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HELSINKI, FINLAND

SERVING WITH SISU

SUSTAINABILITY, INCLUSION,
AND SOCIETAL UPLIFT

WELCOME TO HELSINKI!



Welcome to Helsinki, the capital of Finland and the heart of a country that has been ranked the happiest in the world for the ninth year in a row. Helsinki's character comes from contrasts: seaside calm and modern design, compact city life and wide-open green space, practical simplicity and surprising creative energy. Helsinki is a city best discovered through everyday moments — a morning ritual, a favorite café, a quiet shoreline walk, or an unexpected pocket of beauty tucked between the sea and the streets.

In Finnish culture, SISU refers to a deep sense of inner determination, the ability to keep going and act with quiet resolve when situations feel challenging or unfamiliar. For you as a visitor, this simply means meeting Helsinki on its own terms. A touch of SISU invites you to stay curious about difference, to be open to new ways of doing things, and to carry a small sense of inner steadiness when experiences are subtle, calm, or outside your usual comfort zone.

In this booklet, we offer small inside views into the city we call home: our routines, our escapes, our favorite corners, and the tastes that anchor us. We hope these reflections accompany you during your stay and help you experience Helsinki a little more like temporary locals.

Enjoy Helsinki with curiosity, openness, and a touch of SISU.

Inside Finland's Swedish-Speaking Subculture

What It Means to Be Finlandssvensk

Did you know that Swedish is Finland's second official language? I'm a Swedish-speaking Finn — *finlandssvensk* — on my mother's side and speak Swedish as my first language. This *finlandssvensk* community has deep historical roots in Finland: Swedish-speaking settlements were first established along the coast in the 12th century. Over time, this created not only a language group but also a distinct subculture in Finland that still shapes everyday life. Today, being *finlandssvensk* means being part of a social ecosystem — an identity upheld by cultural traditions, social patterns, and networks that feels much larger than our 5% of the population. Finland's constitution gives Swedish and Finnish equal national-language status, ensuring that public services, government administration, and education function in both languages. This framework keeps Swedish a visible, everyday part of Finnish society. Swedish remains especially visible in the capital region and coastal areas, where it naturally blends into daily life.

Where Identity Lives in Helsinki

In Helsinki, some places naturally signal the *finlandssvensk* world. Ekberg café — founded in 1852 by Swedish-speaking baker Fredrik Edvard Ekberg — has evolved into a long-standing cultural institution on Helsinki's Bulevarden, reflecting the city's historic Swedish-speaking heritage and the social patterns that define *finlandssvensk* life. Hanken, our Swedish-language business school founded in 1909, is another central hub of the modern urban *finlandssvensk* community. Did you know that "Hanken" began as a nickname for its official Swedish name, Svenska handelshögskolan, but became so widely used that the school eventually adopted it? Today, Hanken is deeply embedded in Helsinki's professional networks, serving as a key anchor of *finlandssvensk* life and its broader societal connections.

Cultural Legacy & the Moomins

The *finlandssvensk* identity also lives through the cultural legacy of Tove Jansson, whose creation of the Moomin universe continues to shape Finnish imagination, design, and storytelling. You'll notice traces of the Moomins all around the city — and often already at Helsinki Airport, where those round, thoughtful characters appear to welcome you with quiet Nordic wisdom. For a deeper sense of Tove's world, I recommend reading *The Summer Book* or watching the 2024 film adaptation starring Glenn Close, a beautiful introduction to Finnish summer in the archipelago. And when in Helsinki, you can experience parts of Jansson's artistic heritage at HAM — the Helsinki Art Museum — where a special exhibition dedicated to Jansson is open until January 2027.

This was a first glimpse, and I hope you enjoy spotting *finlandssvensk* traces around Helsinki.

KRISTINA





Everyday Helsinki

by Johanna



My day-to-day pleasure

The new landmark of Helsinki, the [Oodi Library](#), is a sight for sore eyes! As I pendle into the city and walk to Hanken from the railway station, I have the pleasure of enjoying the architecture of Oodi daily. With its striking wooden façade, Oodi is one of Helsinki's most beautiful modern buildings. Its design blends Finnish spruce, glass, and sweeping curves, making it worth seeing. Inside is even more awesome, with different activities offered to citizens. I especially recommend visiting the second floor for the view!



