



Finland's Coastal Region: agriculture and dairy farms dot this flat terrain.



Lake Saimaa, Finland's largest lake—the fifth largest lake in Europe.

FINNISH . . . the unrifrantic brand

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It has been said that you can't communicate Finnishness in the English language. But we're going to try. Who or what is a Finn, and why? The Finns are different, even among Scandinavians. Let's begin by seeing what we can learn from the land itself, and perhaps then learn what we can about the landscape, meaning in an enlarged sense, the relationship between the land and its people. You will find it helpful to refer to our maps as you continue to read.

Out of a list of 195 countries by Wikipedia, Finland ranks 64th in total area, right after Japan (61st) and Germany (62nd). When it comes to population density however, Japan has 868 people per square mile; Germany has 601 per square mile...

...Finland, with a total population of about 5.5 million people, has 47 per square mile! There's not a lot of people up there.

The World Atlas indicates there are 69 cities in the world with a greater population than the entire country of Finland. But compared to most other places in the world, there is an amazing similarity in the characteristics of the people that inhabit this small, northern

land. What historical, cultural, and physical factors have contributed to Finnish sociological homogeneity?

Finland is isolated by location and climate. Although other Nordic countries have parts of them that reach far north, virtually all of Finland is north of 60 degrees north latitude, which makes it the northernmost country in the European Union. One third of the country is above the Arctic Circle.

Finland is a young country, recovering from recession

Yes, this is the centennial celebration of Finland's birth as a nation, but we are not talking about that kind of "young" or an economic "recession." We are talking about 10,000 years young in geologic time and development. *The continental glaciers that shaped what is now Finland began to recede about 10,000 years ago.* As these massive mountains of ice moved, they scraped and gouged the earth in their path, leaving dips and troughs

in the land that filled with water, leaving over 180,000 lakes in their wake. Actually no one really knows how many lakes there are, but most of them are quite shallow, from 300 feet to as little as 25 feet deep. If you combined all the water from all of those lakes, it would be about equal to Finland's annual rainfall. Ten percent of all of Finland's surface area is comprised of lakes. The largest of these, Lake Saimaa, is the fifth largest in Europe.

Finland is a growing country

Massive glaciers are so heavy they depress the land beneath them, actually compressing it back into the sea from



Under patches of snow, glacial striation left by ice-age glaciers, in Otaniemi, Espoo, Finland.

which it arose, like a heavy brick on a wet sponge. After the glaciers move on or melt, the compressed land begins to rise in what is called isostatic rebound. Because Finland's glacial period is so recent, the land is still emerging from the sea, and Finland is growing in total area by about seven square kilometers per year. This terra firma rebound is proceeding about 25 centimeters in the south and southwest, and about 80-90 centimeters up north, per year. So hurry north and buy real estate, and if you live long enough you can quite literally see your investment grow!

There are places in Finland where, although the glaciers are long gone, you can still see the deep gouges they made in the bedrock they left behind.

Finland's Four Regions

There are four primary geographical regions in Finland.

- **Archipelago Finland**, the world's largest archipelago, is about rocks and water. There are almost as many islands as there are lakes in Finland; the official count is 179,584. There are 455 permanently inhabited islands with no road connection to the mainland. This region includes the Åland islands, strategically located between Finland and Sweden, at the mouth of the Gulf of Bothnia. There are actually four different archipelagos: the Kotka archipelago in the Gulf of Finland, the



Finland's archipelago region: The mouth of the Gulf of Bothnia is dotted with thousands of islands of various sizes, with no road connections to the mainland.

Helsinki archipelago, the Archipelago Sea, and the Kvarken archipelago in the Gulf of Bothnia, which is a UNESCO World Heritage site. Helsinki is nicknamed the Pearl of the Baltic. Sometimes Archipelago Finland and the Coastal area are lumped together, and Helsinki is considered the fourth region, in a category by itself.

- **The Finland Coastal** area is agricultural and dairy farming, and next to the Gulf of Bothnia for 100

kilometers it is extremely flat. These are the greatest plains in all of Norden. The area in the south and southwest of the country gets warming benefit from the Gulf Stream.

- **The Finland Lake** district in the interior of the country is the largest region; it is also the largest lake district in Europe with 188,000 at last count, and it is the most emblematic of Finland with its hills and dense

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forests. This big central part of the country extends east into Russia, with no natural border between the two nations. About 78% of all the surface area of Finland is forested, and 60% of those forests are privately owned, not by the State. About 14% of the Finns own forest land, and most of these holdings are small, about 30 hectares on average.

• **Upland Finland** extends above the Arctic Circle. It begins in the southern part as undulating hills and increases in steepness as you go north, with the highest peak at about 3300 feet. Even so, this area can hardly be called mountainous, with, at the most, gentle hills punctuated with lots of bogs, thanks to the glaciers that were bigger, heavier, thicker, and longer-lasting than in the rest of Europe.

