



# Nature, Recreation *and* Sport in Helsinki



## Areas in Helsinki

	Helsinki km <sup>2</sup>	Helsinki Region km <sup>2</sup>
Total area	686	4 693
♦ Sea area	500	1 602
♦ Land area	186	3 091

Source: City of Helsinki Urban Facts



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# To the reader

Helsinki is Finland's only metropolis. The urban image is complemented by nature, which runs between settlements and embraces the city in the form of fields and forests. Bays and headlands, islands and islets off the coast enrich the scenery. Nature is an inherent part of everyday life and leisure time pursuits for the people of Helsinki. Summer activities include various excursions into the great outdoors, fishing, picking berries and mushrooms or just enjoying the natural landscape. On hot summer days, the city's numerous beaches attract swimmers and sunbathers. In winter, recent years have also seen a tremendous increase in winter swimming. Many destinations are also firm favourites with visitors to Helsinki.

Nature, Recreation and Sport in Helsinki comprises statistics, short articles and stories describing Helsinki as the home of the active outdoor people and as a great travel destination. The publication contains six chapters, the first of which tells about urban nature, the urban landscape and vegetation, the second takes us from the land to the sea, shores and archipelago. The theme in chapter three is leisure and

hobbies, and international benchmarking shows Helsinki residents as particularly standing out as literature and exercise enthusiasts. The fourth theme is sports, both as a hobby and competitively. Chapter five of the publication tells about Helsinki as a tourist destination and presents a range of popular sights in the city. Last but not least is some key statistical information about Helsinki and the people who live there.

Jointly produced by four departments of Helsinki City – Sports Department, City Office's Tourist and Convention Bureau, Environment Centre and Helsinki Urban Facts – the publication is primarily aimed at the general public and media representatives attending the 10th IAAF World Championship in Athletics held in Helsinki in 2005. Sanna Ranto from City of Helsinki Urban Facts is responsible for the editorial work. A list of contributors appears on the first pages of this publication.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to everyone contributing to the production of this publication.

Helsinki, June 2005

Leila Lankinen  
*Acting information manager*

# Nature in Helsinki

Seasonal changes and daylight variations

Green Helsinki

Landscape and geology

Flora and vegetation

Wild animals

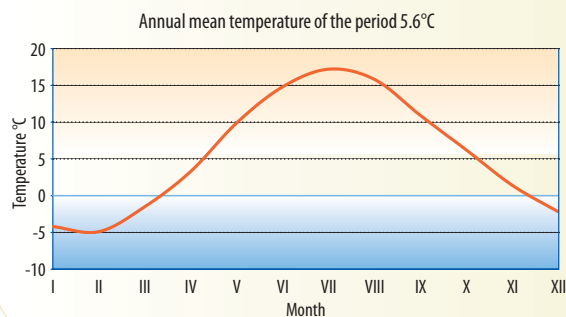
Nature protection

The air is clean

Helsinki citizens value urban nature

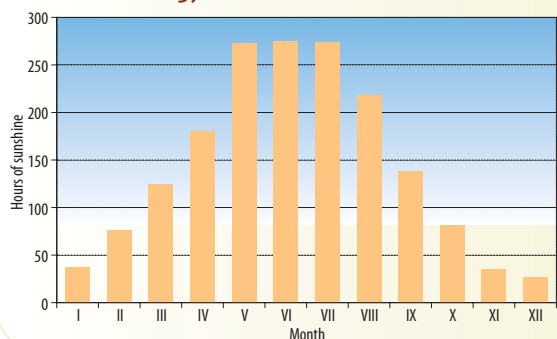


### Monthly mean temperatures at Helsinki City Centre Weather Station in 1971–2000



Source: Finnish Meteorological Institute

### Monthly sunshine hour averages at Helsinki 1971–2000



Source: Finnish Meteorological Institute

## Seasonal changes and daylight variations

Helsinki lies at a latitude of 60 degrees north, which means it experiences distinct climatic variations between seasons. Although the sea moderates fluctuations in temperature, making winters and summers more temperate in Helsinki than inland, a high of +31.2°C was recorded in the capital in summer 1975 and a minimum of -34.3°C in the winter of 1987.

The length of daytime in Helsinki also varies greatly across the year. Around Christmas, there are barely six hours of daylight, but in return, around Midsummer the nights never really get dark – just a few hours of twilight. And actually Helsinki ranks high among other European capitals when it comes to the number of hours of sunshine per day averaged over a year.

Snow lies permanently in central Helsinki for an average of 95 days a year. The average date for the first snowfall is 14 November and for a lasting snow cover 21 De-

◀◀ Previous page: Winter in eastern Helsinki, Uute-la headland.



## General information



	Helsinki	Finland
Animal emblem	Squirrel ( <i>Sciurus vulgaris</i> )	Brown bear ( <i>Ursus arctos</i> )
Floral emblem	Maple ( <i>Acer platanoides</i> )	Lily-of-the-valley ( <i>Convallaria majalis</i> )
National bird	..	Whooper swan ( <i>Cygnus cygnus</i> )
Highest point	62 m (Jakomäki hill)	1 328 m (Mountain Halti)
Longest river	99 km (River Vantaa, partly in Helsinki)	483 km (River Kemijoki)
Number of lakes (larger than 500 m <sup>2</sup> )	..	187 888
Largest lake	..	1 377 km <sup>2</sup> (Lake Saimaa)
Number of islands (over 100 m <sup>2</sup> )	315	179 000
Largest island	390 ha (Island of Santahamina)	685 km <sup>2</sup> (Åland main island)

Source: City of Helsinki Urban Facts, Statistics Finland

cember. The greatest depth of snow ever recorded in central Helsinki was 71 centimetres in 1976.

## Green Helsinki

Although Helsinki is the most densely populated part of Finland, it has many green areas: 6,600 hectares of parks, forests or recreational areas covering over one-third of the city's land territory give Helsinki's residents 118 square metres of green area per capita. In addition, the city owns 6,737 hectares of recreational areas outside Helsinki itself. These areas are there for the benefit of Helsinki citizens for outdoor recreation and exercise. The largest of these out-of-town recreational areas lies in the Nuuskio National Park, which is situated less than 30 km from the city centre.

The green areas in Helsinki are predominantly natural forest area, and thus typically do not resemble European-style parks. The oldest forests in Helsinki, which have not been touched for over half a century, lie in the northern districts.

→ The predominant tree along the Helsinki coast is the pine.

## Length of daylight in Helsinki in 2005

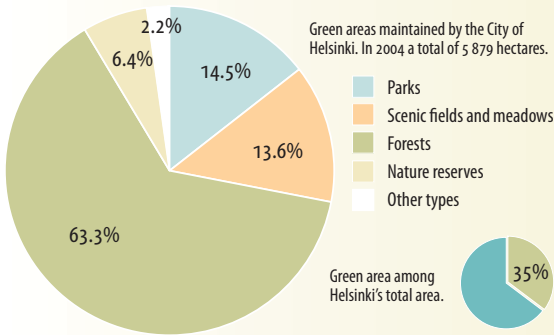
Date	Sunrise at	Sunset at	Length of the day
Vernal equinox 20 March 2005	6.22	18.35	12 h 15 min
Summer solstice 21 June 2005	3.54	22.50	18 h 56 min
Autumn equinox 23 September 2005	7.07	19.17	12 h 10 min
Winter solstice 21 December 2005	9.24	15.13	5 h 49 min

Source: almanakka.helsinki.fi



HELSINGIN KAUPUNGIN RAKENUSVIRASTON KUVA-ARKISTO

### Green areas in Helsinki



Source: City of Helsinki Public Works Department

### Landscape and geology

The topography of the Helsinki Region represents typical Finnish southern coast: small barren hills of rounded rocks alternate with clay-bottomed valleys. The coastline is very indented, with a mosaic of head-

lands, coves and islands. Many former islands in Helsinki are now integrated into the mainland and bays have been filled in, thus straightening up the shoreline in places. Helsinki's average altitude is 11 metres above sea level, the highest point being 62 metres.

The natural landscape in Helsinki and Finland has been shaped above all by the last Ice Age. The enormous weight of the ice pushed down the earth's crust, which has been gradually rising ever since the ice started to melt over 12,000 years ago. Even today, the land is still rising in Helsinki, by 2.5 millimetres a year. Following the Ice Age, the Helsinki Region was submerged deep under water, and gravel and boulder belts of the ancient shoreline can be seen in many places tens of metres above the present sea level. The area features many

❖ *Glacial erratic boulders, reminders of the Ice Age, can be found in many places in Helsinki.*



HELSINGIN KAUPUNGIN YMPÄRISTÖKESKUKSEN KUVA-ARKISTO / ANTTI SALLA



➤ *Nuukio National Park is popular with hikers from Helsinki.*

examples of glacial erratics. Some of these boulders originate from southeast Finland or Russia. They were transported long ago by the ice, before being deposited at their present locations.

The bedrock of Finland is one of the most ancient in the world. Rock types in the Helsinki Region are gneisses, schist rocks and granites that represent the deep roots of a mountain belt that stood here two billion years ago. The soil in Finland formed chiefly during and after the last Ice Age. The main types of soil in Helsinki are till, clay and sand.

## Flora and vegetation

The Helsinki Region lies in the European zone of mixed deciduous/coniferous forest. Thus, we find, for example, oaks among the various native deciduous tree species, but not beeches. Northwards, this mixed forest gradually changes to more coniferous forest. The Helsinki Region has many southern plants not found farther north. Another factor enriching the local flora is its location between the eastern continental vegetation zone and western maritime zone. Bogs are typical for the zone but have for the most part been drained, a few small ones have been preserved as sites of special natural interest.

In all, over a thousand species of wild plants grow in the Helsinki area, which is a surprising number this far north. The proportion of indigenous species among the plants in an area is a good indicator of the natural state of a habitat, because alien species usually need man-made environments such as fields, gardens, yards or parks to survive. In Helsinki, the proportion of native plants is still relatively large, around 40 per cent. On the outer islets, it varies between 80 and 100 per cent.



LIUKUNTAIVIRASTON ARKISTO

## Nuukio National Park

Less than 30 kilometres from central Helsinki lies Nuukio National Park, an almost untouched nature reserve of 39 square kilometres. The area is from time to time extended as part of the Natura Programme. The City of Helsinki owns extensive areas in Nuukio.

