

EUROPE · WINTER SPORTS · HIKING · WILDLIFE · CULTURE · ARCHITECTURE

 Finland

Finland is a land of forest, lakes by the tens of thousands and extremes of light: summer nights that never quite get dark and winters lit by the aurora. Helsinki mixes Nordic design with an island sea fortress, the Lakeland invites canoeing and cottage stays, and Lapland brings husky trails and Sámi culture. Sauna is not a spa treatment here but simply how people live.

 Before you go, read the UK government's travel advice for Finland and entry requirements (visas, passport validity). Last updated by FCDO 11 August 2026.

 CAPITAL Helsinki	 CURRENCY Euro (EUR) £1 ≈ €1.19	 LANGUAGE Finnish, Swedish English	 BEST TIME Jun–Aug, Dec–Mar
 DAILY BUDGET £75–£320 £££ Expensive	 PLUGS Type C, F 230V · adapter needed	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 3h direct ~£80–£260 return	 TIME ZONE UTC+2 standard time

Finland is shaped by water and latitude. The south coast holds Helsinki, Turku and the old wooden town of Porvoo; inland lies the Lakeland, a maze of forested islands and channels around Lake Saimaa; and north of the Arctic Circle stretches Lapland, with rounded fells, reindeer and the Sámi homeland around Inari. A classic first summer trip links Helsinki, Tampere and Savonlinna by train and lake boat, perhaps adding Turku's archipelago. Winter visitors usually fly straight to Rovaniemi, Kittilä or Ivalo for snow activities and aurora hunting, with a night or two in Helsinki at either end.

Costs are high, broadly on a par with Scandinavia: expect around £12 for a weekday lunch buffet and £100 or more for a mid-range double, though lunch deals, supermarkets and free camping under everyman's right help. Everything is efficient, quiet and punctual, and English is widely spoken. Summer brings near-endless daylight and festivals; midwinter in Lapland means a few hours of blue twilight and temperatures that can fall below -30°C, so proper clothing is essential. Finns can seem reserved, but saunas, lakeside cottages and long summer evenings reveal a warmer side. It suits nature lovers, design fans and families chasing snow.

Top 5 highlights

1

NATURE

Northern lights in Lapland

From late August to early April, clear dark nights above the Arctic Circle bring frequent aurora displays. Saariselkä and Inari, by Urho Kekkonen National Park, combine low light pollution with husky, reindeer and snowshoe trips and the Sámi museum, Siida.

2

HISTORY

Suomenlinna

This 18th-century sea fortress, spread across a cluster of islands off Helsinki and listed by UNESCO, is a 15-minute ride on the public ferry. Walk the ramparts, visit the museum and the submarine Vesikko, and picnic among the bastions.

3

HISTORY

Olavinlinna and Lake Saimaa

Finland's best-preserved medieval castle, founded in 1475, rises from a rocky islet in Savonlinna and hosts an opera festival each July. Around it, Lake Saimaa offers canoe routes, lake cruises and the rare Saimaa ringed seal.

4

NATURE

Koli National Park

From the bare summit of Ukko-Koli you look over forested islands in Lake Pielinen, a view that inspired Sibelius and the painters of Finland's national-romantic era. Hike or canoe in summer, and ski the slopes and trails in winter.

5

ARCHITECTURE

Old Rauma

The largest unified wooden town in the Nordic countries, Old Rauma's 600-odd painted houses, merchants' courtyards and bobbin-lace shops form a UNESCO World Heritage Site and remain a lived-in neighbourhood on the west coast.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Helsinki

≈ 1.3 million people

Give it three days for the Design District, the rock-hewn Temppeliaukio church, Oodi library, the market-square ferries and a sauna with a sea dip at Löyly or Allas.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Tampere

≈ 340,000 people

Finland's old mill city sits between two lakes, with red-brick factories turned museums, the Moomin Museum and Rajaportti, the country's oldest public sauna still in use.

3RD LARGEST CITY

Turku

≈ 280,000 people

The former capital has a medieval castle and cathedral, riverside cafés along the Aura and ferries into the Archipelago Sea, best explored by bike in summer.

Figures are for urban areas. Espoo and Vantaa, which outnumber Tampere and Turku as municipalities, are part of Greater Helsinki.

Holiday regions in Finland

These areas have their own season and weather — see their guides for sea temperatures, resorts and flights.

**Finnish Lapland**

Finland Best: Dec–Mar 3h 30m from London

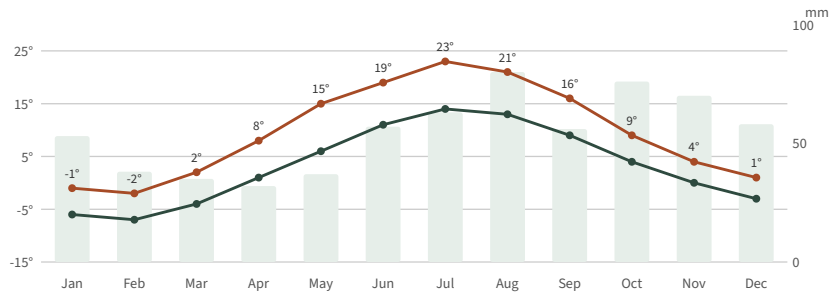
~£190/day

When to go to Finland

Best time: **Jun–Aug, Dec–Mar.**

**Average climate in Helsinki**

— High °C
 — Low °C
 — Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Apr–May

Vappu

On the evening of 30 April students crown Helsinki's Havis Amanda statue with a white cap; on May Day crowds picnic in Kaivopuisto park with home-made sima and doughnuts.

