

Tallinn

Tallinn is so much part of the Helsinki experience, it sometimes feels like a distant suburb; 'Tallinski' is a nickname often heard. Not only is the majority of Tallinn's tourists still bargain-hunters from Finland, but the city makes for an obvious addition to travellers exploring eastern Scandinavia. While thoroughly modern and just 80km from Helsinki, it's also, refreshingly, a world apart. Pleasant surprises on all levels abound here.

Boasting a splendidly preserved and lively medieval old town and a gleaming, chrome and glass city centre, Tallinn inspires visitors to poke their heads into ancient courtyards, crane their necks towards Gothic spires, find a cosy cellar café or happening bar, or just hang out at Town Hall Square soaking up the sun and the suds.

Tallinn, Estonia's capital, is one of the coolest spots in Europe, and it's in the mood to strut its new status as the capital of an EU country. Its subtle, quiet charm weaves its way into your heart before you're aware of it.

FAST FACTS

- **Population** 400,000
- **Currency** kroon (EEK); €1 = 15.65EEK; US\$1 = 13.04EEK; UK£1 = 23.26EEK; A\$1 = 9.4EEK; CA\$1 = 10.9EEK; NZ\$1 = 7.9EEK; ¥100 = 10.9EEK
- **Official Language** Estonian
- **Telephone Codes** Estonia country code ☎ 372; no area code for Tallinn
- **Visas** EU nationals and citizens of the US, Canada and Australia do not need a visa to enter Estonia



ORIENTATION & INFORMATION

The medieval Old Town, just to the south of Tallinn Bay, comprises of Toompea (the upper town) and the lower town, which is still surrounded by much of its 2.5km defensive wall. Its centre is Raekoja plats (Town Hall Square). Immediately west of the Old Town is the modern city centre, with shopping plazas and the closest Estonia has to skyscrapers.

The **Tallinn Tourist Information Centre** (☎ 645 7777; www.tourism.tallinn.ee; Niguliste tänav 2; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun May-Jun, 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun Jul-Aug, 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun Sep, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat Oct-Apr) offers a full range of services. Here you can purchase the Tallinn Card (130EEK to 450EEK), which offers free rides on public transport, admission to museums, free excursions and discounts at restaurants, valid from six to 72 hours. **Estonian Holidays** (☎ 627 0500; www.holidays.ee; Rüütli tänav 28) can help you make travel arrangements.

For maps of the city and region as well as Lonely Planet titles, check out the book shop **Apollo** (☎ 654 8485; Viru tänav 23).

Change money at **Tavid** (☎ 627 9900; Aia tänav 5; ☎ 24hr). To keep in touch, head to the **central post office** (☎ 625 7300; Narva maantee 1; ☎ 7.30am-8pm Mon-Fri, 8am-6pm Sat) or to **Jumping Jacks** (Suur Karja tänav 13; ☎ 11am-9pm; per hr 30EEK) a basement-level, slightly dingy internet connection.

In an emergency, dial ☎ 110 for police and ☎ 112 for fire, ambulance and urgent medical advice. The **First Aid Hotline** (☎ 697 1145) can advise you in English about the nearest treatment centre. For general information, **Info Line** (☎ 626 1111) is very helpful.

SIGHTS

Raekoja Plats & Lower Town

Raekoja plats (Town Hall Square) has been the centre of Tallinn life since markets began here probably in the 11th century. It's dominated by the only surviving Gothic **town hall** (☎ 645 7900; adult/student 35/20EEK; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Sat Jun-Aug, by appointment Sep-May) in northern Europe (constructed in the early 14th century, reconstructed 1402-04) and faced by pretty, pastel buildings from the 15th to 17th centuries. Old Thomas, Tallinn's symbol and guardsman, has been keeping watch from his perch

on the weathervane atop the Town Hall since 1530. You can also climb the building's **tower** (adult/student 25/15EEK; ☎ 11am-6pm Jun-Sep). Usually lasting four days, the **Old Town Days** festival in early June sees Raekoja plats come alive with market stalls, concerts, dancing and medieval-themed merry-making.