Nuukio National Park lies on a lake upland. Its biodiversity is based on the combination of a southern location in Finland and a varied topographic profile. Granite cliffs and hills rounded by the ice ages alternate with ravines and valleys, which conceal verdant groves. There are 43 small lakes and ponds in the area.

The national park is home to 70 endangered or specially monitored species of animal, plant and fungus. It is most famous for its flying squirrels (*Pteromys volans*), which make up one of the largest populations in Finland. This species is under special protection in Finland and the EU.

The 30 kilometres of signposted trails offers attractive hikes through the woodlands of Nuukio, but walking across country with a map and compass is allowed, too. There is a national bicycle route running right through the park, and cross-country and alpine skiing, horse-riding, angling and mushroom and berry picking are popular pursuits. Several nature events for youngsters are arranged annually. Camping facilities including chalets and saunas enable overnight stays, and guided tours are arranged for tourists.

More information about hiking and Finnish national parks:

[www.outdoors.fi](http://www.outdoors.fi)

Web pages of Nuukio:

[www.outdoors.fi/page.asp?Section=5131](http://www.outdoors.fi/page.asp?Section=5131)

Service number to Nuukio: +358 (0)9 0205 64 4790



HELSINGIN KAUPUNGIN KUVA-PANKKI / MIKA ROKKA

### Most common native trees in Helsinki

- ◆ Norway spruce (*Picea abies*)
- ◆ Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*)
- ◆ Silver birch (*Betula pendula*)
- ◆ Downy birch (*Betula pubescens*)
- ◆ European aspen (*Populus tremula*)
- ◆ Grey alder (*Alnus incana*)
- ◆ Black alder / Common alder (*Alnus glutinosa*)
- ◆ Rowan / Mountain ash (*Sorbus aucuparia*)
- ◆ Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*)
- ◆ Goat willow / Great willow (*Salix caprea*)
- ◆ Bird cherry (*Prunus padus*)

### Wild animals

With its large forest-dominated green areas, Helsinki is home to many wild animals. 46 species of mammals have been observed in the city, but the majority are passers-through. Large predators such as the wolf (*Canis lupus*) and lynx (*Lynx lynx*) have paid visits to the capital, and brown bears (*Ursus arctos*) live permanently not far out of town. However, the chance of spotting any of these animals is remote. On the other hand, smaller predators residing in the city, such as the fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), badger (*Meles meles*), ermine (*Mustela erminea*), weasel (*Mustela nivalis*), and the alien species mink (*Mustela vison*) and

◆ Squirrel is the Helsinki City's animal emblem.

raccoon dog (*Nystereutes procyonoides*), are regularly seen. Occasionally pine martens (*Martes martes*), those dwellers of the coniferous forests, can be spotted, too. The European elk (*Alces alces*) and other members of the deer family, are quite often seen in Helsinki's forests. These animals sometimes cause problems for road traffic by venturing out onto the roads. Roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) hide more discreetly in the woods. Brown hares (*Lepus europaeus*) are seen in almost every park, as are foxes, squirrels (*Sciurus vulgaris*) and hedgehogs (*Erinaceus europaeus*).

A recent bat survey commissioned by the City of Helsinki found nine of Finland's eleven species of bats in the city. Even the whiskered bats (*Myotis mystacinus/brandtii*), which prefer old forests, thrive in Helsinki. The northern bat (*Eptesicus nilssonii*), Finland's most common bat species, can be observed, for example, catching insects around street lamps in inner Helsinki.

Helsinki is home to a variety of 120 nesting bird species: sea birds, wetland birds, forest birds, field birds, and even typical wilderness species. Only species that require marshes, lakes or large woodlands for their habitats are absent. The black woodpecker (*Dryocopus martius*) may be spotted splitting old wood even quite near the



## Vanhakaupunki Bird Wetland – a Natura 2000 area

Vanhakaupunki bay lies in the geographical centre of Helsinki. Where River Vantaa empties into the bay, the town of Helsinki was founded in 1550, and there are still some fields that have been cultivated since the 16th century. North of the bay, where the University of Helsinki has its research farm, there is a stretch of countryside with cows grazing the waterfront meadows. The area also includes an arboretum.

The area around the Vanhakaupunki rapids is a beautiful historical milieu. No traces of the old town can be seen any more, but the rapids are flanked by striking old industrial mills. For over one hundred years, the bay has been a popular spot with bird watchers: excursions were already being arranged in the early 19th century. Today, the area with its lookout towers and network of paths is a favourite among local bird watchers.

The Vanhakaupunki nature sanctuary is an EU Natura 2000 zone. This 316 hectare area alongside a shallow coastal bay surrounding the estuary of the River Vantaa, comprises extensive reed beds, shore meadows, forests and open water. Within the Natura 2000 zone is Helsinki City's largest protected area, the 258.2 hectare Viikki–Vanhakaupunki Bird Wetland. 288 bird species have been spotted in the reserve.

Birds nesting in the Vanhakaupunginlahti reserve include the citrine wagtail (*Motacilla citreola*), bearded tit (*Panurus biarmicus*), water rail (*Rallus aquaticus*), lesser spotted woodpecker (*Dendrocopos minor*), great reed warbler (*Acrocephalus arundinaceus*) and bittern (*Botarus stellaris*). Besides being a

➡ A favourite spot with birdwatchers and hikers: the wetlands of Viikki.

⬆ The bearded tit.

nesting area, Vanhakaupunki is also an important stopover site for migrating birds. On a good day in May, an experienced bird-watcher may spot up to a hundred species.

The rapids are a favourite spot for fishing. The bay is the habitat of both sea and freshwater species. The River Vantaa is an important spawning area for many species of fish, and many migrating species swim up the river to their spawning grounds in the autumn. For decades, fish could not pass the rapids because of the dam, but in the 1990s, the rapids were altered to allow the passage of fish. Trout and salmon are among the species spawning in the River Vantaa.

For further information in English:

[www.gardenia-helsinki.fi/viikkinature](http://www.gardenia-helsinki.fi/viikkinature)







ARTO NIIFONEN

city centre. Last winter, several three-toed woodpeckers (*Picoides tridactylus*) were reported, and two white-backed woodpeckers (*Dendrocopos leucotos*) – Finland’s most endangered forest bird species. Even the eagle owl (*Bubo bubo*) and the long-eared owl (*Asio otus*) may be heard hooting in the city. Roofs in inner Helsinki provide homes for nesting herring gulls (*Larus argentatus*), lesser black-backed gulls (*Larus fuscus*) and common gulls (*Larus canus*). Among newcomers are the conspicuous barnacle geese (*Branta leucopsis*). These geese, which mainly nest in the Arctic tundra, can now be seen by the hundreds in the autumn grazing park lawns in Helsinki.

#### Ten birds most commonly nesting in Helsinki

- ◆ White Wagtail (*Motacilla alba*)
- ◆ Mew Gull (*Larus canus*)
- ◆ Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*)
- ◆ Northern Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*)
- ◆ Hooded Crow (*Corvus corone*)
- ◆ Great Tit (*Parus major*)
- ◆ Blackbird (*Turdus merula*)
- ◆ Willow Warbler (*Phylloscopus trochilus*)
- ◆ Blue Tit (*Parus caeruleus*)
- ◆ Fieldfare (*Turdus pilaris*)

Source: Helsingin lintuatlas (An Atlas of birds in Helsinki). Helsinki City Environment Centre publication 1/1998.

## Nature protection

Helsinki has 40 nature reserves covering a total of over 400 hectares. Most of them are quite small, less than one hectare. The aim of the reserves is to safeguard biodiversity and the natural heritage. They are also important for research and education, and for visitors.

The nature reserves comprise a good cross section of environments native to Helsinki: forests, swamps, wetlands, eskers, islands and islets. Whereas most reserves out in the islands are protected owing to their birdlife, other reserves focus on vegetation or geological features. Many reserves have scenic values, too, and some even cultural and historical values.

Some of Helsinki’s nature reserves are important nationally, for example three of its reserves are listed on the EU’s Natura 2000 Network of Protected Areas. Helsinki also has some protected small-scale natural habitat types such as coastal meadows, beaches and hazel bush groves. Many of these have remained almost in a pristine state on islands owned by the Finnish Defence Forces, where the public has not had access.

A few habitats of plants enjoying protection have been preserved in Helsinki, such as the sites where the handsome-flowered restharrow (*Ononis arvensis*) grows.

◀ Whooper swans in Kallahti bay in eastern Helsinki.

There are only nine such habitats in Finland. Also, 31 natural monuments are protected, mostly trees but a few geological sites, too. The most interesting ones are probably the potholes in the Pihlajamäki district. The larger pothole has a diameter of seven metres and a depth of eight metres. They were ground into the bedrock by rocks stirred by the melting waters of the inland ice. Dating back over 50,000 years, they are the oldest known of their kind in Finland.

