December, the town's Christmas tree. Find the round stone marked with a compass rose in the middle of the square. From this spot, with a little stretching and bending, you can see the tops all five of Old Town's spires.



St. Olav's Church

In Medieval times, this Gothic church tower with its 159m spire was thought to be the tallest building in the world. Nowadays the 124-metre steeple still dwarfs most of Tallinn's buildings and remains an important symbol of the town.



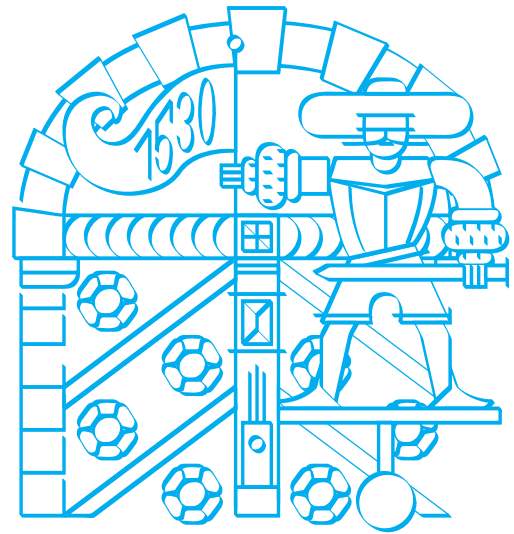
Dance with Death

Tallinn's most famous artwork is Bernt Notke's 15th-century painting *Danse Macabre* (Dance with Death), a spooky depiction of people dancing with skeletons. The unusual, wall-sized work is on display in St. Nicholas' Church, and continues to amaze visitors with its immensity and level of detail.

Swedish period

1561–1710

Sweden ruled Estonia from the late 1500s to 1710, during which it put a lot of work into improving Tallinn's defenses. In addition to strengthening the city wall and its towers, builders installed secret tunnels around the bastions for moving soldiers and gunpowder, and for spying on would-be invaders.



House of the Brotherhood of Black Heads

The ornate façade of this Old Town guild hall is easily the city's most prized architectural remnant of the Swedish period. Its beautiful Renaissance décor dates to 1597, and the much-photographed red, green and gold door dates to 1640. The Brotherhood of Black Heads gets its odd name from the guild's emblem, the dark profile of its patron saint, Mauritius. Today Tallinn Philharmonic Society operates here.

Bastion Tunnels

The Kiek in de Kõk museum is the entrance to this fascinating system of hidden, 17th-century tunnels that run under Toopea Hill. Originally built for battle, they later served as bomb shelters.



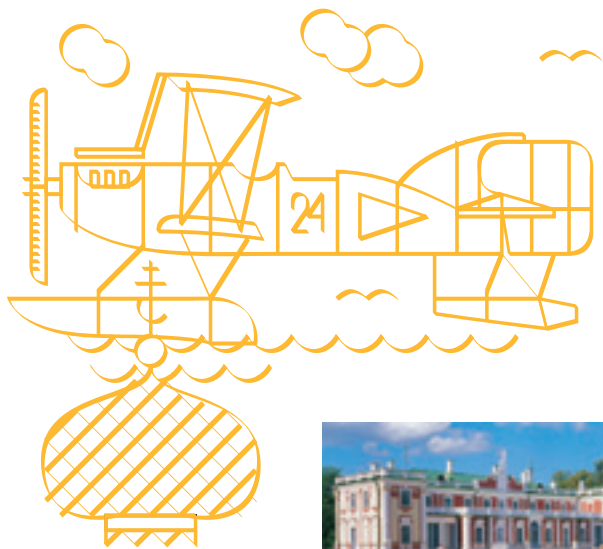
Fortification

A large part of what gives Old Town its character is the system of walls and towers that surround it. Work on the town's defenses first began in 1265, but the current outline of the wall dates to the 14th century. By its heyday in the 16th century, the wall was 2.4 km long, 14–16 m high, up to 3 m thick, and included 46 towers. All these towers had names, some descriptive, some showing a weird kind of Medieval humour.

Tsarist period

1710–1918

Tallinn was taken over by the Russian empire in 1710. The change of regime meant a clampdown on freedoms for ethnic Estonians, but a 'National Awakening' in the 1860s eventually led to moves for independence.