The **Raeapteek** (Town Council Pharmacy), on the north side of the square, is another ancient Tallinn institution; there's been a pharmacy or apothecary's shop here since at least 1422. An arch beside it leads into narrow Saia käik (White Bread Passage), at the far end of which is the lovely, Gothic **Pühavaimu Kirik** (Holy Spirit Church; ☎ 644 1487; ☎ 10am-3pm, free concerts 6pm Mon), dating from the 14th-century with carvings from 1684 and a tower bell cast in 1433.

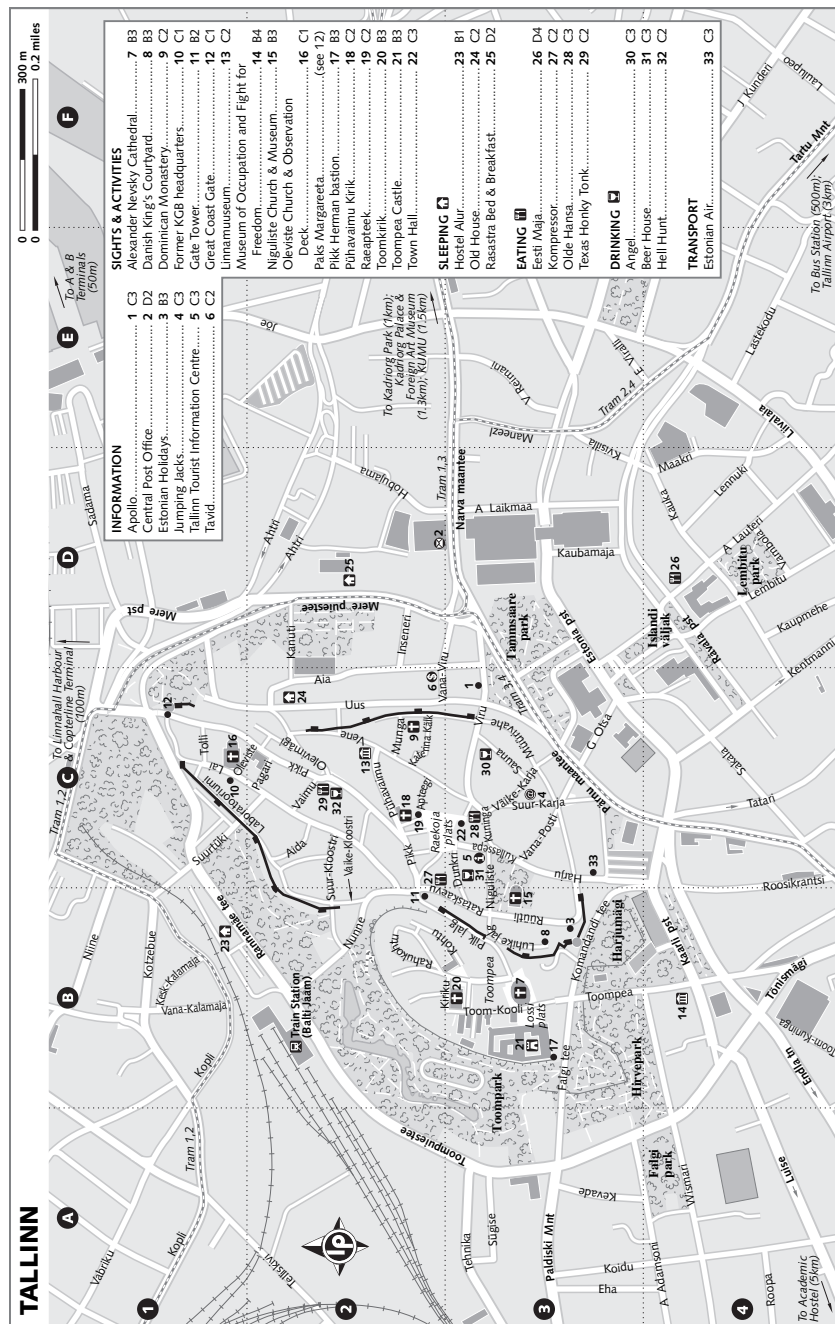
A medieval merchant's home at Vene tänav 17, on the corner of Pühavaimu tänav, houses Tallinn's most interesting museum – the **Linnamuuseum** (City Museum; ☎ 644 6553; www.linnamuuseum.ee; Vene tänav 17; adult/student 35/10EEK; ☎ 10.30am-6pm Wed-Mon Mar-Oct, 10.30am-5pm Wed-Mon Nov-Feb), which traces Tallinn's development through to 1940.

