

# Helsinki



Helsinki is a sea-town *par excellence* and an exciting, dynamic place. Half the city seems to be water, and the tortured geography of the coastline includes any number of bays, inlets and a speckling of islands. The harbour is the heart of the city, and watching the giant ferries glide into port is a defining memory and essential Helsinki experience.

Helsinki is cool without – as yet – being self-consciously so. Unlike other capitals, you sense that people go to places because they enjoy them, not to be seen. Much modern décor is ironic and humorous, and achieves stylishness by daring to differ rather than trying too hard.

While not an ancient place, much of what is loveable in Helsinki is older. The style of its glorious Art Nouveau buildings, the spacious elegance of its cafés, the careful preservation of Finnish heritage in its dozens of museums, restaurants that have changed neither menu nor furnishings since the 1930s are all part of the city's quirky charm.

It has a very different feel to the rest of Finland, partly because before the days of the hi-tech society it was the country's sole point of contact almost with the rest of the world.

Like all of Finland, though, Helsinki has a dual nature. In winter you sometimes wonder where all the people are. In spring and summer they are back again, packing green spaces and outdoor tables to get a piece of blessed sun, whirring around on thousands of bicycles and kicking the city's nightlife into overdrive.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Listening to concerts at **Tempeliaukio** (p66), an underground church hewn from solid rock
- Appreciating Finnish art both modern and old at the **Kiasma** (p62) and **Ateneum** (p63)
- Taking the ferry to historic **Suomenlinna** (p84) and walking and picnicking among the ramparts
- Heading out on a boat for a memorable dinner at a convivial **island restaurant** (p77)
- Taking the kids to **Serena Water Park** (p87) in Espoo, one of Europe's best
- Enjoying a leisurely circuit of **Tuusulanjärvi** (p88), the lake where Sibelius lived
- Chuff-chuffing down to lovely Porvoo on the **old steam train** (p91)
- Luxuriating in the summer sun in one of the city's excellent **beer terraces** (p78)



■ POPULATION: 559,046

■ TELEPHONE CODE: 09

## HISTORY

Helsinki was founded in 1550 by King Gustav Vasa, who longed to create a rival to the Hansa trading town of Tallinn. An earlier trial at Ekenäs proved unsuccessful, so by royal decree traders from Ekenäs and a few other towns were bundled off to the newly founded Helsingfors (the Swedish name for Helsinki).

For more than 200 years Helsinki remained a backwater market town on a windy, rocky peninsula. The Swedes built a fortress named Sveaborg in 1748 to protect the eastern part of the empire against Russian attack. Following the war of 1808, the Russians succeeded in taking the fortress and a year later Russia annexed Finland as an autonomous grand duchy. A capital closer to St Petersburg was required, to keep a closer eye on Finland's domestic politics. Helsinki was chosen – in large part because of the sea fortress (now called Suomenlinna) just outside the harbour – and so in 1812 classy Turku lost its long-standing status as Finland's capital and premier town.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, Helsinki grew rapidly in all directions. German architect CL Engel was called on to help design the city centre, which resulted in the stately, neoclassical Senaatintori (Senate Square). The city suffered heavy Russian bombing during WWII, but in the postwar

period Helsinki recovered and went on to host the Summer Olympic Games in 1952.

In the 1970s and 1980s, many new suburbs were built around Helsinki and residents celebrated their 'Helsinki Spirit', a term used for Cold War détente. Since then, Helsinki has prospered as an international city with a flourishing cultural life. It is the seat of national parliament and official home to the president. Its hotels are well-stocked with conference delegates and in 2005 the city hosted the athletics World Championships, which unluckily coincided with some of the worst August rain for decades!

## ORIENTATION

Helsinki is built on a peninsula surrounded by an archipelago of islets; there are links by bridge and ferry with many of them. Surrounding satellite cities include Espoo to the west and Vantaa, with the international airport, to the north – Finland's second and fourth most populous cities respectively, one reason why Helsinki feels much bigger than its population statistic indicates.

## Maps

The city tourist office can supply a good free map of Helsinki, as well as walking and cycling maps and a public transport route map. See *Helsinki On Foot* is the tourist office's free walking guide, while *Helsinki*

## HELSINKI IN...

### Two Days

Head down to one of the cafés on the **Esplanadi** (p77) for a strong Finnish coffee before you take in the atmosphere of the kauppatori (market). A street back from here is the **Tuomiokirkko Lutheran Cathedral** (p66) which dominates Senate Square, and nearby is **Katajanokka Island** (p67), with the stunning Orthodox cathedral, beautiful buildings and tempting eating spots. In the afternoon it's gallery time; the **Ateneum** (p63) showcases the Golden Age of Finnish Art, and **Kiasma** (p62) has a contemporary slant and a great café/bar to finish up in.

Don't hit the town too hard, because the next morning you're on a boat to **Suomenlinna** (p84), perhaps with a picnic lunch if it's a nice day. When you get back, soak in some of the atmosphere of the busy shopping streets Aleksanterinkatu and Mannerheimintie and then continue the nautical theme by heading out to one of the city's excellent **island restaurants** (p77).

### Four Days

With two extra days, you can delve deep into Helsinki's undulating coastline. Head past Hietaniemi Beach to pay homage to music at the **Sibelius Monument** (p70), then take in some traditional architecture at the **Seurasaari open-air museum** (p64). At night, check out what's on at **Storyville** (p81) if you're a jazz person, or **Tavastia** (p81) if you prefer it a little rockier. On your last day, take a trip to **Porvoo** (p88) for its beautiful wooden buildings and gorgeous riverside.

*Your Way* (also free) is a valuable booklet of events and listings.

## INFORMATION

### Bookshops

**Akateeminen Kirjakauppa** (Academic Bookshop; Map p64; ☎ 12141; Pohjoisesplanadi 39; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat, noon-6pm Sun) The biggest bookshop in Finland and the place to go for reading matter. There's a huge travel section, maps, Finnish literature and an impressively large English section.

**Hagelstams Bokhandel** (Map p64; ☎ 649 291; Fredrikinkatu 35; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat) Loveable antiquarian and secondhand bookshop. Rare books plus cheap English paperbacks.

**Karttakeskus Aleksi** (Map p64; ☎ 612 3456; Aleksanterinkatu 26; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat) Map shop. Stocks atlases, road maps, topographical maps and general hiking maps.

## Emergency

**General Emergency** (☎ 112)

**Police** (☎ 10022)

## Internet Access

As well as those listed here, several of the cafés and bars have at least one terminal.

**Ateneum** (Map p64; ☎ 173 361; www.ateneum.fi; Kaivokatu 2; ☎ 9am-6pm Tue & Fri, 9am-8pm Wed & Thu, 11am-5pm Sat & Sun) The art gallery has a peaceful reading room with two free Internet terminals. Access the rear entrance off Yliopistonkatu.

**Level 7** (Map p64; ☎ 673 327; Vilhonkatu 5B; per hr €4; ☎ 1-10pm) Quick access amid salvos of online gunfire.

**Library 10** (Map p64; Main post office bldg; ☎ 3108 5000; Elielinkatu 2; admission free; ☎ 10am-10pm Mon-Thu, 10am-6pm Fri, noon-6pm Sat & Sun, shorter hr summer) Music and IT library on the 1st floor of the main post office, by the railway station. Several half-hour terminals and others bookable by phone.

**mbar** (Map p64; ☎ 6124 5420; Mannerheimintie 22; per hr €5; ☎ 9am-midnight, later at weekends) In the Lasapalatsi complex. Offers good-quality Internet access and has heaps of terminals.

**Rikhardinkadun Library** (Map p64; ☎ 3108 5013; Rikhardinkatu 3; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Thu, 10am-6pm Fri & Sat) The most central of Helsinki's public libraries has a good English-language selection and free Internet terminals.

**TeleCenter** (Map p64; ☎ 670 612; Vuorikatu 8; per hr €2; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Sat, noon-8pm Sun) Slowish but cheap and friendly.

**University of Helsinki Library** (☎ 1912 3196; Unioninkatu 36; Internet free; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat) This impressive library is a serene place with a bank of quiet terminals on the 2nd floor.

## Internet Resources

**www.hel.fi** Excellent Helsinki City website, with links to all the information you might need.

**www.helsinkiexpert.com** Sightseeing tours, accommodation bookings, tickets and events listings.

**www.hkl.fi** Public transportation routes and fares.

**www.visitfinland.com** Information pages of the Finnish Tourist Board.

## Laundry

Most Helsinki hotels offer laundry service and some of the hostels have self-service facilities.

**Easywash** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 406 982; Topeliuksenkatu 21; per load €6-8; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Thu, 10am-6pm Fri & Sat) Self-service laundrette. There's a branch at Kalevankatu 45.

## Left Luggage

At the bus and train station it costs €2/3 for small/large lockers – the large lockers are big enough to hold most backpacks. There are similar lockers and left-luggage counters at the ferry terminals.

## Medical Services

**Maria Hospital** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 3106 3231; Lapinlahdenkatu 16; ☎ 24hr) For emergency medical assistance.

**Töölö Health Station** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 310 5015; Sibeliuskatu 14; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon, 8am-4pm Tue-Fri) A medical centre for non-emergencies.

**Yliopiston Apteekki** Mannerheimintie (Map pp60-1; ☎ 4178 0300; Mannerheimintie 96; ☎ 24hr); City Centre (Map p64; Mannerheimintie 5; ☎ 7am-midnight) The branch in the city centre is more convenient.

## Money

Major banks (with international ATMs) are plentiful and easy to find throughout the city, but the best place to exchange cash or travellers cheques is at the official money-changers, who charge a lower commission. At the airport there's an exchange counter and a 24-hour exchange machine.

**Forex** (Map p64; Mannerheimintie 10; www.forex.fi; ☎ 8am-9pm summer, 8am-7pm Mon-Sat autumn-spring) Offers the best rates, with a flat €2 fee on travellers cheques, and no commission. There are other offices at the train station and on Pohjoisesplanadi.

## Post

**Main post office** (Map p64; ☎ 020-451 4400; Mannerheiminaukio 1; ☎ 7am-9pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun) The post office is in the large building between the bus and train stations. The adjacent poste restante office holds mail for a month.

**HELSINKI**

**INFORMATION**

- American Embassy.....1 F6
- Australian Consulate.....2 D3
- British Embassy.....(see 1)
- Easywash.....3 C1
- Easywash.....4 D4
- Estonian Embassy.....5 F5
- Finnsov Tours.....6 C3
- French Embassy.....(see 1)
- Latvian Embassy.....7 D6
- Maria Hospital.....8 C4
- Norwegian Embassy.....9 D6
- Russian Embassy.....10 F5
- Seksuvaalinen tasavertaisuus.....11 C4
- Töölö Health Station.....12 C2
- Yliopiston Aptekki pharmacy.....13 C1

**SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES**

- Boat Hire.....14 D2
- Brahen kenttä.....15 E1
- Burgher's House.....16 F3
- Cygnaeus Gallery.....17 F5
- Design Museum.....18 E5
- Finlandia Talo.....19 D3
- Hakasalmi Villa.....20 D3
- Helsinki Zoo.....21 H3
- Icebreaker Fleet.....22 G4
- Kansallismuseo.....23 D3
- Kotiharjun Sauna.....24 F1
- LinnaMäki.....25 D1
- Mannerheim Museum.....26 F5
- Maritime Museum.....27 H3
- Museum of Worker Housing.....28 E1
- Natural History Museum.....29 D3
- Olympic Stadium, Sports Museum of Finland.....30 C1
- Olympic Swimming Stadium.....31 D1
- Parliament House.....32 D3
- St John's Church.....33 E5
- Sibelius Monument.....34 B2
- Sinebrychoff Museum of Foreign Art.....35 D5
- Tempeliaukio Church.....36 C3
- Töölönlahti Recreational Centre.....37 D1
- Tram Museum.....38 C1
- Uspenski Cathedral.....39 F4

**SLEEPING**

- Academica Summer Hostel.....40 C4
- Accome Töölö.....41 D3
- Eurohostel.....42 G4
- Hilton Helsinki Strand.....43 F2
- Hostel Satakuntatalo.....44 D4
- Hostel Stadion.....45 C1
- Hotel Anna.....46 E5
- Hotel Aurora.....47 D1
- Hotel FinnApartments Fenno.....48 F1
- Hotel Linna.....49 D4
- Hotelli Helka.....50 D3
- Radisson SAS Royal.....51 D4
- Scandic Grand Marina.....52 G4

**EATING**

- Boathouse.....53 E6
- Café Carusel.....54 E6
- Café Ursula.....55 F6
- Kabuki.....56 C4
- Knossos.....57 D5
- Kolme Kruunua.....58 F3
- Konstan Möljä.....59 C5
- Kuu.....60 C2
- Manala.....61 D3
- Mt Everest.....62 D4
- Nokka.....63 F4
- Restaurant Bellevue.....64 F4
- Saslik.....65 E5
- Satkar.....66 D5
- Sea Horse.....67 E5
- Sipuli.....(see 63)
- Sopakeittiö.....68 E2
- Carelia.....69 C2
- Kola.....70 F1
- Room Albert.....71 D4
- Roska Pankki.....72 F1
- Rytmi.....73 E2
- We Got Beef.....74 E5

**ENTERTAINMENT**

- Avis.....85 C4
- DTM.....75 E5
- Finnair Stadium.....76 C1
- Helsingin Jäähalli.....77 C1
- Hightlight.....78 D4
- Juttutupa.....79 E2
- Opera House.....80 D2
- Orion Theatre.....81 D4
- Storyville.....82 D3
- Tavastia & Semi-Final.....83 D4
- Tennispalatsi.....84 D4
- Budget Rent-a-Car.....86 D4
- Hertz.....87 D2
- Kamppi Bus Station (Underground).....88 D4
- Kanava Ferry Terminal.....89 F4
- Katajanokka Ferry Terminal.....90 G4
- Lacara (car rental).....91 F2
- Länsiterminali (West Ferry Terminal).....92 C5
- Olympia Ferry Terminal.....93 F5

**DRINKING**

**TRANSPORT**

0 0.5 miles 1 km

To Seta (1.3km)

To Hartwall Arena (1.5km)

To Uusikaupunki (1.3km)

To Toivoala (1.3km)

To Vantaa Airport (19km); Lahti (105km)

To Directorate of Immigration (50m)

To Itäkeskus swimming hall (8km); Rastila Camping (10km); Porvoo (50km)

To Espoo (12km)

To Kaapelitehdas & Museums (300m)

To Suomenlinna (2km)

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- 96 Olympia Ferry Terminal.....93 F5

**DRINKING**

**TRANSPORT**

## Telephone

**Main telephone office** (Map p64; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) On the 2nd floor in the main post office building. You can place calls from here, but it's cheaper to call overseas using a prepaid phonecard at any public telephone, or even a mobile phone.

**TeleCenter** (Map p64; ☎ 670 612; Vuorikatu 8; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Sat, noon-8pm Sun) A call centre with cabins and cheap international rates, starting from about €0.10 per minute to other European countries.

## Tourist Information

In summer you'll probably see uniformed 'Helsinki Helpers' wandering around in their green bibs – collar these useful multilinguals for any tourist information.

Apart from the tourist office publications, free tourist brochures such as *Helsinki This Week* (published monthly) and *City in English* are available at tourist offices, bookshops and other points around the city.

At **Helsinki Expert** (www.helsinkiexpert.fi) you can find up-to-date information on the Helsinki Card (see right).

**Helsinki City Tourist Office** (Map p64; ☎ 169 3757; www.hel.fi/tourism; Pohjoisesplanadi 19; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat & Sun May-Sep, 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun Oct-Apr) Busy multilingual office with a great quantity of information on the city. Also here is the Helsinki Tour Expert desk where you can book hotel rooms and purchase tickets for train, bus and ferry travel around Finland and for travel to Tallinn and St Petersburg.

**Tikankontti** (Map p64; ☎ 270 5221, 0203-44122; www.metsa.fi; Eteläesplanadi 20; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat) This is the Helsinki office of Metsähallitus, the Finnish Forest and Park Service. It has information and maps for national parks and protected hiking areas and you can buy maps and fishing licences or rent wilderness cottages around the country.

## Travel Agencies

From Helsinki you can easily arrange trips to the Baltic States, Russia and beyond.

**Finnsov Tours** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 436 6960; Museokatu 15) One of the more established operators, providing tours, travel arrangements and help with visas.

**Helsinki Expert** (Map p64; ☎ 2288 1222; www.helsinkiexpert.fi) This is an agency handling travel around Finland and to Tallinn and St Petersburg. It's in the city tourist office.

**Kilroy Travels** (Map p64; ☎ 680 7811; www.kilroytravels.com; Kaiokatu 10C) Specializes in student and budget travel.

**Traveller** (Map p64; ☎ 660 002; www.traveller.fi; Kasarmikatu 26) Specializes in train routes from Helsinki to Russia and beyond on the Trans-Siberian.

## SIGHTS Museums & Galleries

It would take a good few days to get around all of Helsinki's 40 or so museums, and some, such as the **News Museum** (covering the history of Finnish newspapers) and the **Kindergarten Museum** (history of Finnish preschool strategies), are too specialized for most visitors, but there are a few stand-out attractions. For a full list, pick up the *Museums* booklet (free) from the tourist office.

