

A full-page photograph of the Helsinki Cathedral in Finland. The cathedral is a white neoclassical building with a large central dome and two smaller side domes, all with green patina. It sits atop a hill with a wide, stone staircase leading up to it. In the foreground, a cobblestone plaza is visible, with a wooden bench where a few people are sitting. A decorative black metal fence runs across the bottom of the frame, with a bed of white daisies in the immediate foreground. The sky is a clear, bright blue.

Berlitz

HELSINKI

POCKET GUIDE

TOP 10 ATTRACTIONS



SUOMENLINNA FORTRESS

A Unesco World Heritage site, guarding the Gulf of Finland. See page 60.



SENATE SQUARE

Pristine 19th-century town planning. See page 34.



ESPLANADI

This long, elegant park is lined with Finland's flagship design stores. See page 29.



TEMPELLIAUKIO

The Rock Church is hewn from solid stone and shrouded in shining copper. See page 44.



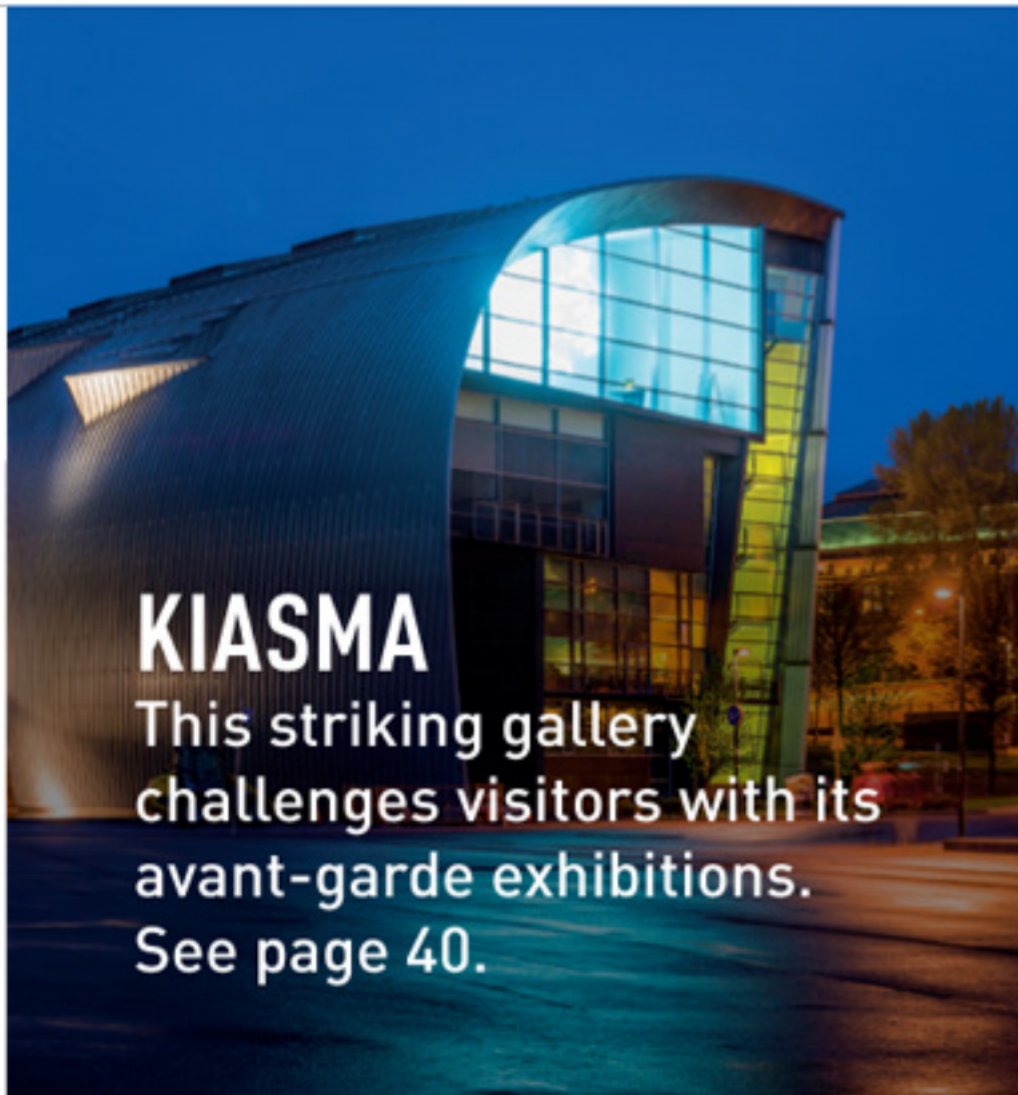
MARKET SQUARE AND HALL

Buy bear meat, wild strawberries or fish direct from bobbing boats. See page 30.