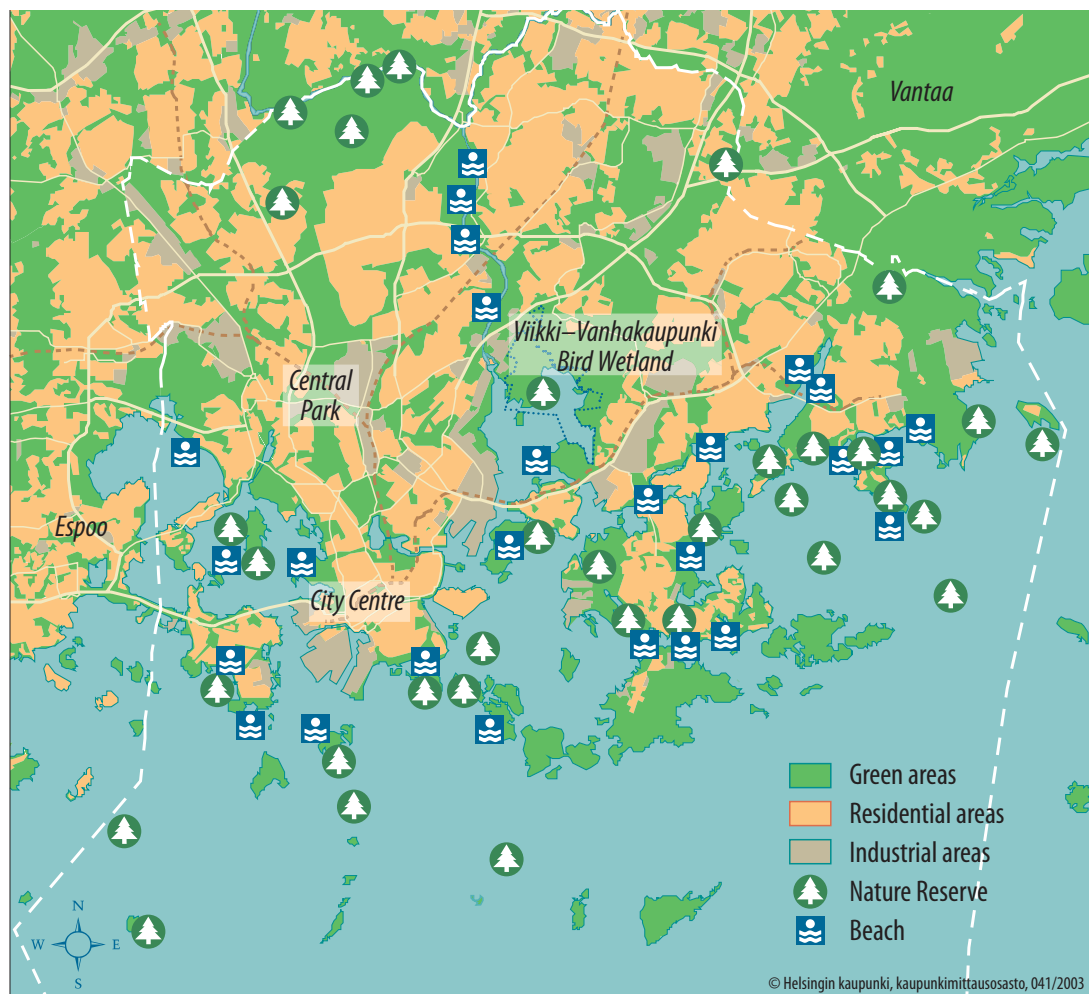
### Nature reserves in Helsinki

Conservation targets	Number	Area hectare
Birds	19	310
Woods	8	71
Bog	4	13
Endangered plant species	4	1
Meadow	2	8
Eskers	2	4
Lagune	1	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>421</b>
From which		
in mainland	15	382
in archipelago	25	39

Protected land area 1.5 %

Source: City of Helsinki Environment Centre

### Green and nature reserve areas and beaches



## The air is clean

By international comparison, the air is very clean in Helsinki. The last few decades have seen strategic actions by the municipality to improve air quality in the city. Combined heat and power (CHP) production means efficient energy production. Over 90 per cent of buildings are linked to the district heating system. Additionally, desulphurization units in power stations and

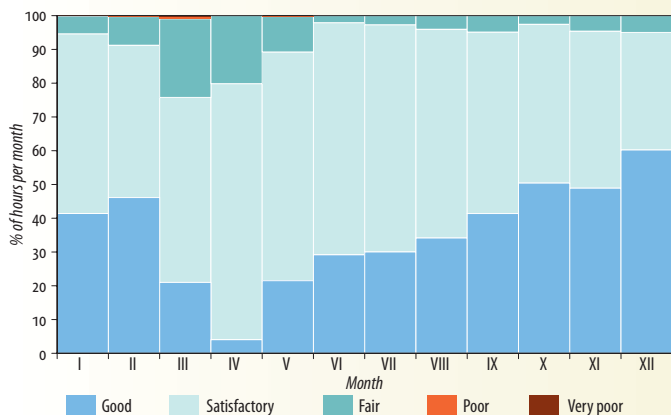
the increasing use of natural gas and low-sulphur oil and coal mean that the concentration of sulphur dioxide is very low in the air we breathe in Helsinki.

Comprehensive public transport reduces air quality problems particularly in inner Helsinki. Improved combustion technologies and fuels have already resulted in a steady decrease in carbon monoxide in the air over the last fifteen years. Thanks to the use of unleaded petrol, lead emissions have also been reduced to a fraction of earlier readings. The concentration of these substances in the air in Helsinki is clearly below the maximum recommendations issued by WHO.

However, some problems remain. Nitrogen oxide emissions from transport are one, and suspended particles in the air another, especially in spring. To reduce the effects of ice on the roads during the winter, the streets and roads are gritted or salted. Moreover, vehicles must be fitted with winter tyres, most of which are studded. In the springtime, after the snow has melted, dust particles from the road surface are often stirred up into the air. This problem is tackled by sweeping the streets as early as possible using modern street cleansing equipment.

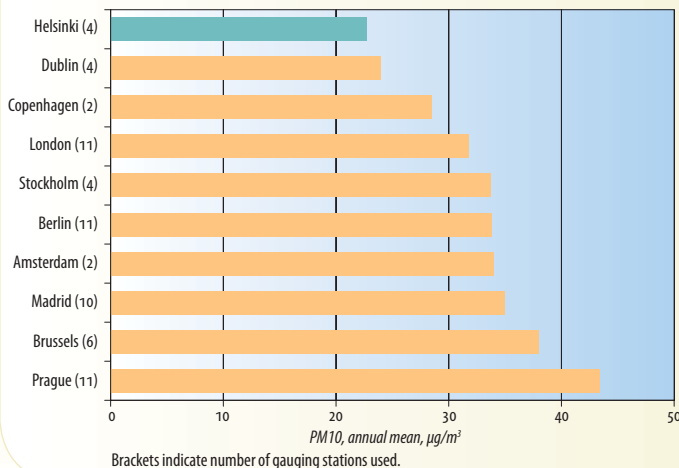
Air quality in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area is indicated by means of an air quality index based on international and national recommendations. Over 90 per cent of the time, air quality in central Helsinki is good or satisfactory. Less than 0.2 per cent of the time, the air quality is poor or very poor – primarily in springtime, when there is dust in the air.

### Monthly variation in air quality in a busy street in central Helsinki in 2004



Source: Helsinki Metropolitan Area Council YTV

### Concentration of particles (PM10) in the air in selected European capitals in 2003 (annual means)



Source: Helsinki Metropolitan Area Council YTV; EEA, AirBase database

## Helsinki citizens value urban nature

In the year 2000, a poll was carried out on environmental attitudes among Helsinki citizens. It revealed that 92 per cent of respondents felt urban nature is important





to them. Even small elements of nature may have great significance for their quality of city life, and green areas are associated with many pleasant things: they make areas more attractive, improve air quality and reduce noise and pollution. Urban nature appears to have psychological dimensions, too, since citizens reported that green areas invigorated them and offered them aesthetical experiences. Many underlined the importance of a moment of tranquillity in the bustle of the city. Moreover nature is often linked with exercise as well. Closeness to nature and good opportunities for exercise considerably improve an area's appeal and its inhabitants' feeling of well-being.

Environmental issues have come to play an essential role in the attitudes and values of Helsinki citizens, and environmental protection is today a social value as well. According to the poll on environmental attitudes, three-quarters of the people in Helsinki thought environmental protection was a matter of major concern, alongside the bringing down of unemployment. All social classes agreed on this point, with young people, in particular, underlining the importance of environmental issues.

◆ *Restharrow Ononis Arvensis has only nine habitats in Finland, one of them is in Harakka island, near the Helsinki City centre.*

During the 1990s, many practical steps, such as waste recycling, had become a part of everyday life for city residents. Today, 86 per cent of households in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area recycle paper. ■

#### Further information sources on the internet

- ★ City of Helsinki Environment Centre: [www.hel.fi/ymk](http://www.hel.fi/ymk)
- ★ Information about Helsinki's parks and green areas at the websites of the Public Works Department: [www.hkr.hel.fi/english/greenareas](http://www.hkr.hel.fi/english/greenareas)
- ★ Finland's environmental administration provides information about nature and environment: [www.ymparisto.fi](http://www.ymparisto.fi)
- ★ Finnish Meteorological Institute weather services: [www.fmi.fi/en](http://www.fmi.fi/en)
- ★ Helsinki Metropolitan Area Council, YTV, monitors air quality in Helsinki. It has a real time monitoring service at [www.ytv.fi/english/air](http://www.ytv.fi/english/air)
- ★ Helsinki was the first European capital to complete a comprehensive plan for sustainable development. This programme, approved in summer 2002, sets the targets and actions for ecological, social and economic sustainability until 2010. Local Agenda 21 in Helsinki: [www.hel.fi/ymk/agenda](http://www.hel.fi/ymk/agenda)

The Helsinki archipelago is full of life

City residents in the islands

Recreation in the islands and seaside

Fish and fishing

Beach life

The state of the Baltic Sea is important to Helsinki citizens

# Maritime Helsinki

HELSINGIN KAUPUNGIN KUVAARKKI / PHILIP DEAN



## The Helsinki archipelago is full of life

The area of Helsinki incorporates 500 square kilometres of sea, with over 300 islands. While only 50 of these islands are over three hectares, more than half are small islets of less than half a hectare.

Over time, the islands have been sculpted by the forces of nature. More recently, a few have even been shaped by man. Some 20 kilometres offshore towards the open sea, the vista of larger islands and narrow sounds and bays fringed with varied vegetation gradually changes to open seascapes dotted with small barren islets. Although these outer islets have few or no trees, the rocky clefts and hollows, fertilised by sea bird droppings, may display surprising floral splendour.

Most of the islands support stands of forest. Pine trees growing on rocks or sands are common, but groves of deciduous trees are seen, too. The islands off the southern coast of Finland display a great variety of species, and almost 700 species of vascular plants have been found growing in the archipelago zones. Earlier, some islands were used as pasture, which has led to distinctive localities of vegetation between the rounded cliffs and rocks. Some islands have been or are still military areas, which has allowed them to remain relatively untouched by people.

Birdlife is abundant in the archipelago. Species nesting on the outer islets include eider (*Somateria mollissima*), wigeon (*Anas penelope*), mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*), goosander (*Mergus merganser*), tufted duck (*Aythya fuligula*), the common tern (*Sterna hirundo*) and various members of the seagull family. Wagtails (*Motacilla alba*), wheatears (*Oenanthe oenanthe*) and oystercatchers (*Haematopus ostralegus*) are

◀ *Elisaari island in the archipelago west of Helsinki is a public recreational area owned by the City of Helsinki.*

common on rocky islets. The lesser black-backed gull (*Larus fuscus*), which used to be the predominant seagull in offshore Helsinki, has gradually been outnumbered by the herring gull (*Larus argentatus*).