Jun

Juhannus (Midsummer)

On the weekend nearest 24 June, cities empty as Finns head to lakeside cottages for bonfires, saunas and the nightless night; flags fly and many shops close.

Jul

Savonlinna Opera Festival

Every July, full-scale opera productions fill the covered courtyard of Olavinlinna castle. Book tickets and Savonlinna accommodation months ahead, as the town fills up.

How much does Finland cost?

SHOESTRING

£75

per person / day
≈ €89.28

hostels, street food, buses

MID-RANGE

£160

per person / day
≈ €190

3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis

COMFORTABLE

£320

per person / day
≈ €381

4-star+, guided trips, private transfers

Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

Karjalanpiirakka

Karelian pasties: thin rye crusts crimped around rice porridge, eaten warm with munavoi (egg butter) for breakfast or from any bakery counter.

Lohikeitto

Creamy salmon soup with potatoes, leeks and plenty of dill, served with dark rye bread; a lunchtime staple in Helsinki's market halls.

Poronkäristys

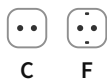
Thinly sliced reindeer sautéed in butter and served with mashed potato, lingonberries and pickled cucumber, the classic dish of Lapland.

Getting around

VR trains link Helsinki with Tampere in about 90 minutes and Turku in two hours, and overnight sleepers run to Rovaniemi and Kolari in Lapland. Finnair flies to Rovaniemi, Kittilä and Ivalo, and Matkahuolto and OnniBus coaches fill the gaps. In Helsinki, buy HSL tickets for trams, metro and the Suomenlinna ferry in the app; Uber and Bolt work in the larger cities. Hire a car for the Lakeland.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE



230V — bring a UK-to-C/F adapter

DIALLING CODE

+358

TAP WATER

Generally safe to drink

TIPPING

Service is included and tipping is not expected; rounding up for good service in restaurants or taxis is appreciated but never obligatory.

ETIQUETTE

Finns value personal space, punctuality and comfortable silences. Public saunas are usually single-sex and nude: shower first, sit on a towel or paper seat, and ask before throwing more water on the stove.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Helsinki Airport (HEL), Helsinki; Rovaniemi Airport (RVN), Rovaniemi; Kittilä Airport (KTT), Kittilä

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Telephone: **112** (ambulance, fire, police)

Source: FCDO “Getting help”

TIME ZONE

UTC+2 (standard time)

DRIVING

On the right

Visas & entry for Finland

Shown for a British passport.

No visa needed

You can travel without a visa to the Schengen area, which includes Finland, for up to 90 days in any 180-day period without a visa. This applies if you travel: as a tourist; to visit family or friends; to attend business meetings, cultural or sports events; for short-term studies or training.

The requirements for working in Finland are different.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations



See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Tetanus

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Bat Lyssavirus

Tick-borne encephalitis

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

No yellow fever certificate is required to enter.

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Finland

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Sat 31 Oct 2026	All Saints' Day
Sun 6 Dec 2026	Independence Day
Thu 24 Dec 2026	Christmas Eve
Fri 25 Dec 2026	Christmas Day
Sat 26 Dec 2026	Second Day of Christmas
Fri 1 Jan 2027	New Year's Day
Wed 6 Jan 2027	Epiphany
Fri 26 Mar 2027	Good Friday
Sun 28 Mar 2027	Easter Sunday
Mon 29 Mar 2027	Easter Monday
Sat 1 May 2027	May Day
Thu 6 May 2027	Ascension Day
Sun 16 May 2027	Pentecost
Fri 25 Jun 2027	Midsummer Eve
Sat 26 Jun 2027	Midsummer Day

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in Finnish

ENGLISH	FINNISH	SAY IT
Hello	Hei	hay
Thank you	Kiitos	KEE-tos
Please	Ole hyvä	OH-leh HU-va
Excuse me	Anteeksi	AHN-tayk-see
How much is this?	Paljonko tämä maksaa?	PAHL-yon-ko TA-ma MAHK-saa

Know before you go

- Drinks over 8% alcohol, including spirits and most wine, are sold only in state-run Alko shops, which close on Sundays; supermarkets sell beer, cider and wine up to 8%.
- Everyman's right lets you hike, pick berries and mushrooms and camp for a night or two on most land, provided you keep away from homes and leave no trace.

For Lapland in winter, book accommodation and aurora tours months ahead for December; February and March bring longer days, deeper snow and fewer Christmas crowds.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.