

Finland

Facts and Statistics

Location: Northern Europe, Scandinavia, bordering Norway 729 km, Sweden 586 km, Russia 1,313 km

Capital: Helsinki

Climate: cold temperate; potentially subarctic but comparatively mild because of moderating influence of the North Atlantic Current, Baltic Sea, and more than 60,000 lakes

Population: 5,214,512 (July 2004 est.)

Ethnic Make-up: Finn 93%, Swede 6%, Sami 0.11%, Roma 0.12%, Tatar 0.02%

Religions: Evangelical Lutheran 89%, Russian Orthodox 1%, none 9%, other 1%

Government: republic

Language in Finland

Of the two official languages of Finland, Finnish is the first language spoken by 93% of the country's 5 million inhabitants. Finnish, unlike Scandinavian languages, is not Germanic but in a class of its own. Theoretically, it is related to Hungarian but in practice the two are not mutually comprehensible.

The other official language, Swedish, is spoken by around 6% 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.

Finnish Culture & Society

Nordic but not Scandinavian

- . Finland along with Iceland is Nordic rather than Scandinavian.
- . This is reflected in their language which is not Germanic in origin.
- . While many social values are the same, there are subtle differences with Scandinavians.

Finnish Egalitarianism

- . Finland is an egalitarian society, which is reflected in their language, which employs gender-neutral words.
- . Finns are very modest and downplay their own accomplishments.
- . They view being humble and modest as virtues.

Finnish Behavior

- . Finns believe there is a proper way to act in any circumstance and always expect courteous behavior.
- . Talk in moderate tones and do not do anything to call attention to yourself.
- . Serial conversation is the rule - i.e. listen to the speaker, wait for them to finish and then reply. Interrupting is rude.

Fancy a Sauna?

- . The sauna has a special role in the domestic life of Finns.
- . It is an experience shared with family and friends.

- . Important business meetings may be followed by a sauna in which the conversation is continued on a more informal basis.
- . Saunas are found everywhere: At the end of calendar year 2002, there were 1,212,000 saunas in private apartments and another 800,000 in summer cottages and public swimming pools. This translates to more than 2,000,000 saunas for a population of 5.2 million.