Taru Grepp

Kadriorg Palace

Russian Tsar Peter the Great built the city's famous Kadriorg Palace in 1718, naming it in honour of his wife, Catherine I. Surrounded by fountains and manicured gardens, this stunning, Northern Baroque palace is now home to the international collection of the Estonian Art Museum.



Thomas Volmer

Patari prison

Barbed wire, attack dogs, execution rooms ... it doesn't get much grimmer than this. Originally built as a fortress in 1840, this seaside complex served as a prison from 1919 until 2004. Visitors today can explore the mostly untouched remnants of Soviet prison life when booking a tour in advance.



Arne Maasik

Seaplane Harbour

At the old Seaplane Harbour in Tallinn's Kalamaja district visitors can see enormous, reinforced concrete shell hangars that are a one-of-a-kind find in the history of architecture and engineering. Built in 1916, they're said to be decades ahead of their time. Modern builders claim that, even with the help of a computer, it would be impossible to come up with a better design today. Today this engineering marvel houses the Estonian maritime history museum promising a "sea full of excitement" for the whole family. Covering 7,000 m² on three levels, the museum features a replica seaplane, British built submarine Lembit, 30-metre long aquarium with Baltic Sea fishes and many more attractions.

First independence

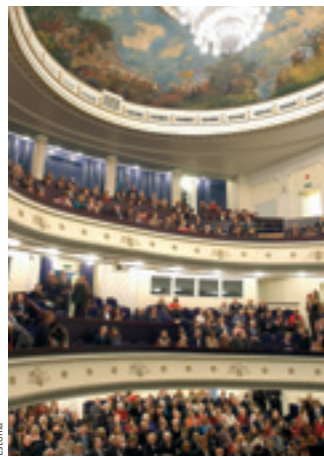
1918–1940

Estonia's victorious War of Independence against Soviet Russia (1918-1920) left Tallinn a turbulent city marked by political intrigue, espionage and economic chaos. By the mid-1930s, however, the Estonian Republic had landed on its feet. The now-calm capital underwent a building boom and developed a thriving café and cabaret culture.



Café Maiasmokk

Tallinn's oldest and most famous café, Maiasmokk has been operating since 1864, and still retains its amazing, pre-war interior. This old charmer lives up to its name (Estonian for "sweet tooth") by serving up a variety of tempting cakes and pastries – all made right on the spot.



Estonia

Estonian National Opera

The Jugend-classical theatre building designed by Finnish architects Armas Lindgren and Wivi Lönn was the largest building in early 20th century Tallinn. The Opera House's repertoire consists of classical and contemporary operas and ballets, as well as operettas, musicals and children's plays. During the World War I, the theatre building operated as a military hospital.



Thomas Volmer

Presidential Palace

Just up the hill from the more famous Kadriorg Palace is Estonia's Presidential Palace, built in 1938 to serve as the official residence and workplace of the head of state. It still serves that function today.



Reino Vasa-Rangsoo

Tallinn's own houses

Most visitors to Tallinn are fascinated by Tallinn's 'wooden house districts' – Kalamaja, Kopli, and Pelgulinn. These neighbourhoods of colourful working-class houses took their shape during Europe's 19th-century industrial boom. But unlike their counterparts in other countries, Tallinn's wooden house districts escaped 20th-century redevelopment and are now among the last places in the world where one can find such an intriguing hodgepodge of old-fashioned homes. The most architecturally unique of these are called 'Tallinn Houses'. Built in the 1920s and 30s, these two- to three-storey apartment houses are made of two symmetrical wooden wings separated by a stone central staircase. There are about 500 of these in the city today.

Soviet times

1940–1991

World War II ended with Estonia trapped behind the Iron Curtain. Five decades of Soviet occupation resulted in much of the offbeat architecture that can still be seen around the city.



Estonian History Museum – Maarjamäe Palace

Maarjamäe Palace tells the story of the birth, development, occupation and second independence of the republic.

A variety of objects, documents and stories highlight Estonians' desire for freedom and self-determination throughout the 20th century. The museum's courtyard is full of Soviet era demounted monuments offering different kind of view to art.



