

SUOMI ~ FINLAND

NATIONAL PROFILE



MAAILMANVAIHTO RY ~ ICYE FINLAND

2010-11



Dear exchangee,

We are happy to welcome You to spend your exchange year 2010-11 in ***Suomi*** Finland. We hope your time in Finland will be an intercultural success for all parties involved: for you; for your volunteer workplace; for the host family; and for us at ICYE Finland. Your year here will surely be an important experience in your life - you will not regret choosing this Nordic country!

The National Profile you are reading has been made for you by members of ICYE Finland in order to give a basic idea of the Finnish society – on what it means to live here. This booklet also gives you some important guidance for your time in Finland. **Please, read this National Profile carefully as it contains a great deal of VERY IMPORTANT INFORMATION.** Based on years of experience, in this booklet, we at ICYE Finland have collected the things every exchangee should know before coming here. So, if you have difficulties in understanding something, please, ask someone to translate it to you as reading this booklet is crucial for you!

NB! : Este "National Profile" tiene información muy importante sobre el programa de ICYE en Finlandia. Por favor, si no lo entiendes, pide que alguien te lo traduzca.

Reading this National Profile is one of the first important steps you can take to prepare yourself for the coming year in Finland. In fact, your extended exchangee-period starts as you read it! Even now, don't forget the basic rule: only by being active, you can achieve the best exchange experience. We can only give you the tools and support needed for a successful and enjoyable time in Finland, but everything else depends on you.

Finally, we at ICYE Finland are really looking forward to meeting you!

Tervetuloa! Welcome!

Reeta Kaikumo
Program coordinator

Ps.

It is very important that all exchangees arrive in early August so that they are in time for the arrival training. Therefore, apply for your residence permit well in advance! Apply for your residence permit in May at latest!

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THOUGHTS OF FORMER VOLUNTEERS

This is what I like about Finland

- sauna! (I love coming hearing the sentence "the sauna is still warm")
 - pulla (Finnish sweet buns)
 - seeing true winter
- 12 year old girls laughing at you because you've never done fishing
- the feeling when understanding something that people said to you in Finnish (and when you can even answer to them)
- the people (believe it or not...but I've seen them laughing and strangers talking to me on the street)
- going to watch sports events live (Biathlon and Nordic ski world cup competitions, volleyball and ice hockey matches ym.) and it's quite easy finding someone to join you.
 - kids teaching you funny words like "ripuli"
- though I couldn't believe during the winter, but in spring **THE SUN COMES BACK !!!!!**
 - watching Finnish folkdance
 - cross-country skiing
 - Finnish names
- have I mentioned SNOW?!?!?
 - plentiful nature
 - no traffic news on the radio!!
 - walking on rivers (on ice)

Anja Dottermusch, German Volunteer 2003/04

...I was told that "Finns are friends for a lifetime" but the first couple of months I felt it would take a lifetime to get a Finnish friend. Even though I was living and working with the same people, they never tried to speak to me or even smile at me, and at one point I almost thought of going back to India. The ICYE were a great deal of moral support to me. Then I learnt the art of making friends. It was so easy! All I had to do was asking questions, especially about the culture, language, food, beer or winter; sometimes even if I knew everything about it! The fact is that the Finns love to teach. Once a person speaks, we have already found the door to his heart; opening it and getting in is as easy as that! And now I have many nice friends and I feel it was worth all the trouble. My social life has been quite easy and fun since then and I hope it would be the same for the months to come...

...Punctuality is the second name of the Finns and the clock rules their life! One can witness that in every aspect of Finnish life...

...The weather variations are extreme in Finland. The temperature in summer might be +30C, while in winter it might go down to -40C (it was -31C in my project). In other words, it varies from delightful to depressing. The same with sunlight; in summer Finland is very light. Yes, one can read a newspaper without lights at midnight! But in winter Finland is very dark; one can't even find a newspaper without the lights on, even in afternoon! Nature is lovely and it is at its best in Finland. In summer the whole country is green and blue and in winter it is all white. If a person loves nature (like me) then Finland is a natural and obvious choice...

Arwind Kabbhinahally Raghupathy, Indian volunteer Finland 2001/02

Finland is a more beautiful country than I thought. I had travelled to Lapland this summer, and wow, it was like a small piece of heaven had fallen on the earth by mistake. There were a lot of lakes. I was surprised that people have to use two different kinds of methods to travel. During summer they use boats to go home, and in winter they use cars in the same way. If I tell this to any one of my countrymen, they will find it hard to believe. The changing colour of the leaves is another amazing thing. Finland is a place of magic. It would be better if Finland would be named as "Magicland".

With regards to people, in Finland only the colour of people is different to Nepal. Finnish people are so helpful, honest and punctual - by the way, Finnish people are the finest people.

Krishna Bahadur Subedi, Nepalese volunteer Finland 2004/05

MAAILMANVAIHTO RY - ICYE FINLAND

"Not for you but with you"

The Finnish ICYE committee aims to provide the exchangees from different cultural backgrounds the possibility to meet with a new culture and language - Finnish. We seek to offer an experience the exchangee could not find in his or her native country. We believe that this experience will help to broaden one's perspectives and to help one to become aware of his or her part in creating peace and justice in the world.

ICYE Finland is a registered, independent organisation. It is led by the General Assembly, which is held once a year (in March). At this assembly the chairman and the board are elected. The board normally meets once a month and is entrusted with the power to make decisions outside the General Assembly.

THE BOARD

The Board of ICYE Finland in 2009-2010 and their areas of responsibility:

Meri Tennilä	Chairperson, Finances, PR
Karita Blom	PR, Finnish Volunteers Abroad
Marika Heinonen	Finnish Volunteers Abroad, Co-operation with Finnish NGOs
Anna Huovila	Finnish Volunteers Abroad
Maria Isoaho	Foreign Volunteers in Finland, Support Persons
Anna-Sofia Joro	PR
Tiina Laitinen	PR, Host Families
Emilia Niemi	Foreign Volunteers in Finland, Host Families
Heli Tuovinen	PR, Finnish Volunteers Abroad
Liisa Turja	Foreign Volunteers in Finland

THE ICYE OFFICE

The office is located in the 'monument centre' of Helsinki near the Lutheran Cathedral and the Main Railway Station. The exchangees are always welcome to call, e-mail or visit the office with their questions, problems and joys.

In the office there are two paid staff members. The Secretary General, Anni Koskela, who is responsible of general administration and out-going Finnish volunteers. The Program Coordinator, Reeta Kaikumo, who is responsible for the foreign volunteers in Finland.

On any given moment, it is very likely that there may also be interns, civil servant and other temporary staff working in the ICYE Finland office.

The contact address of the office:

Maailmanvaihto ry – ICYE Finland
 Oikokatu 3
 00710 Helsinki, Finland
 Tel. +358-9-774 1101 Fax. +358-9-7310 4146
 E-mail: Reeta: hosting@maailmanvaihto.fi
 Anni: maailmanvaihto@maailmanvaihto.fi
 Internet: <http://www.maailmanvaihto.fi>

THE CO-WORKERS (VOLUNTEERS)

Most of the the ICYE Finland activities are organised by Finnish volunteers, the co-workers. The volunteers are former exchanges of ICYE or otherwise interested in intercultural activity.