My favourite way to spend a free day in Helsinki

For me, the natural choice to spend my day is one of the many art museums Helsinki has to offer. The guaranteed choice is [Ateneum](#). It is located in city center near the railway station, holding Finland's oldest and largest art collection. The basic collection offers a window to the Finnish soul, and the changing exhibitions are well-curated. The building itself is beautiful, with two cafes with delicacies to enjoy.



My favourite getaway from Helsinki

I have a deep desire for a constant connection with the nature and for that, Espoo's [Haltia](#), the Finnish Nature Centre, is truly unmatched. Just a short 30 minute trip from Helsinki, Haltia opens the door to a genuine Finnish wilderness experience. Nestled right beside [Nuuskio National Park](#), it gives you immediate access to peaceful forests, quiet lakes, and miles of woodland trails.



My favourite places to eat in Helsinki

While there are many great restaurants, the place I return to is [Bas Bas Kulma](#). It has a bistro-style vibe, and it is the little brother of equally great [Baskeri & Basso](#). The restaurant is charming, with a warm atmosphere. The small portions celebrate simple tastes, and the freshly baked bread is to die for. Because one can choose the number of dishes, it also works for mixed appetites. Booking a table is recommended – [tableonline.fi](#) works well. Yam!



Everyday Helsinki by Robert



My day-to-day pleasure

One of the things I appreciate most about living in Helsinki is how close it is to the sea. The Baltic Sea hugs Helsinki (and Espoo) to the south, and with just a short walk or tram ride I can be by the shore. While I prefer dipping in the lakes year-round, regardless of the weather, I find walking by the sea very soothing. As a bonus, when the temperature drops in winter it's even possible to walk on the ice to some of the islands. It's quite special to see people pushing prams, riding bikes, or even kite surfing on the frozen sea on a sunny day.



My favourite getaway from Helsinki

I live in Espoo, the city that borders Helsinki to the south-west. I'd hop on the metro to Tapiola and visit [EMMA](#) – the Espoo Museum of Modern Art, where among other things you can learn more about the wonderful world of children's book writer and illustrator [Mauri Kunnas](#). Whatever your age, I also recommend the adjacent [Leikki](#) – Museum of Play, a place that brings back the simple joy of toys and play from a time when life felt a bit easier. From Tapiola, I'd walk (or take the metro two stops) to Niittykumpu and stop for a drink at the [Bodom Bar & Sauna](#), a sort of museum dedicated to Finnish heavy metal music.



My favourite way to spend a free day in Helsinki

If it's a sunny day, I love going to [Löyly](#), a public sauna with distinctive architecture, and then walking along the seafront all the way to the Old Market Hall ([Vanha Kauppahalli](#)). It's a beautiful route that takes you past Kaivopuisto park and offers views of the archipelago. You simply follow the shoreline and enjoy the scenery. There are many places to stop for coffee along the way, including [Café Ursula](#), a true Helsinki institution. During summer, you can even hop on a ferry (e.g., [JT](#) or [HSL](#)) and visit one of the many islands in the archipelago.



My favourite places to eat in Helsinki

Like many others, I recommend trying the salmon soup (you can have it at Löyly, but many restaurants serve it). Although it's located inside the Kamppi shopping mall (on the 5th floor), I really like the salmon soup at [Fisken på Disken](#). Helsinki is full of wonderful cafés and restaurants with cuisine from all over the world. A fun place serving traditional Finnish food in the city centre is [Zetor](#) (you'll see why when you get there, and it gets even funnier when you inevitably visit the restroom).

For snacks, you should try the savoury Karelian pastry and the sweet pulla bun, available in any café. I recommend [Café Regatta](#) next to the Sibelius Monument, or [Levain](#) near the [Tempelisaari Church in Töölö](#). If I have to name one place that never disappoints, it would be [Alexanderplats](#), located next to the [Swedish Theatre](#) and close to the [Stockmann department store](#).



