

FINLAND

In Finland, travelers can experience a myriad of attractions and activities, enriched by none other than the country's history and culture. From the world renowned sauna to shopping and culinary escapades – both traditional country fare and haute-cuisine – and exciting adventures through the magical nature, Finland has something to offer for every traveler.

Helsinki, Finland's capital, is a brilliant illustration of how empire and art nouveau style meets modern design. Named as the World Design Capital in 2012, Helsinki is the base from which Finnish design – characterized by minimalism and clean lines – has flourished over the years.

From Helsinki to the north, there are a myriad of activities that travelers can enjoy. In the southern town of Porvoo, the second-oldest in Finland, travelers can walk along the river lined with medieval brick-red warehouses, or through the town's small historic streets lined with craft shops and interior design stores, stopping at one of the cafes known throughout southern Finland for its sweets and pastries.

In the glistening lake towns and cities of Finland, travelers are surrounded by an oases of clear and clean blue waters. In the summer, go fishing in the country's deep blue lakes, or sail over it as you spot wildlife going about their business, or perhaps hike up the mountains that envelope these luminous waters. In Lakeland in the east, be amazed by Saimaa, Finland's largest lake and home to the Saimaa ringed seal, one of the most endangered species in the world. Head north, and you can admire the dazzling water displays of Savonlinna and from the top of Olavinlinna castle as you listen to the dramatic melodies of a soulful opera. In Finland, you will feel a certain and special closeness with the water, which remains to this day a national concern for the Finns, who have relied on the country's lakes and rivers as a source of food and livelihood these many centuries.

In Lapland, travelers can gain a thorough understanding of the culture of the mysterious north, where the Finnish and Sami people have lived and thrived together for centuries. Lapland's cultural heritage draws its strength from its history and its indigenous people, who have found – despite its often times extreme conditions – the meaningful beauty and simplicity in Arctic living. Here, you can learn about and experience first-hand the Sami culture and the northern Finns' way of life, characterized by harmonizing one's self and activities with the mesmerizing passing of eight – not four – seasons, the midnight sun and a period of total darkness, lit by a pearly moon, the starry sky and the northern lights.

Wherever travelers go, they will find themselves deeply immersed in Finland's light and nature. In the summers, the daylight seems endless, and when the dark months of winter arrive, the skies explode with the magical colors of the northern lights – like a heavenly fox running across the windswept arctic fells with sparks flying from its tail, sweeping up the snow, as the Sami legend often goes.

Travelers will leave Finland with enchanting memories that will last a lifetime.

Did You Know?

- ❖ When traveling through Finland, it's always smart to have with you a fully charged mobile phone, as you won't find a single payphone anywhere.
- ❖ Finland is where you will find some of the world's strangest sports and competitions such as the Wife Carrying World Championship, swamp football, mosquito hunting, rubber boot throwing and even an Air Guitar World Championship!
- ❖ Finland has also contributed to some of the world's best and tasty inventions such as salty licorice, Angry Birds, Molotov cocktail, the SMS, the heart-rate monitor and of course, the sauna, which you can find all over the country. In fact, there are over 2 million saunas in Finland, and for a population of 5.5 million people, this equals to an average of one sauna per household!
- ❖ When driving in Finland, both locals and travelers need to heed extra caution since speeding fines are calculated by the offending driver's annual income – with one unfortunate driver fined over 200,000 Euros for a single speeding offense!
- ❖ You can find one of the world's rarest and most endangered seals in Finland, the Saimaa ringed seal.