THE DIFFERENT VOLUNTEER PROGRAMMES - ICYE / EVS / GERMAN CIVIL SERVICE

Maailmanvaihto ry – ICYE Finland receives exchangees/volunteers through three different programs: ICYE Program, EVS Program (European Volunteer Service) and the German Government (German Civil Service). All three programs offer opportunities for intercultural learning and are quite similar in their objectives. Yet, some differences do exist.

	ICYE	EVS	CIVIL SERVICE
Countries	All ICYE countries	European countries	Germany
Age	16-30	18-30	18->
Start	Mainly in August	Throughout the year	January and August
Duration	Mainly 12 months, sometimes 6 months	6-12 months	11,5 months
Cost	Participation Fee	European Union Sponsored Program	Own Sponsors
Pocket Money	Minimum of 85 euros paid by the local hosting project	The monthly sum of 120 euros paid by ICYE Finland with the support of the EU's Youth in Action - program	The monthly sum of 130 euros paid partly by ICYE Germany/ German Government and host project
Projects	ICYE Finland organises suitable project for the volunteer	All projects approved by the EU Commission. List available in the EVS web- page. ICYE Finland coordinated the exchange	ICYE Finland organises suitable projects for Civil Servants
Working hours	20-40 hours/week	max. 35 hours/week	32-38 hours/week
Support Person	Organised by ICYE Finland	ICYE Finland seeks a support person for every volunteers, although it is not a demand of the programme	Organised by ICYE Finland
Camps/ trainings	3 training camps organised by ICYE Finland	2 trainings organised by CIMO, the Finnish National Agency of EU's Youth in Action -program. EVS volunteers are welcome to the ICYE trainings, though for a participation fee.	3 training camps organised by ICYE Finland
Insurance	Insured by ELVIA	Insured by AXA	Finnish Public Health Insurance & additional Private Health, Accident and Third Party Liability Insurance

THE EXCHANGE YEAR

WHAT IS IT LIKE TO BE AN EXCHANGEE? The exchange programme of ICYE seeks to build intercultural understanding between people from different countries. During the exchange programme, the exchangees get to learn about the cultural differences and see them in practice. In such exchange, the exchangee (you) comes to spend a long period of time in a country where the cultural patterns and family customs may be different from those you are accustomed. **Therefore it is important that you begin your year with an open mind – and with a readiness to adapt!** Do not expect too many things but be prepared to meet the unexpected.

ARRIVAL TO FINLAND Someone from ICYE Finland will be meeting you at the airport. **Do not leave the airport on your own!** Before your arrival we will send you a letter, which will give you more detailed information about your first days in Finland. The emergency phone number of ICYE Finland is **+358 (0)44 356 5667**, which you can use in case you do not find a member of ICYE at the airport.

ORIENTATION AND THE LANGUAGE TRAINING If arriving in August, the ICYE volunteers will have the compulsory orientation training for 10 days. This training gives the exchangees the basic knowledge of the Finnish language (approx. 30 hours of teaching), Finnish culture and basics of volunteer work in the Finnish context. The exchangees also get to know each other, the ICYE co-workers and staff in this on-arrival training. **It is very important that all ICYE-exchangees arrive for this training. Therefore, apply for your residence permit well in advance!** In 2010, the arrival camp will be in the end of August. The volunteers should arrive in Finland day of two before it starts. The exact arrival dates will be informed in beginning of 2010.

For the EVS volunteers, the compulsory on-arrival training is provided by the Finnish National Volunteer Agency, CIMO. EVS volunteers are welcome and encouraged to join the ICYE orientation and language training as well.

MID-TERM AND FINAL EVALUATION In January, ICYE organises a mid-term camp. It provides a chance for the exchangees to discuss and explore their stay in Finland so far – to evaluate it. Similar camp, after more experiences of Finnish life, the final evaluation meeting will be organised in May.

SUPPORT PERSON ICYE Finland provides every ICYE volunteer and German civil servant with a support person, a personal contact person between volunteer, host placement and the office in Helsinki. *This person will help you especially in the beginning in adjusting to the Finnish society and should be the first person to be contacted* if you encounter some problems at the beginning. Mostly support persons are former exchangees of ICYE, so they are aware of the problems exchangees may confront during the year.

ON MOTIVATION OF THE EXCHANGEES

We want to emphasize that you will be living and participating in a volunteer programme. You will not be on a holiday.

An exchange year is experiencing the daily life in your host country. It is very important for yourself that you are motivated and know why you are actually going abroad as an exchange - and why to Finland. Here are some tips you can go through.

- 1. Be curious and willing to learn!** “He who is afraid of asking is ashamed of learning!”
- 2. Be quick to observe but slow to judge.** It is good to ask questions and learn to understand strange things.
- 3. Mistakes are natural.** Do not be afraid to make mistakes - or to be corrected. Mistakes can help you understand your environment and the world more fully.
- 4. Appreciation is crucial!** People hosting you are sharing their homes with you and do it voluntarily, so do appreciate their hospitality.
- 5. Do adapt!** You may not like the place all the time but still you have to adapt and get along with the people there.
- 6. Learning to speak Finnish is crucial!** It helps you to get to know the Finnish culture, habits and people. Take the challenge! Finnish language is just different, but definitely not impossible to learn. It's logical and in many ways simple. Numerous exchangees before you have shown it can be learned.
- 7. Humour is important!** Do not forget humour as it is the best remedy in many cases.
- 8. The more you give, the more you get.** The right attitude is very important during your exchange year. “When you help someone, you make two people happy!”
- 9. Enjoy your time, relax!** Be always ready for new things at your host project and at your free time even though you might not like it at first. It's always good to be curious.
- 10. IT IS YOUR YEAR - MAKE IT THE BEST!**

REQUIREMENTS OF THE EXCHANGEES

- Age 18-30 years for volunteer work programs; possible exceptions may be negotiated with the sending organisation
- No academic requirements. ICYE Finland CANNOT place anyone in a university or any institute of higher-education as a student!
- Interest in Finnish lifestyle and culture.
- Motivated to become a volunteer, not a tourist or immigrant.
- Willingness to do voluntarily work on regular basis.
- Mature and outgoing – able to live both alone and with others.
- Willingness to learn the Finnish language.
- Positive and open attitude towards new and different lifestyles and cultures.
- Confirmation of one's acceptance of the Tri-Party Agreement that stated the rules and regulations of the exchange program in Finland. The exchangee must send a signed copy of the Tri-Party Agreement to ICYE Finland prior to his/her arrival.

HOST PROJECTS

The exchangees are scattered all over Finland: ranging from the Southern Capital City of Helsinki to the Northern Province of Lapland; from the flat farmlands of the West to the hilly lake regions of the East. Most exchangees live in the countryside or in small towns with 2'000 to 10'000 inhabitants.

Some of the exchangees live in tiny, and sometimes quite isolated, places in the scarcely populated countryside. The distances between houses and villages are often long (though internet and mobile networks reach everywhere). Thus, one's activeness and initiative are extremely important in adapting to the Finnish countryside and to understanding its charm. Public transportation in the countryside is not frequent – travelling might sometimes create some difficulties. There are very few daily connections to the village centre or to a nearby city. Also, the public transportation is relatively expensive. However, the projects and/or host families do not mind driving the volunteers once in a while to a village centre or a city. Despite all this, many volunteers have said that in the smaller villages they have had the opportunity to experience 'real Finland', which is different from the modern urban way of life of most Finnish cities. It is this 'real Finland', unknown to even some Finns, which you have the rare opportunity to experience!

