

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 out 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.

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 in their iPhones.

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 nearly **identical geographical latitude 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



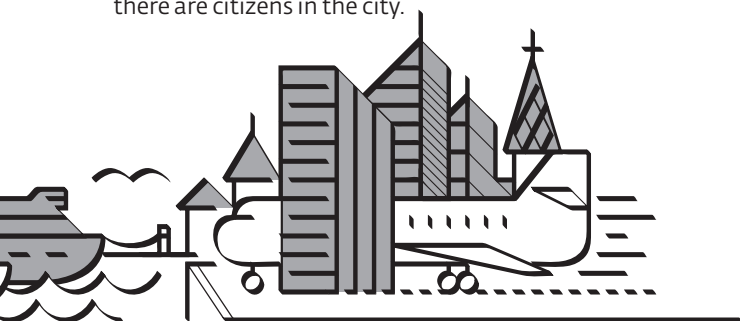


Kaupo Haagen

Tallinn is a **popular cruise destination** bringing close to **400,000 passengers** to the town **each year** – as many as 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.

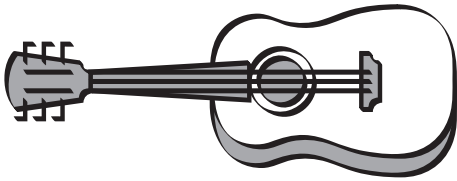


15 min
from the airport



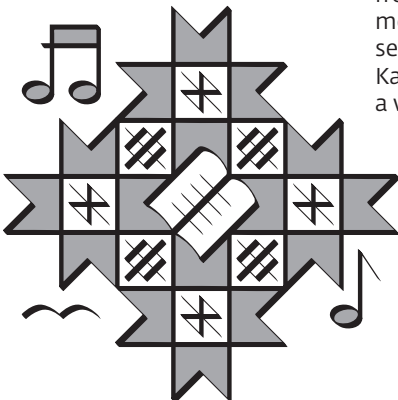
Toomas Veimer

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**.



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 **Estonian National Opera**, **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 neighbors, **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.





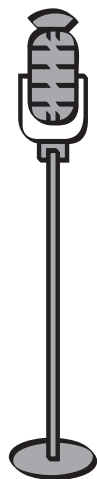
Marri Kadank



Ain Avik



Sigrid Vir



Tallinn's regular events and festivals:

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

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

Spring in Tallinn starts off with the sound of jazz, namely the **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 each summer, 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**. The wall that surrounded the city was up to 15.9 m high, 3 m thick, and 3 km long, and was dotted by 46 towers. Today, 2 km of the original wall and 26 of the towers are still intact.

Underneath Tallinn there are **hundreds of metres of underground passage ways**, mostly built in the 1600s during the time of Swedish rule. During World War II, Tallinn residents used the 17th-century tunnels under Old Town as bomb shelters. Nowadays a full 380 m of the tunnels are open to the public as a tourist attraction.

At the centre of Old Town stands the impressive, early-15th-century Town Hall, **the best preserved Medieval 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 once **the tallest building in the world**.



Records show that 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 Raeapteek on Town Hall Square is **Europe's oldest continuously operating pharmacy**. It has been open since 1422.

The Alexander Nevsky Cathedral atop Toompea Hill is Estonia's main Russian Orthodox place of worship. Built in 1900, when Estonia was part of the tsarist **Russian empire**, the cathedral was originally intended as a symbol of the empire's dominance – both religious and political – over this increasingly unruly Baltic territory.

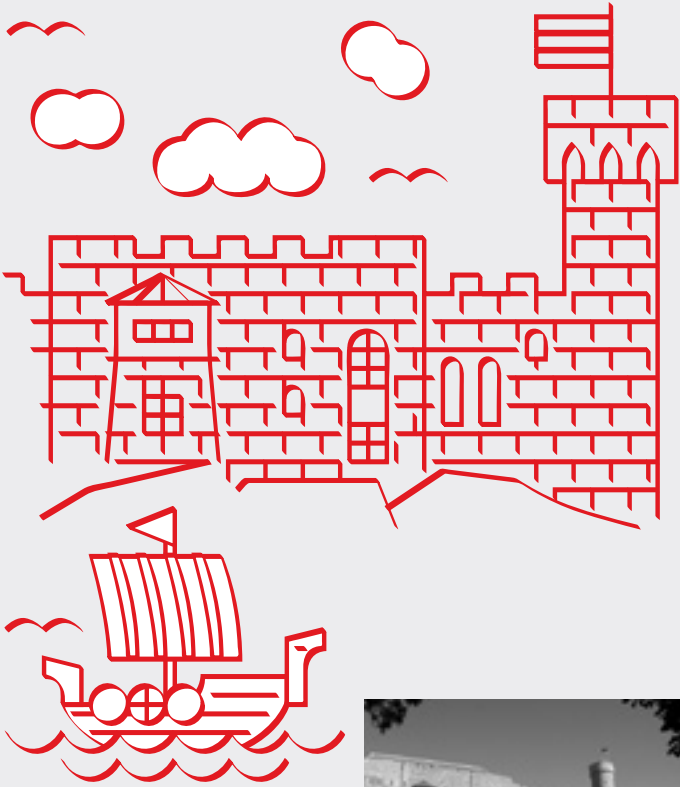
On the façade of the 14th-century Church of the Holy Ghost, you'll find an elaborately painted clock that's **the oldest public timekeeper** in Tallinn.