From Vene tänav, an arched doorway leads into a cosy courtyard and the world of the **Dominican Monastery** (☎ 644 4606; kloostri@hot.ee; Vene tänav 16/18; adult/student 45/15EEK; ☎ 9.30am-6pm mid-May–mid-Sep), which was founded in 1246 as a base for Scandinavian monks. Today the monastery complex houses Estonia's largest collection of very impressive **stone carvings**, which leave an impression on visitors eager to catch a glimpse of Medieval-looking life; there are often concerts and mysterious activities taking place here.

The majestic **Niguliste Church** (☎ 644 9911; adult/student 35/20EEK; ☎ 10am-5pm Wed-Sun), a minute's walk south of Raekoja plats, is now used to stage concerts and serves as a museum of religious art.

At the foot of the slope below the Niguliste is the carefully exposed wreckage of the buildings that stood here before the Soviet bombing of Tallinn on the night of 9 March 1944.

Pikk tänav, running north from Raekoja plats to the **Great Coast Gate** and the **Paks Margareeta** (Fat Margaret Bastion), the medieval exit to Tallinn port, is lined with many 15th-century houses of medieval



merchants and gentry. Also here are the buildings of several old Tallinn guilds and some museums.

Near the end of Pikk tänav stands a chief Tallinn landmark, the **Oleviste Church**. This is a great place to start any Tallinn expedition as there's a superb **observation deck** (☎ 621 4421; adult/student 20/10EEK; ☎ 10am-6pm) halfway up its 124m structure offering the city's best views of the Old Town (it's a long and narrow climb up, though – bring a hanky to wipe off the sweat). The Church is dedicated to the 11th-century King Olav II of Norway but it is linked in local lore with another Olav (Olaf), the church's architect who fell to his death from its tower. First built in the early 13th century, it was once the world's tallest building (it used to be 159m high). Near the church on Pikk tänav 59, is the **former KGB headquarters**; the basement windows were sealed to conceal the sounds of cruel interrogations.

Toompea

A regal approach to Toompea is through the red-roofed 1380 **gate tower** at the western end of Pikk tänav in the lower town, and then along Pikk jalg (Long Leg). The still-active 19th-century Russian Orthodox **Alexander Nevsky Cathedral** (☎ 644 3484; ☎ 8am-7pm) dominates Lossi plats at the top of Pikk jalg, sited strategically across from **Toompea Castle**, Estonia's traditional seat of power. The **riigikogu** (parliament) meets in the pink, baroque-style building out front, an 18th-century addition. The state flag flies from the **Pikk Herman bastion**. A path leads down from Lossi plats through an opening in the wall to the **Danish King's Courtyard** where, in summer, artists set up their easels.

The Lutheran **Toomkirik** (Dome Church; ☎ 644 4140; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sun) is Estonia's oldest church, founded in 1219 (though the exteriors date from the early 14th century). From Toomkirik, follow Kohtu tänav to the city's favourite lookout over the Lower Town.

The **Museum of Occupation & Fight for Freedom** (☎ 668 0250; Toompea tänav 8; adult/student 10/5EEK; ☎ 11am-6pm Tue-Sun), is just down the hill from Toompea and contains a new and worthwhile exhibit on Estonia's history of occupation, focusing on the most recent Soviet one.