Lastly, only very few host projects are situated in the extreme 'wilderness'. Most projects are situated in the more densely populated and well-connected regions such as the Province of Southern Finland (the region surrounding Helsinki), but **note that most likely you will NOT be placed in a city.**

HOST PROJECTS The exchangees who come to Finland will work as volunteers in different volunteer projects. Most of the volunteer projects are connected to social work. Some exchangees will spend their year in a Folk High School (Scandinavian 'boarding school' for people over 18), where they have the opportunity to study and work as volunteers. See **Work Profile** for more information.

HOST FAMILIES About one fourth of the exchangees will live in Finnish host families. The form of families can varies a lot. There can be families with children or with out, with two or single parents, with young or with older couple etc. Families are an important element in Finnish social life as many people like to spend their free time at home with their family members. In terms of social status, the host families mainly represent the predominant middle-class. Also, like it is often the case in Finland, our host families have different political and religious backgrounds. It is important for volunteers to remember that he/she will be an equal member of the host family with equal rights and responsibilities.

OTHER LIVING SITUATIONS Many exchangees live connected to their volunteer work placement in a community or in a flat or room adjacent to their work. The exact conditions depend from place to place, but all will receive good level of accommodation.

WHAT ABOUT PAID JOB? It is not possible to get a paid job in Finland during the volunteer year! ICYE is a program of volunteer work, which allows the earning of monthly pocket money, not of a salary. ICYE programme participants do not get a working permit for Finland, just a residence permit. Yet, it is possible to earn small amounts of money occasionally without a work permit (by working ca. two hours per week), but the limit is very strict in Finland. However, no

free time activities should be allowed to interfere with your volunteer work, which is, after all, your primary purpose for coming to Finland.

VERY PRACTICAL ADVICE

CLOTHES When coming to Finland you must be prepared for all kinds of weather – Finland has four seasons – spring, summer, autumn and winter. Finnish winter is cold (often freezing) and for this reason you will need warm clothes. Warm hat, gloves, boots, a woollen scarf, warm wind&rainproof coat, etc. are essential. If you do not want to bring some with you, you can also buy winter clothes in Finland - your hosts or ICYE co-workers will give you practical advice. However, be aware that new clothes are quite expensive. This is why some young people buy clothes in second hand shops – there are plenty of them in the cities and towns and the clothes are good quality even used.

Warm winter clothes are important, but do not forget the other three seasons! In the autumn and the spring you might find water&wind proof clothes useful. The summer is usually warm: summer clothing such as shorts and t-shirts is necessary, and don't forget your swimming gear – this is after all a land of thousands of lakes!

If possible, also take your sleeping bag with you as you will definitely find it useful during your stay.

However, one of the important practical principles in Finland is that everyone carries his/her own luggage. This is good to remember when packing for departure. Do not take too many things with you!

SOME THINGS TO BRING ALONG

- Your passport! You will need it at the airport and in proving your age/identity. Remember that even if you are coming from another EU country, you will not be able to visit Russia without a passport. It is also very difficult to open a bank account without one.
- **All your ICYE-papers (collect them in a file). Do not forget this booklet!**
- Some information about your own country: maps, family pictures, slides etc.
- Small things to give as presents to your host family and friends you will make.
- A camera for capturing memories.
- Bring some of your favourite music with you. Also bring any musical instrument you play – we would love to hear you play it!
- If possible, learn some national dances, plays and games – anything distinctive of your country – to be used as program items for the camps and for you to share your culture with us.
- Sleeping bag. It will be good both on camps and your own holiday trips – you will need it if you go hiking in the beautiful wilderness of Lapland.
- If you use medication, try to bring enough medication for the entire year with you.
- Small important things (like toothbrush, towel, and alarm clock), which you might need in the beginning.
- Warm winter clothes if you do not want to buy them in Finland.

NB! You do not have to bring your own bed clothes, they will be provided to you by the project/host family.

POCKET MONEY AND COST OF LIVING

The ICYE exchangeees will receive a small pocket money of 85 EUROS monthly from the host placement. It is good to keep in mind that Finland is an expensive country in comparison to many other countries. **The pocket money, 85 EUROS, is not much.** You will need to bring some of your own money with you. Especially transportation is expensive in Finland and since you will likely want to visit your friends around the country and see different parts of Finland in your free time, your own money will be important!

Please, keep in mind that there will be more expenses during your first weeks of stay in Finland than later on. ICYE Finland recommends that at the arrival to Finland, the volunteer should have *at least 100 euros in cash with him/herself.*

Here are some prices that tell you what your pocket money can buy.

Urban area bus ticket (Helsinki):	2,5	(ALL IN EURO)
Train ticket Helsinki-Tampere, adult one way	30	
Youth Hostel, dormitory bed, one night	~18 ->	
Chocolate bar	1	
Beer (a bottle in a shop)	1	
Beer (a pint in a restaurant)	3 – 6	
Cappuchino (in a café)	3	
Cigarettes (pack of 20)	4,5	
Hamburger	4	
Pizza	6- 10	
Stamps (post cards worldwide)	0.80	
Jeans	~35 ->	
Sweater	~30 ->	
Toothpaste	2-4	
Shampoo	3-5	
Sanitary towels	4	
Movie ticket	7.50-10	
Swimming hall, single entry ticket	~3.5 ->	
Ice-hockey game in Helsinki	11 - 35	
Opera	14 – 62	
Summer Rock Festival, 2-day ticket	~60 - 80	
Finnish language course	~30 ->	
Finnish-English-Finnish pocket dictionary	16 ->	
Mobile phonecall within Finland	~0.06/minute ->	
Mobile phonecall to a foreign phonenumber	~0.28/minute ->	

1 EURO ~ 1,47 USD (September, 2009)

IMPORTANT TO KNOW

RESIDENCE PERMIT

Citizens from the EU, Switzerland and the Nordic Countries:

Volunteers coming from European Union countries only need their I.D. card and/or passport to enter Finland. **In any case, bring your passport** with you as you will need it when you open a bank account and also if you wish to travel to Russia. Those coming from European Union countries can stay in Finland for three months without a particular permission. EU and Swiss citizens have to apply for a **certificate of registration** in Finland from the local police **within three months of the arrival**. It costs 40 EURO (in 2009). Volunteers from other Nordic countries should bring **the Inter-Nordic Migration Form** with them and register at the local Register Office after 6 months of stay.

Other nationalities:

If your nationality is other than that of a country in the European Union, you will need to apply for **A RESIDENCE PERMIT** for one year at the nearest Finnish Embassy or Consulate before entering the country. The fee for the first residence permit is 200€ (2009). Depending on the local currency exchange rates and service fees, the cost can slightly varies. You can get the application form (OLE 1) for residence permit from the Finnish Embassy or Consulate or from the internet site of the Finnish Immigration Service <http://www.migri.fi/netcomm/content.asp?article=1942&language=EN>

Do not apply for a student permit as you are not a student! The status of a volunteer is referred to as a trainee. **Participants of the ICYE program do not need a work permit.**

Apply for the residence permit in time! Preferably as soon as you are accepted to the ICYE program in Finland! It can take up to **3 months** to get the residence permit. This is because the Finnish embassy in your country cannot grant residence permits. They have to send your application to the Finnish Immigration Service (www.migri.fi) in Helsinki. The directorate grants all the residence permits!