In spring and autumn, Helsinki is also visited or flown over by large flocks of migrating birds. The reefs and shoals of the archipelago provide good resting places. During the last few years, seals have increased in numbers in the Baltic Sea, and if you are lucky, you may spot the head of a grey seal (*Halichoerus grypus*) in the water just next to the city centre.

## City residents in the islands

For centuries, people in Helsinki have turned to the sea for their livelihood – and for recreation. In the 19th century, shipyards and wharfs were established on some islands, and on others summer villas. In the late 19th century, many islands were turned into public recreational areas where anyone could go to relax, practise sports or even go Saturday night dancing. Some of these “people’s parks” also had an edu-

◀ *Brooding oystercatcher in Harakka Island.*



HELSINGIN KAUPUNGIN YMPÄRISTÖKESKUKSEN KUVA-ARKISTO / ARTTO NIIPONEN





HELSINGIN KAUPUNGIN KUVA-PANKKI / SCANFOTO

## Pihlajasaari Island

### Some islands off Helsinki City centre



Only ten minutes by waterbus from central Helsinki, the twin islands of Pihlajasaari are the most popular summer islands in the city. The long beach on the north side of the western island attracts many swimmers and sunbathers, while on the smaller island there is a nudist beach. Pihlajasaari has a restaurant, a kiosk, rental saunas and boat moorings.

A short bridge connects the two islands, which together measure 23 hectares. The topography of the islands is varied: in many places smooth, rounded rocks and small bays provide secluded spots. The rounded rocks on the south side are home to many nesting bird species. The vegetation consists mostly of pine forest.

Waterbuses to Pihlajasaari leave every hour from Merisatama just west of Kaivopuisto park and from Ruoholahti. Return ticket, adults €4.50. Islandkeeper: tel: +358 (0)9 630 065

cational mission, and today, the Seurasaari Outdoor Museum and the Korkeasaari Zoo carry on this tradition.

Nowadays, the seaside and the archipelago are an important part of Helsinki's identity. The islands and the meandering coastline with bays and headlands provide excellent opportunities for outdoor recreation all year round. A guiding principle in Helsinki has been to keep shores and waterfront public, and little land has been earmarked for private use. In fact, in recent years, industry and harbours have begun moving out, leaving increasing extents of sea-front for housing and recreational purposes.

The City of Helsinki owns over half of the number of islands, and a majority of these islands are for public recreation. Approximately one-tenth of island areas is taken up by privately owned summer cottages. The state owns the greatest proportion of land area in the archipelago, about half of the island's land area is used by the military, and thus access is restricted.

❖ *Skaters and other fresh-air fiends enjoying a winter's day and the clear ice on the frozen sea.*

## Recreation in the islands and seaside

Fishing and swimming are popular in Helsinki. Various kinds of fish can be caught – and eaten. Boating is also very popular in summer. The city has around 11,000 mooring places, one-third of which are rented to the public by the Helsinki City Sports Department, the remainder being leased to yacht and boat clubs. The majority of visitor marinas are administered by yacht clubs.

In winter, when the sea freezes over and the ice is thick enough, the people of Helsinki take to walking, skating and skiing, for instance between the islands. Many enjoy ice fishing through a hole drilled in the ice, and recently ice yachting has become popular. However, great care should always be taken when walking on the sea ice, because currents weaken it and ships break it. Anyone going out on the ice should follow existing paths or ski trails in the snow.

The valley of the River Vantaa is another popular zone for outdoor recreation. Several paths and trails follow its course as it flows through the city's green areas, which



HELSINGIN KAUPUNGIN KOVAPANKKI / MATTI TIRRI

in parts are protected nature areas. In winter, ski trails run along its banks and, conditions permitting, on the ice, too.

## Fish and fishing

In hardly any other European capital is fishing as popular as in Helsinki. Almost one-third of the citizens go fishing at least occasionally, either in Helsinki or elsewhere. It has been estimated that recreational fishermen from Helsinki catch a total of 2.8 million kilogrammes of fish and 266,000 crayfish a year.

Fish caught off Helsinki's waterfront are generally considered healthy and good food. The quantity of fish caught by hook and line almost equals that caught by nets, a clear indication of how many recreational fishermen there are. In fact, Helsinki and the waters of nearby municipalities are among Finland's most important angling areas.

In 2004, over 10,000 fishing permits were sold in Helsinki. The number of recreational fishermen is, however, much larger, because no permit is required for angling or ice fishing (i.e. fishing through the ice). Lure fishing is also free for anyone under 18 or over 65. There are estimated to be 50,000 recreational fisher-

men in the Helsinki sea area, who catch a total of over 600,000 kilogrammes of fish a year.

The sea areas in Helsinki are home to around 60 species of fish, including some introduced species, such as rainbow trout (*Salmo gairdneri*), lake trout (*Salmo trutta lacustris*) and asp (*Aspius aspius*). The most important game fish is perch (*Perca fluviatilis*), followed by roach (*Rutilus rutilus*), zander (i.e. pike-perch, *Stizostedion lucioperca*), brown trout (*Salmo trutta*) and pike (*Esox lucius*).

The Vanhakaupunki rapids at the mouth of the River Vantaa are a particularly popular spot for fishing. A special permit is required for the rapids, which are the place for which most permits are sold in Helsinki. The rapids used to be harnessed by a power station, but since restoration in the 1990s, trout and salmon have started swimming upstream again.

Although the River Vantaa, which runs through extensive farming areas upstream, appears muddy in Helsinki, it is actually relatively clean – 34 species of fish live in its waters. Annual fish catches from the river

◆ Recreational fishing is popular in Helsinki but there are only a few professional fishermen in the city.



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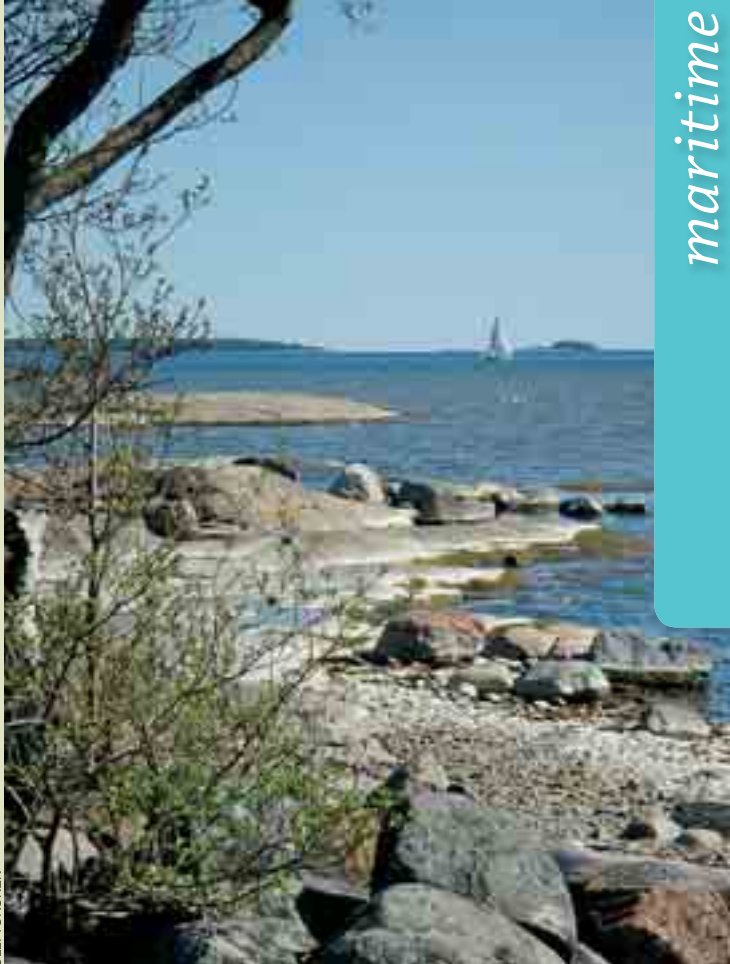


## Harakka Island

Harakka is a very special little island: it represents an outer archipelago environment even though it is situated just a stone's throw off the waterfront of the city centre. It is just nine hectares of rock and sparse vegetation, but has a varied wildlife. The island used to be a garrison area closed to the public, and that is why its distinctive environment is well preserved. Today, the island is a recreational area of the City of Helsinki.

The flora of Harakka Island is a blend of wild species from the outer archipelago and plants escaped from gardens. For its size, Harakka has the most varied flora of all Helsinki, with over 300 different vascular plants, including one species of restharrow (*Ononis arvensis*), which is only known to grow in nine places in Finland.

Birdlife on Harakka is varied, and is easily observed because many of the birds are used to human presence. The island is an excellent example of nature conservation close by an urban zone. In spite of large numbers of visitors, plants and birdlife thrive as long as visitors are properly guided. Nesting birds include the common gull (*Larus canus*), oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*), barnacle goose (*Branta leucopsis*), lesser black-backed gull (*Larus fuscus*), eider (*Somateria mollissima*), redshank (*Tringa totanus*), goosander and red-breasted merganser (*Mergus merganser/serrator*), and arctic and common tern (*Sterna paradisae/hirundo*).



OULLI TURUNEN

Harakka's Nature Centre provides not only information but also various activities for children and adults. It arranges guided tours, exhibitions, outings, courses and free outdoor schooldays for school children and kindergartens. The island also has an Artists House and an artists' society, the Harakka Association. Almost thirty artists have their ateliers on the island.

Public access to Harakka is by waterbus, from the Kaivopuisto jetty near Café Ursula, from mid April to late September. Use the semaphore to call the vessel. Fare €3 for a return ticket. For boat timetables in English, see [www.merenkavijat.fi/yhteysvene.htm](http://www.merenkavijat.fi/yhteysvene.htm). In winter, the island can usually be accessed across the ice.

Nature Centre open: 4 May to 30 September, Tue–Fri 10–17, Sat–Sun 12–16.

Information in English: [www.harakka.fi](http://www.harakka.fi)

Helsinki City Environmental Centre's pages on Harakka in English: [www.hel.fi/ymk/sve/organisation/Harakka\\_eng.html](http://www.hel.fi/ymk/sve/organisation/Harakka_eng.html)

📍 Nature Center in Harakka Island arranges adventure outings for children.



MARGIT JENSEN



## Seurasaari Island

Seurasaari is a beautiful green island of tranquillity just a few kilometres from the city centre. Its 46 hectares of pine forest, rocky slopes, groves and richly vegetated hollows has a large variety of wildlife. Many of the animals are used to visitors, but the small islets off the south tip are a protected area, and off limits to the public during the bird nesting time. However, it is possible to watch the birds from shore close by. As the evening darkens, numerous bats take to the skies to delight wildlife watchers. The island has also one of Helsinki's protected potholes, the "giant's cauldrons".