Taiga, or boreal forest, covers most of Finland, from the northern parts of the south to the very far north of the country in Lapland. There is more forest as percentage of total area in Finland than anywhere else in Europe.

Wikipedia defines the Arctic Circle as the southernmost latitude in the Northern Hemisphere at which the sun can remain continuously above or below the horizon for twenty-four hours. That means at least once each year at any location within the Arctic Circle the sun is visible at local midnight, and at least once it is not visible at local noon. Long summer days of sunshine and long winter nights of darkness prevail for months at a time above the Arctic Circle. Lapland is the region of the midnight sun and long winter nights.

About four million people live north of the Arctic Circle, distributed among the eight nations with land located above the Circle.



Finland map shows the four primary geographical regions described.



Upland Finland, (including Lapland) where the sun shines above or below the horizon for twenty-four hours at a time.

The Finnish Sami are the northernmost indigenous people in the European Union. There are less than 8,000 of these in Finland, often referred to as Laplanders or simply Lapps and there are less than 2,000 who speak their language as their mother tongue. Many of them have assimilated into the Nordic populations rather than suffer ostracism for being or looking different. And some were simply in search of expanded possibilities for themselves. [Include language map of Finland here:]

Finland's Geopolitical Position

Much of Finland's political history was spent sandwiched between the two hegemonic powers of Sweden and Russia who settled their differences on the battlefield of Finland. No matter which way the battle went, Finland paid with the loss of their men, land, and resources. With their independence came a masterful balancing act to remain neutral to their neighbors' arguments.

The silhouette of Finland on a map looks like a woman with only one arm. The Finnish Maiden became the personification of Finland, and after the Continuation War in which Finland lost major land areas to Russia in the Moscow Armistice of 1944, the figure was said to have lost the other of her arms, as well as a hem of her "skirt".

Summary

Finland is an isolated country in the Far North, with 1/3 of its territory beyond the Arctic Circle. Except for some coastal areas in the south, it gets quite cold in the winter when the days and nights meld together in long periods of darkness. The northern lights, or aurora borealis, are



visible 200 nights of the year. The country is blessed with seemingly endless lakes and forests, but it is sparsely populated which means resources need to be conserved and

consumed with respect. Those resources include their attitudes toward each other; with a (Continued on page 00)



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limited population, everyone contributes because everyone is needed. Getting the best from your human resources just makes good sense. Teamwork and trust are vital to survival. Conversation is conserved like any other resource; why expend energy unless there is a clear need?

Both the extended darkness of winter in Finland and the tragic waste of human life due to repeated wars between neighbors may contribute to a latent sense of melancholy and desire for safety from things beyond their control. Both communing with nature and the heat and camaraderie of the sauna contribute to a sense of well-being. Eight minutes in the forest is enough to reduce stress hormone levels. In this small country of 5.5 million people, there are 500,000 summer cottages, most of them in the woods, and many of them can be rented by tourists.

How do Finns describe themselves? They are pragmatic, functional;

sustainability is a natural part of their thinking processes, nothing is to be wasted. They are close to nature, trees, water, all living things, but they are not sentimental about hunting or fishing, which is part of their heritage too.

The sauna is their sanctuary; these are people who sweat for leisure. Being alone can be the hardest thing. Life is meant to be shared, and the sauna is where that happens; a place where you can find clarity by rising above the details. They are honest; your wallet will most likely still be where you left it in Finland.

Finns don't brag about themselves. Finnish is not flashy. They are characterized by no-frills authenticity. Finns are the slow-living brand. They are proud of their country, but they are not satisfied with everything in their country. They are probably a little suspicious of people who talk too much, or who are given to showing off, but on the other hand, Finns wish they



were more aggressive about marketing themselves. They wish more people knew about the good things they enjoy in their country, and they are learning to combine more courage (sisu) with less quiet modesty in order to get the message out to the world.

Finns are well known for their low levels of corruption and they have low levels of hierarchy. Maybe there is a connection between those two characteristics. They rely on consensus, and they have a strong commitment to rule of law rather than rule of men.



Above left: Finnish youth in traditional historic dress, celebrating the country's centennial year.

Above right: aerial view of Helsinki, Finland's capital city.

Ovals: representatives of Finland's many faces.

one of the most technologically advanced and wealthiest. It is quite possible there are now more people of Finnish descent outside Finland than inside Finland. Wherever they have gone, they have carried their values of honesty and hard work and innovation and belief in education and equality with them as ambassadors of the unfrantic in life. Sauna and sisu (courage and persistence) are integrated in the Finnish good life.

They have differences of opinion about what is right and what is wrong about Finland, but Finns are unanimous that they can't think of a better place to live. Come visit, see for yourselves. Tervetuloa Suomeen! Visit Finland!



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