July is the time of Finnish summer holidays and many of the government offices are closed during summer holidays. If you apply for the residence permit in the end of June or in July, be aware that you might miss the on-arrival camp (that includes language teaching) in August and along with it the initial period of your ICYE year in Finland. So, **DO NOT leave the application for the Residence Permit to the summer months!**

For the residence permit application you need:

- a valid passport (it should be valid for longer than the period you will spend in Finland)
- an invitation letter, which you will get from us at ICYE Finland.
- two ID/passport photos
- an application form from the Finnish embassy or consulate. You can also print it from the internet.

You can find the addresses and other information of Finnish Embassies and Consulates from the homepage of the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

www.formin.fi or more precisely from

[:http://www.formin.fi/public/default.aspx?nodeid=15131&contentlan=2&culture=en-US](http://www.formin.fi/public/default.aspx?nodeid=15131&contentlan=2&culture=en-US)

Finland is part of the European free travel zone, the Schengen Area, which means that when you have the residence permit issued by Finland, you also have the right to travel to other Schengen countries without needing another visa. (*Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland*)

However, keep in mind that if you have a connecting flight through a country, such as the UK, which has not yet implemented the Schengen Agreement, you should make sure you have a valid transit visa. You can check whether you need one from the website of the UK Border Agency: <http://www.ukvisas.gov.uk/en/doineedvisa/visadatvnationals>

CONTRACT AND THE INVITATION LETTER Your sending National ICYE Committee should give you a Tri-Party Agreement, a contract, which ICYE Finland makes with all our ICYE volunteers. Please, read through it carefully and if you agree with its terms, send a signed copy to ICYE Finland. Once we receive the signed copy from you, we will sign it as well and send you a copy.

ICYE Finland will also send you an invitation letter ("To Whom It May Concern"). This is an invitation, which is meant to describe to the governmental authorities about the program and about the responsibilities of ICYE Finland. This letter is important when applying for the Residence Permit. ICYE Finland will also send you this letter once we have received your application and a signed copy of the Tri-Party Agreement.

INSURANCES

Your insurance covers normal medical care in the case of unexpected illness or accident, including dental care up to a limited amount. However, routine check-ups, preventive health-care and medication without a doctor's prescription are not covered by your insurance. **Also, your personal items are not covered and neither is driving a car!**

- ICYE exchangees are insured for the period of their stay in Finland by ELVIA. You will receive more information regarding the insurance from your sending National Committee, who will also give you the Guide for Exchangees 2010-11, which includes more detailed instructions related with your insurance.
- EVS volunteers have a group insurance by AXA – European Benefits. If you come from an EU country, you should also bring a valid European Health insurance card with you. You will receive more information about EVS insurance during your pre-departure camp. Along with your insurance card you will receive a Guide for EVS Volunteers.
- German Civil Servants will get their insurance from Germany. You will receive more information about your insurance from the ICJA.

Make sure you carefully read and listen the insurance information given to you and that already before arriving to Finland you are aware of what your insurance covers and what it does not cover.

VACCINATIONS You do not need any special vaccinations when you come to Finland. However, we recommend you to check that your polio, tetanus and diphtheria vaccinations are valid as they are the vaccinations expected in Finland.

TRAVELLING During your stay in Finland you will travel to camps around Finland, and you will visit places and have trips with friends, but still remember: you are an exchangee not a tourist! Your travel time is limited to four weeks in one year programme. Usually volunteers take the holiday on summer months. Anyhow, the holidays need to be always negotiated with your volunteer work place. The EVS volunteers will gather 2 days off from work every month and should negotiate with the project on how to spend them. During all other weeks you are expected to do your volunteer work. Lastly, following points are important to remember when you are temporarily away from your hosting situation:

1) Always first negotiate with your hosts about your travel plans and of your need for any extra holidays. You are not allowed to travel during working weeks if not agreed before hand.

2) Make sure that your hosts know where you are and how you can be reached. Always inform the ICYE office when you are travelling for more than three days - or out of Finland!

3) Inform your hosts (family/work placement) when you will be back and follow the agreed plans! Always inform about possible changes in your travel plans to your hosts!

4) If you are planning to travel abroad in the end of your year, ICYE Finland must approve your plans. If you want to organise your return home independently, inform the office in early spring!

NÄHDÄÄN PIAN!

SEE YOU SOON!

FACTS ABOUT FINLAND

Population: 5,3 million. Average life expectation – women: 83 years, and men: 76 years. Average age in 2006 – women: 42 and men 39 years

Capital city: Helsinki with 564,000 inhabitants – Greater Helsinki Area (includes the cities of Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa and Kauniainen) has a population of ca. 1 million.

Major cities: 71% of the Finnish population lives in cities – the major ones are Espoo (235,000), Tampere (206,000), Vantaa (189,000), Turku (175,000) and Oulu (130,000).

Area: 338,000 km² - 10% water: there are 188,000 lakes in Finland! The longest distance you can drive is from the Southern Peninsula of Hanko to the Northern Lapland town of Utsjoki: 1,157 km. The highest point is mt. Halti: 1,328 m.

Population density: 15,7 inhabitants per km². The average inside living space per person is 36,7 m².

Family structure: Most Finnish people live in nuclear families - the average family size is 2,9 persons/household. The average number of children in families is 1,8. Single-parent households are common, and ever since 2002, registration of same-sex partnerships has been legal.

Employment situation: 60% of the Finnish population has a higher-education degree of some level. Yet, at the moment the unemployment rate is 7,7%. (2009)

Native Languages:

Finnish	91,5%
Swedish	5,5%
Sámi	0,03% (1,700 people)

Ethnicities:

Finnish-speaking and Swedish-speaking Finns, minorities such as the Roma and the Sámi of Lapland.

Foreigners:

At the moment 2,5% of the population are of foreign background (smallest percentage inside the EU): most of them come from Russia, Estonia, Sweden and Somalia. However, this percentage is constantly growing.

Religion:

The majority of Finns (81%) belong to Evangelical Lutheran Church, although most people only go to church for family ceremonies (such as funerals or weddings) or on important Christian holy days such as Christmas or the Easter. However, the Lutheran mentality is strongly connected with the Finnish 'ethos' – its moral bases are still important for the Finnish society! Another old Finnish Church is the Finnish Orthodox Church with 1,1% of population belonging to it. Alongside this 1,2% of the population belongs to other Christian churches or other religions such as Islam or Judaism. Approximately 17% are non-religious.

President:

Mrs. Tarja Halonen (elected in 2000 for 6 years and re-elected in 2006). The first female president in Finland!

Parliament:

The legislative power lies with a unicameral parliament with supreme executive power vested in the Cabinet (currently centre-right wing) and the President. The 200 members of the parliament are elected ever four years. The political major parties are Centre Party, National Coalition Party, Social Democratic Party, Green League and Left Wing Alliance.

Foreign Policy:

Officially, Finland seeks to be a non-aligned neutral country. Friendly relationship, especially with the Nordic countries, Russia and the other EU countries, are the basis of Finland's foreign policy. There is, however, increasing debate on whether Finland should join NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) in the media and among politicians.

Domestic Policy: Finland is a member of the European Union and its domestic policies are strongly influenced by the EU. Finland is a free market economy, but with an extensive social security system – a Nordic welfare state.

Currency: EURO (€), the common European currency.