Kadriorg

Even if you have one day in Tallinn, it's worth heading towards pleasant **Kadriorg-Park** located just 2km east of the Old Town along Narva maantee (take tram No 1 or 3 to the last stop). The park and its 1718–36 Kadriorg Palace were designed for Peter the Great for his wife Catherine I. Both the **Kadriorg Palace** (☎ 606 6400; Weizenbergi tänav 37; adult/student 45/25EEK; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Wed & Fri-Sun, 10am-9pm Thu May-Sep, 10am-5pm Wed-Sun Oct-Apr) and the **Foreign Art Museum** (adult/student 15/5EEK; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun) are housed in the same magnificent building and make for a dreamy hour or so – the 17th- and 18th-century foreign art is mainly unabashedly Romantic, and the palace unabashedly splendid.

Nearby is the brand new **KUMU** (☎ 602 6000; Weizenbergi tänav 34; adult/student 75/40EEK; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Wed & Fri-Sun, 10am-9pm Thu May-Sep, 10am-5pm Wed-Sun Oct-Apr), the country's largest museum by far. A spectacular, massive structure of limestone and green glass, it contains a large collection of Estonian art as well as constantly changing contemporary exhibits.

SLEEPING

The Tourist Information Centre can help find the right accommodation to fit your budget. **Rasastra Bed & Breakfast** (☎ 661 6291; www.bedbreakfast.ee; Mere puistee 4) can set you up with a room in a private home from 275EEK per person.

Hostel Alur (☎ 631 1531; www.alurhostel.com; Rannamae tee 3; dm/5/d/tr from 235/500/720/845EEK, about 15% cheaper Sep-Apr; (P)) Not the liveliest of hostels, but it's clean, friendly, (a bit too) quiet and just a stone's throw from the train station and Old Town. There's 10% discount for ISIC and YHA cardholders.

Academic Hostel (☎ 620 2275; www.academichostel.com; Akadeemia tee 11; d 495EEK) Situated on the edge of the Tallinn Technical University campus grounds, this is a bright, happy, freshly-done-up hostel with a lively atmosphere. With 108 rooms spread out along five colour-coded floors, it feels more like a modern but budget hotel than a typical hostel with a young, vivacious, international clientele.

Old House (☎ 641 1464; www.oldhouse.ee; Uustänav 22 & 26; dm 290EEK, 1-1/2-1/3-1/5-1/6-person room 550/650/9

75/1450/1740EEK, guesthouse s/d/tr 450/650/975EEK, apt 1300-2500EEK) This hostel-guesthouse fills two nearly adjacent houses in the Old Town. Walls are paper-thin, but it's pleasant, spotless, filled with friendly travellers and a hearty breakfast is included. Its Old Town luxury apartments make a great splurge. ISIC cardholders get a 10% discount off all rates.

EATING & DRINKING

Beer House (☎ 627 6520; Dunkri tänav 5) A little piece of Austria in the heart of the old town, this multilevelled place is great for a night of revelling in the company of many foreigners and a few locals. Tallinn's only microbrewery is located within and whips up a prize-winning array of delicious and fresh beers (30EEK to 40EEK) – if they don't do you in, the oompah-pah music surely will!

Kompressor (☎ 646 4210; Rataskaevu tänav 3; mains from 40EEK) Eat one of the enormous, stuffed pancakes and you'll be full for the rest of the day. The large hall and casual atmosphere make it a great hang-out too; the big tables make it easy to chat up locals.

Texas Honky Tonk (☎ 631 1755; Pikk tänav 43; mains from 50EEK) No one does Americana quite so well in Tallinn. The menu is mostly Tex-Mex (the burritos are superb), and the atmosphere lively and yippee-ayota-yay fun.

Eesti Maja (☎ 645 5252; www.eestimaja.ee; Lauteri tänav 1; buffet 75EEK, meals from 125EEK; ☎ 11am-11pm) Here's a good place to sample some traditional Estonian fare in a folksy interior. The weekday lunch buffet is a good deal and lets you try some of the heavy, exotic fare without a full-plate commitment.