In 1997 **UNESCO** added the Old Town into the **World Heritage List**, acknowledging its unique value and noting the importance of preserving it.

Pre-Christian Times

6000 B.C. – 1219 A.D.

Although 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.



Annikka Pihlari

Great Guild Hall

An excellent place to learn more about prehistoric 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 Kadaniik

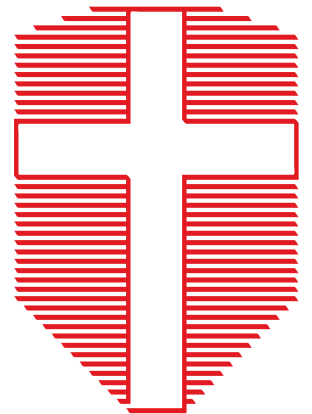
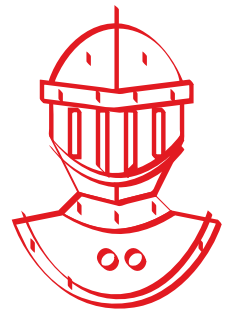
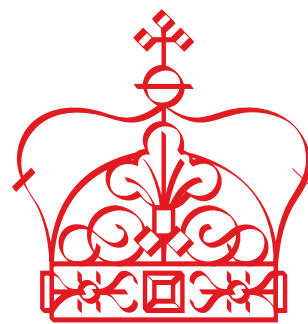
Toompea Castle

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.



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.



Anu Vahtra

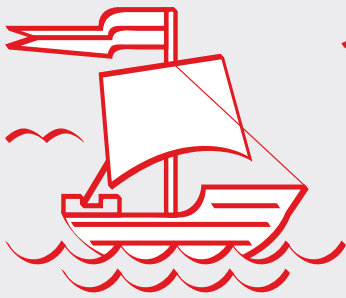
Dominican Monastery

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.



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.



Alain Ailhaon

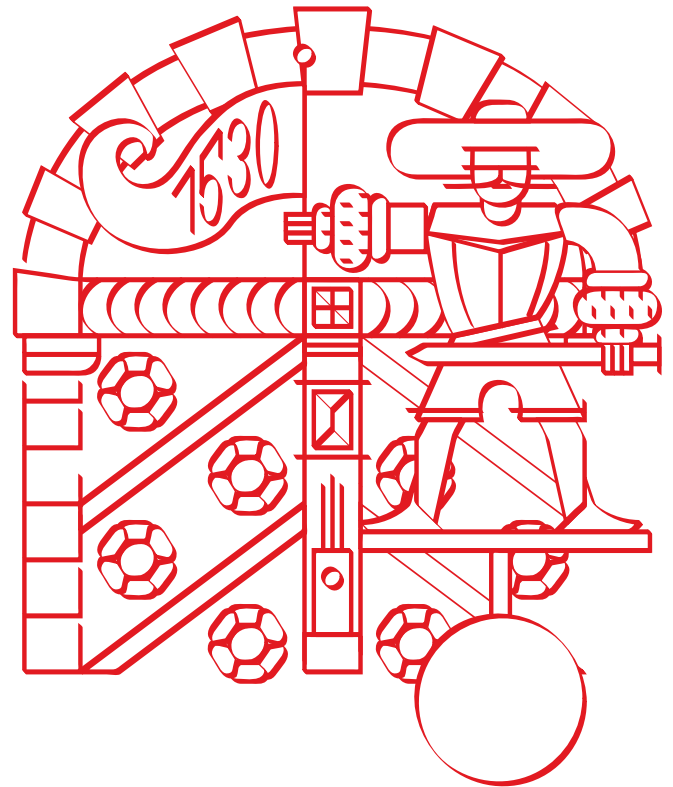
Town Hall Square

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.