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<u>1155</u>	The first Christian missionaries arrive to Finland from Sweden. Finland becomes part of the Swedish Kingdom.
<u>1527</u>	Finland transforms from a Roman Catholic country into a Lutheran(Protestant) one as a result of the Reformation.
<u>1543</u>	The first book in Finnish (a book of grammar) is compiled by the Lutheran reformer, Mikael Agricola.
<u>1640</u>	The first University of Finland is established in Turku.
<u>1809</u>	Sweden cedes Finland to Russia after the Finnish War of 1808-09. The Russian Czar, Alexander I, declares Finland as an Autonomous Grand Duchy within the Russian Empire, with him as its ruler.
<u>1812</u>	Helsinki is declared the Capital of Finland.
<u>1828</u>	The University is moved from Turku to Helsinki.
<u>1860</u>	Finland creates its own currency, the Finnish mark (<i>markka</i>).
<u>1863</u>	Finnish language gains equal status with Swedish as a language of administration in Finland.
<u>1906</u>	The first unicameral and modern parliament is established in Helsinki. Full suffrage is granted - women are granted full political rights.
<u>1917</u>	Finland declares independence from the newly formed Soviet Union on 6th of December (the Finnish Independence Day). The new state is first recognised by the Soviet Union, France, Germany and Sweden.
<u>1918</u>	Civil war breaks between the Whites (the Nationalists) and the Reds (the Communists and the Socialists). The Nationalists gain victory, and consequently a German prince, Friedrich Karl, is chosen as the King of Finland, but he renounces the nomination within a month, without setting foot in Finland.
<u>1919</u>	The Finnish Parliament decides to adapt a President-led form of Republic.
<u>1921</u>	The Aland Islands (situated between Finland and Sweden) are granted autonomy.
<u>1939-40</u>	The Winter War starts as the Soviet Union (the USSR) attacks Finland.
<u>1941-44</u>	The Continuation War: fighting between Finland and the USSR resumes. Massive offensive by the Soviet troops in the summer of 1944 forces the Finns to surrender. Important Eastern provinces are ceded to the USSR, but Finland is not occupied and preserves its independence and sovereignty.
<u>1944-45</u>	Lapland War: Finnish troops fight against the Germans in the Northern Province of Lapland, which leads to their retreat to Norway.
<u>1948</u>	The Finno-Soviet Pact of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance is signed, but officially Finland remains neutral.
<u>1952</u>	The summer Olympics are held in Helsinki – this leads to the period of economic growth that transforms Finland from a poor agrarian society into its current form, a thriving high-tech society.
<u>1955</u>	Finland becomes a member of the United Nations and the Nordic Council.
<u>1970</u>	Finland adopts a 40-hour working week.
<u>1975</u>	The important Cold War meeting between the Western and Eastern blocs, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, takes place in Helsinki.
<u>1977</u>	Finland signs a free-trade agreement with EEC – preceder of the EU.
<u>1991-93</u>	Deep economical recession followed by the fall of the Soviet Union.
<u>1995</u>	Finland joins the European Union.
<u>2000</u>	First female president is elected.
<u>2002</u>	The Finnish national currency <i>markka</i> replaced by the <i>euro</i> .

GEOGRAPHY & NATURE Finland (in Finnish: Suomi) is the sixth largest country in Europe. Roughly 1/3 of the country lies north of the Arctic Circle. Finland shares a common border in the north with Norway, in the east a long border (1,269 km) with Russia, on the south Finland is bordered by the Gulf of Finland (Estonia lies south of it), and on the west by the Gulf of Bothnia and Sweden.

Most of Finland is lowland, but in the far Northwest some mountains are over 1000m high. Most of Finland is made of ancient granite bedrock, which has been shaped and fractured by numerous ice ages, the marks of which can be seen for example in the complex lake system and the equally complex archipelagos. This also means that Finland has only very minor earthquakes. Finland has three main physical regions: the coastal lowlands, the central lake system, and the northern uplands. The Finnish coastal lowlands extend along the two coasts of the Gulfs of Finland and Bothnia where thousands of scenic rocky islands lie - the principal archipelagos are the Aland Islands and the archipelago of Turku. The Finnish Lake District in central Finland is an interior plateau heavily forested and studded with lakes, swamps and bogs. The Northern Finnish Highland (Lapland), much of which lies north of the Arctic Circle, consists of infertile soil and is also the most sparsely populated region of Finland. In the far north, arctic forests and swamps eventually change to tundra.

Finland is home to a grand total of some 42,000 species of plants, animals and fungi. Insects are the single largest group, with an estimated 20,000 different species. The large wild animals that exist in Finland include, for example, brown bear, golden eagle, elk, deer, lynx, reindeer, white-tailed eagle, wolverine and wolf. The saimaa ringed seal is found only in Finland's largest lake, Saimaa, and since there are only around 250 such seals left, they are considered to be one of Europe's most endangered mammals.

Did you know that:

* 76% of Finland is covered by forests and woodland, the highest proportion in the world.

* 10% of Finland is covered by water. There are 187,888 lakes in Finland. The biggest one is called Saimaa.

*The longest river in Finland is Kemijoki - the River Kemi (483km).

*The highest tunturi (arctic mountain) in Finland is mt. Halti (1328 metres high) – holy to the Sámi.

* The scenic archipelago off the city of Turku in Southwestern Finland is the biggest in the world, measured by the number of islands in it - more than 20,000.

Remember that Finland is a country of nature! Finland's traditional rights of common access, known as everyman's rights (*jokamiehen oikeus*), provide a legal basis for the free exploitation of 'the fruits of nature.' Everyone in Finland has the right to roam in the forests, pick wild berries and mushrooms - no matter who owns the land. Hunting rights are however dependent on the permission given by the landowner, and also most types of fishing require permits from the local authorities, who generally grant fishing rights to outsiders for a payment of a small fee.

Finns' typically close relationship with nature is also evident in the high number of the so-called 'summer cottages' (*mökki*) in the countryside and the wilderness – there are almost half a million of them in this country with just over five million

inhabitants. Almost all of these cottages or cabins are close to lakes or to the seashore, and about half of them are suitable for use in the winter. Many of the cottages are very basic, in other words, there is no electricity or running water, but many Finns prefer it that way – though there has been a rise in the number of ‘luxury summer cottages’ in recent years. You will be invited at least to once to such a cottage during your stay in Finland. Make sure you do not miss the opportunity to get experience Finnish cottage life - especially during the summer – that is what most Finnish people love the most and those living abroad miss the most!

Be curious, look around you and you will find many opportunities in the nature – do this even if you had not been a scout, or even interested in forests or nature, before! Many Finnish people enjoy the wilderness and would appreciate if you are ready to try to find its charm during your year in Finland. It is very likely that by going to the wilderness you will understand something crucial about this peculiar country and its people!

CLIMATE & SEASONS Finland's climate shows both maritime and continental influences. The Atlantic and Arctic Oceans, as well as the surrounding Baltic Sea, cool the climate in the coastal regions during spring, but on the other hand, warm it in the autumn. The Finnish climate is more continental, in other words, more extreme, than in the Eastern and Northern parts of the country. The far North, however, has a rather marine climate because of the influence of the Arctic Ocean. The Finnish summer is short, only two to four months long, but the summer days are very light, even during the night. The annual mean temperature in the South, in the Capital City of Helsinki, is 5.3 degrees Celsius.

Finland has four distinctive seasons, which differ greatly from each other: winter, spring, summer and autumn. It is important to be prepared for all them.

Autumn (*syksy*) is usually quite rainy, dark and chilly throughout the country. Yet there are many people, who love the mystical feeling of autumn. *Ruska* (forest glowing with autumn tints) and morning mist give the autumn a special feeling.