Olde Hansa (☎ 627 9020; Vana Turg 1; mains from 175EEK; ☎ 11am-midnight) If you'll splurge just once in Tallinn, here's where to do it. This medieval-themed restaurant (more authentic than kitsch!) boasts first and foremost the most ebullient and friendly service in the city, plus exotic meats (elk, wild boar) and home-made delights such as juniper cheese and honey beer. It's a fun atmosphere inside or out on the terrace, and the food and its creative presentation is always first-rate.

Hell Hunt (☎ 681 8333; Pikk tänav 39) A trooper on the pub circuit for years, this place boasts an amiable atmosphere and reason-

able prices for locally brewed beer and cider (half-litre for 24EEK).

Angel (☎ 641 6880; Sauna tänav 1) Open to all sexes and orientations, this mainly gay restaurant-bar-club has become one of the liveliest spots in town for fun of all kinds. The upstairs restaurant is noted for its cuisine and sassy waiters.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

The national carrier **Estonian Air** (airline code 0V; ☎ 640 1101; www.estonian-air.ee; Vabaduse väljak 10, Tallinn) links Tallinn with some 20 cities in Europe and Russia, and at reasonable prices. A number of other airlines serve the **Tallinn airport** (www.tallinn-airport.ee).

Copterline (www.copterline.ee) runs pricey helicopter flights between Helsinki and Tallinn's Copterline Terminal, at the Linnahall harbour, nearly hourly from 7am to 7pm weekdays (one way 1395EEK to 3100EEK, 18 minutes).

Boat

FINLAND

About 25 ferries, hydrofoils and catamarans cross between Helsinki and Tallinn every day. Ferries make the crossing in 2½ to 3½ hours, hydrofoils in just over an hour. All companies have concession rates. Prices are cheaper from mid-August through until May.

Tallink (☎ 640 9808; www.tallink.ee) operates up to three ferries (from 280EEK) and seven catamarans (from 390EEK) every day. **Lindaline** (☎ 699 9333; www.lindaliini.ee) makes up to eight hydrofoil crossings each way daily (single/return 450/660EEK), leaving from the Linnahall harbour. **Eckerö Line** (☎ 631 8606; www.eckeroline.ee) operates a daily car-carrying catamaran from Terminal B, making the crossing in just 3½ hours (single/return 345/380EEK). **Nordic Jet Line** (☎ 613 7000; www.njl.ee) has several car-carrying catamarans departing from Terminal C, they make the trip in around 1½ hours, seven times a day (from 420EEK). **Silja Line** (☎ 611 6661; www.silja.ee) has both ferries and catamarans leaving from Terminal A (singles from 520EEK) and offers day-trip packages to Helsinki. **Viking Line** (☎ 666 3966; www.vikingline.ee) operates large car ferries, which depart twice a day from Terminal A (from 735EEK).

SWEDEN

Tallink (☎ 640 9808; www.tallink.ee) runs nightly ferries from Tallinn's Terminal D to Stockholm (from 360EEK up to 5740EEK for a luxury suite, 15 hours), as well as daily ferries from Paldiski, 52km west of Tallinn, to Kappelskär near Stockholm (from 375EEK, 12 hours). Tickets should be booked well in advance in Tallinn or Stockholm's **Frihamnen** (Free Harbour; ☎ 08-667 0001).

GETTING AROUND

Tallinn has an excellent public transport network of buses, trolleybuses and trams that operate from 6am to midnight. In Es-

tonia, *piletid* (tickets) are sold from most street kiosks (adult/student 10/7EEK) or can be purchased from the driver (15EEK). Validate your ticket by using the hole-punch inside the vehicle. All public transport timetables are posted on the web at www.tallinn.ee.

Taxis cost from 5.50EEK to 9EEK per kilometre. Try **Iks Takso** (☎ 638 1381) or **Taxi Marabu** (☎ 650 0006). Throughout central Tallinn, the ecologically sound **Velotakso** (☎ 508 8810) offers rides on egg-shaped vehicles run by pedal power and enthusiasm, and charges 35EEK for anywhere within central Tallinn.

© Lonely Planet Publications. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted. In return, we think it's fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don't upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - 'Do the right thing with our content.'