### KIASMA MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

In the curvaceous, quirky chalk-white building designed by Steven Holl is **Kiasma** (Map p64; ☎ 1733 6501; www.kiasma.fi; Mannerheiminaukio 2; adult/under 18yr €5.50/free; ☎ 10am-8.30pm Wed-Sun, 9am-5pm Tue). It opened to much fanfare and controversy in 1998 and exhibits a rapidly growing collection of Finnish and international modern art from the 1960s to the present. The focus is definitely on the offbeat, and changing exhibitions feature striking visual arts and media exhibits with some bizarre themes. There's a growing permanent collection on the 3rd floor and a theatre with a changing programme (tickets usually cost extra) on the ground floor, where you can also check out the cool handwritten clock outside the good museum shop.

Kiasma is a popular local meeting point in summer – its café and beer terrace are hugely popular, locals sunbathe on the

### HELSINKI CARD

If you intend to do some serious sightseeing, or even have a few particular places picked out, the Helsinki Card can save you money. This pass entitles you to urban travel, entry to more than 50 attractions in and around Helsinki and discounts on day tours to Porvoo and Tallinn. A card valid for 24/48/72 hours costs €25/35/45 for adults and €10/13/16 for children (7 to 16). You will need lots of planning to save money; only consider it if you are going to take the sightseeing bus tour to Suomenlinna and see several museums in a hurry. Buy the card (and a brochure outlining the discounts) at the city tourist office or at hotels, R-kiosks and transport terminals.

grassy fringes and skateboarders do their thing around the Mannerheim statue.

Behind the Kiasma is the **Sanomatalo** (Map p64), the HQ of the famous Helsinki daily, the *Helsingin Sanomat*. Designed by Sarlotta Narjus and Antti-Matti Sikula, it's a glassy, cool space that has exhibitions as well as popular shops, bars and cafés.

### KANSALLISMUSEO

The impressive **Kansallismuseo** (National Museum of Finland; Map pp60-1; ☎ 4050 9544; www.kansallismuseo.fi; Mannerheimintie 34; adult/child €5.50/free; ☎ 11am-8pm Tue-Wed, 11am-6pm Thu-Sun), just north of the mausoleum-like parliament building, looks a bit like a Gothic church with its heavy stonework and tall square tower. It was actually designed and built specifically as a museum in National Romantic style and opened in 1916, but was extensively renovated in 2000. The museum is divided into rooms covering different periods of Finnish history, including pre-historic and archaeological finds, church relics, ethnography and cultural exhibitions. The superb frescoes on the ceiling arches (by Akseli Gallen-Kallela) depict scenes from the epic *Kalevala*, including one of the hero Väinämöinen plunging a stake into the giant pike.

### ATENEUM

The list of painters at the **Ateneum** (Map p64; ☎ 173 361; www.ateneum.fi; Kaiokatu 2; adult/student/child €7.50/6.50/free; ☎ 9am-6pm Tue & Fri, 9am-8pm Wed & Thu, 11am-5pm Sat & Sun) reads like a 'who's who' of Finnish art. It houses Finnish paintings and sculptures from the 18th century to the 1950s including works by Albert Edelfelt, Akseli Gallen-Kallela, the Von Wright brothers and Pekka Halonen. Pride of place goes to the prolific Gallen-Kallela's triptych from the *Kalevala* depicting Väinämöinen's pursuit of the maiden Aino. There's also a small but interesting collection of 19th- and early-20th-century foreign art. Downstairs is a café, good bookshop and reading room. The building itself dates from 1887.

### SINEBRYCHOFF MUSEUM OF FOREIGN ART

The largest collection of classic European paintings in Finland is on the premises of the old **brewery** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 1733 6460; Bulvardi 40; admission €3, with exhibitions €7; ☎ 10am-

6pm Tue & Fri, 10am-8pm Wed-Thu, 11am-5pm Sat & Sun), which also has excellent temporary exhibitions. The main collection is primarily Italian, Flemish and Swedish in origin and includes period rooms furnished in Gustavian style and collections of porcelain and crystal.

### KAAPELITEHDAS

The massive **Kaapelitehdas** (Cable Factory; ☎ 4763 8305; www.kaapelitehdas.fi; Tallberginkatu 1C), off Porkkalankatu and on the way to Espoo, was once used for manufacturing sea cable and later became Nokia's main factory until the 1980s. It's now a bohemian cultural centre featuring studios, galleries, concerts, theatre and dance performances. Take tram 8, bus 15, 20, 21, 65A or 66A, or the metro to Ruoholahti stop.

There are several museums here, including the **Finnish Museum of Photography** (☎ 6866 3621; adult/child €5/free; ☎ noon-7pm Tue-Sun), which mounts interesting temporary photographic exhibitions.

### CYGNAEUS GALLERY

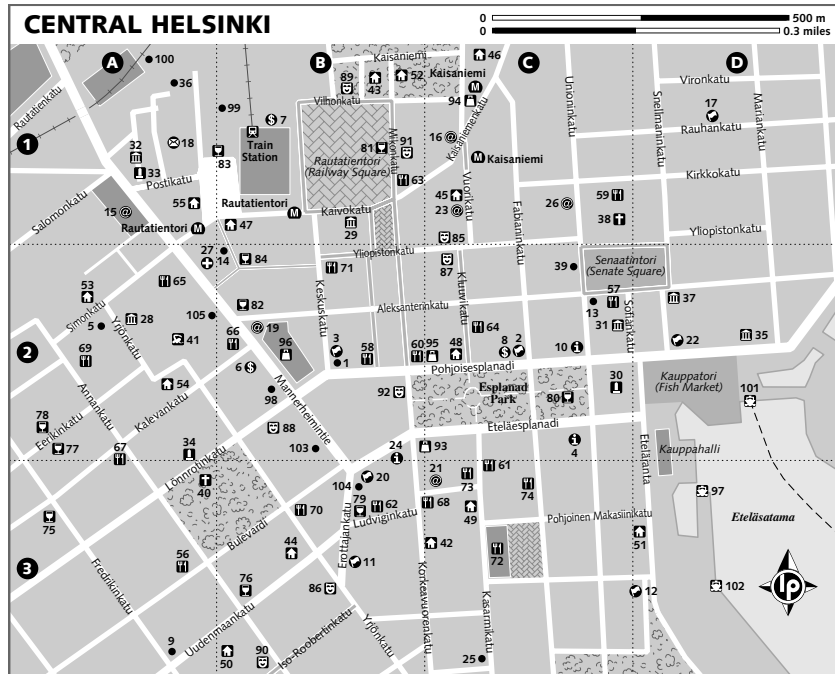
If you're looking for Finnish art from the 19th century, this **gallery** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 4050 9628; www.nba.fi; Kallioliinantie 8; adult/child €3/free; ☎ 11am-7pm Wed, 11am-4pm Thu-Sun) is a great place to go. It opened in 1882 and is one of Finland's oldest art galleries. It's in an attractive wooden building (built in 1870) in Kaivopuisto Park, close to the Mannerheim Museum.

### AMOS ANDERSON ART MUSEUM

The city centre **Amos Anderson Art Museum** (Map p64; ☎ 684 4460; Yrjönkatu 27; adult/child €7/free; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat & Sun) houses the collection of publishing magnate Amos Anderson, one of the wealthiest Finns of his time. It includes Finnish and European paintings and sculptures from the 15th century to the present, furnished rooms as well as special exhibitions.

### MANNERHEIM MUSEUM

This fascinating **museum** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 635 443; Kallioliinantie 14; admission €7; ☎ 11am-4pm Fri-Sun & by appointment) in Kaivopuisto Park was the home of CGE Mannerheim, former president, Commander in Chief of the Finnish army and Civil War victor. Among the souvenirs from Mannerheim's life are



hundreds of military medals, as well as photographs from his trip to Asia when he travelled 14,000km along the Silk Route from Samarkand to Beijing, riding the same faithful horse for two years. Entry includes a mandatory but enthusiastic guided tour (around one hour) in one of six languages, and free plastic booties to keep the hal- lowed floor clean.

#### SEURASAARI OPEN-AIR MUSEUM

West of the centre, Seurasaari is an open-air museum (☎ 4050 9660; adult/child €5/free; 🕒 11am-5pm mid-Sep-mid-May, 11am-7pm Wed Jun-Aug, 9am-3pm Mon-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat & Sun late May & early Sep) with 18th- and 19th-century traditional houses, manors and outbuildings from around Finland. Guides dressed in traditional costume demonstrate folk dancing and crafts such as spinning, embroidery and troll-making. There are guided tours in English at 11.30am and 3.30pm. You'll find similar sorts of museums all over Finland but this is up there with the best. It's also a venue for Helsinki's biggest Midsummer bonfires. Take bus 24 from the central train station.

#### URHO KEKKONEN MUSEUM

Worth visiting on a trip to Seurasaari, this large house (☎ 4050 9650; Seurasaarentie 15, Tamminiemi; adult/child €4/free; 🕒 11am-5pm Thu-Sun, 11am-7pm Wed, 11am-5pm Mon & Tue mid-May-mid-Aug) was a presidential residence for 30 years, right up until Urho Kekkonen's death, when it was turned into a museum. A visit includes a guided tour and the house is surrounded by a beautiful park. While here, don't miss the Tamminiementien café (see p77). From central Helsinki, take bus 24, or tram 4 and walk.

#### KAUPUNGINMUSEO

A group of small museums scattered around the city centre constitute the Kaupunginmuseo (www.helsinkiitymuseum.fi; admission per museum adult/child €3/free, free Thu). All buildings focus on an aspect of the city's past or present. Check opening hours before setting out, as these change with bewildering frequency: **Burgher's House** (Ruiskumestarintalo; Map pp60-1; ☎ 135 1065; Kristianinkatu 12; 🕒 11am-4pm Sun-Thu Jun-Aug & Dec) Built in 1818, this is the oldest wooden townhouse in central Helsinki.

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mbar.....	(see 15)	Hotel Cumulus Seurahuone.....	47 B1
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**Hakasalmi Villa** (Hakasalmenhuvila; Map pp60-1; ☎ 169 3444; Mannerheimintie 13; 🕒 11am-4pm Sun-Thu mid-Jul-mid-Jun) Exhibition on Helsinki and thematic temporary displays.

**Helsinki City Museum** (Map p64; ☎ 169 3933; Sofiankatu 4; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat & Sun) Just south of Senate Square, has a historical exhibition and films about Helsinki.

**Museum of Worker Housing** (Työväenasantomuseo; Map pp60-1; ☎ 146 1039; Kiristinkuja 4; 🕒 11am-4pm Sun-Thu Jun-Aug) Shows how industrial workers lived in the early 20th century.

**Sederholm House** (Map p64; ☎ 169 3265; Aleksanterinkatu 18; 🕒 11am-4pm Sun-Thu Aug-Jun) Helsinki's oldest brick building dates from 1757 and is furnished to suit a wealthy 18th-century merchant.

**Tram Museum** (Raitoliikennemuseo; Map pp60-1; ☎ 169 3576; Töölönkatu 51A; 🕒 11am-4pm Sun-Thu Aug-May) This delightful museum, in an old tram depot,

displays vintage trams and depicts daily life in Helsinki's streets in past decades.

**Tuomarinkylä Museum & Children's Museum** (Lastenmuseo; Map p85; ☎ 728 7458; Tuomarinkylä; 🕒 11am-4pm Sun-Thu mid-Mar-Jul & Sep-Dec) Not far from the airport, this pair of museums occupies an 18th-century manor house and shows the city through the life of a modern family and a child. From central Helsinki take bus 64 to its terminus and walk 1km.

#### DESIGN MUSEUM

This museum (Map pp60-1; ☎ 622 0540; Korkeavuorenkatu 23; adult/child €7/free; 🕒 11am-6pm Tue-Sun, also Mon Jun-Aug, 11am-8pm Tue Sep-May) has a permanent collection and hosts changing exhibitions, mostly focusing on contemporary domestic and industrial design – everything from household furniture and appliances to tools.

## NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

The **Natural History Museum** (Luonnontieteellinen Museo; Map pp60-1; ☎ 1912 8800; Pohjoinen Rautatiekatu 13; admission €4.20; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Fri, 11am-4pm Sat & Sun) houses the University of Helsinki's extensive collection of mammals, birds and other creatures – about seven million specimens in all, including all Finnish species. There's a good exhibition of dinosaur skeletons too.

## POSTIMUSEO

The **Post Museum** (Map p64; ☎ 020-451 4908; Asemakio 5; adult/child €4/free; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 11am-4pm Sat & Sun), in the main post office building next to the train station, may sound a bit dull, but it contains a fascinating collection of stamps, computerised data banks and other hi-tech exhibits.

## SPORTS MUSEUM OF FINLAND

The **sports museum** (Map pp60-1; Urheilumuseo; ☎ 434 2250; Olympiastadion; admission €3.50; ☎ 11am-5pm Mon-Fri, noon-4pm Sat & Sun), in the 1952 Olympic Stadium, houses Finland's 'sporting hall of fame' and looks at the triumphs and defeats of its sporting heroes. Trams 3B, 3T, 4, 7A, 7B and 10 from the city centre all run past it.

Also here is the **Stadium Tower** (Stadion Tornii; admission €2; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat & Sun). Although the viewing platform and lift seemingly haven't been touched up since the Games, the views from the 72m-high platform are great. Don't lob coins from the top; a Lonely Planet correspondent was nearly brained recently by a misdirected rouble...

## Churches

Presiding proudly over Senate Square, the chalk-white neoclassical **Tuomiokirkko** (Lutheran Cathedral; Map p64; ☎ 709 2455; Unioninkatu 29; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, noon-6pm Sun Sep-May, 9am-midnight Jun-Aug) was designed by CL Engel but not completed until 1852, 12 years after his death. It towers high at the top of a flight of stairs, a favourite meeting place and the scene of New Year's revelry. The interior has statues of the Reformation heroes Luther, Melancthon and Michael Agricola; true to their ideals, there is little other ornamentation under the lofty dome. There's a café in the brick-vaulted crypt.

The unmistakable red-brick **Uspenski Cathedral** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 634 267; Kanavakatu 1;

☎ 9.30am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-2pm Sat, noon-3pm Sun, closed Mon Oct-Apr) is equally imposing on nearby Katajanokka island. The two cathedrals face each other high above the city like two queens on a theological chessboard. Built as a Russian Orthodox church in Byzantine-Slavonic style in 1868, this church features classic onion-topped domes and now serves the Finnish Orthodox congregation, many of whom are of Karelian descent. The high, square interior has a lavish iconostasis with the Evangelists flanking panels depicting the Last Supper and the Ascension. There are Orthodox services at 6pm on Saturday and 10am Sunday, well worth attending as a discreet visitor for the fabulous chorals and candlelit atmosphere.

**Tempelliaukio Church** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 494 698; Lutherinkatu 3; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat, noon-1.45pm & 3.30-6pm Sun), designed by Timo and Tuomo Suomalainen in 1969, remains one of Helsinki's foremost attractions. Hewn into solid rock, the church symbolises the modern innovativeness of Finnish religious architecture and features a stunning 24m-diameter roof covered in 22km of copper stripping. There are regular concerts, with great acoustics; the entrance is at the northern end of Fredrikinkatu.

The oldest church in Helsinki is the white wood **Vanha Kirkko** (Map p64; Lönnrotinkatu), designed by CL Engel. Its graveyard, where once plague victims were buried, has been converted into a public park. Opposite the church is a **memorial** to Elias Lönnrot, compiler of the *Kalevala* epic. Depicting Lönnrot flanked by his most famous character, 'steady old Väinämöinen', it was sculpted by Emil Wikström.

Helsinki's largest church is the soaring twin-spired neo-Gothic **St John's Church** (Map pp60-1; St John's Park, off Korkeavuorenkatu).

## Beaches & Cemeteries

Helsinki has several city beaches, of which the best is **Hietaranta**, a likeable stretch of sand just west of the centre. It's a great place to be in the afternoon and evening sun and there are those Finnish summer stalwarts nearby: a beer terrace and minigolf. The nicest way to get here is to stroll from Meckelininkatu west through the **Hietaniemi cemetery**. Finnish cemeteries are beautiful and designed to be walked in; this has Orthodox, Jewish and Muslim sections as well as the Lutheran.

## Parks & Gardens

The **City Winter Gardens** (Talvipuutarha; Map pp60-1; Hammarskjöldintie 1; admission free; ☎ noon-3pm Tue-Fri, noon-4pm Sat & Sun) were founded in 1893 and are elaborate greenhouses containing cacti, palms, and other sun-loving plants foreign to Finnish soil. They are surrounded by a botanical garden, including a spectacular display of roses. Take tram 8 from Ruoholahti metro or Töölö. Closer to the centre, the **University botanical gardens** (Unioninkatu 44; admission free) comprises Finland's largest botanical collection, with classic 19th-century hothouses, a café and a park.

## LINNAMÄKI

The **Linnanmäki amusement park** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 020-385 677; www.linnanmaki.fi; Tivolikuja 1; adult €26, child day pass €14-16, entry only €3.50; ☎ 11am-10pm May-early Sep), on a hill just north of Kallio suburb, has all the usual kid-pleasing rides including a rollercoaster. Its profits are donated to child welfare organizations. Day passes allow unlimited rides, or you can enter free of charge and then buy individual ride tickets (€4.50). Also here is **Sea Life** (adult/child €12.50/9.50; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-8pm Wed, 10am-5pm Sun Jun-Sep, 10am-5pm Oct-May), a state-of-the-art aquarium. Bus 23 or trams 3B, 3T or 8 take you to Linnanmäki.