Everyday Helsinki

by Larissa



My day-to-day pleasure

My day-to-day pleasure is dancing! It keeps me warm during winters, and it is even better during summer when there are outside events. On Sundays, from 6 to 9pm, there is “[Opera Salsa](#)” at Coopperanpuisto. If you have never danced before, they may even hold dance lessons.



My favourite way to spend a free day in Helsinki

I like simple and relaxing things: I would start the day with a walk in the nature (e.g., in [Lauttasaari](#)) and end with some drinks on a terrace or a [rooftop bar](#) (I like the outdoor space in [Allas](#) restaurants overlooking the sea). Luckily, there are many opportunities for both types of activity in Helsinki.



My favourite getaway from Helsinki

I love going to [Turku](#), especially in the summer. The riverside—full of cafes and excellent restaurants—is amazing, and I am always in a good mood while walking around the city. While there, check [Ruissalo](#), an island part of the archipelago. You can take the bus or even a water taxi. While there, you may want to keep your eye to spot deer, foxes, or other wild animals.



My favourite places to eat in Helsinki

As the Brazilian in the bunch, I suggest [Lönnkä Bull & Bottle](#) for their flavorful steaks. If you come at the weekend, I recommend booking a table. [Fat Lizard Töölö](#) is a great place in the summer. I brought my family there when they visited, as the scenery in Töölö is great.



Everyday Helsinki by Mekhail



My day-to-day pleasure

I grew up in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, where life moves quickly and loudly. Over time, I have learned to appreciate Helsinki in smaller moments. The streets around Hanken, with their older buildings and calm rhythm, have a steadiness that I enjoy. Walking from the bus station to Hanken in the morning gives me a few quiet minutes before the day begins. That short walk clears the head and somehow puts me in the right frame of mind for teaching and research.



My favourite way to spend a free day in Helsinki

I enjoy spending a free afternoon in Helsinki at [Halfmoon Game Cafe](#) in the city centre. It is a relaxed place where people gather around games, have a drink, and simply enjoy the moment. I like the atmosphere there – friendly, informal, and a little playful. Sitting down with a game, watching others play, and chatting with friends makes for a surprisingly pleasant afternoon. Time seems to pass quickly there.



My favourite getaway from Helsinki

If you have an extra day in the summer, I highly recommend exploring the [Archipelago Trail near Turku](#). It is one of the most beautiful ways to experience the Finnish coast. With a bicycle, you can move slowly from island to island, crossing the sea on ferries. And stopping in small villages along the way. Many of the ferry crossings are free, and the journeys themselves become part of the experience. For me, the best way to enjoy the route is not to hurry: cycle a little, pause by the water, enjoy the ferry ride, stop at a small café, and continue when you feel like it. It is a place where the sea, ferries, and small islands slow everything down.



My favourite places to eat in Helsinki

From time to time, I look for flavors that remind me of home. Helsinki has some excellent South Asian restaurants where you can find exactly that. One of my favorites is [Rannagor](#), a Bangladeshi restaurant where you can enjoy meals that feel close to what I grew up with: rice, flatbread, dal (lentil soup), and a proper slow-cooked beef curry. Another place I enjoy is Mr. Don, closer to the city centre and perfect for a relaxed meal. If you enjoy spicy, flavourful food, you will feel very comfortable there.



Everyday Helsinki by Arafat



My day-to-day pleasure

I live and work in the city of [Vaasa](#), north of Helsinki, where Hanken has its second campus. So, I occasionally have the privilege to enjoy the hustle and bustle of Helsinki. Whenever I visit the city for work-related reasons, I take a walk from the train station to our campus or department via the [Kamppi](#) area. While taking a 10-12-minute walk to Hanken, I greatly enjoy the architecture and surroundings of [Amos Rex](#) and [Narinkkatori](#) (Narinkka Square) outside the Kamppi center. During summer or other warm times, the place hosts various events and activities.