The island also features an Open-Air Museum, founded in 1909, which displays traditional Finnish wooden houses and old ways of living. All the different provinces of Finland are represented in the well-preserved old buildings, which give an overall view of Finnish country life from the late 17th up until the 20th century. At present, the Seurasaari Open-Air Museum includes 86 separate buildings.

Most visitors walk around on their own, though there are guided tours, too. The outdoor museum is open all year round; however guided tours are available only in summer. Seurasaari is the most popular of Helsinki's recreational islands, with tens of thousands of visitors every year. The island has two beaches, one of which is a public beach and the other a naturist beach.

For further information in English and in Swedish:  
[www.seurasaari.fi](http://www.seurasaari.fi)



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are as high as 100,000 kilogrammes, with perch, rainbow trout, roach and pike topping the list.

### Ten most commonly caught fish in Helsinki sea area

- ◆ Perch (*Perca fluviatilis*)
- ◆ Roach (*Rutilus rutilus*)
- ◆ Zander/Pike-perch (*Stizostedion lucioperca*)
- ◆ Trout (*Salmo trutta*)
- ◆ Pike (*Esox lucius*)
- ◆ Salmon (*Salmo salar*)
- ◆ Rainbow trout (*Salmo gairdneri*)
- ◆ Powan (*Coregonus lavaretus*)
- ◆ Burbot (*Lota lota*)
- ◆ Bream (*Abramis brama*)

### Beach life

In summer, the northern sea warms up, and the smooth, flat rocks and numerous little beaches provide good opportunities for sunbathing and swimming. The City of Helsinki not only maintains its 26 public beaches, keeping them tidy, but also continuously monitors water quality. Many of the beaches have a life-guard. Besides these public beaches, the hundred kilometres of coastline and the archipelago offer numerous alternative swimming opportunities. The River Vanntaa also has some nice swimming places, too. The most popular mainland beach is Hietaniemi, in the Töölö district, and those most frequented in the archipelago are on the islands of Pihlajasaari and Uunisaari. A pleasant alternative in central Helsinki is the famous Uimastadion outdoor swimming pool.

Swimming is a popular pastime in Helsinki, and even the ice in winter does not deter the most enthusiastic swimmers from having a dip. Ice swimming has many devotees who regularly go to special winter swimming places where the water is kept free of ice. There are 13 such spots in





Helsinki. The popularity of ice swimming has grown tremendously these last few years. The first Winter Swimming World Championships were held in Helsinki in 2000.

Water quality at beaches in Helsinki is good. With modern wastewater purification, the average microbiological quality has been maintained at good levels at all beaches in the city ever since 1995.

## The state of the Baltic Sea is important to Helsinki citizens

The residents of Helsinki are concerned about the state of the Baltic Sea, and there is widespread opinion in favour of protecting the quality of the water. Over a hundred million people live in the area around the Baltic Sea, which is under very heavy pressure from municipalities, agriculture and industry. Unfortunately, the exchange of water with the Atlantic through the Danish Sounds is by no means sufficient to reduce the effects of eutrophication.

The quality of the sea water around Helsinki started to improve in the 1970s thanks to reduced local loading resulting from improved sewage treatment. Today, 95 per cent of phosphorus and 80 per cent of nitrogen in wastewaters are removed, and the waters in Helsinki only receive occasional loads. Nonetheless, the bays are

### ◆ Beach in Uunisaari Island.

still overfed with nutrients, because sediments slowly release stored substances. In July and August, blue-green algae may bloom strongly in the Gulf of Finland, if the summer is very warm. ■

### Further information sources on the internet

*In English and Swedish if not otherwise stated*

- ★ The Katajanokka visitors marina, in the heart of Helsinki, has 120 moorings administered by the City of Helsinki. For further information in English, Swedish and German: [www.isomursu.fi](http://www.isomursu.fi)
- ★ Helsinki City Environmental Centre monitors water quality at the city's public beaches. Current conditions can be viewed at the centre's website: [www.hel.fi/ymk/eng/customer\\_service/beaches.html](http://www.hel.fi/ymk/eng/customer_service/beaches.html)
- ★ Finnish Maritime Administration: [www.fma.fi/e](http://www.fma.fi/e)
- ★ Finnish Yachting Association: [www.purjehtija.fi](http://www.purjehtija.fi)
- ★ Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, information about fisheries: [www.mmm.fi/english/fisheries](http://www.mmm.fi/english/fisheries)
- ★ Finnish Game and Fisheries Research Institute: [www.rktl.fi/english/fish](http://www.rktl.fi/english/fish)
- ★ Finnish Tourist Board, information about fishing: [www.visitfinland.com/fishing](http://www.visitfinland.com/fishing)
- ★ Internet Portal for some fishing tourism services: [www.fishinginfinland.com](http://www.fishinginfinland.com)
- ★ Baltic Sea Portal of the Finnish Institute of Marine Research in English, Swedish and Estonian: [www.fimr.fi/en/itamerkanta.html](http://www.fimr.fi/en/itamerkanta.html)
- ★ Finnish Institute of Marine Research: [www.fimr.fi/en.html](http://www.fimr.fi/en.html)



# Leisure and hobbies

People in Helsinki read and exercise a lot

Nature interests Helsinki residents

Exercise and sport hobbies are popular

Ice hockey draws largest audiences

## People in Helsinki read and exercise a lot

A leisure time survey carried out in 1999–2000 shows that Finns spend on average a quarter of their day (6 h 29 min) on leisure activities. One-third of that time was spent watching television (2 h 16 min), the following two favourite pastimes being social life with friends (49 min) and reading (46 min).

Internationally, Finns stand out as readers and exercisers: 76 per cent exercise weekly. Moreover, they spend more time reading than any other nation in Europe. Libraries are popular: in Helsinki citizens borrow on average 17.8 books annually from the 37 municipal libraries (year 2003). In the Helsinki Metropolitan Area, 79% of residents had read at least one book during the previous six months, while 68% had visited a public library. Interestingly as many as nearly one-fifth had written poetry, short stories or novels themselves!

◆ A special library for detective novels opened in Helsinki in 2005.

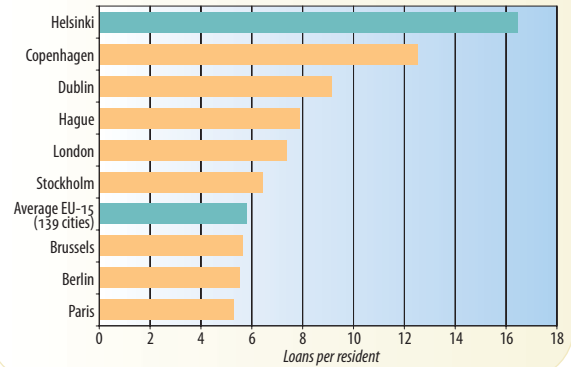


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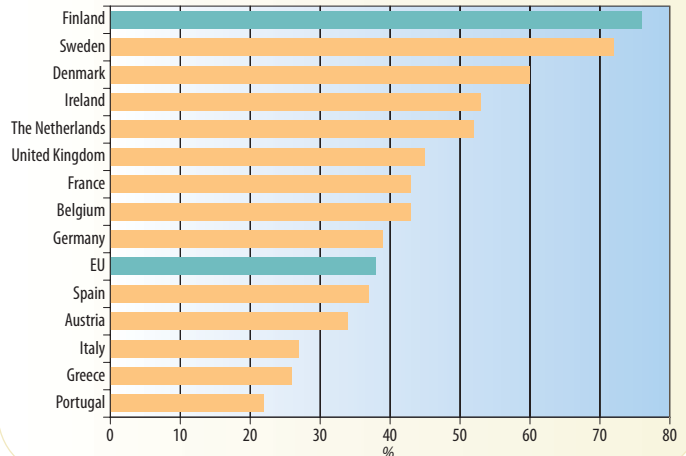
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### Library loans per resident in selected European (EU-15) capitals



Source: Urban Audit, 2001, [www.urbanaudit.org](http://www.urbanaudit.org)

### Proportion of inhabitants who exercise or do sport at least once a week



Source: Eurobarometer 213: Citizens of the European Union and sport, European Commission, November 2004



### Leisure time activities in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area

%	Activity/pursuit
91	take exercise at least once a week in summer
87	take exercise at least once a week in winter
76	read a newspaper daily
71	listen to music daily
69	watch TV daily
66	are engaged in handicraft
46	listen to music at concerts
35	are engaged or have been engaged in recreational dance
34	are engaged in photography
23	are or have been a member in a drama club or in an amateur theatre
19	are engaged in visual arts
17	are engaged in drawing and painting

Persons aged over 15 years

Source: Cultural Statistics 2003 (2005), Culture and the Media 2004:1, Statistics Finland; Leisure Survey 2002 (2005), Statistics Finland, [www.tilastokeskus.fi/til/vpa/index.html](http://www.tilastokeskus.fi/til/vpa/index.html)



MIKA LAUNIS

### Visits to cultural events during the previous 12 months in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area 2002

%	Activity/pursuit
66	had been to the cinema
56	had visited an art exhibition or an art museum
52	had visited historical monuments in Finland
51	had gone to a concert
46	had gone to the theatre
31	had visited a cultural history museum or local museum
18	had seen a classical ballet performance
16	had gone an opera
10	had gone to a folk dance performance

Persons aged over 15 years

Source: Cultural Statistics 2003 (2005), Culture and the Media 2004:1, Statistics Finland; Leisure Survey 2002 (2005), Statistics Finland, [www.tilastokeskus.fi/til/vpa/index.html](http://www.tilastokeskus.fi/til/vpa/index.html)

### Nature interests Helsinki residents

#### Allotment gardens and plots

	Number	Hectare
Total		231
Allotment gardens	1 916	98
Plots (number of grovers, approx.)	5 000	52
Cabins	1 438	81

The city's allotment gardens are very popular and many people even spend their summers there – some plots have a small cottage. There are almost 7,000 allotments in Helsinki, with a total area of 150 hectares.

Source: City of Helsinki Public Works Department

◆ Central Park is popular with outdoor enthusiasts all year round.