## Helsinki Zoo & Maritime Museum

The spacious **Helsinki Zoo** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 169 5969; adult/child €5/3, with ferry ride €8/4.50; ☎ 10am-8pm May-Sep, 10am-4pm Oct-Feb, 10am-6pm Mar-Apr) is located on Korkeasaari – best reached by ferry from the kauppatori. Established in 1889, it has animals and birds from Finland and around the world housed in large natural enclosures, as well as a tropical house, small farm and a good café and terrace.

Ferries leave from the kauppatori and from Hakaniemi every 30 minutes or so in summer and Zoo bus 11 goes from Herttoniemi metro station. This bus also runs at weekends in winter, otherwise it's bus 16 or the metro to Kulosaari and walk 1.5km through the island of Mustikkamaa.

On the adjoining Hylkysaari, and only accessible by bridge from Korkeasaari, is the **Maritime Museum of Finland** (Suomen Merimuseo; Map pp60-1; ☎ 4050 9051; adult/child €2.50/free; ☎ 11am-5pm May-Sep). It's housed in a historic harbour building and has exhibitions on Finnish ship-building and seafaring.

## Katajanokka Island

Just east of the kauppatori, this island (Map pp60-1) is divided from the mainland by a narrow canal and is one of the city's most enjoyable places to stroll. It's a paradise of upmarket Jugendstil residential buildings with extravagant turrets and curious carvings galore. While the south side of the island has two of the major ferry terminals, the other side is more peaceful, with the Engel-designed Foreign Ministry looking out over the impressively functional fleet of icebreakers. At the western end of the island, the Uspenski Cathedral looks over a leisure harbour and a series of warehouses attractively converted into enticing restaurants and bars.

The tourist office's excellent brochure *See Helsinki on Foot* (free) has a self-guided walk around Katajanokka island.

## ACTIVITIES

No visit to Helsinki is complete without a sauna and swim at the **Yrjönkadun Uimahalli** (Map p64; ☎ 3108 7401; Yrjönkatu 21; admission €4-11; ☎ men 6.30am-9pm Tue, Thu, Sat, women noon-9pm Sun & Mon, 6.30am-9pm Wed & Fri). This sleek Art Deco complex was first opened in 1928 and its powerful Nordic elegance has been beautifully restored. There are separate hours for men and women and bathing suits are optional in the pool and not allowed in the saunas.

Helsinki has several public swimming pools with inexpensive admission. Most convenient is the outdoor **Olympic Swimming Stadium** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 3108 7854; Hammarskjöldintie; admission €3; ☎ May-Sep). There are also saunas here and you can rent towels and swimwear. However, the most impressive pool is the **Itäkeskus swimming hall** (☎ 3108 7202; Olavinlinnantie 6; admission €4.50; ☎) – take the metro to Itäkeskus station, walk east for a block and turn left at Olavinlinnantie. The entirely underground complex is carved from rock and was designed to double as a bomb shelter.

**Rollerblading** is popular, especially in Kai-vopuisto park and around Töölönlahti, the pretty bay north of the station. Skates can be hired at **Töölönlahti Recreational Centre** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 4776 9760; Mäntymäentie 1).

For information on bike rental see p83. The bike and skate route map, *Helsingin Pyöräilykartta*, is free at the city tourist office.

### SOMETHING SPECIAL

One of Helsinki's most memorable experiences is the venerable **Kotiharjun Sauna** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 753 1535; Harjutorinkatu 1; admission €7; 🕒 2-8pm Tue-Fri, 1-7pm Sat, sauna time until 10pm). In a quiet street in the Kallio district, this is a historic public sauna fired by enormous wood furnaces that take four hours to warm up and then keep the heat up all day. It's a gloriously traditional place, with antique lockers, décor unchanged since it opened in 1928 and separate men's and women's sections. You can even opt to be cleaned off by a sturdy old scrubbing-woman. The wood sauna has a completely different feel and aroma to the usual electric ones; spank yourself with a birch *vihta* to massage the skin and help the cleaning process, and afterwards it's the custom to have a beer out on the street terrace – clad only in a towel of course!

In winter, **Brahen kenttä** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 753 2932; Helsinginkatu 23; admission €2, skate rental €4; 🕒 Nov-Mar) is a great natural outdoor area where public skating is arranged; it feels like a nostalgic Northern European film!

### HELSINKI WALKING & CYCLING TOUR

The following tour is a combination of walking and cycling – if you're on foot you'll probably want to stick to the central Helsinki area, but with a bike it's a breeze to get out to Seurasaari, west of the city.

The starting point for any tour of Helsinki is the bustling **kauppatori** (1; p82), also known as the fish market. It is surrounded by graceful 19th-century buildings – some of only a few remaining in the city after the devastation of WWII. The stone obelisk topped by a golden eagle is the **Tsarina's Stone** (2), Helsinki's oldest monument, unveiled in 1835 in honour of a visit by Tsar Nicholas I and Tsarina Alexandra.

**Havis Amanda** (3), the lovely mermaid statue and fountain just west of the fish market, was designed in 1908 by one of Finland's most beloved artists, Ville Vallgren. The statue, also known as 'Manta', is commonly regarded as the symbol of Helsinki. During **Vappu** (May Day) students gather here to celebrate the coming of spring.

Across from the kauppatori is the **Presidential Palace** (4), guarded by colourful sentries. This is the president's official Helsinki residence – at the time of writing home to Tarja Halonen, Finland's first woman president.

Heading east, cross the footbridge onto Katajanokka Island to visit the Orthodox **Uspenski Cathedral** (5; p66) on a hill above the harbour. This very photogenic red brick church is one of the most recognisable landmarks in Helsinki. **Katajanokka** itself is well worth a stroll if you have the time – many

of its narrow streets have fine Art Nouveau residential buildings.

Back on the mainland, turn right along Sofiankatu, a narrow cobbled street with interpretive boards explaining some early Helsinki history. It leads to **Senaatintori** (6), Helsinki's 'official' centre. The **statue of Tsar Alexander II** in Senaatintori was cast in 1894 and symbolises the strong Russian influence in 19th-century Helsinki.

Engel's stately chalk-white, blue-domed **Tuomiokirkko** (Lutheran Cathedral; p66), completed in 1852, is the square's most prominent feature and Helsinki's most recognisable building. The main **University of Helsinki** building is on the west side of Senaatintori and the university's magnificent **library** is a little farther north along Unioninkatu. Two of Helsinki's museums, the **Helsinki City Museum** (p65) and **Sederholm House** (p65) are along the south side of the square.

Walking back to Pohjoisesplanadi, you're in the pleasant **Esplanad Park** (7), with a cobbled avenue and grassy verges. It's a favourite summer spot and there's often live music here. The Esplanad leads to the city's broad main thoroughfare, Mannerheimintie. On the northeast corner is the famous **Stockmann department store** (8; p82), where seemingly every Helsinkian buys everything.

Continue two blocks north on Mannerheimintie to **Kiasma** (9; p62), the daring Museum of Contemporary Art. An **equestrian statue** of Marshal CGE Mannerheim, the most revered of Finnish leaders, dominates the square next to the museum. Protests by war veterans delayed the building of Kiasma by almost a decade because many felt that it would degrade Mannerheim's memory to build a modern art gallery on the site – ironically, the Marshal was an avid collector of avant-garde art in his day.

Detour two blocks east to the Soviet-sized Rautatietori (Railway Square), where you'll find the train station, naturally, as well as the National Gallery, **Ateneum** (10; p63). The museum building, long a work-in-progress, was completed in 1991. The train station itself is a masterpiece of the Finnish National Romantic style.

Return to Mannerheimintie and continue walking northwest. The monolithic 1931

**Parliament House** (11; ☎ 4321; Mannerheimintie 30; admission free; 🕒 guided tours 11am and noon Sat, noon and 1pm Sun, also 1pm Mon-Fri Jul-Aug) dominates this stretch. A little further up Mannerheimintie, on the right, is one of Alvar Aalto's most famous works, the angular **Finlandia Talo** (12; visiting info ☎ 40241, box office ☎ 402 4400; Mannerheimintie 13; guided tours €6), a concert hall built in 1971. Opening hours depends on events, ring for information.

At this point you can detour west along Museokatu and Aurorankatu to Tempelikaatu where you'll find **Tempelliäukio Church** (13; p66), a modern church hewn from solid rock.

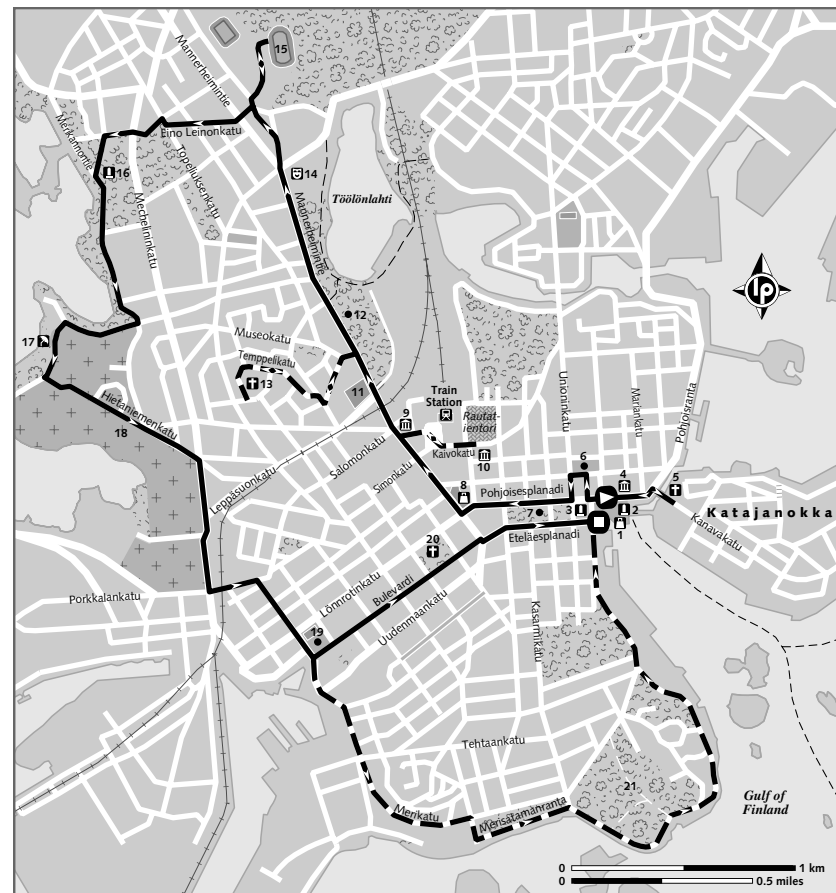
A few blocks further north on Mannerheimintie is the 1993 **Opera House** (14; p81),

### TOUR FACTS

**Start & end** kauppatori

**Distance** 8km

**Duration** 3hr



home of the Finnish National Opera. Continue a short distance north on Mannerheimintie to the 1952 **Olympic Stadium (15; p66)**. For some of the best views of Helsinki, take a lift to the top of the 72m Stadium Tower.

From the stadium, walk or cycle west to Sibelius park and the **Sibelius monument (16)**. This kinetic sculpture was created by artist Eila Hiltunen in 1967 to honour Finland's most famous composer, Jean Sibelius. Bus 24 from the park can take you northwest to the **Seurasaaari Open-Air Museum (p64)**, or south to the intersection of Mannerheimintie and Pohjoisesplanadi, its terminus.

Alternatively, continue walking or riding around the coast road to **Hietaranta Beach (17; p66)**, Helsinki's most popular beach. Heading back towards the city centre through the peaceful **Hietaniemi Cemetery (18; p66)**, you'll reach **Hietalahti square (19)** which has its own kauppahalli (covered markets) and a popular flea market (p82). From here you can return to the city centre along Bulevardi, pausing in the summer park where there's a lovely church, **Vanha Kirkko (20; p66)**.

Alternatively, continue around past the West Harbour to the south of the penin-

sula, following the waterfront to **Kaivopuisto park (21)**, a favourite place for Finns to picnic and laze around in summer. Note the small wooden jetties, erected for households to wash their rugs, a very typical and traditional ritual of the Finnish summer. Continuing along the waterfront you pass the Olympia ferry terminal and eventually arrive back at the kauppatori.

## HELSINKI FOR CHILDREN

Helsinki is an excellent place to visit with young ones, particularly in summer when boat trips, amusement parks and outdoor events are all in operation. Finland is a child-friendly society and just about every hotel and restaurant will be keen to help out.

Nearly every accommodation choice will have either family rooms or the option of extra beds at minimal additional cost. Even the business-type hotels will cheerfully explain how the sofa in their executive-class rooms folds out into a child-size bed.

There are plenty of activities that will interest most children. The harbour ferries are an obvious attraction, with both the zoo and Suomenlinna island reached this way. Linnanmäki amusement park (p67) is a

long-standing Finnish family favourite and it now has an on-site aquarium to add to the appeal. The Serena Water Park in Espoo (see p87) is also guaranteed to please.

Many museums make a big effort to interact with children and often offer free admission. On Suomenlinna, there is a toy museum as well as a submarine to visit; the Tram Museum, Children's Museum, Sports Museum and Natural History Museum will also appeal to various ages. The Heureka Science Centre (p87) in Vantaa is also a winner.

The beaches on Suomenlinna and at Hietaniemi are particularly safe, while there are playgrounds in both Kaivopuisto park and Töölönlahti bay.

## TOURS

**Helsinki Expert** (☎ 2288 1600; adult/child €20/10, with Helsinki Card €8; 🗺 on the hour 10am-2pm in summer, 11am in winter) runs excellent 90-minute sightseeing bus tours. They depart from the Esplanad, near the tourist office, and taped commentary (in 11 languages) is via a headset. A similar route runs from the Olympic ferry terminal daily at 10.30am via the Katajanokka terminal (10.45am). The same company offers walking tours and tailored group tours.

**Open Top Tours** (☎ 050-430 2050; per trip €22, with Helsinki Card €10) also has hop-on hop-off tours aboard an open-top double decker bus. Tours leave from the kauppatori, follow a similar route to the Helsinki Expert and also have headphone commentary. It costs €22 or €10 with the Helsinki Card.

There are also several types of guided walking tours in summer, usually given once a week. Inquire at the city tourist office.

## Cruises

Strolling through the kauppatori in summer, you won't have to look for cruises – the boat companies will find you. **Royal Line** (☎ 170 488), **Sun Lines** (☎ 727 7010; www.sunlines.fi) and a number of smaller companies offer 90-minute sea and canal **cruises** (adult/child €16/8) with regular daily departures in summer. The trip around the island of Laajasalo, run by Sun Lines, is probably the most interesting. There are also lunch and dinner cruises.

A visit to the Helsinki Zoo (p67) or Suomenlinna sea fortress (p84) is a good way to combine a scenic boat ride with other sightseeing (and they're both free with the Helsinki Card). There are also longer day-

cruises by ferry and steamer from Helsinki to the Finnish town Porvoo; see p91.

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

**Vappu** (May Day) The festival of students and workers is taken very seriously in Helsinki – on 30 April at 6pm people gather in the centre around the Havis Amanda statue, which receives a white 'student cap'.

**Ice Hockey World Championships** (www.ihwc.net) Often televised on a big screen under a tent on Rautatientori in May – there's a great atmosphere here, especially if Finland makes the finals.

**Regional Fair** (www.hel.fi) Held in early June, this festival spotlights a different region of Finland each year.

**Helsinki Day** (www.hel.fi/helsinkipaiva) Celebrating the city's anniversary brings many free and cheap activities to Esplanad Park on June 12.

**Latin American Carnival** (www.hel.fi) An important music festival held in mid-June.

**Ankkarock** (www.ankkarock.fi) Rock festival held in Vantaa in early August.

**Koneisto Festival of Electronic Music and Arts** (www.koneisto.com) Held in mid-August at various locations around the city.

**Helsinki Festival** (Helsingin Juhlaviikot; ☎ 6126 5100; www.helsinginjuhlaviikot.fi; Mannerheimintie 22-24) From late August to early September, this elaborate arts festival features chamber music, jazz, theatre, opera and more. Tickets range from €10 to €45.

**Baltic Herring Market** (www.hel.fi) In early October a 200-year-old tradition takes place at the kauppatori.

**Etnosoi** (www.globalmusic.fi) Helsinki hosts an ethnic music festival in early November.

**Lucia Parade** Christmas is a special time in Helsinki with the big parade starting at 6pm in Senate Square on December 13.

## SLEEPING

Bookings are advisable for Helsinki hostels and hotels from mid-May to mid-August, although July is usually a quiet time for mid-range and top-end hotels. The **Hotel Booking Centre** (☎ 2288 1400; hotel@helsinkiexpert.fi; 🗺 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat, 10am-6pm Sun Jun-Aug, 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat Sep-May) in the central hall of the train station can help. There's also a branch at the city tourist office. There's a small booking fee, but room rates are often cheaper than you would get on your own.

## Budget

**Academia Summer Hostel** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 1311 4334; www.hostelacademia.fi; Hietaniemenkatu 14; dm €18, standard s/d up to €40/60, modern s/d up to €55/75, HI discount; 🗺 Jun-Aug; 📞 📧 📺 📺) Finnish

## GAY & LESBIAN HELSINKI

Helsinki has an active and permissive gay and lesbian scene, which, while not quite as lively as Copenhagen or Stockholm, has a number of good venues ranging from the scene-y to the relaxed. Most are in the cool Punavuori section of town, around Iso-Roobertinkatu.