My favourite way to spend a free day in Helsinki

Whenever I visit Helsinki on vacation or during a free weekend, I spend time with my family or friends exploring the city's tourist attractions. Among the tourist attractions, I visit the [Senate Square](#) for its mesmerizing classical architecture and surroundings. The nearest attractions from the Square where I like to spend time are the [Esplanade Park](#) and the nearby harbour area. In summer, these places are worth visiting if you would like to experience different activities and/or take a trip to the nearby islands.



My favourite getaway from Helsinki

Last summer, I visited two places from Helsinki that I really liked. First, I visited Tallinn, the capital of Estonia, on a cruise ship from Helsinki's harbour. Exploring the beautiful shoreline of Finland from on board a ship or boat is truly a wonderful experience. For example, you will pass the island of [Suomenlinna](#), which is itself a unique tourist destination. Second, I visited the city of Porvoo, particularly the [old Porvoo](#), which is famous for its red-painted riverside warehouses and is about an hour's drive from Helsinki. The place is worth visiting if you have some hours to explore places outside Helsinki.



My favourite places to eat in Helsinki

I have a natural craving for Asian foods. Whenever I visit alone for work, I like to get food at a Nepalese restaurant called [Ravintola Sansar](#). It serves a wide range of Asian dishes in a nice and cozy atmosphere. Just a few hundred meters from Sansar, I also like the Japanese sushi restaurant [Konnichawa Kamppi](#). If you would like to have a wide selection of sushi in a restaurant near Hanken, this could be one of the places to explore. Aside from the Asian dishes, I recommend you try one of the famous Finnish dishes, Salmon soup. Sometimes, I even take it on a [VR](#) train when returning to Vaasa from Helsinki or other places.



Everyday Helsinki

by Anu



My day-to-day pleasure

Helsinki is a city of both mainland and islands. My home island, [Lauttasaari](#), is just two metro stops from Kamppi, near Hanken. My everyday joy is simply taking a walk: along the shoreline, through small patches of forest, past the little harbour, or up on the cliffs with views toward the open sea. It's wonderfully relaxing. [Café Puhuri](#) is located in a late 18th-century wooden villa surrounded by lilac and apple trees, and it's a charming place for a pause. A little farther away, [Kasinonranta Café](#) sits on a sandy beach with a great terrace, and in summer, the evening sun stays with you for a long while. For the island's best burgers, including great vegetarian options, head to [Paseo Café, Grill & Sauna](#) on the southern beach of Lauttasaari.



My favourite way to spend a free day in Helsinki

Helsinki is a very walkable city, and combining walking with culture and good food makes a perfect free day. Whether you prefer history or art, the museums are plentiful. My favourite museums in central Helsinki are [Amos Rex](#) for contemporary art and [Ateneum](#) for classic art. [The Architecture and Design Museum](#) offers the Escape to Moominvalley as a lovely refuge. Museum cafés are worth checking out too.



My favourite getaway from Helsinki

Many Finns have summer cottages at the seashore or by a lake. A weekend or holiday close to nature is a perfect way to unwind. Swimming in wild waters, visiting a shore-side sauna, picking berries and mushrooms in the forest, or simply relaxing while listening to the birds' morning concert is a sure reset for both body and mind.



My favourite places to eat in Helsinki

Helsinki has something tasty for everyone, and many restaurants offer plenty of options for different dietary needs. In the summer, I love heading to [Kauppatori](#), the Market Square, to enjoy fresh berries. Long sunny days give strawberries an especially sweet flavour, and it's fun to try different varieties and decide which one is your favourite. Craving something savoury? My favourite is cold-smoked salmon on rye bread. And just next door, the old indoor [Market Hall](#) is full of delicious things to discover. It's well worth a visit.



Everyday Helsinki by Stefan



My day-to-day pleasure

Visiting a public sauna. [Kulttuurisauna](#), [Yrjönkatu Swimming Hall](#), or [Kotiharjun sauna](#) are all unique in their own way. Please check details and opening times online before going. All of these are authentic and gender segregated. Bring swimwear (optional; needed for swimming only), slippers (optional), and a towel. For mixed groups, [Löyly](#) (here swimwear is mandatory) may be more suitable.