Winter (*talvi*) temperature sometimes falls as low as -20 C, but sometimes it can get even colder. It may be hard to imagine how cold that is, but keep in mind that the temperature in an average freezer is ‘just’ -18 C! The coldest temperature ever measured was -51.5 C.



That record was broken in Kittilä, Lapland in January 1999. Recently, though, due to global warming, winters have become milder especially in the southern parts of the country. Winter is also the season when days are very short. In the northern part of Finland the sun does not rise for 51 days (polar nights) during the winter. This period is called *kaamos*. During this time it is possible to see the wonderful Northern Lights (Aurora Borealis) especially in the northern part of the country.

Spring (*kevät*) time the days get lighter and the snow begins to melt away. Nature goes through another of its transformation. It is uplifting to see the first spring flowers blooming, leaves beginning to reappear and the migrant birds returning for the summer.



Summer (*kesä*) is the time of the light nights. In the far north section of Finland, the sun does not set for 73 days – these are the famous ‘white nights’. The summer temperatures are normally around +18-25 C, but sometimes during summer the temperature reaches above +30 C.



IT IS IMPORTANT TO KEEP IN MIND THAT:

- The winter in Finland is long and cold. The temperature can vary between cold and very cold (normally between 0 to –35 degree Celsius). However, by wearing enough warm clothes the coldness can be easily beaten. Besides the central heating and insulation of the houses and workplaces is always excellent.
- The winter is also very dark. The darkness is the one thing that the volunteers often find the hardest to cope with. There is light for about 6 hours a day in the south of Finland. Having snow makes it feel lighter and so does Christmas with lots of candles and delicious food.
- During winter, people seem to be less social. Some people also feel like they cannot sleep enough even after 12 hours of sleep.
- The summer, on the other hand, is always very light. It is light all the time and some people find it very hard to get to sleep properly because of that! In the North, in Lapland, the sun does not set at all. During the summer people seem to be really happy and content and it seems as if they do not need any sleep.
- The seasons have effects not only on volunteers but on Finns too – indeed, the influence of the changing seasons is an important part of the Finnish character!

FINNISH CHARACTER Finnish people are often thought of as being introverted and stubborn, which perhaps not the best impression. This is partly true, because in everyday life, outside their families and circle of closest friends, Finns avoid close contact with other people. Finns are also generally not very good with the so-called ‘small talk’. This means that Finns do not necessarily talk much to strangers. Interpersonal communication, in general, is quite short and precise – indeed, it may at first appear rude, but Finns themselves do not perceive that as rude. In part this is because of the Finnish language, which enables people to express themselves both shortly and precisely. Also, honesty and sincerity play an important part in the Finnish way of communication. Finnish people might not speak much, but what they do say, they truly mean regardless of the possible impression of being too frank. This is, however, changing in especially in bigger cities with the influences coming from foreign media, internet and friends from abroad.

Nevertheless, in Finland, honesty is of great importance. If someone forgets, for example, his/her mobile phone, jacket or even a wallet in a shop or a café, it is not uncommon to find it there afterwards. Most likely the person, who found it, gave it to the staff to keep until the owner returns to look for it. Honesty is an important part of the working and political life as well. In 2003, Finland was ranked the least corrupt country in a survey conducted by Transparency International.

When people meet for the first time, people normally shake hands. Finns are not used to giving kisses. On the other hand, good friends and family members may give each other a hug. Some have even said that Finns hug a lot.

It is also absolutely normal for Finns to spend time together without really speaking to each other – silence is an important part of the Finnish art of communication. It might happen that in a bus two friends do not necessarily speak to each other and neither one is uncomfortable about it. Yet this silence, or strong need for privacy (in the Finnish culture privacy, one’s own space, is important), should not be viewed as a sign of impoliteness. Silence is rarely considered as a bad sign. Then again, Finland has one of the highest densities of mobile phones

in the world and, strangely enough, you are likely to see the otherwise silent Finns constantly blabbering on their mobile phone or anxiously exchanging text messages.

"I was on a trip to a national park with the 6th grade last week which was an intensive experience, we were wandering about 27 km in 3 days, living in a cottage without electricity, our running water was a little creek next to the cottage, but of course the 11 years old children took their mobiles... this is the finnish way of life. :)"

Anja Dottermusch, German volunteer to Finland 2003-4

Finnish people are shy, but when you get to know them you'll find that they are very trustworthy and sincere. Being shy becomes clear in the difficulty some Finns face in starting a conversation in a foreign language eventhough most Finns have an excellent knowledge of English (especially the youger generations). It is not very common for them to make the first step eventhough they would like to do so. Thus, it is often important for the foreign volunteer to be prepared to take the first step in getting to know Finnish people. However, getting to know a Finn and becoming friendly with a Finn can take a while, but it is almost always worth the while!!! Finns are considered as loyal friends. So once you have become friends, you will always be friends. Yet just like everywhere else, people are different - not all Finns are equally loyal.

Tipping in bars and restaurants is not very common in Finland. You are not expected to leave a tip in restaurants, bars, taxies, etc. Yet some Finns leave a tip if the service has been exceptionally good. You can do them same if you choose.

In Finland, religious faith is often considered as a private rather than public matter. Compared to countries many non-European countries, Finland is quite secular: most of the population does not regularly attend religious services. Still, the Christian heritage remains an important element of Finnish culture.

Finns are very punctual and many prefer to arrive early rather than late. Arriving late is not viewed positively – constantly doing so is viewed very negatively! Punctuality normally applies to public transportation, which often departs exactly on the minute.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO KEEP IN MIND THAT:

· Experience has shown that volunteers tend to spend a lot of their spare time among themselves instead of making Finnish friends. This is probably because it appears easier to make friends with and to relate to other volunteers. The need to make Finnish friends may seem of little importance, but often towards the end of the exchange year volunteers realise that they are missing something important: true Finnish contacts. These contacts are important after the year is over, so be willing and prepared to make an effort, preferable as early as possible!

· It is good to keep in mind that punctuality is also expected of the volunteer and it is good to get in to the rhythm of life in Finland right from the start of your volunteer year. You will be expected to arrive on time for work, meetings, and buses will not wait for you!

MEN AND WOMEN In relative terms women and men in Finland are very equal both in the public and the private sphere. The Act on Equality between

Women and Men in 1995 introduced a quota provision. The quota provision ensures an equal proportion of women and men in public institutions. The provision applies to government appointed committees, advisory boards and other corresponding bodies as well as to municipal bodies. A share of either gender in those organs must be at least 40%.

Women who do not work are a rarity in Finland today. Practically all younger women work. Women are usually full-time employed for life: they do not leave their jobs when they get married or have children. Widespread participation of women in working life has not, however, led to salary-related or position-connected equality between genders in the labour market. A clear division into men's and women's jobs still exists. However, this boundary has become more and more blurred in recent years. The division of labour between genders is also evident in salary levels. Women's salaries in both the private and the public sectors are still only below those of men even though women in every age group are better educated than men. Although women work similar hours as men do, their salaries are still lower.

At home, a mother's opinion is usually just as authoritative as that of a father. There are also many single parent households since the divorce rate is high - almost half of the marriages end in divorce. Couples often live together in a common-law marriage without officially getting married. Young people move away from home at an early age (usually around 18-20) and subsequently lead an independent life. Lastly, attitudes towards sexual relations are quite liberal.