The best place to start is to pick up the *Gay Guide* from the tourist office. This is updated yearly and has listings of bars, clubs, events, saunas and shops. It's also online at [www.z-lehti.fi/queerguide.htm](http://www.z-lehti.fi/queerguide.htm).

For more information, contact the Helsinki branch of **Seta** (☎ 681 2580; www.seta.fi; Mannerheimintie 170), the national GLB&T organization located about 4km north of the centre.

## Bars & Clubs

**DTM** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 676 315; Iso Roobertinkatu 28; 🗺 9am-4am Mon-Sat, noon-4am Sun; 📺) Scandinavia's biggest gay club is a multilevel complex and has an early-opening café/bar, one of the most popular spots on this busy bar street. There are a couple of club areas opening at 9pm (there's a minimum age of 22 and a Saturday cover charge) and there are regular club nights as well as drag shows or women-only sessions.

**Con Hombres** (Map p64; ☎ 608 826; Eerinkinkatu 14; 🗺 2pm-2am) A relaxed sort of place with a terrace. It's a good spot to chat to people earlier on; the Eurovision music gets louder as the night wears on.

**Hercules** (Map p64; ☎ 612 1776; www.herculesgayclub.com; Lönnrotinkatu 4; 🗺 9pm-4am) A busy disco, mainly men but with some women too. Classic dancefloor hits.

**Room Albert** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 643 626; Kalevankatu 36; www.roombar.fi; 🗺 2pm-2am) A new, cool, bar for gay men with plenty of Eurochic style and savvy sounds.



students live in luxury given the mould-ridden hovels that pass muster elsewhere in the world, which makes this a very attractive budget choice during summer. It's got friendly staff, great facilities, free parking and a swimming pool, not on offer at most of the five-star hotels around the place. All rooms are light and spacious and have their own bathroom, simple kitchen, and beds with crisp white sheets.

**Eurohostel** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 622 0470; www.eurohostel.fi; Linnankatu 9; dm €23-26, s €38-40, d €46-51, tr €69-76; ☒ ☑ ☐) Right by the ferry terminals, this HI-affiliate is one of the new brand of hostels that places a premium on treating guests well and providing good conveniences. While the building is somewhat institutional, it more than makes up for it with cheery rooms that come in two categories; the Eurohostel rooms are well worth the extra couple of coins it costs to upgrade. There's also a surprisingly smart café downstairs, doing a breakfast buffet (€6.30), pizzas and cheap lunches (€7.90).

**Hostel Erottajanpuisto** (Map p64; ☎ 642 169; www.erottajanpuisto.com; Uudenmaankatu 9; dm €25, s/d €46/60, HI discount; ☒ ☑ ☐) This is the most laid-back budget accommodation in Helsinki and has a good location on a lively street close to the heart of the city. It's a social sort of place with a likeably chaotic feel, and while the bunk dorms feel a little overpriced, it's worth paying if you appreciate a gregarious atmosphere more than a fistful of facilities.

**Rastila** (☎ 321 6551; www.hel.fi/liiv; Karavaanikatu 4; tent sites €11-17, 2-person cabins €37-43, 4-person cabins €52-62, cottage with/without sauna €165/100; ☐ ☒ ☑) Only 20 minutes on the Metro from the heart of town, in a pretty water-side location, this camp site is an excellent choice. As well as tent and van sites, there are green wooden cabins with bunks, a microwave and a fridge, and more upmarket log cottages. There are all sorts of facilities in the complex (which gets pretty busy in July): you can hire bikes or rowboats or canoes to take out on the water.

**Hostel Mekka** (Map p64; ☎ 630 265; www.hostelmekka.com; Vuorikatu 8B; dm/s/d €25/47/57; ☐) Unbeatably central, this low-key hostel is set in a stately old Helsinki building set back from the street in a courtyard. It feels more like a guesthouse, with homely, retro rooms sleeping up to four in beds. It's

pleasantly cool in summer, but the heating struggles to cope in the depths of the Helsinki winter.

Other recommendations:

**Matkakoti Margarita** (Map p64; ☎ 622 4261; www.matkakoti-margarita.com; Itäinen Teatterikuja 3; s/d/tr with shared bathroom €40/54/69, s/d with bathroom €55/70) Very close to the station, with a welcoming owner and a big range of rooms decorated in well-worn domestic floral.

**Hostel Satakuntatalo** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 6958 5233; fax 685 4245; Lapinrinne 1A; dm €19, s €36-39, d €54-58; ☒ ☑ ☐) Handily located right by the bus station, this is far from flash but the rate includes a buffet breakfast. The corridors are filled with wafting curry smells from the Nepalese restaurant below.

**Hostel Stadion** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 477 8480; www.stadionhostel.com; Pohjoinen Stadiontie 3; dm/s/d €15/28/41; ☒ reception 7am-2am, 7am-3am in summer; ☐ ☒ ☑) An easy tram ride from town, this HI hostel is actually part of the Olympic Stadium. There are no views though and it feels old-style with big dorms and shared showers.

## Midrange

**Accome Töölö** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 251 1050; www.accome.com; Museokatu 18; studio apts €62-104, 2-bedroom apts €101-169; ☒ reception 8am-8pm Mon-Fri; ☒) In the quiet district of Töölö, upmarket yet bohemian, and deceptively close to the centre, these furnished apartments offer excellent value. With brand-new and typical Nordic furniture, it feels like being in an upscale Finnish home; you even get your own doormat! Reception is only open on weekdays, but they will arrange a spot for you to collect a key if you will be arriving at other times.

**Martta Hotelli** (Map p64; ☎ 618 7400; www.marttahotelli.fi; Uudenmaankatu 24; s €103, d €130-155, weekends & Jul s €75, d €85-95; ☐ ☒ ☑) Don't be surprised if you are effusively greeted by name before you've even put your bags down in this ultra-welcoming hotel; the personable service here is a delight. It also wins guests over with its lavish buffet breakfast – a real Finnish homestyle treat – and for its free parking. There are two grades of rooms: those in the newer wing are much more spacious and boast shiny floors and furniture, while the older rooms are a little careworn for the price, albeit comfortable and scrubbed for an army-brass spotlessness.

**Hotel Aurora** (Map p64; ☎ 770 100; www.hotelaurahelsinki.com; Helsinginkatu 50; s/d €114/138, weekends €76/98, r economy/summer €68/71; ☐ ☒ ☑)

This friendly charity-run hotel is significantly better than its brick exterior suggests. The modernized common areas are beautifully spacious and stylish and the rooms are decent, some with views over the bay. There are several good family suites, which are very attractively priced in the summer months, when the amusement park across the road is in operation too. As well as a pool, there are bookable squash courts, free sauna and a gym straight out of a 1980s boxing movie!

**Hotel Linna** (Map p64; ☎ 010-344 4100; www.palace.fi; Lönnrotinkatu 29; s/d to €162/189, weekends to €99/116; ☐ ☒ ☑ ☐) This smallish hotel's name means 'castle', and the flamboyant turreted façade backs it up. Built in 1903 as the student clubhouse for the technical university opposite, it's a full-blooded Jugendstil medieval fantasy. The main part of the hotel, however, is in a quiet modern annexe behind the front building. The rooms have been recently refurbished and look very cool and handsome. There's a minimalist, even vaguely Japanese feel, all a significant contrast to the dragons-and-damsels whimsy of the façade.

**Hotel Arthur** (Map p64; ☎ 173 441; www.hotelarthur.fi; Vuorikatu 19; s/d €94/114, weekends €73/92; ☐ ☒ ☑ ☐) Always a popular choice for its combination of being very central yet located on a quiet side street right by the Kaisaniemi park, this is a decent middle-of-the-road option to rely on if your preferred choices are full. Spend the extra €15 and take a superior room; these are much larger than the standards and have been designed with plenty more verve and thought.

**Gasthaus Omapohja** (Map p64; ☎ 666 211; gasthaus.omapohja.oy@kolumbus.fi; Itäinen Teatterikuja 3; s with washbasin/toilet/bathroom €44/54/64, d with washbasin/toilet/bathroom €65/75/85; ☒) Omopohja is a fine old guesthouse close to the train station but without any railway sleaze. It's located next to a theatre and the lobby is decorated with this in mind; the rooms are much simpler, but bright. If the yellow wing is a little much, ask for a room in a more subdued tone!

Other recommendations:

**Hotelli Helka** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 613 580; www.helka.fi; Pohjoinen Rautatiekatu 23A; s/d €117/184, weekends & summer €79/99; ☐ ☒ ☑ ☐) Despite a somewhat shabby exterior, this is a smart and very central hotel handy for both bus and train stations.

**Hotel Anna** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 616 621; www.hotelanna.fi; Annankatu 1; s €110-125, d €150-165, junior ste €195;

☒ ☑ ☐) This stately hotel is run by the small Finnish Free Church and will appeal to those who appreciate peace and quiet.

**Hotel Finnapartments Fenno** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 774 980; www.hotelfenno.fi; Kaarlenkatu 7; economy s/s/d €56/72/88, weekends €50/65/77; ☐ ☒ ☑) With simple, reasonably priced rooms with self-catering facilities, this is a functional sort of place.

## Top End

Most of these hotels have various offers and special rates bookable with travel agents or via their websites; you rarely have to pay the full rack rate. Although it hadn't yet opened at time of research, the Klaus K hotel (www.klauskhotel.com) is destined to be a stylish addition to Helsinki's hotel scene.

**Scandic Grand Marina** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 16661; www.scandic-hotels.com; Katajanokanlaituri 7; s/d from €142/181, weekends €95/105, summer r for 2+ nights €81-91; ☐ ☒ ☑ ☐) A superb conversion from an early-20th-century giant brick harbour warehouse, this has bags more character than most business hotels, with cool, colourful and recently refurbished rooms. It boasts a great location on the lovable Jugendstil island of Katajanokka and is right by the ferry terminals. Service and facilities are particularly good.

**Hotel Rivoli** (Map p64; ☎ 681 500; www.rivoli.fi; Kasarmikatu 40; s €173-205, d €194-235, ste €335, weekend d €99-169; ☐ ☒ ☑ ☐) This beautiful boutique hotel is one of Helsinki's best lodgings and offers a stylish welcome. It exudes a quiet charm that begins in its fabulous lounge-and-breakfast area with charming plant-filled conservatory. The rooms are luxurious; there's a distinct design and colour scheme on each floor, all in a classic French-influenced style. It's much more romantic than most of the city's hotels and very chic without conceding anything on the comfort front. The suite is fabulous – the place to reserve for a memorable Helsinki honeymoon, or sumptuous short break. The hotel also has fabulous apartments round the corner, for stays of five nights or more.

**Sokos Hotel Tornii** (Map p64; ☎ 020-1234 604; www.sokoshotels.fi; Yrjönkatu 26; s/d €189/218, weekends €94/115, summer r €98; ☒ ☑ ☐) On a quiet, very central dog-legged street, this iconic, friendly place has been careful to preserve some of its prewar ambience, when it was famed as being Helsinki's 'skyscraper'.

The rooms in the main part of the hotel, however, have been very recently restored and feel great, with super-inviting beds and stylish moulded grey furnishings. In contrast, another part of the hotel has original, fabulously whimsical, turn-of-the-century Art Nouveau decoration. As well as a rooftop bar with great views, the Tornio has an excellent restaurant and a sweet little courtyard bar.

**Sokos Hotel Vaakuna** (Map p64; ☎ 020-123 4610; www.sokoshotels.fi; Asema-aukio 2; s €193-220, d €218-251, summer & weekend s/d from €78/115; (P) ☒ ☑ ☒ ☒) This vast central hotel was built as one of the key accommodations for the 1952 Olympics and conserves a stately elegance typical of that era. The rooms are very big – some have lovely convex doors and many have original Finnish art on the walls; a very nice change from repros of *Sunflowers!* The top-floor rooms are smaller but have balconies with fabulous views over the city. Above here is a chic restaurant and bar with similarly spectacular vistas, as well as a memorable sauna that can be booked by groups.

**Palace Hotel** (Map p64; ☎ 1345 6660; www.palace.fi; Eteläranta 10; r with/without view €280/235, weekends & Jul €130/165; (P) ☒ ☑ ☒) Surprisingly, for a city which at times seems all water and no land, Helsinki has very few hotel rooms with watery views. The Palace however is right on the central harbour and looks straight across at where the big Baltic ferries dock. Although it looks large, it isn't; there are several classes of rooms, but, once you are staying in this level of accommodation, it'd be foolish not to pay the extra that a sea view commands.

**Hotel Kämp** (Map p64; ☎ 576 111; www.hotelkamp.fi; Pohjoisesplanadi 29; r €380-420, weekends from €165; (P) ☒ ☑ ☒ ☒) This grand and stylish hotel is one of the city's finest and a Helsinki emblem, whose history includes plenty of long, animated piss-ups as the likes of composers Sibelius and Gallen-Kallela thrashed out their ideas. Eventually gutted and only recently re-converted to a hotel, it retains the original opulent façade – all balustrades and pilasters – and some interior features. Its charm nowadays lies especially in its gorgeous public areas, particularly its beautiful dark-wood bar. The rooms, while equipped to five-star levels, lack a little by comparison and all face inwards, but are very attractively furnished and comfortable.

The room prices offered are usually substantially lower than the rack rates: book online for the best offers.

**Hilton Helsinki Strand** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 39351; www.hilton.com; JohnStenberginranta4;s/d from €205/240, r weekends & summer from €125; (P) ☒ ☑ ☒ ☒) Around the corner from the appealing Hakaniemi market, this impresses, from its quiet waterside location to its soaring lobby area and transparent lifts. The rooms are well-sized and come in a variety of standards – some rooms have a balcony. It'd be wasteful to come here and not try for a room with a view over the water, out towards where the serious business of Helsinki harbour goes on.

**Scandic Simonkenttä** (Map p64; ☎ 68380; www.scandic-hotels.com; Simonkatu 9; r €225-255, summer from €99, weekends from €63, ste €510-810; (P) ☒ ☑ ☒ ☒) This giant sleek überhotel makes a stylish modern base in the heart of the action. It feels like a symbol of Finland's transformation from rural backwater to significant corporate player. The public areas feature modish couches and grand perspectives, while the air-conditioned rooms are all shiny and new, featuring particularly comfortable beds with wooden fittings. Some rooms have a sauna, so it's worth requesting one of these on the off-chance.

**Radisson SAS Royal** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 020-123 4701; www.radissonsas.com; Runeberginkatu 2; standard r up to €240, weekends €100, summer €95, ste €350-700; (P) ☒ ☑ ☒ ☒) This striking modern building is right by the new bus station and offers modern contemporary rooms in a range of themed styles: Nordic rooms, for example, have no carpet and a pared-back Scandinavian feel. Business class rooms are slightly more expensive and have a few extra facilities such as free wireless Internet access. The breakfast buffet is generous and there's a good beer terrace on the forecourt.

**Hotel Cumulus Seurahuone** (Map p64; ☎ 69141; www.cumulus.fi; Kaivokatu 12; s/d to €195/220, weekends & summer from €99/118; (P) ☒ ☑ ☒) Most Finnish towns had a *seurahuone*, which was a centre for high society to meet, a place for visiting officers, gentlemen and ladies to stay and a venue for concerts and ballroom dances; this gracious building served as Helsinki's from 1914 on. The common areas are delightful, with a fabulous restaurant, all noble furniture and sparkling chandeliers; you expect a Russian cavalry officer

to dash in with an urgent message for the Tsar. The rooms are exceedingly spacious, with high ceilings and a classic feel that does justice to the building. Other rooms are in a more modern wing.

**Radisson SAS Plaza** (Map p64; ☎ 020-123 4703; www.radissonsas.com; Mikonkatu 23; r standard to €210, business to €250, weekends & summer €105-120; (P) ☒ ☑ ☒ ☒) In a quiet but central corner of Helsinki by a park, this modern business hotel occupies a beautiful building with plenty of Art Nouveau character, some of which has been retained once you have entered through the modern glass façade. With friendly, professional service and a host of business facilities, this is a comfortable downtown choice.

#### AIRPORT HOTELS

There are fast transport connections from Vantaa airport to the city, but if you find yourself wanting to overnight here, there are some options.

**Scandic Gateway** (☎ 818 3600; www.scandic-hotels.fi; s/d from €176/209, weekend r €140; (P) ☒ ☑ ☒) The most convenient is this small hotel in the terminal itself. The rooms are Nordic and modern, although unfortunately they don't have windows, which makes them feel a little claustrophobic and nips planespotting plans in the bud.

A larger Hilton hotel is due to open at the airport in 2007.

#### EATING

Helsinki has by far the best range of restaurants in Finland, be it for fast food, authentic Finnish cuisine or international dining. It also has a fabulous café scene, good markets and some great parks to set up a summer picnic. Helsinki is notable for its excellent selection of Russian restaurants

#### Restaurants

##### BUDGET

**Konstan Möljä** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 694 7504; Hietalahdenkatu 14; lunch/dinner buffet €7.50/14; ☒ 11am-10pm Mon-Fri, 2-10pm Sat) This is a good place to go for hearty home-style Finnish fare in a pleasant, rustic atmosphere. Much of the maritime décor comes from an old harbour near Vyborg (once Finnish but now in Russia). The buffet includes soup, salad, bread, meat and vegetable dishes and always includes reindeer. Mains, such as fried Baltic

herring and salmon, are priced from €11 to €19. The dinner buffet starts at 4pm.