### Percentage of people in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area who had outdoor pastimes during the previous 12 months

%	Pursuit
53	nature excursion
43	picking berries
39	sailing or boating
36	fishing
30	picking mushrooms
27	hikes in wilderness or elsewhere in nature
19	winter swimming
15	bird or wildlife watching hikes
11	ice fishing
4	hunting

Persons aged over 15 years

Source: Leisure Survey 2002 (2005), Statistics Finland, [www.tilastokeskus.fi/til/vpa/index.html](http://www.tilastokeskus.fi/til/vpa/index.html)



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## Everyman's Rights

The traditional Finnish legal concept of everyman's right allows free right of access to non-inhabited land and waterways, and the right to collect natural products such as wild berries and mushrooms, no matter who owns the land. These rights also generally apply to foreign nationals, with certain exceptions related to local boating, fishing and hunting rights.

Everyman's right means that access to the land and temporary camping is free of charge, and does not require the landowner's permission. People taking advantage of these rights are nevertheless obliged not to cause any damage or disturbance.

Booklet of Every man's right in English, Swedish, German and French: [www.ymparisto.fi/default.asp?contentid=104523&lan=fi&clan=en](http://www.ymparisto.fi/default.asp?contentid=104523&lan=fi&clan=en)

## Berry and mushroom picking

Collecting the fruits of the forests – mushrooms and berries – is a tradition dating very far back and is still a popular outdoor pursuit in Finland. Towards the end of the summer and in the autumn, forests offer a rich harvest. 37 edible species of berries can be picked, but most people prefer the more common berries: mainly blueberries, lingonberries, cloudberry and cranberries. Wild berries are very healthy food, with high contents of vitamins, minerals and flavonoids.

Finnish forests are estimated to yield a total of 500 to 1,000 million kilos of berries every year, i.e. an average of 100–200 kilos per Finn. However, only a fraction of this amount is actually picked, although two Finns in three report they go berry picking each year (in 2002). Depending on the species, between one and ten per cent of berries are picked, allowing the average Finn to consume 8.3 kilos of wild berries annually.

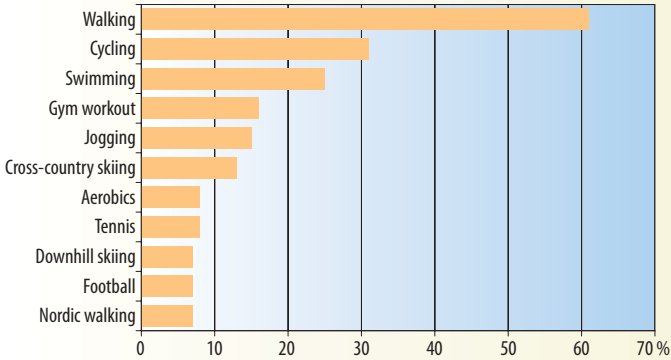
There are hundreds of edible mushroom species in Finland. The estimated annual mushroom harvest of Finnish forests is somewhere around 1,000 million kilos, i.e. around 200 kilos per inhabitant. As with the wild berries, pickers prefer to collect the more common mushroom species. In 2002, 45 per cent of Finns reported they went mushroom picking.

Berry and mushroom picking is not just a way of stocking the larder with a welcome supplement of vitamins for the winter months, it is also an excellent way of getting oneself out-of-doors and exercising – and enjoying the tranquillity of the nature.

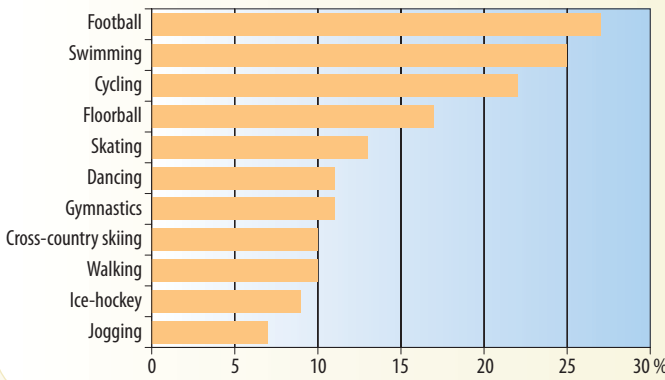
See more at the website of Arctic Flavours Association: [www.arctic-flavours.fi](http://www.arctic-flavours.fi) (English, Swedish, German, French and Russian)

## Percentages of people in Helsinki doing the most popular forms of exercise

### Most popular forms of exercise, over 18 year olds

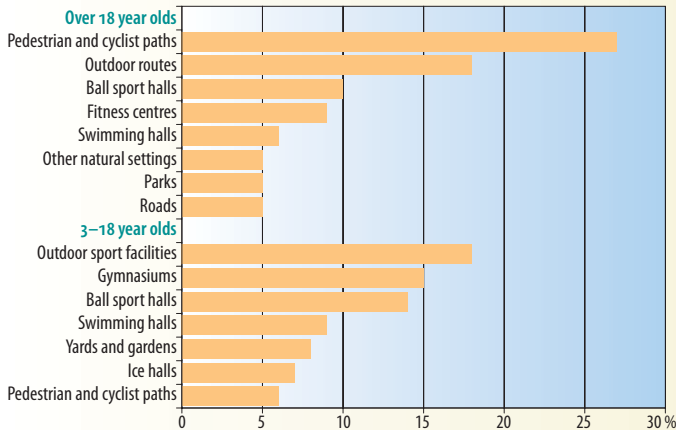


### Most popular forms of exercise, 3–18 year olds



Source: Helsinki Exercise Survey 2001–2002

## Most popular places for exercise among adults and under 18 year olds in Helsinki



Source: Helsinki Exercise Survey 2001–2002

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◆ Helsinki City Marathon is Finland's largest running event.

## Exercise and sport hobbies are popular

On aggregate, Helsinki residents exercise up to 85 million times a year. Over one-third exercise more than five times a week. The popularity of doing sports and exercise as a hobby has steadily grown during the past ten years. If the yardstick by which to measure enough exercise is three brisk walks or similar activity per week, leading to a raised pulse rate and some sweating, it is estimated that 60 per cent of Helsinki residents get enough exercise.

The most popular forms of exercise are walking and cycling. Women do more walking and swimming, whereas team sports are more popular with men. Although no major differences seem to exist between male and female exercise frequency, women tend to exercise more, while men tend to exercise more intensively.

With three-quarters of children and adolescents participating in two or more forms of exercise, they engaged in a larger variety of sports than adults did. Football and swimming were the most popular. Whilst sports and exercise among children is more a social activity, a large proportion of adults exercise on their own. Over half of children exercise in a group, and half do so in a club. Children and adolescents are also the most frequent visitors to various sports facilities.

## Central Park of Helsinki

With its 1,100 hectares, Keskuspuisto – Central Park, begins near the Olympic Stadium in the heart of Helsinki and stretches northwards for 10 kilometres all the way to the city boundary, making it the largest single green area in Helsinki. Central Park offers nature, sports and outdoor recreation.

In southern part of the park stand some of the city's most important sport buildings in the spacious and green Töölönlahti bay area: the Olympic Stadium, the Kisahalli sports hall, the old ice stadium, the swimming stadium and the football stadium. Northwards from there extends the green park with its forested areas.

Central Park has around 100 km of paths and trails, some of which are cleared of deep snow in winter, while others are turned into ski tracks. Besides being a very pleasant area for jogging and biking, Central Park has two sports centres for indoor and outdoor pursuits. The log cabins and cafés of the park are popular with hikers. Paloheinä Ski Centre in the northernmost parts of the park is the most popular cross-country ski venue in Helsinki. Skis and other winter and summer sports equipment can be hired there, and from the Töölönlahti bay rental centre, too.

Central Park is a good example of the rich and varied nature of the Finnish south coast region. The park is largely for-

◆ *The River Vantaa near the Ruutinkoski rapids in the northern part of the Central Park.*

ested (around 700 ha), but also has fields, hills and rivers. Wildlife is rich and varied, with many species of forest birds in particular. In spring, the park displays an abundance of the bright white wood anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*). The forests is predominantly old, with spruce (*Picea*) being the most common tree. Other notable natural features in Central Park are stands of aspen (*Populus tremula*), ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*) and larch (*Larix decidua*). The northern part of the park contains an old forest in which there are four nature reserves with total area of 38.12 hectares.

Mammals living in Central Park include elk (*Alces alces*), badgers (*Meles meles*), foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*), arctic and brown hares (*Lepus timidus/europaeus*), weasels (*Mustela nivalis*), raccoon dogs (*Nystereutes procyonoides*), and muskrats (*Ondatra zibethica*). In the nesting season, the park is filled with birdsong. Bird species nesting in the park include the black woodpecker (*Dryocopus martius*), goldcrest (*Regulus regulus*), Eurasian jay (*Garrulus glandarius*), tits (*Paridae*), dunnock (*Prunella modularis*), garden warbler (*Sylvia borin*), wood warbler (*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*) and red-breasted flycatcher (*Ficedula parva*).

