Finland Essay, Research Paper

There is evidence of Finland being inhabited as early as 10.000 years ago. Those inhabitant`s main occupation was hunting and fishing. They came to Finland by different routes – through Karelia and over the sea from the west and the south. There are many language groups: the Finnish, the Finnish Swedish (coastal area, the ?land islands), the Lapps (Lapland) and the Romany. There are two official languages in Finland – Finnish and Swedish. At present the population amounts to a little over 5 million. 95 % is Finnish speaking, 6 % is Swedish speaking and less than 1 % speak other languages. The religion has been influenced both by the East and the West. About 86,4 % of the population belong to the Lutheran church and 1 % are Greek Orthodox.

HISTORY

Administratively Finland was a part of the Kingdom of Sweden until 1809, when Russia occupied the whole country in the Napoleonic Wars. Finland became an independent republic on Dec. 6, 1917, when Lenin recognized its independence. In 1918 a civil war broke out where the Reds, supported by the Russian Bolsheviks, fought against the Whites, whose allies were the Germans. The fierce civil war ended soon with the victory of the Whites and Finland became a Democratic Republic.

The Soviet Union attacked Finland in 1939, after Finland had refused the cession of its territory to the Soviet Union. The famous Winter War broke out. Although the enemy was superior in force, the Finnish Army repelled it by encircling the Soviet troops in extremely cold weather in the forests of Eastern Finland. The Soviets annexed Karelia, but the Finns won it back at the beginning of the Continuation War (1941-44), apart from which Finland occupied large areas of Soviet Karelia. The Soviet Army organized a new attack in the summer of 1944 with the intention of occupying the whole of Finland. They were stopped at Vyborg. According to the terms of peace, Finland was to drive the Germans, who had been their allies in the Continuation War, out of Northern Finland, give away a part of Karelia and pay heavy reparations. Nevertheless, Finland could keep the most precious thing of all – its independence.

After the wars a period of extensive reconstruction works and economic development began. In 1952 Helsinki hosted the Olympic Games. As a result of the neutrality policy, the European Security Council met in Helsinki in 1975. The 1980s witnessed a period of economic well-being, which was followed by a recession at the beginning of the 1990s.

CLIMATE

Finland has four clearly distinguishable seasons.

The summer lasts for 3 months, from June to August. On a warm day the temperature can be 25-30 C. The average summer temperature is 18 C. There may be quite a lot of mosquitos in June and July, but nowadays there are effective deterrents to keep them away.

The colourful autumn season attracts many tourists.

The first snow usually falls in December and the heaviest snowfall usually occurs in March. Central and Northern Finland have excellent facilities for winter sports like skiing, downhill skiing and motor sledging.

In the summertime Lapland is fascinating because of the midnight sun which never sets. In the same way, in winter there is a period of darkness with no sunlight

?land – a self-governing province

The ?land Islands are situated between Finland and Sweden. The self-government was appointed in the 1922 Geneva Convention of the League of Nations. Finland is committed to following the convention which guarantees the ?land Province`s right to self-government, language, culture and local customs. The self-governing ?land has the power of legislation and management of internal affairs. The people are represented by the Provincial Government of ?land. The province has been a demilitarized area since the Peace of Paris of 1856, following the attack on the Bomarsund fortification and its destruction in the Crimean War. The demilitarization means that no military troops may be brought to ?land and it may not be fortified.

The province is divided into 15 municipalities and one town, Marianhamn, in which nearly half of the ?land population lives. ?land has had its own flag since 1954 and its own stamps since 1984. The ?land

Province has a population of about 25000 and it consists of 6500 named islands, of which 65 are inhabited.

BOAT TRAFFIC

Due to the geographical location, boat traffic plays a significant part in goods and passenger traffic. Important links are Helsinki-Tallinn, Helsinki-L?beck, Helsinki-Rostock, Helsinki-Mariehamn-Stockholm, Turku-Mariehamn-Stockholm and Vaasa-Ume?. The large shipping companies guarantee a quick and comfortable journey across the Baltic Sea. In summer it is advisable to book the tickets in advance. The ship traffic between Finland and Sweden is quite busy and is operated by large ferries which provide the traveller with all the comfort a sea journey can. There are daily departures from Finland, ?land and Sweden.