**Zucchini** (Map p64; ☎ 622 2907; Fabianinkatu 4; lunch €6-9; ☒ 11am-4pm Mon-Fri) This is one of the city's best vegetarian cafés and very popular with local workers for lunch. The dish of the day with various tasty components costs €8; there are also wines, cakes, a sunny back room and a small terrace out front. Snacks like quiche and soups are also on the menu.

**Knossos** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 621 1122; Hietalahden kauppahalli; mains €7-15; ☒ 11am-midnight Mon-Sat) This likeable and authentic Greek/Cretan restaurant is situated in the market hall at Hietalahti and is the place to take a break from fruitless bargain-hunting in the flea market. There are good lunch specials from 11am to 2pm and a sunny terrace.

**Satkar** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 611 077; Lönnrotinkatu 26; mains €8-18, set menus €19-21; ☒ 11am-11pm Mon-Fri, noon-11pm Sat & Sun) A Nepalese restaurant with plenty of North Indian dishes on the menu, including tandoori and thalis. There's a good range of vegetarian choices and good-value multicourse set menus.

**Mt Everest** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 6831 5450; Lapinlahdenkatu 17; lunch €7-9, curries €8-12; ☒ 10.30am-11pm Mon-Fri, noon-11pm Sat & Sun) Just by where the buses enter the bus station, this is a well-priced Nepalese place with friendly service and soothing velvety décor. There's a range of cheap lunch dishes, but the à la carte offers significantly better quality.

#### MIDRANGE

**Sea Horse** (☎ 628 169; Kapteeninkatu 11; mains €12-21; ☒ 10.30am-midnight) This much-loved restaurant was established in the 1930s and the décor has barely changed since then. It's frequented by people from all walks of Helsinki life, who come for its menu of home-style staples served in enormous portions. The fried herring, the meatballs, the liver and mash: all the delicious Finnish classics are there just like granny used to make them!

**Kosmos** (Map p64; ☎ 647 255; Kalevankatu 3; mains €15-25, lunch €25; ☒ 11.30am-1am Mon-Fri, 4pm-1am Sat, closed Jul) This Helsinki institution was originally designed by Alvar Aalto and is a great place for a smartish meal. The restaurant is decorated with Finnish art and the menu, Finnish with some Mediterranean influences, includes delicacies such as (deliciously delicate) sweetbreads in port sauce

as well as excellent fish dishes and some solid vegetarian choices.

**Cantina West** (Map p64; ☎ 742 4210; Kasarmikatu 23; mains €10-22; ☎ food served 11am-11pm, bar open later) This good-natured place is widely considered Helsinki's best Tex-Mex restaurant. There's an attractive dark-wood interior and a long, cheery menu with big steaks and tasty chicken fajitas. Needless to say, it's also a bar, with the tequilas and margaritas flowing freely.

**Manala** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 5807 7707; Dagmarinkatu 2; mains €10-22; ☎ 11am-4am Mon-Fri, 2pm-4am Sat & Sun) Manala roughly means 'hell', but this is a paradise for those who like to eat late; this versatile place combines several dance floors and bars with a good and unpretentious Finnish restaurant which serves a full menu with proper service until around 4 in the morning! It's popular with actors refuelling after the show, and other creatures of the night.

**Lappi** (Map p64; ☎ 645 550; Annankatu 22; mains €15-30; ☎ noon-10.30pm Mon-Fri, 1-10.30pm Sat & Sun) This Lapp restaurant is the place to come for a healthy dose of northern rustic décor, playing it up a little for the enjoyment of those visitors who aren't going to make it that far north. Many people come here to try the sautéed reindeer (€16), but other dishes are actually much tastier, such as the fish, or the sirloin of elk, as well as a great shared plate of mixed starters.

**Kolme Kruunua** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 135 4172; Liisankatu 5; mains €8-18; ☎ food 4-11pm Mon-Sat, 2-11pm Sun, bar until 3am) A relic of the 1950s, this place is famous for its delicious *lihapullat* (meatballs; €8), which are served, along with a range of other traditional Finnish forest food, without ceremony and until late.

**Kuu** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 2709 0973; Töölönkatu 27; mains €13-20; ☎ 11am-1am Mon-Fri, 1pm-1am Sat & Sun) This is a recommended place to try affordable but delicious Finnish cuisine, with readers lavish in their praises for its reindeer steaks. Not to be confused with the bohemian artists' bar called Kuu Kuu a couple of blocks away (in itself a good spot for a late bite).

**Papa Giovanni** (Map p64; ☎ 622 6010; Keskuskatu 7; mains €10-22; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, dinner Sun) This is a real favourite among Helsinki's pasta eaters. Downstairs is a spaghetteria, set within a shopping centre, with reasonably priced pasta dishes (€8 to €9) and an

Italian-style café; upstairs is a stylish restaurant and wine bar with high-backed chairs and a tempting range of Italian soups, salads and mains.

Other recommendations:

**Kabuki** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 694 9446; Lapinlahdenkatu 12; sushi €3-5, mains €10-24) Everything is as it should be at a good Japanese restaurant, with décor, service and delicate flavours all in harmony.

**Maithai** (Map p64; ☎ 685 6850; Annankatu 31-33; mains €10-16; ☎ 11am-11pm Mon-Fri, noon-11pm Sat, 2-11pm Sun) Intimate and authentic Thai place. Just don't discuss state secrets; it's pretty small!

**Namaskaar Bulevardi** (Map p64; ☎ 6220 1155; Bulevardi 6; mains €12-18; ☎ lunch & dinner) Best of several branches of this Indian restaurant. Food is passable, décor stylish and the terrace great. The Sunday buffet (1-6pm, €22) is popular.

**Volga** (Map p64; ☎ 622 1717; Rikhardinkatu 1; mains €13-23, lunch specials €9-14; ☎ lunch & dinner) Russian restaurant with a lovely summer terrace in an enclosed courtyard. A huge serving of mixed blini is €19.90.

#### TOP END

**Chez Dominique** (Map p64; ☎ 612 7393; Ludviginkatu 3; mains €40-50, lunch menu €39, set menus €79-125; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Fri, dinner Sat, closed Jul) For fine French cuisine, this is the number one choice in Helsinki and has two Michelin stars. There's a short à la carte menu featuring exquisite, rich fare, but the speciality are the set menus (prices exclude drinks). There's a fabulous list of French wines and it's served in a chic, intimate dining room.

**Nokka** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 687 7330; Kanavaranta 7; mains €24-29, set menus €56-60; ☎ 11.30am-midnight Mon-Fri, 6pm-midnight Sat, dinner only Mon-Sat Jul) Atmospherically set in a restored brick warehouse on the waterfront across the canal on Katajanokka, this has rapidly created a lofty reputation for itself. You'll spot it easily with its flaming torch and huge ship's propeller backing an unbeatable summer terrace. The food is high in class and makes use of the finest Finnish produce, with tasty wild mushrooms combining memorably with delicately handled perch or salmon. The service is faultless and warm rather than formal. Interesting wine cellar.

**Saslik** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 7425 5500; Neitsytpolku 12; mains €16-32; ☎ noon-midnight Mon-Sat, 4-11pm Sun) This is regarded as the city's top Russian restaurant. It offers live music nightly and seven private, themed dining rooms – all complete

with plush velvet, stained-glass windows and chandeliers. Most mains are around €24 but blinis with Russian or Iranian caviar will raise your bill substantially!

**Restaurant Bellevue** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 636 985; Rahapajankatu 3; mains €20-30) Just down from the Uspensky Cathedral, this venerable Russian restaurant has been going since the October Revolution. It specializes in Russian and Finnish food with a French accent and has a couple of set menus. Carnivores who want to tick all the boxes will be attracted by the bear steak (€65); more moderate choices include borscht, chicken Kiev (yes it really is Russian) and a sensational baked Alaska for dessert.

**Sipuli** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 622 9280; Kanavaranta 7; mains €26-33; ☎ 6pm-midnight Mon-Fri) This place, near the church on Katajanokka island, offers fine views back across the city. The speciality is gourmet Finnish food, including wild game in season. There are various dining areas; the main one is extravagantly poised under chandeliers and a large skylight with the Uspenski cathedral looming overhead.

#### Cafés

**Tamminiemientien Kahvila** (☎ 481 003; Tamminiementie 8; ☎ noon-10.30pm summer, shorter hr winter) This memorable café is set next to the City Art Museum and near the Urho Kekkonen museum in a lovely bit of parkland. It's like a cross between a Chekhov play and a flower-loving granny's country cottage and is utterly curious and charming. The coffee or tea is expensive but comes with a huge *pulla* (a typical and tasty cardamon-flavoured

bun) and can be taken on the veranda, the chairs of which fly jaunty coloured scarves. Take tram 4 or bus 24 for this beauty.

**Café Esplanad** (Map p64; ☎ 665 496; Pohjoisesplanadi 37; sandwiches €3-5; ☎ 8am-10pm Mon-Fri, 9am-10pm Sat, 10am-10pm Sun) This large, busy space is a perfect spot for a variety of needs and wants. Oversized Danish pastries and excellent Finnish *pulla* are good accompaniments to coffee (bottomless) or espresso; for lunch, there are spectacular salads and a variety of wines served by the glass.

**Café Strindberg** (Map p64; ☎ 681 2030; Pohjoisesplanadi 33; ☎ 9am-10pm Mon-Sat, 10am-10pm Sun) This upmarket café is a classic place to see and be seen on the Esplanad, with a terrace whose waiter-served seats are much in demand. There's a sumptuous lounge and classy bistro upstairs too.

**Café Ekberg** (Map p64; ☎ 6811 8660; Bulevardi 9; buffet breakfast & lunch €8; ☎ 7.30am-7pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-5pm Sat, 10am-5pm Sun) This is Helsinki's oldest café (opened 1861) and one of the best places for breakfast in the city. The lunch buffet is great value and they also do great loaves to take away.

**Fazer** (Map p64; ☎ 6159 2959; Klauviku 3; ☎ 7.30am-10pm, 9am-10pm Sat) Another historical café worth delving into, this is a huge space with character for days, classic décor and a small terrace. Founded in 1891 by the Finnish confectionary-making family (you'll see Fazer sweets and chocolate everywhere), it does amazing ice-cream sundaes and also sells cakes and tea to take away.

**Café Ursula** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 652 817; Ehrenströmintie 3; light mains €7-12; ☎ 9am-7pm) Down on

#### SOMETHING SPECIAL: ISLAND RESTAURANTS

An essential summer experience for Helsinki folk is to head out for dinner to one of the small islands dotted around the harbour. There are several island restaurants, which are served by small boats that ferry diners to and from quays on the mainland opposite. The most famous is the stylish, spired Klippan, set in a villa on Luoto island, by Valkosaari.

More convivial is **Boathouse** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 6227 1070; Liuskasaari; mains €12-25; ☎ 5pm-midnight Mon-Sat, noon-9pm Sun May-Sep), a circular two-deck restaurant on Liuskasaari, reached from a jetty on Merisatamanranta. It's only a couple of hundred metres offshore, but it already feels like an outpost, albeit a very comfortable one. The restaurant is cheerful, noisy and light, with seafood aplenty. You might choose orange-flavoured squid (€10.90) or a filling seafood platter (€27.90); it's all pretty good. Best is the atmosphere, which is very family-friendly (there's even a 'dog bar') and relaxed. Instead of the usual guestbook, visitors pin notes to the chandelier in the lobby.

Even if you're not dining at these restaurants, it's worth heading out to the islands for the city views or to have a drink watching the big ferries sliding past. The boats are around €3 to €5 return for non-diners and run every 10 to 15 minutes during eating hours.

Kaivopuisto Park, with great views over to Harakka island, this classy café is popular with locals and visitors and is a lovely, relaxing spot. When things are quiet on the diplomatic front, the British ambassador nips across for tea from the embassy opposite. Further around the peninsula (westwards), Café Carusel is a cheaper, more functional waterfront café with excellent focaccias.

**Café Krypta** (Map p64; ☎ 709 2455; Kirkkokatu 18; coffee & pastry €2; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, 11am-5pm Sun Jun-Aug only) This welcoming, unusual café is situated in the crypt of the Lutheran cathedral and has a quiet candlelit atmosphere and good prices. You are surrounded not by creaking tombs but by vaulted brick foundations and exhibitions of modern art, and it's a good hideaway from the tour groups.

**Café Engel** (Map p64; ☎ 652 776; Senaatintori; ☎ 8am-10pm Mon-Fri, 9am-10pm Sat, 10am-10pm Sun) Directly opposite the cathedral, this café is popular with students popping across from the university. It's an arty place with a small gallery next door and a big notice board announcing coming events. There's a covered courtyard at the back which serves as a little cinema on summer evenings.

**Limón** (Map p64; ☎ 622 5992; Rikhardinkatu 4; dishes €7-18; ☎ 11.30am-11pm Mon-Fri, 11am-10pm Sat) Limón is essentially a café-bar where the beautiful people like to see and be seen, savouring finely flavoured Mediterranean-style concoctions, from light and luscious bruschettas to more substantial fare.

### Quick Eats & Self-Catering

There are plenty of hamburger restaurants (such as Hesburger and Carrols), pizza shops, kebab joints, hot-dog stands and grillis in Helsinki.

The **kauppahalli** (covered market; Eteläranta; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8am-4pm Sat), built in 1889, is one of the best in Finland and, although touristy, is a great place to nose around. The kauppatori, also known as the fish market, is good for salmon chowder, cheap snacks and fresh produce such as berries. Most food stalls set up plastic chairs and tables on summer afternoons.

**Soppakeittiö** (Map pp60-1; Hakaniemen Kauppahalli; soups €5-8; ☎ 10.30am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-3pm Sat) On the ground floor of the intriguing Hakaniemi market building north of the centre, this little soup kitchen is a great place to warm the cockles in winter. The

delicious, generously portioned soups come with bread and cheese spread; the bouillabaisse (€7) is a reader favourite.

**Eatz** (Map p64; ☎ 687 7240; Mikonkatu 15; sushi €3-8, mains €10-20; ☎ 9am-midnight, weekends 9am-4am) With a variety of separate eateries in one building on the east side of the Rautatien-tori, Eatz manages to serve up everything from Thai and Indian to Italian and even has a sushi train and Australian bar. It's also the cornerstone of Helsinki's biggest summer beer terrace.

**Forum shopping centre** (Mannerheimintie 20; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat, noon-6pm Sun) Has an atrium-covered food court with everything from Asian noodles to burgers and kebabs. There's also a large supermarket in the basement level.

**S-Market** (Map p64; Kasarmikatu; ☎ 7am-9pm Mon-Sat, 7am-6pm Sat) Another well-stocked central supermarket.

### DRINKING

The Finns certainly know how to party, especially in summer when open-air beer terraces spill out everywhere to take advantage of the long hours of daylight. Helsinki's biggest summer terrace is along Mikonkatu where hundreds of chairs and tables crowd the sidewalk in front of Eatz (above), and the nearby On the Rocks and Barfly. After about 4pm on a sunny day it's difficult to score a seat here, but the atmosphere is fantastic.

Another good spot to find cafés (and bars) is the pedestrian section of Iso Roobertinkatu, an animated strip just south of the centre. Popular spots include We Got Beef and Labyrinth.

The Kallio district northeast of the centre is full of downmarket character, and a stroll along Helsinginkatu will reveal many delightfully seedy bars. Just make sure you realize that 'Thai Hieronta' isn't a place to get a green curry...

**Kappeli** (Map p64; ☎ 681 244; Esplanad Park; ☎ 10am-midnight Mon-Sat, 10am-11pm Sun) Located in the middle of the park near the kauppatori, Kappeli has one of the most popular summer terraces. It faces a stage where various bands and musicians regularly play in summer. Inside, there's a vaulted cellar bar, which is fantastic later in the evening or when the sun's not shining. There are also restaurant and café sections.

### HELSINKI – KAHVI DRINKING CAPITAL OF EUROPE

If you ever wondered why there are so many cafés in Finland, wonder no more. It's because Finns are among the world's highest consumers of coffee, a love affair that sees the average person down almost 10 kilos of the stuff annually, some four to five cups a day each!

Even outside the bustling big city, coffee is what drives Finland. There are dozens of cafés in every town and village; even petrol stations have cafés, and a cup of coffee is included with the lunch special at most restaurants.

Seldom will you visit a house without being served coffee. Traditionally you say 'no' and then accept, by saying 'OK, just half a cup', which in reality turns out to be four or five cups.

To do as the Finns do, pour your *kahvi* into a *kuppi* and add some *maito* (milk) or *kerma* (cream). It is traditionally accompanied by a *pulla* (cinnamon bun).

**Corona & Kafe Mockba** (Map p64; ☎ 611 200; Eerikinkatu 11-15; ☎ 11am-2am) These two utterly distinct bars are run by the quirky filmmakers Aki and Mika Kaurismäki and both attract a savvy, grungy crowd. Corona has about 20 pool tables and cheap beer, while the ultra-characterful Mockba (Café Moscow in Russian) recreates a lugubrious Eastern Bloc drinking den. It's understated and ironic, with a samovar, artery-clogging salami snacks and LPs of Soviet Army hits and Brezhnev speeches. Due to open in a former cinema in the same complex is Dubrovnik, which is to be a venue for regular live jazz. Downstairs from Mockba is another bar, Superbar, a trendy little spot decorated in homage to comics.