More Information in English and Swedish:

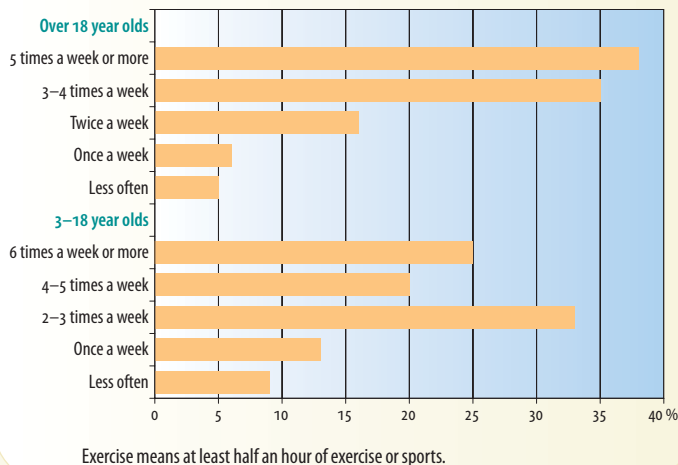
[www.hel.fi/keskuspuisto](http://www.hel.fi/keskuspuisto)

Recreational centre in Töölönlahti, sports equipment rentals:

[www.suomenlatu.fi/toolonlahti/](http://www.suomenlatu.fi/toolonlahti/)



## Exercise frequency among adults and children in Helsinki



Source: Helsinki Exercise Survey 2001–2002



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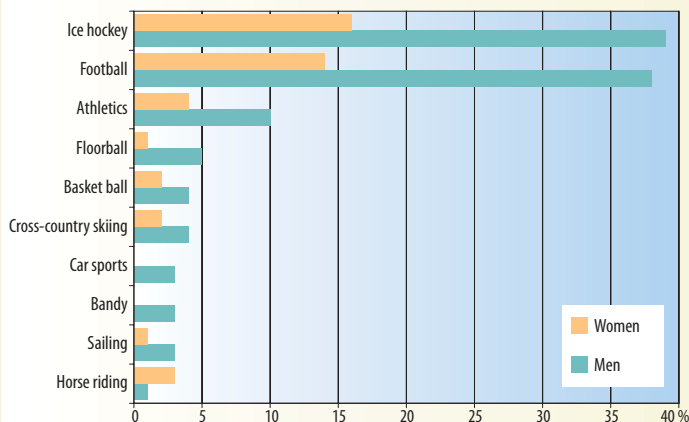


HELSINGIN KAUPUNGIN KUVAPANKKI / PAUL WILLIAMS

## Ice hockey draws largest audiences

Ice hockey draws the largest audiences in Helsinki, football ranking a close second. Watching sports matches is more popular among men than women: 77 per cent of men had been to a game or competition during the previous 12 months, compared with only 41 per cent of women. Almost every other Finn goes to a match or championship at least occasionally. ■

## Proportion of men and women having been to various sports events during the previous 12 months in Helsinki



Of Helsinki citizens in total, 54% had been to at least one kind of sports event in a past year.

Source: Helsinki Exercise Survey 2001–2002

## Further information sources on the internet

- ★ Map of outdoor recreation areas with routes and trails in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area: [kartta.hel.fi/ulkoilukartta](http://kartta.hel.fi/ulkoilukartta)
- ★ Sports equipment rentals available at Töölönlahti Recreational Centre and at Paloheinä Cross-country Skiing Centre: [www.suomenlatu.fi](http://www.suomenlatu.fi)
- ★ The City of Helsinki arranges nature trips on various themes all year round in the city and its surroundings. The most popular destinations are the island of Harakka and the Vanhakaupunki bay area. For further information about nature tours: [www.gardenia-helsinki.fi](http://www.gardenia-helsinki.fi) and the Helsinki City Environmental Centre: [www.hel.fi/ymk](http://www.hel.fi/ymk).

## Sauna

Finnish sauna culture has long traditions. It is estimated Finland has over two million saunas, 1.3 million of which are in dwellings (in 2003). This means every other Finnish home is equipped with a sauna. The sauna plays a central role also in Finnish city life. In Helsinki, 20 per cent of households have a sauna of their own. However, just about every block of flats has a communal sauna for use by the residents of the building. Today, more and more individual flats have their own small electric saunas in the cities, too.

Sauna is an essential part of the Finnish summer, and all summer cottages have their own sauna. Midsummer sauna is particularly significant for Finns. Saunas are usually built right next to the sea or lake, allowing one to take a dip in the fresh cool water. One of the traditions is to pick fresh birch branches, which are then used to beat the body, thus improving blood circulation. Countryside saunas are nearly always heated with wood, whereas most city saunas are electrically heated.

Many Finns spend their summer holidays in their summer cottages. Typically, these cottages are close by one of the 187,999 lakes in Finland or on the seashore. In 2003, Helsinki citizens owned a total of 40,883 summer cottages, in other words 14 per cent of households in the city owned one. In Finland as a whole, there are 466,000 summer cottages, of which over 400 are in Helsinki.

Two famous public swimming pools in Helsinki, both equipped with saunas:

### Yrjönkatu indoor swimming pool

*Yrjönkatu 21, tel. +358 (0)9 310 87401, Closed in August 2005.* Built in 1928, Yrjönkatu indoor swimming pool is the oldest public pool in Finland. The interior is a fine example of classicism, with Roman-style baths. Swimming is allowed with or without a swimming suit. There are separate times for men and women.

Further information in English:

[www.hel.fi/liv/eng/yrjonkatu.html](http://www.hel.fi/liv/eng/yrjonkatu.html)

### Uimastadion (*Swimming Stadium sauna*)

*Hammarskjöldintie 5, tel. +358 (0)9 310 87854, open 9 May–11 Sept, Mon–Fri 6.30–20.00, Sat–Sun 9.00–20.00.*

Built in 1947, the Swimming Stadium, with a swimming pool and sport facilities and a public sauna, is located near the Olympic Stadium in the Töölönlahti bay area.



HELSINGIN SAUNASAARI OY

◆ *Saunasaari island offers a peaceful setting for sauna culture near the city centre.*

There is even an island in Helsinki known as Sauna Island, i.e. **Saunasaari** in Finnish. With four different wood-heated saunas and some wood-heated hot tubs, the idyllic Saunasaari Island in Helsinki's archipelago offers an unforgettable experience, where one can enjoy a sauna in a tranquil natural setting – just next to the city centre. The waterbus trip from the Kauppatori market square takes 20 minutes. Saunasaari primarily receives groups and companies, but in summer, trips for the public are arranged as well.

For further information in English and German:

[www.saunasaari.fi](http://www.saunasaari.fi)

Most hotels in Helsinki have saunas for use by guests. There are also public saunas in Helsinki open to everyone. The Helsinki City Tourist Office website presents traditional and modern saunas in the city: [www.hel.fi/tourism/EN](http://www.hel.fi/tourism/EN) (choose services).

For comprehensive information on the sauna, please consult the following sites:

- ◆ The Finnish Sauna Society: [www.sauna.fi](http://www.sauna.fi) (in English)
- Sites maintained by the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs:
  - ◆ [virtual.finland.fi/People/way\\_of\\_life.asp](http://virtual.finland.fi/People/way_of_life.asp) (in English)
  - ◆ [www.info-finlande.fr/fo/visu.php3/Msg\\_26\\_0\\_387\\_1\\_7](http://www.info-finlande.fr/fo/visu.php3/Msg_26_0_387_1_7) (in French)
  - ◆ [virtual.finland.fi/People/DE](http://virtual.finland.fi/People/DE) (in German)
  - ◆ [virtual.finland.fi/finfo/espanja/sauna\\_01.pdf](http://virtual.finland.fi/finfo/espanja/sauna_01.pdf) (in Spanish)
  - ◆ [virtual.finland.fi/finfo/russian/sauna.html](http://virtual.finland.fi/finfo/russian/sauna.html) (in Russian)

# Sports and exercise

Sports is a wide concept

Sports facilities



## Sports is a wide concept

The terms sports and exercise mean different things to different people. In Finland, exercise and sport is regarded as fundamental and they should be available to everybody. Helsinki City thus views their provision as basic services. Exercise is beneficial for both the individual and for society because regular exercise improves people's wellbeing and performance both at home and at work – whilst also preventing illnesses.

Beyond its beneficial impacts on the body and mind, exercise has important social effects: it brings people together. Exercise can be an instructive hobby, it creates opportunities for meaningful leisure, offers new experiences and fosters social interaction. The effects of social wellbeing are particularly important to children and adolescents.

The majority of sports facilities in the capital have been built by the City of Helsinki, which also gives direct financial support to one out of two local sports clubs. The promotion of health and personal performance is considered important enough to warrant support from the society. Besides direct financial support, the authorities promote sports and exercise by providing free or low cost facilities.

Various sports clubs and associations provide the majority of organised exercise opportunities in Helsinki. There are about 800 sports associations in Helsinki, most of them are not very big and only 15 have over a thousand members. Yet, total membership is nearly 100,000 people. One in three inhabitants of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area is active in a sports association, and sports and exercise are, in fact, the most common theme for associations in the region and the whole country. Every other child or adolescent in Helsinki belongs to a sports club of one form or another and associations play a very im-

### Sport facilities in Helsinki in 2004

Sport Facilities	Number
<b>Indoor sports facilities</b>	<b>705</b>
Gymnasiums	336
Fitness centres and similar	158
Dance studios	53
Halls for racket games	42
Specialised indoor sports facilities	41
Sports and ball games halls	37
Gyms for martial arts	23
Ice halls	10
Bowling alleys	5
<b>Outdoor fields/courts</b>	<b>925</b>
Ball game fields	427
Outdoor ice rinks – natural ice	215
Outdoor ice rinks – artificial ice	3
Basketball and volleyball courts	185
Tennis courts	50
Sports grounds (for athletics)	41
Finnish baseball fields	4
<b>Cross-country sports facilities</b>	<b>121</b>
Outdoor recreation areas	58
Golf courses	23
Orienteering areas	18
Slopes for skiing and tobogganing	9
Motor sport areas	4
Ski-jump hills	3
Cross-country skiing centres	2
Boating sports facilities	2
Air sports areas	2
<b>Water sports facilities</b>	<b>135</b>
Swimming halls	14
Other swimming pools	20
Outdoor swimming pools	3
Spas	6
Beaches	26
Other swimming places	66
<b>Outdoor trails and routes</b>	<b>63</b>
Fitness trails	42
Nature trails and hiking trails	14
Activity oriented routes	7
<b>Specific sports facilities</b>	<b>333</b>
Skateboarding/rollerblading ramps	18
Horse riding facilities	12
Shooting ranges (outdoor)	8
Rock climbing sites	6
Velodrome	1
Dog parks	86
Play parks for children	202
Play parks, where the city organises guided activity for children	70
<b>Other or unknown</b>	<b>280</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>2 562</b>

Sports facilities included here have been approved by the Ministry of Education.

Source: National Sport Databank in Finland, [www.sport.jyu.fi/](http://www.sport.jyu.fi/) in English and Swedish; Helsinki City Sports Dept., Public Works Dept. and Social Services Dept.; Urban and Regional Indicators of Statistics Finland



HELSINGIN KAUPUNGIN KUVAARKKI / PAUL WILLIAMS

## Skiing

People have used skis for thousands of years in northern Europe. In winter, it was the easiest way to get around when there were no roads. Today, skiing is a sport pursued in many different ways. Engaging just about every muscle in the body, cross-country skiing is an excellent and cheap way of working out – and of enjoying the outdoors in winter.

Skiing is, in fact, the third most popular sport among Finns, and its popularity seems to be growing. In 2002, the country had 732,000 people interested in skiing, which means around 14 per cent of Finns go skiing regularly. Skiing in Helsinki is also becoming more popular, in 2002 13 per cent of the city residents used the city's illuminated and well maintained trails.