FINNISH SOCIETY After World War II Finland developed into a wealthy Nordic social welfare state. Social segregation is less visible than in many other countries and social class or status do not define one's friendships or schools. It is normal to speak to a new acquaintance in first person singular (informally) right from the beginning regardless of his/her social status or possible age difference. Finland has an extensive public healthcare and education system available to all residents. This means that libraries have excellent facilities open to everyone (including free internet). The municipalities also offer sport facilities such as swimming halls, gyms, cross-country skiing tracks, etc.

Relatively high unemployment rate has affected the Finnish society in recent years, but it has been improving since the economic slump of the early 1990s – though the 2008 financial crisis has again led to a rise in unemployment. The unemployment rate in July (2009) was 7,7%, but it varies a lot in different parts of the country: it is much lower in the Greater Helsinki area and higher in the Eastern and Northern parts of the country. This is one cause of the depopulation of the countryside and the growth of cities. Higher unemployment rates in the countryside and in smaller cities drive the population to the bigger cities. Consequently, urbanisation causes many universally known problems in the cities, such as expensive housing, traffic congestion and pollution, though on much smaller scale than in many other countries. Racism and intolerance have also caused problems in some areas.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO KEEP IN MIND THAT:

· There are not many foreigners in Finland and a volunteer may come to a situation when he/she feels like standing out from the crowd. In smaller places the volunteer may be the only foreigner in the village. At first this might feel

unpleasant, but it is something that one can get used to. Similar things happen everywhere in the world - especially to blonde/blue-eyed Finns. In Finland people might look at you, but be too shy to come to talk to. Do not be intimidated by this as no harm is meant. Normally this will stop over time as the curious looks become happy greetings.

- Unfortunately some foreigners do experience intolerance, even verbal abuse. Quite typically it is by drunken men. The best response is to walk away without paying any attention. These people are a small minority and Finns are ashamed of such behaviour. Still, verbal abuse and intolerance can hurt - there is no excuse for it! However, it is nearly unheard of that foreigners would encounter physical abuse in Finland. The time when this might happen, even to Finns, is late at night as the bars/night clubs have closed and some drunken people flow to the streets looking for fights.

Crime and drug abuse is an increasing problem especially in the bigger cities. Yet, all the cities are much safer than most other European cities! Loneliness encountered by the elderly in this fast paced career driven society and alienation of those who have failed to adapt to it are the one of the gravest social problems in Finland. Alienation especially affects the unemployed and the people in the remote parts of the countryside.

However, alcohol is perhaps the most destructive social and health problem in Finland. Like many Nordic people, some Finns drink a lot, and under the influence of alcohol their behaviour may be quite far from how they normally behave. The consumption of alcohol per person per year may be higher in some other countries, but the manner, in which alcohol is consumed in Finland differs from most other European countries. A typical Finn binge drinks – he/she drinks a lot and fast. Yet, most people control their drinking – indeed, increasingly well – and this is why the drunken ones stand out.

CITY VS COUNTRYSIDE Urbanisation, the movement of people from the rural areas to the cities, began in the 1960s and still continues. This movement was particularly directed to the Greater Helsinki area. But most university cities (there are 10 university centres) have shown rising population figures. This has also enabled the development of the Finnish knowledge-based high-tech economy, which is in no small part a result of the universities themselves. A slight 'counter-urbanization' also occurred in Finland during the 1990s as some people wanted to 'go back into the nature'.

Finland's most densely populated and urbanized areas lie in the South and Southwest of the country – the so-called 'golden triangle'. This area is said to be located within the '*susiraja*' - the wolf border. In other words, the majority of Finns live in this relatively small area, the most fertile part of Finland. This area has, indeed, historically been the core of Finland. This points the uneven distribution of population. The overall population density might be 17 per km² of land, but the density in the Province of Uusimaa, which includes Helsinki, is almost 205 per km². The population density in the other, more industrialized Southern provinces is over 30 per km², while that in the provinces of the East and North is less than 10 per km². Lapland is the most sparsely populated province, with a population density of only 2.2 persons per km².

It is important to keep in mind that even though Finnish cities (small in global scale) do not differ a lot from the ones in Europe in general, the countryside does. In a small village of 2000 people, the majority of the people do not live in the village centre, the houses are scattered around the whole area of the municipality. The distance between neighbours can be relatively long and the public transport not very frequent.

FINNISH CULTURE AND ARTS Finland has the world's highest per capita rate of public funding for the arts and museums. There are many interesting museums and galleries in Finland that are really worth visiting - ranging from Modern Art museums and Castles to spy and paper art museums. There is normally an entrance fee, but at least some of the biggest museums have certain times when it is possible to visit free of charge.

One of the most important pieces of Finnish literature is the national epic *Kalevala*. It consists of oral poems of the Karelian region of Finland, which were collected and composed into a single story by *Elias Lönnrot* in the 19th century. The poems tell stories of great mythical heroes and their adventures. It is possible to find translations of *Kalevala* in most major languages. There are other famous Finnish authors whose works have been widely translated. These authors include for example: *Mika Waltari*, who wrote *The Egyptian*, *F.E. Sillanpää*, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1939 and *Tove Jansson*, the creator of the Moomins.

There are no really famous Finnish painters, but if you are interested in arts, it is worth seeing the works of art by artist such as *Akseli Gallen-Kallela*, who used *Kalevala* as his inspiration for his paintings. Other painters,

whose works are definitely worth getting to know include painters such as *Helene Schjerfbeck*, *Albert Edelfelt* and *Hugo Simberg*. Sculptor *Eila Hiltunen* is quite famous as well. One of her most famous works is the Sibelius Monument in Helsinki centre. *Jean Sibelius* was a Finnish composer, who composed among other things 7 symphonies. His most famous compositions include *Finlandia* and *Valse Triste*. Sibelius' villa, *Ainola*, situated north of Helsinki, is one of the most visited places in Finland. Classical music is still very highly esteemed in Finland and there are many Finnish world class opera singers and directors of orchestra.

Finland is also well known for its architecture and design. You might have heard of *Alvar Aalto*, *Eliel* and *Eero Saarinen*, *Tapio Wirkkala* or *Marimekko*. More recent trends in the field of arts include the *Kaurismäki Brothers*, *Aki* and *Mika*, who are film directors. *Aki Kaurismäki's Man Without a Past (Mies Vailla Menneisyyttä)* won the Grand Prix at Cannes Film Festival in 2002.

Finnish music, with the exception of the classical or heavy music, is not really very well known outside of the country. In the past years some bands have gained a bit of recognition abroad. Perhaps you have heard of HIM, Darude, Nightwish, The Rasmus, Children of Bodom or Apocalyptica? If you have the opportunity, go to one of the outdoor music festivals during the summer. It will definitely be one of the best experiences of your year and chance to listen to Finnish music – there's a summer musical festival for almost any kind music: ranging from heavy metal to classical or folk.

There is one world class personality, who comes from Finland, whom we all know, and needs be mentioned when discussing about Finland. He is *Joulupukki* or Santa Claus as he is known in English. He lives in a place called *Korvatunturi*, which is a remote mountain in Lapland. You will have the opportunity



Sibelius Monument



to meet him during your stay in Finland as he will come over to your place during Christmas if you don't want to go and visit him at Santapark (near Rovaniemi)... remember to be nice, otherwise he won't bring you any gifts on Christmas Eve!!!