Arne Maasilik

Tallinn TV Tower

Standing at 314 metres, Tallinn's TV Tower is easily Estonia's tallest structure. It's also a prime example of Soviet engineering (completed in 1980), and reflects the somewhat tacky and bizarre style of the period both inside and out. After renovations, the TV Tower re-opened in spring 2012.



Andreas Meichner

Hotel Viru & KGB Museum

This first hotel-museum used to be the secret office of the Soviet security services, hidden away on the 23rd floor of the Viru Hotel. The tour provides a treasure trove of stories about the Soviet-era hotel business and the KGB's part in it. Visitors will also be treated to breathtaking views of the sea, Old Town and city centre from the terraces of hotel, which was the country's very first skyscraper.



Toomas Tuul

Pirita Harbour

In 1980 Tallinn played host to the yachting events of the Moscow Olympics, and several major building projects were undertaken here in the lead-up to the event. One of the most visible remnants of those times is Pirita Harbour, a must-see for anyone interested in Olympic history, socialist architecture or large amounts of oddly-shaped concrete.

Independence re-established

1991

In September 1988, about 300,000 people – over a quarter of all Estonians – gathered in Tallinn's Song Festival Grounds to sing national songs and hear politicians make calls for independence. This was one of the nation's defining moments: its peaceful 'Singing Revolution'. After re-establishment of independence in 1991, Tallinn developed into a high-tech, European capital, but never lost sight of its Medieval heritage.



Toomas Tuul

The Song Festival Grounds

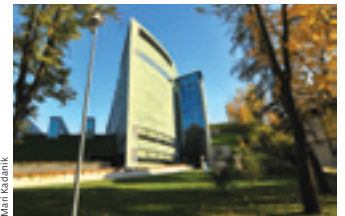
It was here in 1988 that the Singing Revolution, a massive, musical demonstration against Soviet rule, set Estonia on its road towards independence. Most famously the site is home to the Estonian Song and Dance Celebration, an unforgettable event that takes place every five years, drawing together up to 30,000 performers and 200,000 performers.



Tallinn

Freedom Square

Completely revamped in 2009, this vast square on the edge of Old Town is a fantastic place to get a sense of Tallinn's history in all its richness. From here you can see remnants of several eras at the same time – Medieval towers, 19th-century churches and 1930s-era cafés all surround a 21st-century public space.



Mani Kadaniik

Kumu Art Museum

Opened in 2006, the Kumu is the impressive main building of the Art Museum of Estonia, and it's naturally a magnet for every visitor interested in Estonian culture. The focus here is on the Estonian art.

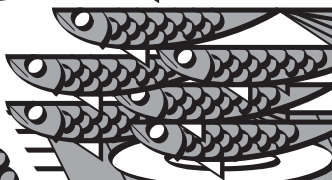
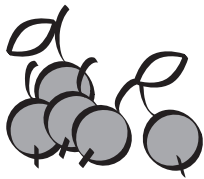


Paul Kuumet

Rotermann Quarter

This former factory complex near the city's Passenger Port has been hailed by visiting experts for its cutting-edge architecture, a prime example of how the city continues to develop in new and interesting ways.

Dining out & chilling out



Mari Kadantik



Traditional Estonian cuisine has its roots in village culture, with **Germanic, Scandinavian and Slavic influences thrown in the mix**. Most known dishes include **sauerkraut, jellied pork, marinated eel, herring**, and at Christmas, **blood sausage**. The local signature drink is **Vana Tallinn, a sweet liqueur** invented in the 1960s. It's usually taken straight or added to coffee.



Head isu!

Bon Appetit!

Tallinn's bustling restaurant scene is packed with inventive chefs and offers mouthwatering cuisine for every taste:

Medieval, ethnic, elegant, cutting-edge and more.

Thanks to strong cultural and historic links, the city is also home to several **top-notch restaurants**.



Sigrid Viir

Peruse the city's diverse café scene to find **creative cafés** with wide selection of **gourmet coffees, cakes, handmade chocolates** and salads. A romantic hideaway, a trendy hangout or just a place to get a decent cappuccino – whatever kind of café you're looking for, you can find it in Tallinn.



Sandra Urvek

Tallinn has long been a popular destination for **relaxation**. The city is home to several **spas**, all offering **brand new facilities** and services ranging from various **saunas** to **chocolate massage**.

