

A field guide to

Estonia.

Cool facts, real places and the stories behind them, from the local guides at openBaltics.



Estonia, *the Nordic edge.*

The places, the food, the odd facts and the best months: everything we tell our own friends before they come to visit. Keep it on your phone, or print it for the trip.

Estonia is the smallest, the most northerly, and the most quietly different. Its language is Finnic, not Baltic (a cousin of Finnish, unrelated to anything else in the region). Its sensibility tilts north: spare interiors, long silences, dry humour, a deep comfort with the dark half of the year. Tallinn is one of the most complete medieval capitals in northern Europe, a Hanseatic merchant town that survived the centuries because nobody, until very recently, was rich enough to demolish it.

Off the mainland, the country shatters into 2,000 islands, of which only a couple of dozen are properly inhabited. Saaremaa and Hiiumaa are the largest: slow, flat, full of wooden churches and meteor craters. Inland, half the country is forest and a tenth is raised bog: vast, soft, light-soaked landscapes you cross on plank boardwalks. Then there is the e-state, run almost entirely online, where you can sign a property transfer on your phone in the middle of a bog walk.

The openBaltics team, Vilnius



The seal

The seal is our host in Estonia. Grey seals rest on the islets off Saaremaa and Hiiumaa, and a boat from the islands will take you out to them.

IN THIS GUIDE

The country in numbers	3
Four places that make Estonia	4
Six things that surprise people	5
Three bases for a trip	6
Black bread, and the sauna	7
The year, month by month	8
The practical bits	9
Trips we run in Estonia	10

AT A GLANCE

The country in *numbers*.

Tallinn

CAPITAL

1.4 million

POPULATION

45,300 km²

AREA

51% of land

FOREST COVER

2,222 mapped

ISLANDS

August 20, 1991

INDEPENDENCE

~22% of land

BOG COVER

Suur Munamägi, 318 m

HIGHEST POINT



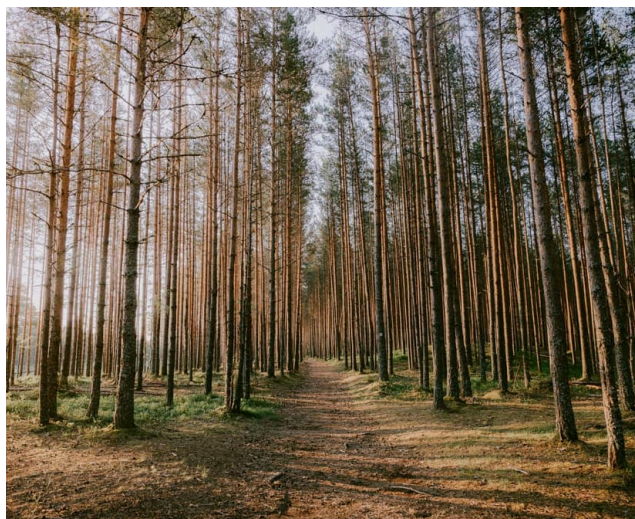
Four places that make *Estonia*.



01

Tallinn, intact

The Lower Town, the Upper Town, the wall, the towers and the Town Hall Square, one of the most complete medieval ensembles in northern Europe, and small enough to walk in a morning.



02

The bog boardwalks of Lahemaa

The Viru raised bog, an hour east of Tallinn. A 3.5 km plank loop through what looks like another planet: open, mossy, lake-pocked, and almost completely silent.



03

Saaremaa, the slow island

An intact 14th-century bishop's castle at Kuressaare, a meteor crater field, juniper plains, and 18th-century wooden windmills. The biggest island, and the quietest.



04

Telliskivi & Kalamaja

Beyond the city walls: a wooden-house quarter and a former industrial yard, now full of small kitchens, design studios and the country's best espresso. Tallinn's other half.

Six things that *surprise people.*

2,000+

01 Islands, mostly empty

Estonia has more than 2,000 islands off its western coast. Only a couple of dozen are properly inhabited.

e-state

02 A country that runs online

Almost every public service runs online, from voting to signing a property transfer on your phone. Estonia pioneered e-residency, a government digital identity open to people who have never been there.