ECONOMY Finland is an advanced industrial/high-tech economy. Two thirds of the country's economic output comes from the service sector. Forests remain the most crucial resource, although engineering and high-tech industries, led by Nokia, have long been the leading parts of Finnish industry. The structure of Finnish industrial exports has changed dramatically over the past decades. The wood and paper industry, which accounted for over half of the exports less than thirty years ago, is now equally important to both electronics/high-tech and metal/engineering sectors. High-tech is the most spectacular success story in Finnish exports. Its huge growth in the 1990s was mainly based on mobile phones and other telecommunication equipment. The success of mobile phone manufacturing, however, is only one example. Companies and brands such as F-Secure, Linux, Kone, Marimekko, Metso, Polar, Suunto, Fiskars, and Exel are all world-class Finnish brands.

EDUCATION Finnish people are well educated. Finland invests 7.2% of its GNP in education, the highest figure within the OECD. Education in Finland is public and free to all – even foreigners coming to Finland. There are very few private schools. All Finns are required to get their basic education between the ages of 7 to 16. They may then choose to continue at an upper secondary (3 years) or vocational (2-5 years) school, and after that at one of the universities or other institutions of higher education.

Two popular forms of education are the system of folk high-schools, which offer non-formative education, and the so-called *työväenopisto* or *kansalaisopisto* ('adult education institute'), which offer evening courses in various academic subjects, including Finnish language.

FOOD The basic meal in Finland traditionally consists of potatoes and meat or fish. In recent years also salad has become an inseparable part of a Finnish meal. Potatoes and bread are part of almost every meal and in general Finns drink a lot of milk. These days this is changing as pasta and rice, or even wine are becoming parts of Finnish meals. Increasing number of Finns are also vegetarians. Another drink that Finns are absolutely crazy about is coffee. With the consumption of 14kg per person annually, Finns drink relatively more coffee than any other nation. So when you go to visit someone, they most likely will ask whether you would like a cup of coffee. Finns also enjoy the local fruits of the nature: different berries and mushrooms. Finnish food is not at all spicy and foreigners often find it lacking salt as well. The food is certainly something that you will have to get used to - it is a big part of the culture.

SAUNA is probably the most beloved feature of the Finnish lifestyle. There are over 2 million saunas in Finland (consider the rate per capita!). There is a sauna in almost every house and nowadays you can often also find one in apartments in the centre of Helsinki. Traditionally Finnish people went to sauna once a week (every Saturday night), but depending on the family it can even be used every day.

FINNISH LANGUAGE People often mistakenly assume that languages spoken in neighbouring countries are closely related. A simple answer to 'Is

Finnish like Swedish? or *'Does everyone in Finland speak Russian?'* is resounding *'No.'* Swedish and Russian belong to the Indo-European group of languages. Finnish, on the other hand, is one of the Finno-Ugric languages, which do not belong to the Indo-European language family like the majority of languages in Europe. In all, about 23 million people speak a Finno-Ugric language. The major ones are Hungarian and Estonian. Most of the other languages are tiny, nearly extinct small languages within the Russian Federation.

The Finno-Ugric languages share common lexical and grammatical features. Although these languages have developed separately for thousands of years, common features include for instance: absence of gender (the same Finnish pronoun *hän* denotes both *he* and *she*), absence of articles (*a* and *the* in English), long words due to the structure of the language (and the lack of prepositions), and numerous exact verb cases.

Finnish often expresses ideas very differently from the more common European languages. It is for this reason that Finnish has a quite notorious reputation of being a difficult language. To master Finnish requires a lot of work. However, there are not exceptions or irregularities in the Finnish grammar; but unfortunately, there are a lot of rules. Grammatically speaking Finnish is a very logical language and the spelling is also completely phonetical – this means that can be learned in a systematic fashion.

It is good to keep in mind that studying any foreign language requires a lot of work and commitment. Finnish is definitely no exception. **But each year a number of volunteers become fluent in Finnish!** Do not feel put off by the first lessons or by the fact that the various forms of colloquial (spoken) Finnish often differs a lot from the written language. However, start from the standard Finnish as all Finnish is based on it! The more effort you put into learning Finnish, the more you will learn and with the language can give you a completely new perspective to the country and its people.

USEFUL WORDS ~ HYÖDYLLISIÄ SANOJA

YES	KYLLÄ, JOO, JUU
NO	EI
THANK YOU	KIITOS
HERE YOU ARE/PLEASE	OLE HYVÄ
EXCUSE ME/SORRY	ANTEEKSI (colloquial: SORI)
GOOD MORNING	HYVÄÄ HUOMENTA
GOOD DAY	HYVÄÄ PÄIVÄÄ
GOOD NIGHT	HYVÄÄ YÖTÄ
HELLO	PÄIVÄÄ
HI!	HEI! MOI! TERVE!
BYE!	HEI HEI! / MOI MOI! / HEIPPA!
HOW ARE YOU?	MITÄ KUULUU?
(I AM) FINE / GOOD	(MINULLE KUULUU) HYVÄÄ
OPEN	AVOINNA, AUKI
CLOSED	KIINNI / SULJETTU
TOILET	WC, VESSA;
M - MIEHET	MALES
N – NAISET	WOMEN
TELEPHONE	PUHELIN
TRAIN	JUNA
RAILWAY STATION	RAUTATIEASEMA, JUNA-ASEMA
BUS	LINJA-AUTO/ BUSSI
BUS STATION	LINJA-AUTOASEMA, BUSSI ASEMA
AIRPORT	LENTOKENTTÄ
HARBOUR	SATAMA
TAXI	TAKSI
NUMBERS ~NUMEROT 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10	
YKSI, KAKSI, KOLME, NELJÄ, VIISI, KUUSI, SEITSEMÄN, KAHDEKSAN, YHDEKSÄN, KYMMENEN	

You can find virtual Finnish language courses from:

<http://donnerwetter.kielikeskus.helsinki.fi/FinnishForForeigners/>

OR

<http://venla.org/>

Finnish

Swedish

Sámi

Tervetuloa! Välkommen! Buresboahhtin!

Welcome!

FINLAND ON THE WEB

IT IS IMPORTANT TO KEEP IN MIND THAT:

Finland is one of the countries with the highest number of internet connections per person. Still, this does not mean that every place has a computer or that the volunteer can freely use it like at home. However, if there is no internet connection in the project, free internet can be found, for example, from local libraries.

If you are interested in finding more information about Finland, the internet is the quickest and probably the easiest way to do so. Here are some useful links:

- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Finland> (Wikipedia entry on Finland)
- <http://www.infopankki.fi/> (Useful information about Finnish society)
- <http://www.formin.fi/english/> (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland)
- <http://virtual.finland.fi/> (Lot of useful information about Finland)
- <http://www.visitfinland.com/> (Information about Finland for Tourists)
- <http://www.yle.fi/uutiset/news/> (YLE News about Finland)
- <http://www.hs.fi/english/> (Helsingin Sanomat, the biggest newspaper)
- <http://www.helsinkitimes.fi/htimes/> (Helsinki Times, main English newspaper)
- <http://sixdegrees.fi/6d/> (Six Degrees, about culture and society)
- <http://www.sauna.fi/inenglish.html> (The Finnish Sauna Society)

Normally it is possible to find the webpages of the Finnish cities and municipalities by writing **www. Name of the city. fi** for example:

Tampere: www.tampere.fi

Turku: www.turku.fi

Jyväskylä: www.jyvaskyla.fi

Lahti: www.lahti.fi

NB. If the name of the city has got dots they are written without them in the web addresses.

Ä -> A & Ö -> O