**Vltava** (Map p64; ☎ 766 3650; Elielinaukio 2; bar meals €8-12; ☎ 11am-3am or later) Named for the river that runs through Prague, this new bar/restaurant is a great spot for beer lovers. Right next to the train station, it boasts a big range of draught and bottled beers, solid wooden tables and a terrace that catches the afternoon sun. There's a good bar menu and heartier Czech dishes (pork, boar, sausages...) in the bistro upstairs, which also has classy lounge seating.

**Ateljee Bar** (Map p64; Sokos Hotel Torni, Yrjökatu 26; ☎ 2pm-2am Mon-Thu, noon-2am Fri & Sat, 2pm-1am Sun) This is a tiny perch on the roof of the Sokos Hotel Torni, and is worth ascending just for the views of the city. Take the lift to the 12th floor and the narrow winding staircase to the top. Downstairs, the courtyard Tornin Pivi is a cute little terrace with good wines by the glass and Coopers Stout in bottles. The rooftop bars of the Palace and the Sokos Vaakuna hotels are also notable for their great views.

**Bar Tapasta** (Map p64; ☎ 640 724; Uudenmaankatu 13; tapas €3-5; ☎ 11am-midnight Mon-Thu, 11am-2am Fri, 2pm-2am Sat) This is an intimate and welcoming bar with quirky Mediterranean décor, an elegant young crowd and friendly staff. The tapas are cheap and generous; there is also (how did you guess?) pasta, a selection of wines by the glass and popular sangria.

**Zetor** (Map p64; ☎ 666 966; Mannerheimintie 3-5; mains €10-22; ☎ 11am-4am Sat, 3pm-1am Sun & Mon, 3pm-3am Tue, 3pm-4am Wed & Thu) This is a spoofy Finnish restaurant and pub with deeply ironic tractor décor ('Zetor' is a Czech tractor manufacturer whose heyday was in the Cold War years). It's owned by film maker Aki Kaurismäki and designed by those crazy guys from the Leningrad Cowboys. It's worth going in just for a drink and a ride on a tractor, but the food is decent value too.

**Kola** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 694 8983; Helsinginkatu 13B; ☎ noon-2am; ☎) Right in the heart of the intriguing Kallio district, this bar is a little classier than many of its brethren but still a relaxed, comfortable place. There's a '70s feel, a window to be seen in, and a magazine rack to browse the music press.

**Carelia** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 2709 0976; Mannerheimintie 56; ☎ 11am-1am Mon-Fri, 4pm-1am Sat, closed mid-Jun-early Aug) Right opposite the opera house, this former pharmacy has been beautifully converted into a wine bar and upmarket restaurant. Very atmospheric with its wooden drawers and glass bottles, it's the perfect place for a glass of something nice before or after the show.

**Rytmi** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 7231 5550; Toimen Linja 2; ☎ 11am-2am Mon-Sat; ☎) Northeast of the centre, this deservedly popular bar is a favourite of musicians, actors and students, and has a stylish but bohemian feel. There are regular DJs playing on weekends and it also has a terrace.

**Bar Loose** (Map p64; ☎ 586 1819; Fredrikinkatu 34) The trendiest spot in the thriving Finnish rock and metal scene, this is a place where musicians hang out and black leather, vinyl and piercings are *de rigueur*. It's been voted Helsinki's favourite bar; there's also some-times live music here.

**Vanha** (Map p64; Mannerheimintie 3; ☎ 11am-midnight, later at weekends) This music bar is in the beautiful 19th-century students' house. It gets packed with students and runs various summer club nights at weekends. They also do a good lunch (€7.90) on weekdays and there's a summer terrace.

**Erottaja** (Map p64; ☎ 611 196; Erottajankatu 15-17) A no-frills wine bar with reasonably cheap drinks. It's well-patronised by locals in the know and is popular with students.

**Roska Pankki** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 735 488; Helsinginkatu 20). This is one of the classic stops on the Kallio beer trail and draws a real mix of people from muttering drunks to penny-pinching executives. It's got bags of character, a ceiling decorated with banknotes (the name means 'rubbish bank'), and beer served in plastic for the princely sum of €2.

**Pub Tram Spårakoff** (Map p64; ☎ 123 4600; www.koff.net, in Finnish; tickets €7, beers €5; ☎ Tue-Sat mid-May-mid-Aug) In summer you can catch the bright red pub tram from Mikonkatu, just east of the train station, with stops at the Opera House and kauppatori. It's a bit pricey but a quaint way to do a quick tour of town. It departs from its terminus on Mikonkatu on the hour between 2pm to 3pm and between 5pm to 8pm Tuesday to Saturday.

## ENTERTAINMENT

In many ways Helsinki has a typical capital-city entertainment and nightlife scene, but in recent years the city's bars, cafés and clubs have blossomed. There's a lot on offer, particularly music-wise. As well as a full range of trends, from hole-in-the-wall bars and cafés to rock and jazz clubs to dance clubs, there's generally a sophisticated but down-to-earth air about Helsinki's nightlife.

For events, concerts and performances, see *Helsinki This Week* or inquire at the city tourist office. Major rock and pop concerts by touring bands are staged at the **Hartwall Arena** (☎ 020-494 076; opposite).

## Nightclubs

**Lost & Found** (Map p64; ☎ 680 1010; Annankatu 6; ☎ to 4am) This popular bar has a great atmosphere and eccentric and original décor on the 'lost and found' theme. Originally a gay bar, it now is far too mixed to really be labelled as such and attracts all sorts to its relaxed upstairs and tightly packed downstairs club.

**Teatteri** (Map p64; ☎ 681 1130; Pohjoisesplanadi 2) The ultrachic club inside the Swedish Theatre has space for 300 people and there's a beautifully designed bar on the middle level. It doesn't feel particularly Finnish, but attracts plenty of celebrities and party people.

**mbar** (Map p64; ☎ 6124 5420; Mannerheimintie 22; ☎ 9am-midnight, later at weekends) This trendy little café in the Lasipalatsi complex between the bus and train stations offers good-quality Internet access and has heaps of terminals (per hour €5). As the night draws on, it becomes a place to be seen sipping something cool and alcoholic, accompanied by some excellent DJs.

**Helsinki Club** (Map p64; ☎ 4332 6340; Yliopistonkatu 8; ☎ 11pm-4am) If you're partying late, this is a mainstream dance club popular with a youthful and trendy Helsinkian crowd. The interior is pretty tacky, with dodgy wallpaper and worse carpet; make it to the cooler back dancefloor if you can! During the week there is a variety of local acts, with big-name DJs at weekends, when the minimum age is 22.

**Highlight** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 734 5822; Fredrikinkatu 42; ☎ 9pm-4am) This place atmospherically set in a former church claims to be a 'disco for demanding people' and attracts a young crowd looking for late-night dancefloor action. It's difficult to get in after 11pm on Friday and Saturday.

**Arctic Icebar** (Map p64; ☎ 278 1855; Yliopistonkatu 5; ☎ 10pm-4am Wed-Sat) In the cavernous Uniq nightclub almost opposite Club Helsinki, this is a bar literally carved out of ice – tables, bar, the lot. Inside, it's minus five degrees; you get lent a suitable furry parka to enter. It's expensive (and you won't be able to ask for a glass of tap water...) but definitely worth doing once. There's an age minimum of 24. Uniq itself is popular with a slightly older, well-heeled crowd, including the occasional Finnish celebrity and at times hosts big-name live acts.

**On the Rocks** (Map p64; ☎ 612 2030; Mikonkatu 15; ☎ bar from noon in summer, 4pm in winter, club from

9pm) Across the square from the train station, this cheerful bar has a great summer terrace and pool table, and a rock'n'roll theme. Downstairs is a dark, moody club, which has frequent live rock music, nightly DJs and even a fountain. Entry at weekends is €6, with a minimum age of 23.

## Live Music

**Tavastia** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 694 8511; www.tavastialubi.fi; Urho Kekkosenkatu 4; ☎ 9pm-late) One of Helsinki's legendary rock venues, this attracts both up-and-coming local acts and bigger international groups. There's a band every night of the week and the cover charge is usually around €10. Next door is another, smaller venue, Semi-Final, run by the same people.

**Storyville** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 408 007; Museokatu 8; ☎ 6pm-4am Mon-Sat) This is one of Helsinki's best jazz clubs, housed in a converted coal cellar. A mature, whisky-sipping crowd enjoy the traditional, Dixieland, swing and New Orleans jazz most nights. There's also a romantic terrace here, open later than any others are allowed to be. Locals say that's because Parliament House is next door...

**Juttutupa** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 742 4240; Säästöpankinranta 6) West of Hakaniemi metro station is one of Helsinki's top live music bars, focusing on contemporary jazz and rock fusion. The best day is Wednesday, when there's nearly always a high-quality jazz act, but at any time it's a nice towering stone building looking out over a bay of the harbour, with a terrace and a couple of restaurants.

## Opera, Theatre & Ballet

For concerts and performances, see *Helsinki This Week* or inquire at the tourist office. The opera and concert season is generally September to May (there are no indoor performances in summer). The Symphony Orchestra (RSO) of the Finnish Broadcasting Corporation features popular concerts in **Finlandia Talo** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 402 4400; www.finlandia.hel.fi; Mannerheimintie 13). **Lippupiste** (☎ 0600 900 900; www.lippupiste.com) is the place to call to book tickets.

**Opera House** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 4030 2211; Helsinginkatu 58; tickets from €15) Opera, ballet and classical concerts are held here, but not during summer. Performances of the Finnish National Opera are subtitled in Finnish.

**Kansallis Teatteri** (Map p64; ☎ 1733 1331; www.kansallisteatteri.fi, in Finnish; Lätinen teatterikuja 1) The Finnish National Theatre occupies a beautiful building by the train station. Performances are in Finnish but quite an experience even if you haven't mastered the language yet.

## Cinemas

There are several cinemas in Helsinki, all of which show original-version films with Finnish and Swedish subtitles.

**Diana** (Map p64; ☎ 612 3622; Yrjönkatu 8) In a courtyard, this cinema offers top-grade art-house European and world films.

**Orion Theatre** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 6154 0201; www.sea.fi; Eerikinkatu 15) This is where the Finnish Film Archive shows classics from their collection, with three screenings a day except Mondays. You must purchase an annual membership (€4), then admission is €3.50.

**Tennispalatsi** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 0600 007 007; www.finnkino.fi, in Finnish; Salomonkatu 15) This is one of Europe's largest multiplexes and screens recent blockbusters.

**Forum** (Map p64; ☎ 0600 007 007; Mannerheimintie 16) Another mainstream cinema, in the Forum Centre.

## Sport

Sporting events in Helsinki are numerous.

**Hartwall Arena** (☎ 0600 10800; www.hartwall-arena.com; tickets €13-30) Between September and April ice hockey reigns supreme and the best place to see top-level matches is at this arena, about 4km north of the city centre (bus 23 or 69 or tram 7A or 7B). Built in 1997, Hartwall hosted the Ice Hockey World Championships that same year and has seating for more than 13,000 fans. It's the home of local Superleague side Jokerit Helsinki.

**Helsingin Jäähalli** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 477 7110; www.helsinginjaahalli.fi; Nordenskiöldinkatu 13) Ice hockey matches are also played at this indoor arena in the Olympic stadium complex.

**Finnair Stadium** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 0600 10800; www.lippupalvelu.fi; tickets €8-15) Next to the Olympic Stadium, this is the home ground of HJK Helsinki. The team's the closest thing Finland has to a Real Madrid or a Manchester United, having won 21 Finnish league titles and even having made a foray into the group stages of the Champions League a few years back.

## SHOPPING

Helsinki is an excellent spot for shopping, particularly for Nordic fashion and, of course, the latest furniture and homewares from the avant-garde Finnish design studios. Prices are high on Pohjoisesplanadi, the main tourist street in town. Other notable shopping streets are Aleksanterinkatu and Fredrikinkatu. Mariankatu has many antiques shops and Iso Roobertinkatu is filled with funky boutiques and secondhand stores. The tourist office has a good brochure of (paid) listings of interior design shops.

**Artek** (Map p64; ☎ 6132 5277; www.artek.fi; Eteläesplanadi 18) As well as other Nordic homewares, this shop is especially devoted to selling the furniture and fabrics of Alvar Aalto, the Finnish architect and innovator whose designs still look modern almost a century later.

**Arabia** (☎ 020-439 3507; Hämeentie 135; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun) The factory outlet and exhibition of this legendary Finnish ceramics company is bleakly located but worthwhile. Take tram 6 to its terminus and walk a further 200m north.

**Dis 'n' Dat Records** (Map p64; ☎ 680 1118; www.disndatrecords.com; Shop 18 Kaisaniemi Metro Station) Here is the place to look for CDs and other forms of music from Finland and abroad.

**Marimekko** (Map p64; ☎ 686 0240; Pohjoisesplanadi 31) Finland's most famous clothing and fabric label lives on with its warm floral colours loved as ever. Let Sweden sneer; Marimekko is as popular with young Nokia executives as it is with aunts and grandmas meeting over cinnamon buns.

**Stockmann** (Map p64; ☎ 1211; Aleksanterinkatu 52) The oldest and largest department store in Finland, this is surprisingly well priced for Finnish souvenirs and Sámi handicrafts, as well as Finnish textiles, Kalevala Koru jewellery, Lapponia jewellery, Moomintroll souvenirs and lots more. It offers an export service.

## Markets

**Kauppatori** (☎ 6.30am-2pm winter, longer hr summer) This famous market is still an important food market for locals and well worth visiting, although it is heavy with tour groups. Fish, seasonal fruit and berries and *makkara* (sausages) are on sale and people even sell direct from boats moored at the quay. There are also plenty of stalls selling local handi-

crafts and souvenirs at (sometimes) inflated prices. Nearby, the ornate indoor kauppahalli is a paradise of Finnish food stalls.

**Hakaniemi kauppahalli** (☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8am-4pm Sat) This and the kauppatori at the metro stop is a traditional-style Finnish food market and is a less touristy alternative to the main one at the harbour.

**Hietalahti flea market** (☎ 8am-3pm Mon-Sat, 8am-8pm daily Jun-Aug) The closest secondhand centre to central Helsinki: you'll find anything from used clothes to broken accordions, but it's pretty downmarket.

**Kauppahalli** (☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat) This renovated market is at the Hietalahti flea market and has a mixture of craft and antique stalls. Take tram 6.

**Vallila** (Aleksis Kivenkatu 17; ☎ 9am-5pm) A popular indoor flea market in Kallio. The range and quality is usually better here than at Hietalahti. Trams 1 and 1A stop opposite.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

### Air

There are flights to Helsinki from the USA, Europe and Asia on many airlines. See p342 for more information on reaching Finland by air. Finnair and its subsidiaries offer international as well as domestic services, with flights to 20 Finnish cities – generally at least once a day. **Blue1** (☎ 0600 25831; www.blue1.com) has budget flights to some Finnish destinations. The **Finnair office** (Map p64; reservations ☎ 0600 140 140; www.finnair.fi; Asema-aukio 1; ☎ Mon-Sat) is in the train station complex. The airport is in Vantaa, 19km north of Helsinki.

The quickest way to Tallinn is by helicopter. **Copterline** (☎ 0200 18181; www.copterline.com; ☎ 7am-10pm) flies hourly from Helsinki to Tallinn and back. The trip takes 20 minutes one way and costs from €118 for a limited ticket (book at least two days in advance) to €228 for a guaranteed seat. At time of writing, weekend services had been suspended after a crash, but were due to resume.

### Boat

International ferries travel to Stockholm and Tallinn. There is also a regular catamaran and hydrofoil service to Tallinn. See p346 for more details.

Four of the five ferry terminals are just off the central kauppatori: Kanava and Katajanokka terminals (Map pp60–1) are

## TRIPPING TO TALLINN

Although Finland can seem very remote from the rest of Europe at times, Helsinki is remarkably close to the continental mainland, and a day or overnight trip to the Estonian capital of Tallinn is very easy. There's a big contrast between modern Helsinki and the turrets and spires of Tallinn's medieval Old Town.

It's 80km across the Gulf of Finland to Tallinn and the catamarans and hydrofoils do the trip several times daily in 90 minutes (p347). The ferry is cheaper, while at the other end of the price scale, you can get there by scheduled chopper (opposite). See p341 for entry requirements to Estonia.

It's a 15-minute walk from the ferry terminals to Tallinn's magnificent Old Town, with its lofty castle and quaint, narrow lanes. The **tourist office** (☎ 645 7777; www.tourism.tallinn.ee) is in the heart of it and sells the useful Tallinn Card sightseeing pass.

served by bus 13 and trams 2, 2V and 4, and Olympia (Map pp60–1) and Makasiini (Map p64) terminals by trams 3B and 3T. The last terminal, Länsiterminali (Map pp60–1, West Terminal), is served by bus 15.

Ferry tickets may be purchased at the terminal, from a ferry company's office in the centre or (in some cases) from the city tourist office. Book in advance during the high season (late June to mid-August).