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.



Jack Keradok

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.



Toomas Vohmer

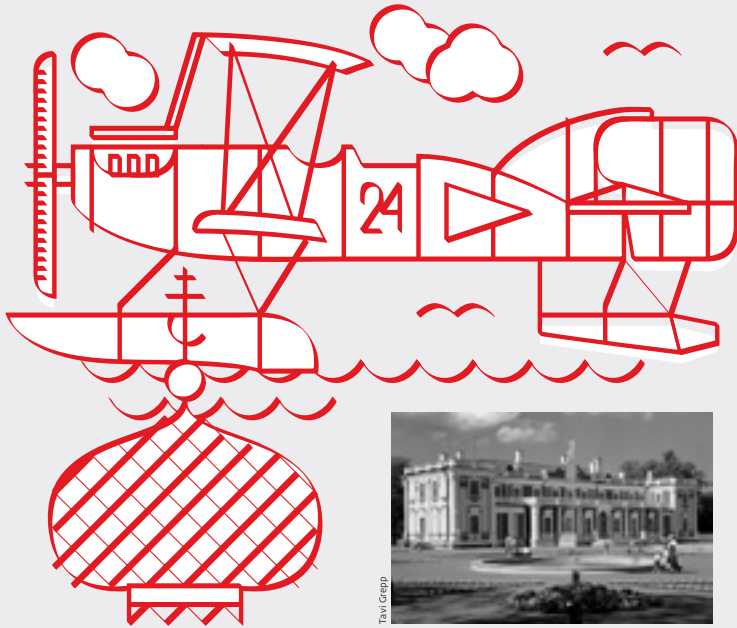
Fortification

A large part of what gives Old Town its character is the system of walls and towers that surrounds 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.



Tallinn's Seaplane Harbour and Hangars

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. This engineering marvel will re-open after renovation in 2012. The harbour is also home to a number of museum ships including the world's oldest operational steamer-ice-breaker Suur-Tõll, which dates to 1914, and the 1930s-era, British-built submarine Lembit, a rare relic of Estonia's prewar navy.



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.



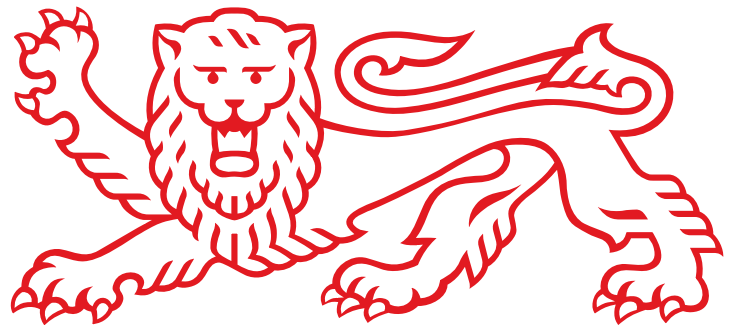
Patarei Prison

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. It recently opened as a museum where visitors can explore the mostly untouched remnants of Soviet prison life.

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.



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.



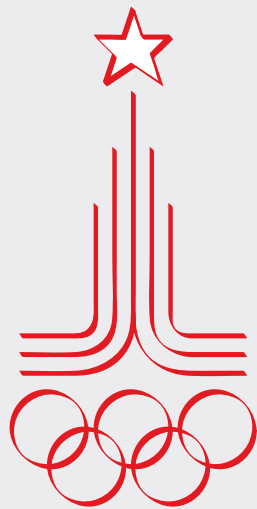
Presidential Palace

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.

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.



Occupation Museum

The best way to get a glimpse of what life was like in Nazi- and Soviet-occupied Estonia is to visit this modern museum near Vabaduse väljak (Freedom Square). It not only chronicles the harshness of the regimes, but provides insights into the day-to-day realities of the time.



Serge Rompaa

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 undergoing renovation, it will re-open in 2012.