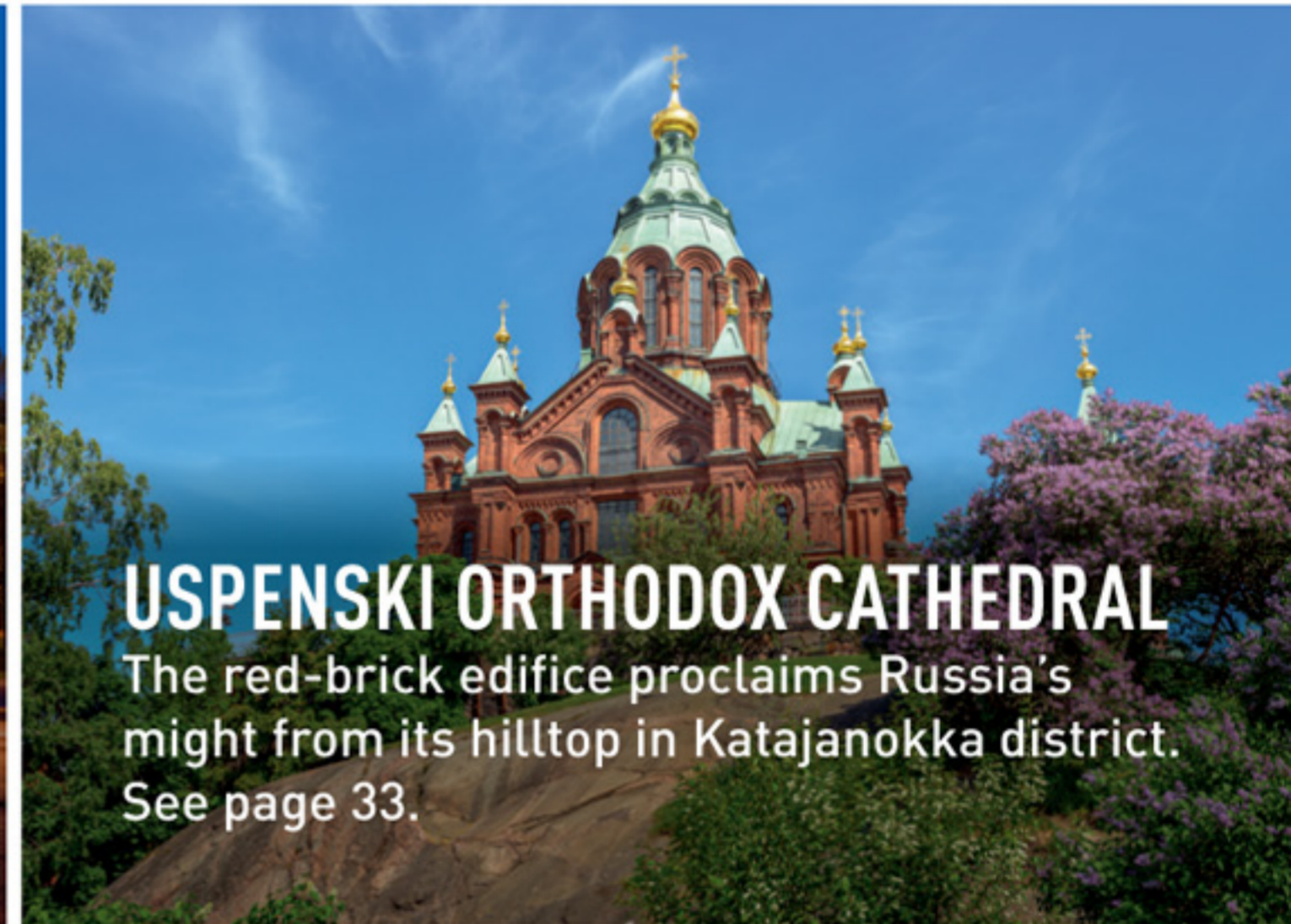
NATIONAL MUSEUM OF FINLAND

Explore Finland's history from the Stone Age to the present day. See page 43.