The car ferries which operate between Germany and Finland are quick and comfortable, but there are not very many departures and they can be very full during the peak season. However, during the last few years cargo boats have made traffiking a lot easier.

The boat traffic between Finland and Estonia is expanding all the time. Now there are many connections a day. The crossing takes about 3,5 hours by ferry and only a little over an hour by hydrofoil

Helsinki (pop. 500 000) is a modern capital. Nevertheless, there are also parts of Helsinki which have preserved the old architecture and atmosphere.

Regional Ticket

The regional tourist ticket entitles you to unlimited travel on all buses, trams, trains and underground trains. It is sold in the offices of Helsinki Traffic Board at the Railway Station and Hakaniemi Underground Station.

Helsinki Card

Helsinki Card entitles you to free travel and entrance to several museums and tourist attractions. Further information from the Tourist Centre.

History

Gustav Wasa, the King of Sweden, founded Helsinki as a commercial seaport in 1550 at the mouth of River Vantaa. The massive Suomenlinna Sea Fortress dates from the 18th century. In 1812 Helsinki became the capital of the Grand Duchy of Finland and in 1917 the capital of the independent Finland. Many historical sights of the city are from the early 19th century, when the Senate Square became the administrative centre of the city.

Also the Suomenlinna-Sveaborg Museum Fortress is one of the most important sights in Helsinki

Architecture

The Senate Square and its Empire style buildings like the Lutheran Cathedral, the University and the Council of State Building have remained the finest architectural sights in Helsinki.

A new commercial centre has emerged near Hakaniemi Market. On the El?intarhanlahti Bay are the City Offices and the City Theatre. The Finlandia House, venue of conferences and concerts, is located in the Hesperia Park on the T??l?nlahti Bay. Next to it is the new National Opera of Finland. The Temppelinaukion kirkko Church in T??l? is the most popular sight in Helsinki.

Helsinki is a maritime town. The busy Market Square with its fruit and flower stalls and white seagulls is right at the seaside. The Suomenlinna Fortress is only a short trip away and so is the Pihlajasaari recreation area, the beaches of which are very popular in summer. You can go to Korkeasaari, the Helsinki Zoo, either in summer by ferry or by car all-year. Seurasaari contains a large recreation area and a unique open-air museum.

All the motorways in Finland start in Helsinki. Along the western coast runs the road called Jorvaksentie and another one – Tarvontie – goes northwest. The coastal railroad goes to Hanko. There is a railroad to Turku and the main railroad goes north, the final destination being Kemij?rvi. The trains to Eastern Finland go all via Riihim?ki. The central airport for domestic as well as international flights is the Helsinki-Vantaa Airport. The Finnish national air company is Finnair. The most important sea links are the round-the-year links to Sweden, Germany and Estonia.

ROAD TRAFFIC

Finland has a dense road network which covers the entire country and is in good condition. The only traffic jams occur during public holidays and the holiday season in summer. The frost can damage the roads in Northern Finland. The damages are also caused by stud tyres that are used in winter.

Finland has right-hand traffic. In private cars seat belts must be worn both in the front and the back seat. Driving with headlights is compulsory outside built-up areas and everywhere if it is dark. The basic speed limit is usually 80 km/h, 50 km/h in built-up areas and 100-120 km/h on motorways during the summer. At present there are no road tolls.

AIR TRAFFIC

The centre of international air traffic is the Helsinki – Vantaa Airport. It has also good connections with other parts of Finland. Finnair is the air line responsible for domestic flights.

TRAIN AND COACH TRAFFIC

A railroad network covers most of the country, reaching as far north as Rovaniemi. Long driving distances are made easier by car transporting fast trains trafficing between northern and southern Finland. The coach traffic is good and reliable. Information about timetables, tickets and prices is available at coach stations and tourist agencies.