Toomas Tuul

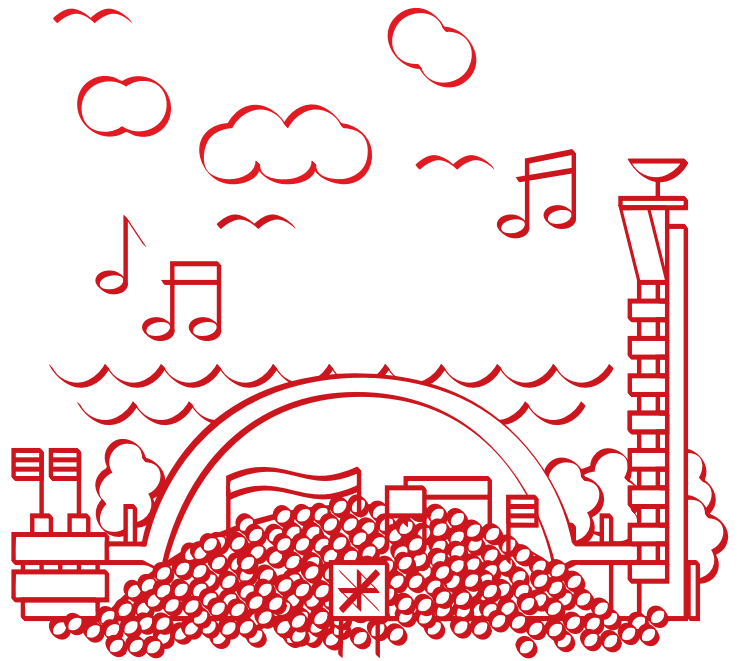
Pirita Harbour

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.



Axel Rand

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.



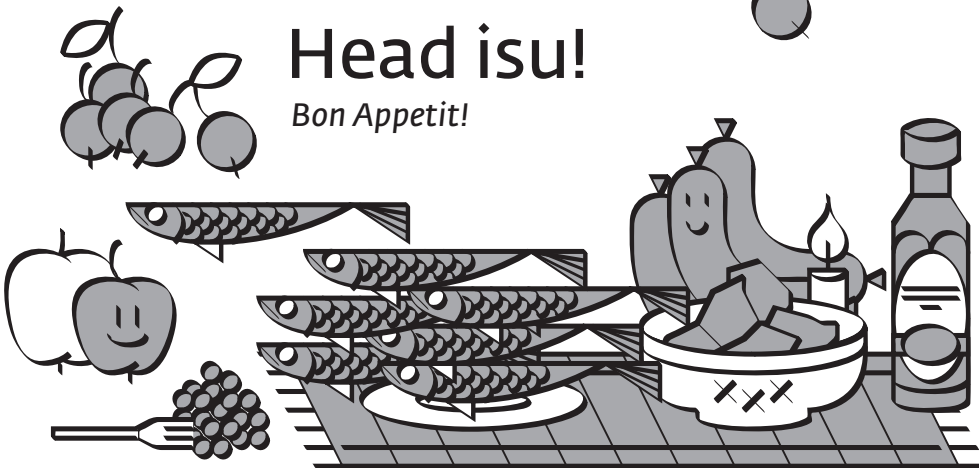
Karel Koplimets

Rotermann Quarter

This new shopping and cultural space 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



Head isu!
Bon Appetit!



Mari Kadantik

Traditional Estonian cuisine has its roots in village culture, with **Germanic, Scandinavian and Slavic influences thrown in the mix**. Favourites 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.



Sigrid Vir

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 Russian restaurants**.



Johannes Avro



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

If relaxation means **biking, yachting, swimming, golfing**, and 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 over **350 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**.

The international think tank Intelligent Community Forum listed Tallinn **among the world's "Top Seven Intelligent Communities"** for 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010.

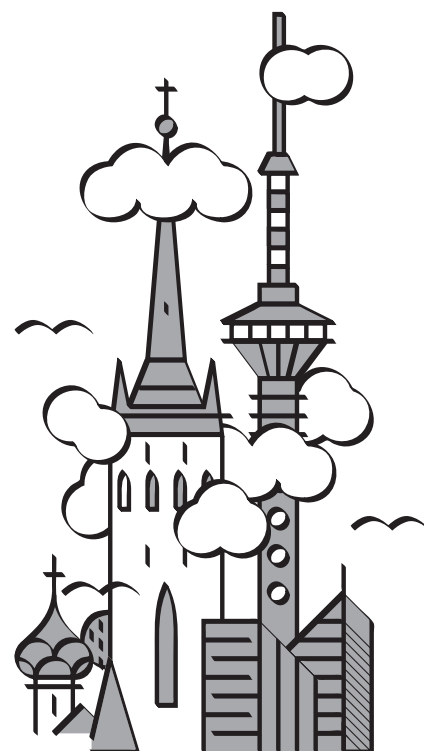


Public Wi-Fi

Cafés and hotels throughout the city provide free internet access.



In Medieval times, Tallinn's St. Oleviste Church tower with its 159 m spire was the tallest building in the World. Nowadays the city's tallest structure is its 314 m TV Tower, which will soon have its own claim to fame: it will host 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!





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