KIASMA

This striking gallery challenges visitors with its avant-garde exhibitions. See page 40.



USPENSKI ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL

The red-brick edifice proclaims Russia's might from its hilltop in Katajanokka district. See page 33.



KAMPPI CHAPEL OF SILENCE

A hallowed space by the bustling bus station. See page 39.



ATENEUM ART MUSEUM

The Ateneum contains the largest collection of art in Finland. See page 28.

A PERFECT DAY



9.00am

Helsinki Cathedral

After feasting on a Finnish breakfast at your hotel, head straight for the neoclassical Kruununhaka district. In the morning light, before the crowds descend, the startling white cathedral floats above Senate Square like a dream.

10.00am

Havis Amanda

Wander down Unioninkatu to have a gander at the city's sauciest mermaid. Next, stop at the orange tents on the Market Square for a fortifying slug of coffee before admiring the many stalls, tumbling with fresh produce.



1.00pm

Lunch in Esplanadi Park

Back on dry land, head for lunch at the 140-year-old Restaurant Kappeli (see page 111), in prime position on tree-lined Eteläesplanadi. A favourite of Sibelius's, the restaurant has one of the biggest terraces in the city, perfect for people-watching and listening to live music on the nearby summer stage.

11.00am

Archipelago tour

Helsinki is a city of the sea. The Royal Line boat tour threads between the archipelago islands, offering stunning views of Suomenlinna Fortress and a whole new perspective on the city.

2.00pm

Walk up Mannerheimintie

Stroll through the park to the beginning of Mannerheimintie. This is Helsinki's longest street: on the left-hand side are venerable institutions such as the Parliament Building and the National Museum; while on the right are the modern Kiasma and Musikkitalo. Stop at Finlandia Hall to admire the work of Alvar Aalto, one of Finland's greatest architects, before taking a pleasant walk across Hesperia Park to the Olympic Stadium.

IN HELSINKI



5.00pm

Sauna

Catch tram No. 8 (Arabia direction) along Helsinginkatu, and prepare yourself for a quintessentially Finnish experience. Kotiharjun, dating back to 1928, is a rustic wood-burning sauna where you can get to know the locals. Pace yourself with plenty of breaks and cold water. If you're here on Tuesday, Friday or Saturday, be brave and get a scrub from the traditional washing-woman.

4.00pm

Olympic Stadium Tower

Although the Olympics were held here over 60 years ago, walking into the stadium will still give you goosebumps. However, the highlight of a visit is a clanking lift ride up the tower for fabulous views of Helsinki and its archipelago backdrop.

6.30pm

Sámi dining

The metro from Sörnäinen will whisk you back to the centre in 10 minutes, hopefully with an appetite. Lappi Ravintola (see page 114), a cosy wooden affair on Annankatu, can supply a taste of the wild north, with dishes of reindeer, wild mushroom, and Lappish cheese served with cloudberry jam.

8.00pm

Death metal?

Helsinki's operas and orchestras take a well-deserved rest over the summer, but the city is full of music. Bar Bäckäri is a rock/metal bar with a fantastic atmosphere; if that's not to your liking, you're guaranteed a good time at the Happy Jazz Club Storyville, with live music every night in summer.

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INTRODUCTION

If you're looking for riotous razzamatazz, a sleepless, strung-out, 24-hour city where the party never ends, look elsewhere. Helsinki is a city of cool northern charms, floating serenely above the hot-headed European mainland. One of the world's newest capitals, it is a city that rewards the curious. If you want something unusual – fascinating architecture and design, off-beat galleries and museums, a piquant blending of east and west – you've come to the right place.

Helsinki is one of the world's most liveable cities, a safe, tolerant, modern metropolis with a clear identity. Startling new buildings are transforming the city's silhouette, but its dwellers are still people of the forests and lakes at heart, with a passion for nature that is reflected in Helsinki's many gorgeous parks and gardens.