1/5

03 A fifth of the country is bog

Roughly a fifth of Estonia is wetland, much of it raised bog that you cross on plank boardwalks. The Viru bog, an hour from Tallinn, is the easiest to walk.

2 hours

04 A ferry to another capital

Tallinn sits closer to another capital than almost any city in Europe: the ferry to Helsinki takes about two hours.

Meteorite

05 Craters from the sky

On Saaremaa, the Kaali craters are a cluster of impact lakes left by a meteorite fall in prehistory.

Smoke sauna

06 A sauna on the UNESCO list

In the southeast of Estonia, the smoke sauna tradition is on UNESCO's list of intangible cultural heritage.



Three bases for *a trip*.



HANSEATIC WALLS, SOVIET-MODERN SHORELINE

Tallinn & the north coast

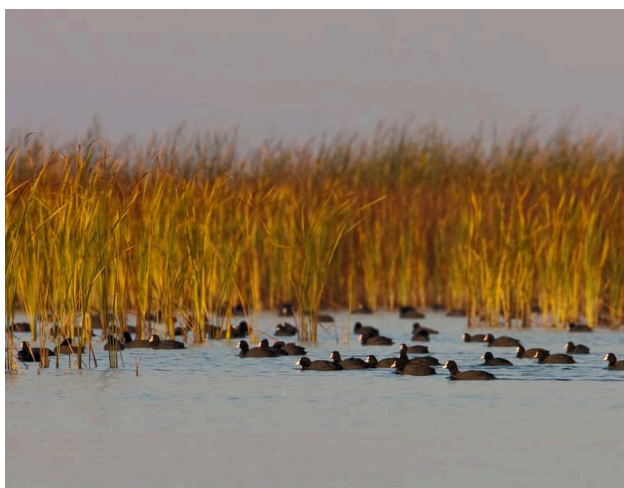
The medieval Old Town, Kalamaja's wooden quarter, and the rugged north coast: Lahemaa national park, Sagadi manor, and the limestone cliffs at Ontika.



THE ISLANDS

Saaremaa & Hiiumaa

Two big, flat, slow islands in the western archipelago. Wooden windmills, Kõpu lighthouse (the world's third-oldest still in use), and roads where the deer outnumber the cars.



THE WOODED INTERIOR

Tartu & the south

Estonia's university town and the rolling hills of Setomaa and Võrumaa. Lake Peipus, Russian Old-Believer fishing villages, and smoke saunas you book by the cabin.



Dark rye bread, the loaf on every Baltic table.

ON THE TABLE

Black bread, *and the sauna.*

Estonian food has stepped quietly into a quiet renaissance over the last decade. Ferment-heavy, foraged, restrained. It tastes like the landscape: rye, barley, dill, sour milk, juniper, cold-water fish. In Tallinn the Telliskivi kitchens work with island lamb and bog-water-fed beef; out in Setomaa they still bake bread once a week and smoke meat in standalone wooden saunas, the way their parents and grandparents did. The smoke sauna itself is UNESCO-listed: heated for half a day, no chimney, used for healing as much as washing.

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The year, *month by month.*

Jan QUIET Cold, clear 7h light	Feb GOOD Saunas, deep snow 9h light	Mar QUIET Thaw, mud 12h light	Apr GOOD Quiet spring 14h light
May BEST Bloom, mild 16h light	Jun BEST Jaanipäev, the white night 18h light	Jul BEST Warm sea, island ferries full 18h light	Aug BEST Festival month, calm seas 16h light
Sep BEST Bog walks at their best 13h light	Oct GOOD Forest amber 11h light	Nov QUIET Grey, raw 8h light	Dec GOOD Markets, snow 7h light

BEST MONTHS

June to early September

June to August is the warm half: the islands are open, the bogs are dry enough to walk, and in June it never truly gets dark. December is the other window, for Tallinn's Christmas market below the medieval town hall.



