



Trekking the Planet

Discovering the Cultural and Natural Significance of the World



Where are we now?

- Darren and Sandy are in Helsinki, Finland, located at 60° N and 25° E.
- We have traveled approximately 30,205 miles (48,610 kilometers) from our starting point in California.



People and Culture

- Finland was under Swedish rule from the 12th to 19th centuries. In 1809 it came under Russian control. During the Russian Revolution in 1917, Finland declared its independence from Russia.
- The population is about five million, with about 500,000 living in Helsinki, the capital. Finnish and Swedish are the two official languages. Over 90% of the population speaks Finnish.
- Finland has one of the highest global literacy rates. There are about 200 newspapers published in the country and Finland, along with Japan, has the highest rate of newspaper reading in the world.
- One ethnic group in Finland is known as the Sami, from the northern Lapland region. There are about 7,000 Sami living in Finland.
- In 2003 Finland was the first European country to have both a female president and prime minister. The economy is service-based. Nokia, the large mobile phone manufacturer, is a Finnish company.
- A major holiday in Finland is Juhannus or the Finnish Midsummer. Many people go to the countryside for this holiday, in which bonfires are burned at night to celebrate the summer solstice (the longest day of the year), typically around June 21st.



Helsinki (source: Istopoli.com)

Did you know?

The kantele is a traditional Finnish instrument that has a history going back over 1,000 years. The oldest forms of the instrument were a hollowed out wooden body with five or six horsehair strings. Modern versions can have up to 39 strings. The instrument has a bell-like tone and produces a tranquil sound.



A 38 string kantele -
click the image to
watch a YouTube video
(2:40) (source:
Newworldencyclopedia.org)



Juhannus bonfire (source:
Flickr.com/Sirkku)



Lake Saimaa (source: Articlesbase.com)

Reindeer

Reindeer or caribou are found in North America, China, Mongolia, Norway, Russia, Canada, Sweden and Finland. In Finland, the Sami have herded them for centuries, using reindeer for meat, hides and even milk. There are several types of woodland and tundra reindeer, with males typically 71 to 84 inches (180 to 214 centimeters) long and weighing 200 to 460 pounds (92 to 210 kilograms). In the north of Finland there are more reindeer than people!



sources: (wn.com, wikipedia.org, Lapland-Finland.fi)

Nature and Environment

- Finland is the seventh largest country in Europe and about three times the size of the state of Ohio.
- There are about 188,000 lakes in Finland, comprising 10% of the country. Lake Saimaa is the largest lake at 1,700 square miles / 4,400 square kilometers. The total coastline around the Baltic Sea (Gulf of Bothnia and Gulf of Finland) is about 2,760 miles (4,600 kilometers).
- Approximately 25% of the country is above the Arctic Circle at 66° N latitude. In the far north of Finland in the summer the sun does not set for 73 days. In the far north in the winter there is total darkness, as the sun does not rise for 51 days.
- Lapland is located mainly inside the Arctic Circle. It is not a country but covers portions of Russia, Sweden, Norway and Finland and is slightly larger than the state of Montana. Terrain ranges from mountains in the western portion to tundra with marshes, lakes and rivers in the east.
- Approximately 75% of Finland is covered by forests. About 30% of Finland's exports are related to the forest industry, which includes paper, timber and furniture.

Our Plans

- We took a two-hour ferry trip from Estonia to arrive in Helsinki. We will spend two nights here before heading to Sweden.
- To get to Sweden we will take a 16-hour ferry trip across the Baltic Sea. We will arrive in the capital city of Stockholm and spend two nights there. We will then venture to the north of Sweden to begin our Arctic Circle trek in Lapland.
- Thanks for all the comments and questions so far. Please send us any questions you have about Sweden and our upcoming trek. We will try to include them in our update.

More Information

- <http://www.worldatlas.com/aatlas/infopage/balticsea.htm>
- <http://lifestyle.iloveindia.com/lounge/facts-about-finland-1540.html>
- <http://finlandchannel.com/finland-facts.shtml>
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_of_Finland
- <http://www.travel-island.com/interesting.places/finland.html>
- <http://www.funtrivia.com/en/Geography/Finland-3869.html>
- <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0107513.html>
- <http://www.visitfinland.com/web/guest/finland-guide/where-to-go/lakeland/lake-district-saimaa>
- <http://geography.howstuffworks.com/europe/geography-of-lapland.htm>

The Sauna

The sauna is an important Finnish tradition. Its purpose is to heat and cleanse the body, as well as to refresh the mind and spirit. For many people it is also a place to relax with family and friends. Saunas in Finland are heated between 140° to 212° F (60 to 100° C). It is customary to cool down after sitting in the sauna by swimming in a lake or swimming pool and then visit the sauna again. There are over two million saunas in Finland for its population of five million.



Finnish countryside sauna (sources: Wikipedia.org, Flickr.com/Raphael Gerber)

Our Partners



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