Ferry company offices in Helsinki:

**Eckerö Line** (Map p64; ☎ 228 8544; Mannerheimintie 10, Länsiterminali)

**Linda Line** (☎ 668 9700; Makasiini terminal)

**Nordic Jet Line** (☎ 681 770; Kanava terminal)

**Silja Line** (Map p64; ☎ 0203-74552; Mannerheimintie 2, Makasiini & Olympia terminals)

**Tallink** (Map p64; ☎ 2282 1222; Erottajankatu 19, Kanava Terminal)

**Viking Line** (Map p64; ☎ 123 577; Mannerheimintie 14, Katajanokka & Makasiini terminals)

In summer there are daily ferries between Helsinki and Porvoo, through the southeast archipelago. See p91 for more details.

### Bus

Purchase long-distance and express bus tickets at the new underground **Kamppi Bus**

**Station** (Frederikinkatu; ☎ 7am-7pm Mon-Fri, 7am-5pm Sat, 9am-6pm Sun) or on the bus itself. There's a terminal for local buses to Espoo in one wing, while longer-distance buses also depart from here to all of Finland. Destinations with several daily departures including Jyväskylä (€36.90, four to six hours), Kuopio (€49, five to seven hours), Lappeenranta (€32.30, four hours), Oulu (€77.40, 11½hrs), Savonlinna (€46.70, five to six hours), Tampere (€28.10, 2½ hours) and Turku (€28.10, 2½ hours).

### Train

The *rautatieasema* (train station) is in the city centre and is linked by pedestrian tunnel with the Helsinki metro system. Helsinki is the terminus for three main railway lines, with regular trains from Turku in the west, Tampere in the north and Lahti in the northeast. There is a separate ticket counter for international trains, including the ones that go to St Petersburg and Moscow.

## GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport

Bus 615 (€3.40, 30 to 50 minutes, Helsinki Card not valid) shuttles between Vantaa airport (all international and domestic flights) and platform 10 at Rautatienori (Railway Square) next to the main train station.

**Finnair buses** (☎ 0307-23746) depart from the Finnair office at Asemaaukio (€5.20, 30 minutes, every 20 minutes, 5am to midnight). It also stops at several request stops including the opera house.

There are also door-to-door **airport taxis** (☎ 0600 555 555; www.airporttaxi.fi) costing from €20 for 1 or 2 persons. If leaving Helsinki, these should be booked the previous day before 6pm.

### Bicycle

Helsinki is ideal for cycling: the inner city is flat and there are well-marked and high-quality bike paths. Get hold of a copy of the Helsinki cycling map at the tourist office.

The city of Helsinki provides 300 distinctive green 'City Bikes' at stands within a radius of 2km from the kauppatori – although in summer you'll be lucky to get one. The bikes are free: you deposit a €2 coin into the stand that locks them, then reclaim it when you return it to any stand.

For something more sophisticated, **Greenbike** (☎ 8502 2850; www.greenbike.fi; Mannerheimintie

13A2; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat, 10am-2pm Sun) rents out quality bikes for €10 per day, €15 for 24 hours, or €50 per week (hybrid bikes €10/20/70). By the time of publication, they will have moved, so check the website or give them a ring to find the new location.

### Car & Motorcycle

Cars can be rented at the airport or in the city centre. The big companies include **Avis** (☎ 441 155; www.avis.fi; Hietaniemenkatu 6); and **Hertz** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 020-555 2300; www.hertz.fi; Mannerheimintie 44) a few blocks north of the centre.

Some of the more economical rental companies include **Lacara** (☎ 719 062; Hämeentie 12) north of the centre, and **Budget** (Map pp60-1; ☎ 686 6500; Malminkatu 24) near the Radisson SAS Royal hotel. Motorcycle rental is not common in Helsinki.

Parking in Helsinki is strictly regulated and can be a big headache. Metered areas cost €0.50 to €1 per hour. There are a few free, long- or short-term parking areas around the city; for locations consult the *Parking Guide for the Inner City of Helsinki*, a free map available at the city tourist office.

### Public Transport

Central Helsinki is easy to get around on foot or by bicycle and there's also a metro line and reasonably comprehensive transport network. The city's public transport system, **Helsingin Kaupungin Liikennelaitos** (HKL; www.hkl.fi) operates buses, metro and local trains, trams and a ferry to Suomenlinna. A one-hour flat-fare ticket for any HKL transport costs €2 when purchased on board, €1.40 when purchased in advance. The ticket allows unlimited transfers but must be validated in the stamping machine on board when you first use it. A single tram ticket (no transfers) is €1.80 full fare and €1.50 concession.

Tourist tickets can be purchased at €5.40/10.80/16.20 for one/three/five days; a 24-hour group ticket (two adults and up to four children) costs €8, making it better value even for a couple. Alternatively, the Helsinki Card gives you free travel anywhere within Helsinki (see p62).

There are also regional tickets for travel by bus or train to neighbouring cities such as Vantaa and Espoo which cost €3.40 for a single ticket, €8.50/17/25.50 for one/three/five days, and €12 for a 24-hour group ticket. Children's tickets are usually half price.

**HKL offices** (☎ Mon-Fri) at the Kamppi bus station and the Rautatientori and Hakaniemi metro stations sell tickets and passes, as do many of the city's R-kiosks. Metro services run daily from about 6am to 11.30pm. The metro line extends to Ruoholahti in the western part of the city and northeast to Mellunmäki and Vuosaari.

The *Helsinki Route Map*, available at HKL offices and the city tourist office, is an easily understood map of the bus, metro and tram routes.

Boat services leave from the kauppatori to Suomenlinna (see p86) and to the zoo (see p67).

### Taxi

Vacant taxis are hard to come by during morning and evening rush hours. If you need one, hail one off the street or join a queue at one of the taxi stands located at the train station, bus station or Senaatintori. You can phone for a cab on ☎ 0100 0700. A trip across town from the kauppatori to somewhere like the Olympic Stadium costs about €10 to €15.

## AROUND HELSINKI

### SUOMENLINNA

Suomenlinna, only a 15-minute ferry ride from Helsinki kauppatori, is a very popular day or half-day trip from the city. Set on a tight cluster of islands, this Unesco World Heritage Site (the 'fortress of Finland') was the scene of a major event in Finnish history when the Russians seized it from the Swedes in 1808.

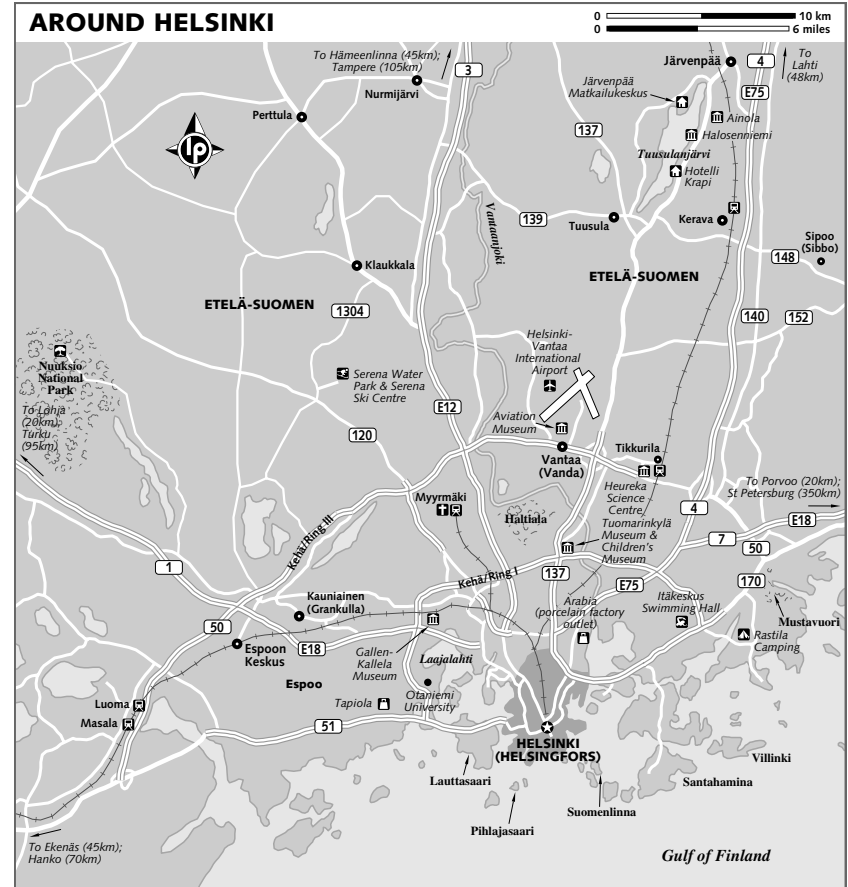
The fields around Suomenlinna's stone ramparts are a favourite picnicking destination for locals. It's not just a place to visit though – there are many residents, who are wearily accustomed to curious faces peering in their front windows.

Every evening between 5pm and 6pm people gather at Suomenlinna's main quay to wave as the ferries sail through the narrow strait – it's quite a sight.

### History

The greatest fortress of the Swedish empire was founded in 1748 to protect the eastern part of the empire against Russian attack. It was named Sveaborg (Swedish fortress).

## AROUND HELSINKI



Sveaborg was once the second largest town in Finland, after Turku. In 1806 it had 4600 residents whereas Helsinki had 4200.

After a prolonged attack, Sveaborg was surrendered to the Russians after the war of 1808, and renamed Viapori. Thanks in large part to the superb sea fortress, the Finnish capital was moved from Turku to Helsinki in 1812. It remained Russian until Finland gained independence in 1917, and continues to have military significance as it's still home to a naval base. During the Finnish Civil War, the Whites incarcerated many Communist prisoners here in brutal conditions. The present name was chosen in 1918, after Finland's independence.

### Sights & Activities

The Helsinki Card allows free travel to Suomenlinna and admission to all the museums. Most attractions are on two main islands, Iso Mustasaari and Susisaari, connected to each other by a small bridge. At the bridge is the **Inventory Chamber Visitor Centre** (☎ 668 800) with tourist information, maps and guided walking tours in summer. In the same building is the **Suomenlinna Museum** (☎ 4050 9691; admission €5; ☎ 10am-6pm May-Sep, 10am-4pm Oct-Apr) featuring a scale model of Suomenlinna as it looked in 1808 and an illuminating 30-minute audiovisual display.

**Ehrensvärd Museum** (☎ 684 1850; adult/child €3/1; ☎ 10am-5pm May-Aug, 11am-4pm Sep, 11am-4pm Sat & Sun Apr & Oct) preserves an 18th-century officer's

home and contains dozens of model ships, sea charts, portraits and blue-and-white tile Swedish stoves. Opposite Ehrensvärd Museum is the **shipyard** where sailmakers and other workers have been building ships since the 1750s. As many as two dozen ships are in the dry dock at any given time. They can be from 12m to 32m long and from as far away as the UK.

Three museums relating to Suomenlinna's military history can be visited with a combination ticket (€6). **Manege** (☎ 1814 5296; admission €4; ☎ 11am-6pm mid-May-Aug) commemorates WWII and displays heavy artillery. **Coast Artillery Museum** (☎ 1814 5295; admission €4; ☎ 11am-6pm Jul & Aug) displays still more heavy artillery in a bunker-style exhibition. Finland was forbidden to possess submarines by the 1947 Treaty of Paris and the WWII-era U-boat **Vesikko** (☎ 1814 6238; admission €4; ☎ 11am-6pm mid-May-Aug) is one of the few submarines remaining in the country. You can take a look inside and sympathise with its wartime crew – it's not for the claustrophobic.

The delightful **Toy Museum** (☎ 668 417; admission €4; ☎ 11am-4pm Sat & Sun Apr & Sep, 11am-5pm daily May-Aug, 11am-6pm Jul) is a private collection of hundreds of dolls – the personal achievement of Piippa Tandefelt. There's a café here serving delicious homemade apple pie. Next to the main quay, the **Jetty Barracks Gallery** (☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun) offers interesting temporary exhibitions.

Old bunkers, crumbling fortress walls and cannons are at the southern end of Susisaari island; poking around here gives the best impression of how the fortress once looked. Be careful with young children here, as there are some nasty drops. A torch will come in handy if you fancy exploring some of the tunnels.

The **church** on Iso Mustasaari island was built by the Russians in 1854. It's the only church in the world to double as a lighthouse – the beacon was originally gaslight but is now electric and is still in use.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Hostel Suomenlinna** (☎ 684 7471; www.leirikoulut.com; Suomenlinna C9; dm €20, s/d/tr €40/50/75; reception ☎ 8am-9pm; ☎) An interesting and enjoyable alternative to staying in central Helsinki is to bed down at this HI-affiliated hostel. Set in a historic building that was

once a Russian primary school and later a barracks, it inevitably has a slightly dour feel, but has plenty of original character. The dormitories are high-ceilinged classrooms, while the private rooms upstairs have cosy sloping ceilings. There is a simple kitchen, as well as a laundry. It's very important to note that the warden doesn't live on the island, so you must check in during reception hours and remember to get the key code.

There are several good cafés and a couple of restaurants on Suomenlinna, or you could do as the locals do and bring a picnic (carrying enormous quantities of cider and beer will help you blend in) and find a peaceful spot among the ramparts. There's a small **supermarket** (☎ 8am-9pm Mon-Fri, 8am-6pm Sat, noon-9pm Sun) by the Suomenlinna Hostel that's open every day.

**Suomenlinna Panimoravintola** (☎ 228 5030; buffet lunch €11.50; ☎ 3-10pm Mon-Fri, noon-10pm Sat, noon-6pm Sun, closed Mon & Tue Jan-Mar) Further along at the main ferry quay, this is an excellent brewery-restaurant with a spectacular lunch buffet. Three types of beer are brewed here (a lager, an ale and a porter) and the enclosed courtyard terrace is a good place to enjoy one.

**Walhalla** (☎ 668 552; mains €26-30; ☎ 6pm-midnight Mon-Sat May-mid-Sep) This is the island's gourmet restaurant and bookings are advised. Its location on the southwest side of Susisaari offers views of passing passenger ships from its open terrace. It also has a bar and terrace open during the day.

**Pizza Nikolai** (pizzas €8-10; ☎ noon-8pm Sun-Thu, noon-10pm Fri & Sat summer) Next door to Walhalla and run by it, this pizza place has a similarly memorable outlook but is cheaper and more relaxed.

**Café Chapman** (☎ 668 692; mains €6-12; ☎ lunch Mon-Fri mid-Sep-Apr, lunch & dinner daily May-mid-Sep) Near the dry dock on Susisaari is a pleasant café in an old stone storehouse. There's a busy terrace in summer.

Near Café Chapman, Café Piper is another good choice.

### Getting There & Around

HKL ferries depart from the passenger quay at the kauppatori in Helsinki, opposite the Presidential Palace (return €3.60, 15 minutes, three times hourly, 6.20am to 2.20am). Buy tickets at the pier.

JT-Lines runs an hourly waterbus from the kauppatori to the King's Gate near the Walhalla restaurant (return €5.50, 30 minutes, mid-May to August). The first departure is from the kauppatori at 8am and the last departure is from Suomenlinna at 12.15am, except for Sunday, when the last service is at 8.30pm. Check current timetables online at www.jt-line.fi.

There's nowhere to hire bikes on the island, but they can be brought across on the ferries.

### ESPOO

☎ 09 / pop 227,472

Espoo (Swedish: Esbo) is an independent municipality just west of Helsinki and while it officially ranks as the second-largest city in Finland, it is in reality a part of greater Helsinki, where much of its population works. It's a peaceful place with lots of water and green space and is very large and spread-out, with three centres and many suburbs, including Westend, with its exclusive waterside mansions. Espoo is one of the fastest-growing parts of Finland and has important technology industries of its own.

### Sights & Activities

The most important sight in Espoo is **Gallen-Kallela Museum** (☎ 541 3388; www.gallen-kallela.fi; Gallen-Kallelantie 27; admission €8; ☎ 10am-6pm mid-May-Aug, 10am-4pm Tue-Sat, 10am-5pm Sun Sep-mid-May), the pastiche studio-castle of Aleksis Gallen-Kallela, one of the most notable Finnish painters. The Art Nouveau building was designed by the artist and is now a museum of his work. Take tram 4 from central Helsinki to Munkkiniemi, then walk 2km or take bus 33 (Monday to Friday only).

Every architecturally minded person should visit **Otaniemi University** campus to see Aalto's main building and library, the Pietiläs' student building and Heikki Siren's chapel. **Tapioala** (Swedish: Hagalund), a modern shopping centre, was hailed in its day as a masterpiece of Finnish city planning.

The **Serena Water Park** (☎ 8870 5555; Tornimäentie 10; adult/child €17/13; ☎ 11am-8pm, closed 2 weeks in Sep) is one of Europe's best, with a cavalcade of pools, Jacuzzis, water-slides and facilities that will suit young and old. It's a great experience at any time of the year, especially

during the cold winters, but in summer there are extra attractions outdoors. There's also a ski centre here in winter.

Espoo's annual **Jazz Festival** (☎ 8165 7234), held in late April, is top-notch.

### NUUKSIO NATIONAL PARK

In the northwest district of Espoo, this small national park is an excellent opportunity to experience a bit of Finnish wilderness if your visit won't take you beyond the Helsinki area. Although so close to town, it's a typical slice of Finnish forest, with a multitude of lakes and ponds, and several walking trails.

You may see rare ospreys, grey-headed woodpeckers or black-throated divers on your strolls; the park is also a habitat to elk and nocturnal flying squirrels.