The *practical bits.*

CAPITAL	Tallinn
LANGUAGE	Estonian
CURRENCY	Euro (€)
TIME ZONE	EET, UTC+2 / EEST UTC+3
FLY IN TO	Tallinn (TLL); ferry from Helsinki
VISA	Schengen, 90/180 days; e-residency available
POWER	230V, type F (Schuko)
TAP WATER	Drinkable everywhere
TIPPING	Round up, or 10% for service you noticed
LANGUAGE TIP	English near-universal under 50; Russian in the east, Finnish on the north coast



Trips we run *in Estonia.*

Planned by people who live here, and changed to fit you.
Every trip can be shortened, stretched or rebuilt.

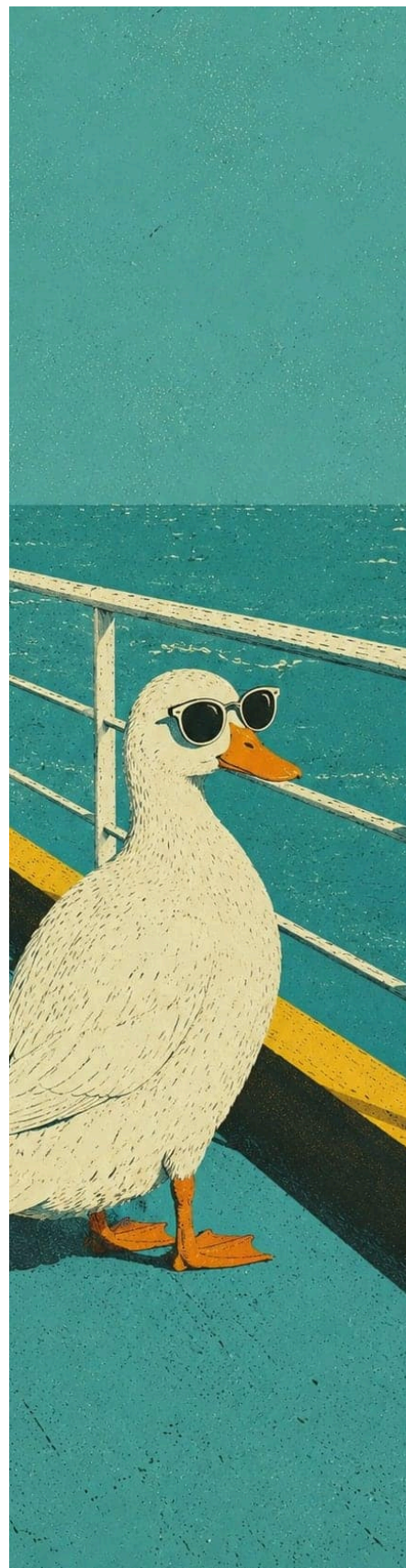
3 DAYS	Medieval Tallinn in depth openbaltics.com/itinerary/tallinn-medieval	FROM €1,155
5 DAYS	Smoke sauna and the south openbaltics.com/itinerary/smoke-sauna-setomaa	FROM €1,715
6 DAYS	Best of Estonia openbaltics.com/itinerary/estonia-islands	FROM €1,995
7 DAYS	Estonian islands self-drive openbaltics.com/itinerary/self-drive-estonia-islands	FROM €640
11 DAYS	The Three Crowns openbaltics.com/itinerary/three-crowns	FROM €2,240

Prices in euros per person sharing a room. Prices as of 20 October 2026.
openbaltics.com/country/ee

Nothing quite right?

Most of our trips start as an email. Tell us how many days you have and what you like, and we will build one around you.

openbaltics.com/plan-a-trip



PLAN IT WITH US

Finish in *the north*.

Tell us your dates and what you love. A real person replies within one working day with a day-by-day plan and a clear price.

EMAIL

hello@openbaltics.com

PHONE AND WHATSAPP

+370 641 40294

WEBSITE

openbaltics.com



openBaltics

MB openBaltics · V. Nagevičiaus g. 3, LT-08237 Vilnius, Lithuania

Photos: Giulio Gröbert / Visit Estonia · Mihkel Sillaots / Visit Estonia · Kaupo Kalda / Visit Estonia · Mati Kose / Visit Estonia · Šarūnas Šimkus /

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