OTHER TRAFFIC

In the metropolitan area there are local trains, buses, trams and underground. The intervals are short and it is easy to change from one kind of transport to another. The regional tourist ticket is valid on all public transport within one hour. It costs 15 FIM.

Taxis are reliable and you can get one quite easily from a taxi stop or ordering by phone. 15 km journey by taxi costs about 120 FIM depending on the time of day.

MONEY AND CURRENCY EXCHANGE

The monetary unit is the Finnmark (FIM) which is dividable into 100 pennies. There are 1000 mk, 500 mk, 100 mk, 50 mk and 20 mk notes and 10 mk, 5 mk, 1 mk, 50 p. and 10 p. coins. Rates of exchange (8.2.1999): 1 DM = 3,0 FIM, 1 USD = 5,3 FIM, 1 SEK = 0,68 FIM, 1 GBP = 8,8, FIM. Currency can be changed in banks (open on weekdays 9-16.15) or in private currency exchange points. The value of Euro is approx. 5.95FIM.

MEDICAL CARE

In case of illness you should contact a health-care centre. Medicines and first aid kits are available in pharmacies. There are health-care centres and pharmacies almost in every municipality

ECONOMY

Finnish economy is on its way to recovery after the depression in the early 1990s. Although the educational standard is rather high compared to many other countries, the unemployment rate is still very high. On 31.12.1998, the unemployment rate was 15,1 %.

The most important export articles are woodprocessing and metalworking products. Also the export of high technology products is gaining in importance. In the field of telecommunications Nokia mobile phones are already quite well-known around the world.

HOTELS

There are about 800 hotels in Finland. You can get information about them in this travel guide. Compared to other countries Finnish hotels are comparatively new. As for their construction and facilities they are of high standard. A high class hotel is equipped with a sauna, a restaurant, and the rooms have a modern bathroom, minibar, TV and video and there are various activity rooms. Finland`s hotel capacity is growing, but it is still insufficient especially in the Helsinki region. Conferences and larer events as well as the new millenium are causing cowdedness, so rooms should be reserved well in advance

FOOD AND RESTAURANTS

The Finnish cuisine has become much more varied and international during the last few years. There are various kinds of fast food, as well as Oriental and French cuisine. Steak and chips are served also at larger service stations. Traditional Finnish food can be found in restaurants and at various summer events. This tourist guide gives information about the eating places in different

FINNISH HUNTING GROUNDS

Due to the length of the country and its northern location, the natural habitat varies greatly in different areas. Its wild nature and hard winters make Finland inhabitable for a comparatively small number of game. The game density is smaller than in Central Europe. The number of small game animals varies from year to year, depending on the harshness of the winter, for example.

The most important game is wood grouse, black grouse, willow grouse, hazelhen, mountain hare, brown hare, elk and white-tailed deer, as well as mallard and goldeneye of the waterfowl. Fox, racoon dog, badger, mink, beaver, muskrat and pine marten are hunted for their fur. Of the bigger predators, a limited number of bears, wolves and lynx can be hunted. Finland is an important nesting place for waterfowl, which is why they are the most common game.

Hostel

80 hostels in different parts of Finland open throughout the year and 80 more during the summer season. Suitable accommodation for everyone from this wide variety of hostels. Out friendly SMR-hostels include summer hotels, youth and family hotels and hostels. Each with rooms for 2-4 guests. Inexpensive prices, often under FIM 100 per person per day. Children under 15 often get discounts.

The internationally known symbol of cabin and spruce on a road sign will show you the way to a SMR-hostel.

CAMPING HOLIDAYS

Camping holidays are an excellent way of spending your free time in natural surroundings with the whole family. You can sleep in a tent, caravan, mobile home or a cabin on a camping site.

There are about 340 camping sites, all with cooking facilities (electric or gas cooker or a wood-burning stove) and washing rooms. Most camping sites have a sauna, access to a beach, boating and fishing facilities, children`s playground and various other recreational facilities. The camping sites can be found under the entries of the municipalities