If relaxation means **biking, yachting, swimming, golfing** or enjoying the **great outdoors**, Tallinn can also oblige. Aegna, Naissaar and Prangli, small islands just off the coast are known for their quiet **pine forests, secluded sandy beaches** and **fishing village charm**.

The city's **nightlife** offers something **for every taste and speed**, whether that means grabbing a pint and watching the game in a **friendly pub**, sipping cognac in a **fireside lounge**, or dancing the night away in a **trendy club**.

With its wide range of **local fashion, design products** and **handicrafts** as well as popular, **internationally known brands**, Tallinn caters to even the most extreme shopaholics.



Mart Tanel



Toomas Tuul

On the cutting edge



As much as Tallinners pride themselves on their city's **Medieval heritage**, it's the **modern side of city life** that tends to grab international headlines.

Not only is Tallinn ranked among the **Europe's most technology-oriented cities**, leading the way in everything from **free public Wi-Fi** to **e-government**, it also has a **dynamic business community** eager to engage in new areas.

The average resident is incredibly **tech savvy**, and businesses are always **quick to adapt** to the next new thing.

The city has **344 public Wi-Fi areas** and over **700 public Internet access points**, nearly all of which are free.



Tallinn is home to the world development headquarters of the Internet telephony company **Skype**, a product developed in Estonia. Tallinn Lennart Meri Airport is home to the **World's first Skype video calling booth**.

Most drivers pay for **street parking via SMS text message**, a system pioneered here.

Becoming an entrepreneur takes **just 15 minutes** over the Internet.

98% of the country's **bank transactions** are done **online**.

Tallinn is home to **NATO's Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence**.

In January 1, 2011 Estonia became the **17th member of the Eurozone**.

Tallinn is the **first European capital** offering **free public transport for its residents** since 2013.

The international think tank Intelligent Community Forum listed Tallinn **among the World's 'Top Seven Intelligent Communities'** for 2010 and 2013.

The **3D Tallinn Old Town application** covering 121-hectares of the Medieval city offers a unique way to discover the old by the way of the new technology: www.3d.tallinn.ee

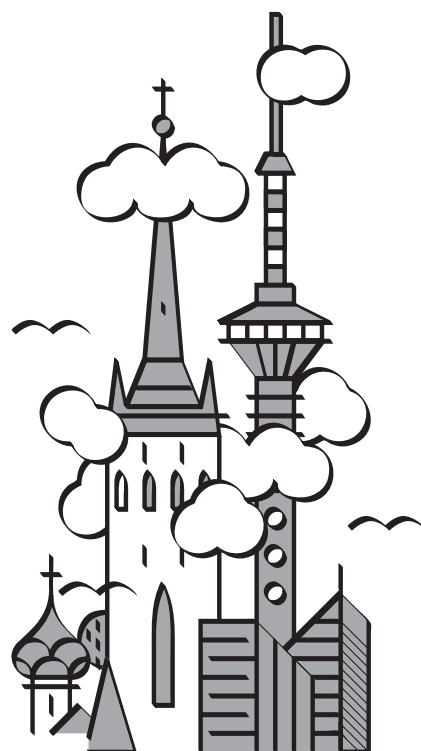


Public Wi-Fi

Cafés and hotels throughout the city provide free internet access.



In Medieval times, Tallinn's St. Olav's Church tower with its 159 m spire was thought to be the tallest building in the World. Nowadays the city's tallest structure is its 314 m TV Tower, which hosts a futuristic exhibition featuring the latest of Estonia's high-tech inventions.



Tallinn is a fantastic place to experience each of the four seasons in all its glory. In summer the city positively bursts with life – parks, beaches and Old Town streets pulse with a festival atmosphere. Both the crisp, colourful autumn and the warm, fresh spring offer their own natural charms. And during the frosty Christmas season the city takes on a truly magical quality!





Published by Tallinn City Tourist Office & Convention Bureau
Text by Steven Q Roman and Tallinn City Tourist Office & Convention Bureau
Design by Bummi, Jan Tomson & Indrek Sirkel
Printed by AS Folger Art • © 2013



www.tourism.tallinn.ee

www.tallinn.mobi
Facebook: VisitTallinn

Download the Tallinn Official City Guide app from Play Store and App Store.