My favourite way to spend a free day in Helsinki

Walking around [Pihlajasaari](#) and taking a dip. The [short ferry trip](#) departs from Ruoholahti and Merisatama, with tickets sold on board. On the island, follow the nature trails, relax on the beach, and stop by the [restaurant](#) housed in an old villa. While the island is largely accessible, some parts of the trails are sandy, which may make wheelchair use difficult.



My favourite getaway from Helsinki

Taking a cruise to [Tallinn](#). Once there, try not to spend all your time in the extensive and magnificent Old Town. Visit the quirky district of [Kalamaja](#), stop by the [old market hall](#), and reserve time to eat at one of the restaurants in [Telliskivi](#). Ferry operators include [Viking Line](#), [Eckerö Line](#), and [Tallink](#). A day trip is possible, but an overnight stay is recommended.



My favourite places to eat in Helsinki

For me, [Ravintola Grön](#) remains unbeatable. Its sophisticated menu, marked by a Nordic sensibility and a strong focus on sustainability, may be the most *sisu*-driven food experience in the city. Tables can be difficult to secure depending on the season, but it is always worth checking.

A no-reservation alternative is the daily soup at [Café Kappeli](#) (on the left when entering), located on [Esplanadi](#) in the heart of the city. The historic building once hosted national figures such as [Eino Leino](#), [Akseli Gallen-Kallela](#), and [Jean Sibelius](#). Who wouldn't want to follow in their footsteps?

MARIA



CULINARY HIGHLIGHTS

Where to eat?

Ravintola Finnjäväl (Michelin Starred)

Discover modern Finnish gastronomy at [Ravintola Finnjäväl](#), one of Helsinki's most acclaimed fine dining destinations. In the intimate Salonki setting you'll find creative, beautifully crafted interpretations of traditional Finnish dishes using the highest quality local ingredients. Whether you choose the refined tasting menu or explore Finnish culinary heritage in a new way, it's a memorable experience for lovers of Nordic food.

Strindberg

Located on Esplanadi with beautiful park views, [Strindberg](#) is a Helsinki classic blending elegant Nordic cuisine with international flavours in a warm, cosmopolitan setting. Enjoy stylish lunches, à la carte dinners, or drinks in the inviting Library Bar, and in summer relax on the outdoor terrace with a glass in hand.

Ravintola Kosmos

A classic Helsinki intellectual and cultural meeting place, long popular with writers, artists, and academics. Serves straightforward Finnish comfort food in a relaxed, quiet setting.

Ateljee Bar, Rooftop in the Heart of Helsinki

Perched atop the iconic Hotel Torni, [Ateljee Bar](#) offers cocktails with stunning city views—and even the ladies' restroom comes with a view! Perfect for enjoying Helsinki from above.

Kappeli

A true Helsinki institution, [Kappeli](#) has stood on Esplanadi since 1867 as a place to meet, eat and celebrate. With a seasonal menu rooted in Finnish ingredients, classic cooking and fresh bakery breads, it offers restaurant dining, a café with traditional pastries, and a lively outdoor terrace — all in a historic setting that's part of the city's cultural fabric.

What to try before you leave Finland

Food

Kalakukko

[Kalakukko](#) is a traditional fish pie from Savonia, made with perch or salmon and pork baked inside a dense rye crust. Hearty and filling, it reflects the flavors of the Finnish countryside. Often eaten warm, it's a unique and comforting regional specialty.

Poronkäristys (Sautéed Reindeer)

Thinly [sliced reindeer](#) sautéed with butter and onions, often served with mashed potatoes and lingonberry sauce. A traditional Lappish comfort dish, rich in flavor and very Finnish.

Kalakeitto (Finnish Fish Soup)

[Kalakeitto](#) is a creamy soup with salmon or white fish, potatoes, and dill. Mild and aromatic, it's a classic comfort dish that reflects Finland's fishing traditions.

Hernekeitto & Pancakes (Pea Soup)

[Hernekeitto](#) is a traditional green pea soup, often served on Thursdays with ham. It's usually followed by pannukakku, a sweet oven-baked pancake with jam. A comforting, classic Finnish pairing.