CITY OF THE SEA

Long referred to as the "Daughter of the Baltic", Helsinki owes its fortune to the sea. The city was founded to compete with the Hanseatic port of Tallinn, just across the Gulf of Finland, and the great offshore fortress Suomenlinna was built 200 years later to protect this vital harbour. In post-war years, shipbuilding was a major industry, and Helsinki is still a centre for specialised Arctic ships, with 60 percent of the world's icebreakers being built in its western dockyards. Today, however, cruise ships have taken over from the merchant vessels and battleships, bringing in 400,000 visitors each summer.

The sea and Helsinki are intrinsically linked. Salty inlets poke their way into metropolitan boulevards, and countless yachts and ferries thread their way through the archipelago islands. The city has even captured a piece of the Baltic and built a kind of shrine

around its edges. Public edifices such as Musikkitalo Music Centre, the Winter Gardens, the brand-new library, Linnanmäki amusement park, and two stand-out Alvar Aalto buildings, the Opera House and Finlandia Hall, encircle Töölönlahti Bay, the peaceful watery core of the city's cultural and recreational area. The entire Katajanokka district, stuffed with Art Nouveau buildings, appears to be tethered to the mainland,

floating alongside it like a boat. Fishermen still sail their catches into the harbour, mooring beside the bustling Market Square to sell their wares. And as if Helsinki doesn't have enough saltwater, a brand-new lido is currently being constructed nearby, underneath the spinning shadow of the SkyWheel.

Only during the long, cold winter does the water finally rest. Even the Baltic freezes into an endless expanse on which promenaders can walk dogs or try out their cross-country skis. At the weekend, city-dwellers strap on their skates and take an icy spin around the inlying islands of the archipelago.

MEET THE FINNS

In Helsinki, 83.2 percent of the people are Finnish-speaking and 6.0 percent Swedish-speaking. Notwithstanding the overwhelming dominance of Finnish, the city's street signs are more often than not shown in both languages – with Swedish beneath the Finnish.



Café life



Ferries connect Helsinki with nearby islands

Whatever their language, the Finns, by and large, are quiet people and to outsiders may seem rather introspective. But make an overture and you'll receive real kindness and curiosity in return.

Finns are patriotic – their national flag is on display everywhere – and are rightly proud of their country's natural beauty. A great deal of importance is placed on spending time in the whispering forests of spruce and birch. In high summer, city-

dwellers head for their rustic *mökki* (summer cabin) on the shores of a glassy lake. Escaping into nature is vital to the Finnish soul. Helsinki's offshore islands are popular beach and bathing places in summer, and there are two national parks on its doorstep to go fishing, or picking berries and mushrooms as autumn draws in.

Conversely, Finns also have a rampant addiction to technology – perhaps not so surprising, since Finland is the home of Nokia. The City of Helsinki has opened up data to its citizens, so that everyone can participate in improving its public services, and much of the centre is covered by its free Wi-Fi network.

ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

Helsinki was founded in 1550, and only evolved into a large city in the late 19th century. Consequently, it has not grown up from higgledy-piggledy medieval roots like most other European cities, but had an orderly plan from the start. After it was made Finland's



capital in 1812, Helsinki benefited from the astonishing talents of German architect Carl Ludwig Engel, who poured his creativity into Senate Square and its surroundings. Another wave of fine architecture arrived with the nationalist movement in the 20th century, when Jugendstil (the German version of Art Nouveau) and then Finnish Functionalism transformed the cityscape once more.

The city's fine architectural past gives it the confidence to create inspired present-day works. Helsinki was the World Design Capital in 2012, with €16 million spent on innovative projects, including the Kamppi Chapel of Silence and the Kulttuurisauna public sauna.

Helsinki also has big dreams for the future: its run-down industrial areas and former docklands are being rejuvenated. The old abattoir quarter is now a centre for food; Suvilahti power plant is a dramatic new venue for open-air music festivals; and Kalasatama harbour is turning into a visionary residential area, with eco-designed high rises and floating apartments, due to open in 2030.

CULTURE

Finns are culture vultures: this small capital has no fewer than 80 museums, many of which, such as the Ateneum National Gallery and the contemporary Kiasma, are focused on art and design.

CLASSICAL MUSIC

This country of just 5.5 million has also produced a disproportionate number of conductors and classical performers. The importance that Helsinki gives to its musicians is reflected in the prominence of buildings such as Finlandia Hall, Musikkitalo and the Opera House, which sit in stately splendour alongside the Parliament and National Museum. Finnish composer Jean Sibelius (1865–1957) is celebrated in frequent concerts.