There's an **information centre** (☎ 020-564 4790; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun mid-Apr-Sep) at the main Haukkalampi entrance to the park and an unstaffed nature exhibition in another cabin. Here or at the main national parks information centre in Helsinki you can book one of the two wilderness cabins (€9) in the park. There are also several free camping sites.

To get to Nuukio, catch bus 85 from Espoo Centre. It drops you about 2km from the Haukkalampi centre. Helsinki Expert, in the main Helsinki tourist office, also runs regular excursions out there in summer.

### Getting There & Away

You can catch buses to various parts of Espoo from the dedicated Espoo wing in the bus terminal in Helsinki. Local trains from Helsinki will drop you off at several stations, including central Espoo. Espoo also has its own bus system.

### VANTAA

☎ 09 / pop 185,429

Vantaa, a large spread-out residential town that is essentially a satellite of Helsinki, is primarily of interest as the location of the Helsinki-Vantaa international airport. Vantaa is also home to **Heureka** (☎ 85799; www.heureka.fi; adult/child €18/11.50; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Wed & Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun, 10am-8pm Thu), a fantastic hands-on science centre, IMAX theatre and planetarium next to the Tikkurila train station. To see the exhibitions only (without the theatre and planetarium) is €13.50/8.50.



In early August, Vantaa is the venue for Ankkarock ([www.ankkarock.fi](http://www.ankkarock.fi)), one of Finland's bigger rock festivals.

There is frequent local train and bus service between Helsinki and Vantaa, 19km to the north; see p83.

## TUUSULAN RANTATIE

☎ 09

The **Tuusulan Rantatie** (Tuusula Lake Rd; [www.tuusulanrantatie.com](http://www.tuusulanrantatie.com)) is a narrow road along Tuusulanjärvi (Tuusula Lake), about a 30-minute drive north of Helsinki. The region attracted a number of artists during the National Romantic era of the early 20th century. Sibelius, as well as the Nobel Prize-winning novelist FE Sillanpää and the painter Pekka Halonen, worked here. A major stop along the 'museum road' is **Halosenniemi** (☎ 8718 3461; admission €5.50; ☎ 11am-5pm Tue-Sun, 11am-7pm May-Aug), the Karelian-inspired, log-built National Romantic studio of Halonen, with a walking trail through his lakeside garden.

Sibelius' home **Ainola** (☎ 287 322; [www.ainola.fi](http://www.ainola.fi); adult/child €5/1; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun May-Sep) is east of the lake near Järvenpää and is another popular stop with tour groups. The family home, designed by Lars Sonck and built on this beautiful forested site in 1904, contains original furniture, paintings, books and a piano owned by the Sibelius family. The graves of Jean Sibelius and his wife Aino are in the garden.

The main town in the area, Järvenpää, is a modern service centre with numerous restaurants and cafés but little to attract the traveller.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Hotelli Krapi** (☎ 274 841; [www.krapi.info](http://www.krapi.info); Rantatie 2; s/d €103/130, weekends & summer €72/90; (P) ☎) Thankfully this place doesn't live up to its name. It's an excellent independent hotel in what was once a cowshed; there's been a hotel here since 1883. It sits on the Tuusula Lake Road south of Halosenniemi and 30km north of Helsinki. It has great modern rooms, with bright colours and pine furnishings, three restaurants and a chance to steam up in a traditional sauna. Service and standards are excellent.

**Järvenpään Matkailukeskus** (☎ 7425 5200; [www.matkailukeskus.com](http://www.matkailukeskus.com); Ståhlhanentie; tent sites €10-18, s €20, 4-person r €45, cabins €25-50; (P) ☎) A camp

site in a great lakeside location 2.5km from Järvenpää with good-value HI-hostel and cabin accommodation.

## Getting There & Away

Tuusulanjärvi is about 40km north of Helsinki. Take a local train to Kerava or Järvenpää or a bus to Hyrylä and proceed from there by bicycle.

## PORVOO

☎ 019 / pop 46,793

An enduringly popular day or overnight trip from Helsinki, Porvoo (Swedish: Borgå), 50km east of Helsinki, is the second-oldest town in Finland after Turku. Officially it has been a town since 1346, but even before that Porvoo was an important trading centre.

There are three distinct sections to the city: the Old Town, the new town and the 19th-century Empire quarter, built Russian style under the rule of Tsar Nicholas I. The Old Town, with its tightly clustered wooden houses, cobbled streets and riverfront setting, is one of the most picturesque in Finland. During the day, its craft shops are bustling with visitors; if you can stay the night, you'll have it more or less to yourself. The old painted buildings are spectacular in the setting sun.

## Information

North of the market square, Osuuspankki Bank has foreign exchange and an ATM.

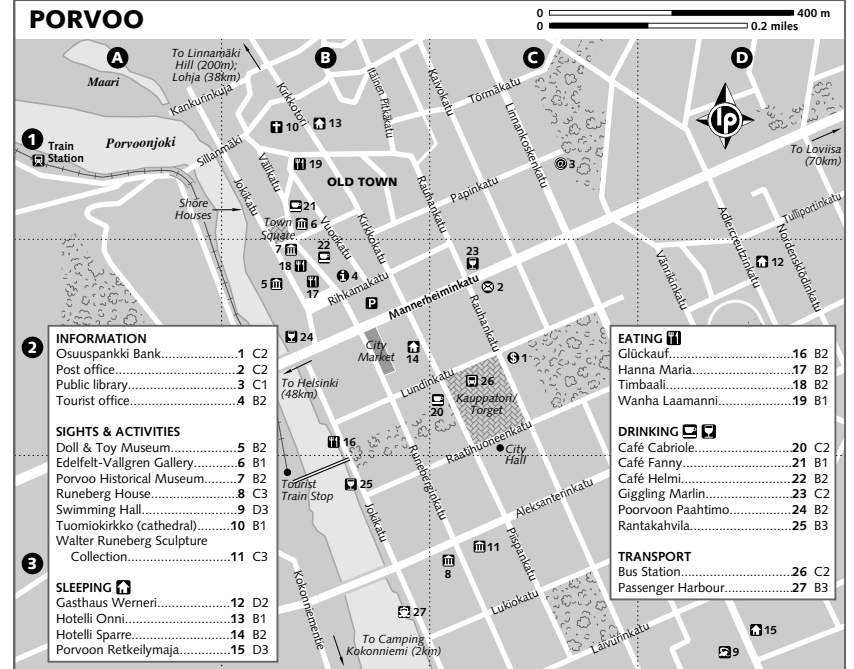
**Public library** (☎ 520 2417; Papinkatu 20; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat) Has free Internet terminals, which can be booked. There's also a terminal at the tourist office.

**Tourist office** (☎ 520 2316; [www.porvoo.fi](http://www.porvoo.fi); Rihkamakatu 4; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun early Jun-Aug, 9.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat Sep-early Jun) Plenty of good information including the informative and free *Porvoo* booklet.

## Sights

### PORVOO OLD TOWN

The Old Town district north of Mannerheiminkatu was largely built after the Great Fire of 1760. It's an alluring warren of narrow, winding cobblestone alleys and brightly coloured wooden houses. Craft boutiques and antique shops line the main roads, Välikatu and Kirkkokatu. For a glimpse of less touristed bits, head for the streets east of the cathedral; Itäinen



Pitkäkatu is one of the nicest. The distinctive row of **shore houses** along the Porvoonjoki were first painted with red ochre to impress the visiting King of Sweden, Gustavus III, in the late 18th century. They were originally used to store goods traded with German ships from the Hanseatic League, but many are now Porvoo's prime residential real estate.

The striking stone medieval **Tuomiokirkko** (cathedral; ☎ 661111; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat, 2-5pm Sun May-Sep, 10am-2pm Tue-Sat, 2-4pm Sun Oct-Apr) dominates the Old Town and has an important place in Finnish history: this is where the first Diet of Finland assembled in 1809, convened by Tsar Alexander I, thus giving Finland religious freedom.

The **Porvoo Museum** (☎ 574 7500; Vanha Raatihuoneentori; combined admission adult/child €5/1; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Sat, 11am-4pm Sun May-Aug, noon-4pm Wed-Sun Sep-Apr) is in two adjacent buildings on the beautiful cobbled Old Town Hall Square. The more interesting of the two is the **Edelfelt-Vallgren Museum**, with paintings by Albert Edelfelt and sculptures by Ville Vallgren, two of Porvoo's most

famous artists. **Porvoo Historical Museum**, in the town hall building across the square, has old furniture and other paraphernalia. It was due to close for restoration for a period as this book went to press.

**Doll & Toy Museum** (☎ 582 941; Jokikatu 14; admission €2; ☎ 11am-3.30pm Mon-Thu & Sat, noon-3.30pm Sun Jun & Jul) houses over 800 dolls and other toys and is the largest museum of its kind in Finland.

There are **guided walking tours** of Old Porvoo at 2pm on Saturdays from early May to mid-September, leaving from the passenger harbour. In addition, from late June to late August, tours leave from the Porvoo Museum from Monday to Friday at 2pm. All tours last one hour, are in Finnish, Swedish and English, and cost €6.

## RUNEBERG HOUSE

National poet Johan Ludvig Runeberg wrote the lyrics to the Finnish national anthem, Maamme-Laulu/Vårt Land (Our Country). His former home is a **museum** (☎ 581 330; Aleksanterinkatu 3; admission €5; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Sat, 11am-5pm Sun May-Aug, closed Mon & Tue Sep-Apr),

with an interior that has been preserved as it was. The **Walter Runeberg Sculpture Collection** (Aleksanterinkatu 5) has 150 sculptures by Walter Runeberg, JL Runeberg's eldest son. Opening hours are the same and admission is good for entry to both museums.

## CRUISES

The *M/S Borgå* departs from the passenger harbour (€6, on the hour, 11am to 4pm, Tuesday to Sunday) and includes some historical commentary. If you have more time, archipelago cruises aboard *M/S Sandra* and *M/S Fredrika* depart on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday at noon from late June to early August (€12, four hours) and offer the chance to stop off at islands en route.

See opposite for details of Helsinki-Porvoo boat cruises.

## Sleeping

Surprisingly, Porvoo is a little light on quality accommodation, perhaps because most people visit on day-trips from the capital. As well as the choices here, the tourist office can recommend a couple of one-room-only options around town.

**Hotelli Onni** (☎ 050-525 6446; www.hotelonni.fi; Kirkkotori 3; s/d €104/124; ☒) With just four rooms, this boutique accommodation is Porvoo's most delightful. It's situated right opposite the cathedral in the heart of the old town, a wooden building set back from the street with an elegant terraced café. The rooms are beautifully decorated with luxurious flair and style.

**Porvoon Retkeilymaja** (☎ 523 0012; www.porvoohostel.cjb.net; Linnankoskenkatu 1-3; dm/s/d €15/28/36; ☐ ☒) This HI-affiliated hostel 800m southeast of Mannerheiminkatu is in a lovely old wooden house with spotless rooms, a grassy garden and a well equipped kitchen. It's a bit old school – the doors close between 10am (check-out time) and 4pm, and curfew is 11pm – but it's popular so book ahead in summer. There's a great indoor pool and sauna complex over the road.

**Gasthaus Werner** (☎ 0400 494 876; gasthaus.wernerid@dnalnternet.net; Adlercreutzinkatu 29; s/d €35/50; ☒ reception 10am-10pm; ☐ ☒) This central guesthouse is run by a cheerful Finn and offers a variety of rooms with shared bathroom and access to kitchens. The rooms in the basement are spacious but a little

## PAINTING THE TOWN RED

Colourful wooden houses are a feature of travel in Finland and other Nordic countries, but traditionally it wasn't just a matter of going down to the hardware store and picking your favourite colour. Originally, wooden buildings in Finland were uncoloured, but in the 18th century, red ochre paint began to become popular. This was mixed at home from iron and mineral extracts and protected buildings from the extreme winters for up to fifty years. It was an economical and accessible solution. Later, wealthier families began using expensive white, yellow and blue paints for their wooden houses, although this 'extravagance' was rarely extended to outbuildings.

dark; those upstairs are a better bet. There are also self-contained apartments available and a small grassy garden area.

**Hotelli Sparre** (☎ 584 455; www.avainhotellit.fi; Piispankatu 34; s/d €75/85, Sat, Sun & summer €70/80; ☒) This is a central, well-kept hotel just off the main street, with friendly service and a sauna and restaurant. The rooms are done out in Finnish floral and are comfortable if not memorable.

**Camping Kokonniemi** (☎ 581 967; www.lomalitto.fi/kokonniemi; tent sites €11 plus €4 per person, 4-person cabins €65; ☒ Jun-Aug) A camping ground 2km south of Porvoo town on the western side of the river, this is a good choice with plenty of greenery and a sauna, café and playground facilities.

## Eating

**Timbaali** (☎ 523 1020; Välikatu 8; mains €11-26; ☒ 11am-11pm, 11am-6pm Sun Sep-Apr) This is a rustic place with a summer garden, more formal interior and perfect Old Town ambience. The menu is broad but the speciality here is snails. They are done in a variety of ways and cost €10 to €12 for half a dozen. There's also a generous lunch buffet in summer.

**Wanha Laamanni** (☎ 523 0455; Vuorikatu 17; mains €20-26; ☒ 10.30am-10pm) In the Old Judges' Chambers, this is the gourmet restaurant of Porvoo. It's in a splendid late-18th-century building with a fireplace for winter nights and a terrace for summer days. Game is a speciality, along with reindeer and Finnish

fish dishes. There are also excellent vegetarian options, such as Jerusalem artichoke steak with mushroom risotto. There's live music at weekends in summer.

**Glückauf** (☎ 54761; mains €13-25; ☒ noon-11pm May-Sep) A 19th-century sailing ship moored on the eastern riverfront is the home of this boat restaurant. It specializes in seafood, and there's a cheaper 'terrace' menu (ie, you eat on the riverbank rather than the boat) from €7 to €13.

**Hanna Maria** (☎ 583 200; Välikatu 6; mains €5-10, steaks €9-15; ☒ 8am-5pm Mon-Sat, 10am-5pm Sun) Right in the old town, this cheap and cheerful lunchtime restaurant serves up no-nonsense Finnish food at cheap prices. It's by no means gourmet, but it more than does the job, particularly if you can nab a spot on the terrace.

## CAFÉS

Quaint cafés are a speciality of Porvoo, particularly in the Old Town and on the waterfront.

**Café Fanny** (☎ 582 855; Välikatu 13; ☒ 10am-5pm, longer hr in summer) Try this café, on the beautiful cobbled Old Town square, for watching Porvoo drift by.

**Café Helmi** (☎ 524 5165; Välikatu 7; ☒ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat, 11am-6pm Sun, longer hr in summer) The elegant formality of this café recalls the time of the Tsars. Fittingly, it specializes in Russian-style high tea and fresh pastries.

**Café Cabriole** (☎ 523 2800; Piispankatu 30; ☒ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Sat) This large stylish old building on the west side of the market square is a good spot to indulge in a pastry or two. On weekdays, there's a good-value lunch buffet (€6.80) served from 11am to 2.30pm.

## Drinking

**Porvoon Paahtimo** (☎ 617 040; Mannerheiminkatu 2) This place at the bridge is primarily a cosy bar although sandwiches and cakes are available. There's a good range of beers and a great little terrace hanging over the water.

**Giggling Marlin** (Mannerheiminkatu 16; ☒ 10pm-4am Wed-Sat) The liveliest of the nightclubs.

In summer, a number of terraces line the riverfront south of Mannerheimintie. One of the best is Rantakahvila (Beach Café),

with cheap drink, a range of fast food and a strangely diverse crowd.

Glory Days, in the Seurahovi Hotel on the east side of the market square, is another bar popular with young locals.

## Getting There & Away

### BOAT

The *M/S JL Runeberg* (☎ 524 3331; www.msjruneberg.fi; adult one way/return €21/31, child €10/14), a former steamship, travels between Helsinki and Porvoo in summer and makes an excellent day trip. It leaves Helsinki daily (except Thursday) at 10am returning from Porvoo at 4pm, and arriving in Helsinki at 7.25pm. Since the trip takes four hours, you may want to return by bus or, on Saturdays in summer, on the vintage diesel train (adult/child combined ferry and train ticket €29/12).

An alternative is the modern, speedy *M/S King*, operated by **Royal Line** (☎ 09-612 2950; www.royalline.fi; one way/return €21/32). It travels from the Helsinki kauppatori at 10am daily between late June and mid-August, returning from Porvoo at 3pm, taking three hours each way. It can be done as a day trip with an interesting archipelago cruise and two hours of sightseeing in Porvoo. The onboard lunch costs €12.

### BUS

Buses depart from Porvoo from the Helsinki bus station every 30 minutes or so (€8.70, one hour) and there are frequent buses to/from towns further east, including Kotka (€12.70) and Lappeenranta (€25.40).

### TRAIN

The old diesel **Porvoo Museum Train** (☎ 752 3262; one way/return €12/20) runs between Helsinki and Porvoo on Saturdays in July and August. The train departs from Helsinki at 10.16am and from Porvoo at 4.30pm and takes 1½ hours; purchase tickets at the Helsinki or Porvoo train station or on board the train. In Porvoo, the train runs to a final stop near the main bridge, about 1km past the old train station. The trip can also be combined with a cruise on the *MS JL Runeberg* (see Boat, above). It also does a trip from Porvoo to the village of Hinthaara between arrival from Helsinki and final departure.

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