Silakkapihvi (Fried Baltic Herring Fillets)

[Breaded and fried herring](#), sometimes served with mashed potatoes or rye bread. Crunchy, salty, and very typical of coastal Finnish cuisine.

Graavilohi (Cured Salmon)

[Raw salmon](#) cured with salt, sugar, and dill. Often served thinly sliced on rye bread or with potatoes — refreshing and delicate.

Muikku (Fried Vendace)

Small freshwater fish, lightly battered and fried whole, often eaten as a snack or street food in the summer. Crunchy, delicate, and very local.

Desserts

Leipäjuusto with Cloudberry Jam

Also called "[squeaky cheese](#)," this mild, fresh cheese from Lapland is served warm with tart cloudberry jam. The contrast of textures and flavors is uniquely Finnish.

Lakka / Cloudberry Ice Cream or Sorbet

Ice cream or sorbet made from [cloudberry](#)s, offering a tart and sweet Arctic flavor that's refreshing in the summer heat.

Mustikkapiirakka (Wild Blueberry Pie)

[Fresh wild blueberry](#)s baked in a rye or wheat crust. Sweet and tangy, it's a classic summer dessert that showcases Finland's abundant berries.

Fresh Berry Compotes

Strawberries, raspberries, bilberries, or blackcurrants served with cream or yogurt. Light, refreshing, and quintessentially Finnish.

Smoothies with Nordic Berries

Cold berry smoothies made from lingonberries, bilberries, or cloudberryes. Refreshing and a healthy summer option.



What to try before you leave Finland

Bonbons

Salmiakki Bonbons

Intensely [salty licorice candies](#), sometimes coated in chocolate. Polarizing but a Finnish classic — adventurous visitors often love the unique salty-sweet flavor.

Salmiakki Toffee or Fudge

Soft toffee or fudge flavored with salty licorice. A more indulgent, chewy version of Finland's iconic salmiakki flavor.

Minttu Chocolates

Finnish [peppermint-flavored chocolates](#), refreshing and sweet. Often enjoyed after meals or as a small indulgence.

Xylitol

[Xylitol](#), first isolated from wood by German chemist Emil Fischer in the 1890s, was later refined in Finland for commercial use from birch trees. A very Finnish ingredient, it's used in sweets and chewing gum as a naturally Nordic product. Xylitol is tooth-friendly, helping to reduce the risk of cavities, and it has a lower glycemic impact than regular sugar, making it a slightly healthier option for sweet treats. Try Xylitol chewing gum or pastilles, and they often come in flavors like peppermint, licorice, or berry.

Drinks

Finnish Long Drink (Lonkero)

The ultimate Finnish summer classic, [Long Drink](#) blends premium gin or rye spirit with refreshing grapefruit or Nordic berry flavors. Popular brands include Kyrö, Hartwall Original, and Laitilan Long Drink, among others. Crisp, slightly bitter-sweet, and perfectly balanced, this iconic cocktail was first created for the 1952 Helsinki Olympics. Alcohol-free versions are also available for a lighter, refreshing option.

Finnish Gin & Tonic

Sip the taste of Finland with [Kyrö Napue](#), [Helsinki Distilling Co.](#), or [Maku Gin](#), paired with premium tonic and Nordic botanicals like juniper, rosemary, and forest herbs. Crisp, refreshing, and elegant, this cocktail perfectly captures the essence of Finnish summer. Alcohol-free versions are also available for those who prefer a lighter option.

Birch & Citrus Cooler

Refresh your summer with this crisp, lightly sparkling drink made from Finnish birch sap and zesty citrus. Mildly sweet with a hint of forest aroma, it's a uniquely Nordic, alcohol-free refreshment — perfect for warm days, outdoor patios, or sipping while enjoying Finland's summer vibes.

Jaffa – Finnish Soft Drink

Enjoy a refreshing taste of Finland with [Jaffa](#), the classic Finnish soft drink made from real fruit flavors like orange, grapefruit, or pear. Light, crisp, and naturally fruity, it's perfect for a summer patio, casual sipping, or pairing with light bites. A deliciously Finnish choice for all ages.



SERVING WITH SISU