Cross-country skiing can be done in many ways. Some people prefer deep pristine layers of snow, others like well laid out trails. Such trails total 30,000 km in Finland, with around 300 km in Helsinki alone, where trails can be found in many parts of town. At the Paloheinä Ski Centre in Central Park, skiing equipment can be rented. Many Helsinki residents have access to a trail near their homes, even in inner Helsinki, where the trails of the Central Park are near.

For more information about skiing and equipment rental:  
[www.suomenlatu.fi](http://www.suomenlatu.fi)

### ◀ Skiing in Helsinki.

portant role especially in the leisure and well-being of young people.

Around a hundred different branches of sports and exercise are pursued in sport associations in Helsinki. Their activities are largely based on unpaid voluntary work, thus offering inexpensive opportunities for exercise.

## Sports facilities

Finland has a very dense network of constructed sports facilities, with 29,000 different facilities for five million people, nationwide, that is one for every 180 Finns. Municipalities own three-quarters of these facilities. In 2004, Helsinki had 2,562 sports facilities, i.e. one for every 218 residents, which means that residents have fairly easy access to sport grounds, outdoor recreational areas and indoor sport halls, etc. The city aims to locate facilities near to residential areas. In 2003, the number of recorded visits to indoor sports facilities maintained by the city was almost three million. ■

### Hiking trails network

Hiking trails in Helsinki	km
Principal hiking trails	350
Outdoor trails	170
Fitness trails	50
Ski trails	300
Cycle ways	750

Source: Helsinki City Sports Department

### Further information sources on the internet

- ★ City of Helsinki Sports Department:  
[www.hel.fi/liv/eng/english.html](http://www.hel.fi/liv/eng/english.html)
- ★ Ministry of Education, Sports affairs:  
[www.minedu.fi/minedu/sports](http://www.minedu.fi/minedu/sports)
- ★ National Sport Databank in Finland:  
[www.sport.jyu.fi](http://www.sport.jyu.fi)

➔ In winter 2005, Helsinki had 13 public winter swimming places.

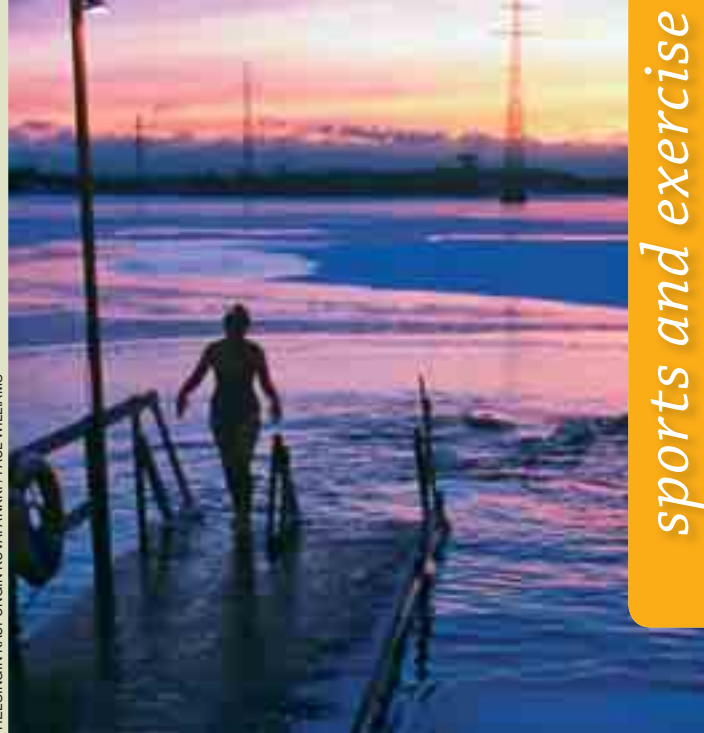
### Recreational areas

#### Recreational areas

Extent of recreational areas in Helsinki, hectares	4 535
Estimated number of visits to these areas in 2003	1 039 000
Green areas owned by the City of Helsinki outside Helsinki, hectares	6 737
Of which recreational forests, hectares	6 285
On the Nuukio lake upland, hectares	3 500
Estimated number of visits to these areas in 2003	500 000

Source: Helsinki City Sports Department

HELSINGIN KAUPUNGIN KUVA-PANKKI / PAUL WILLIAMS



sports and exercise



HELSINGIN KAUPUNGIN KUVA-PANKKI / MARI HOHTIARI

## Winter Swimming

When the lakes and sea freeze over, large holes are cut in the ice to allow Finns to take a refreshing dip into the water. Usually, but not always, winter swimming is done after a sauna. 'Winter swimmers' wear sandals or woollen socks to prevent their feet from freezing in the snow on the way to the water. Once in the water, the hardiest will actually swim, while the less brave will just dip themselves.

Those who are used to winter swimming say that there is no better way to relax, refresh oneself and improve one's tolerance to stress. Winter swimming improves blood circulation and it is believed to prevent winter colds and flu. In other words, winter swimming is actually an ideal hobby for those of us who catch cold easily!

## Nordic Walking

Nordic walking has rapidly become a popular form of exercise in Finland. Enthusiasts currently total 760,000, which means 15 per cent of Finns go Nordic walking regularly. Its popularity comes from its simplicity and efficiency. Anyone can learn Nordic walking, and it is not expensive. Like cross-country skiing, it exercises a large proportion of muscles in the body.

Another advantage of Nordic walking is that it can be done just about anywhere. In Helsinki, you can spot Nordic walkers not only in parks and forests, but on streets and roads, too. Nordic walking poles can be rented at the Paloheinä Ski Centre and in a sports gear centre by Töölönlahti bay in the heart of Helsinki. Instructions for use come with the walking poles.

More information in English and Swedish: [www.suomenlatu.fi](http://www.suomenlatu.fi)



# Tourists in Helsinki

A number one tourist destination in Finland

HELSINGIN KAUPUNGIN KUVAPANKKI

## A number one tourist destination in Finland

Each year, an estimated 10 million tourists visit Helsinki, the majority of whom stay only for the day. Since 2000, annual overnight stays have averaged around 2.5 million, of which roughly 60 per cent are by foreigners. Helsinki is Finland's number one tourist destination – for business travel even more so. More than one-third of tourists choose Helsinki as their principal destination in Finland.

What tourists appreciate in Helsinki and southern Finland is the unpolluted environment, the feeling of security, tidiness and friendly people. Wildlife tourism and adventure holidays are growing steadily: one in five tourists chooses this kind of holiday today. Fishing, hiking and cycling are the top pursuits, but swimming, walking and boating, plus various kind of adventure events, are popular as well. In winter, cross-country and downhill skiing and snow mobile safaris are major attractions. However, although this kind of active tourism is most common in the northern parts of the country, culture-oriented tourists tend to head for the cities in the south to enjoy their architecture and cultural events in Southern Finland. ■

📍 *Tall Ship's Race in Helsinki.*

### Overnight stays in accommodation facilities in Helsinki in 2004

Country of residence	Million	Share of overnight stays in Finland
All	2.5	15 %
Finland	1.0	8 %
Foreign	1.5	35 %

Overnights spent by purpose of visit: business 53%, leisure 45% and other 2%.

Source: Helsinki City Tourist and Convention Bureau

### Further information sources on the internet

- ★ The Helsinki City Tourist and Convention Bureau offers visitors a broad selection of useful information, and brochures. All brochures can be downloaded from this website, [www.hel.fi/tourism](http://www.hel.fi/tourism), which also features a useful calendar of events, a wide range of tourist information about sights and services, and the Helsinki Newsletter. Members of the press can receive free usernames and passwords to access our image bank, which features thousands of high-quality photos of Helsinki. Go to [www.aineistohotelli.com/helsinginkaupunki](http://www.aineistohotelli.com/helsinginkaupunki). Usernames and passwords can be ordered by e-mail from [tourist.media@hel.fi](mailto:tourist.media@hel.fi).
- ★ Helsinki's intent is to take environmental issues into account when arranging mass events. For the World Athletics Championships, a handbook for eco-efficient mass events has been compiled, and will be available for other major championships and mass events as well. For further information: [www.dipoli.hut.fi/ymparisto/ecomass](http://www.dipoli.hut.fi/ymparisto/ecomass)
- ★ Finnish Tourist Board: [www.mek.fi](http://www.mek.fi)

### Some annual sports events in Helsinki

Event	Number of participants in 2004	Month	Type of event
Helsinki City Run	2 631	May	half marathon
Naisten Kymppi – Women's 10 km	around 14 000	May	run/jog/walk for women
Helsinki Cup	816 teams from 17 countries; 20 000 spectators	July	junior football
Helsinki City Marathon	6 830	August	marathon
Helsinki International Horse Show	100 competitors; 45 000 spectators	October	horse-riding



## Suomenlinna Maritime Fortress, a UNESCO World Heritage Site

Half a mile off the coast from central Helsinki lies the island fortress of Suomenlinna, one of the world's largest maritime fortresses. Its eight small islands connected by bridges extend over an area of 80 hectares.

The history of Suomenlinna is strongly linked to the history of the Baltic Sea Region, and the marks of history are still very visible in the area. Construction of the fortress began in 1748, when Finland was still the eastern part of the kingdom of Sweden. In a war in 1808, the fortress surrendered to the Russians, and a year later Finland became a Grand Duchy in the Russian Empire. During the Russian period, Helsinki became the capital city, and Suomenlinna became a large Russian garrison. After Finland's declaration of independence in 1917, Suomenlinna became a Finnish garrison in 1918.

Surprisingly, the fortress has suffered little damage from wars and political change. Furthermore, because of its continuous use as a garrison, the island maintains much of its original appearance. Today, 250-year-old Suomenlinna is one of the five UNESCO's World Heritage Sites in Finland.

Suomenlinna is one of Finland's most important tourist sights, with over half a million visitors each year. To Helsin-

ki residents, it is an important recreational area. On summer weekends, especially, the ferries to Suomenlinna are crowded with locals going for a picnic by the sea or for a walk on the eight kilometres of ramparts on the islands.

The colourful history of the fortress has given the islands a characteristic flora, and bird life, too, is varied. Towards the end of summer, swarms of migrant butterflies flying in across the sea can be seen.

Today, Suomenlinna is the home of 800 permanent residents, who enjoy basic amenities such as a shop, a post office, a school and a church on their islands. Ferry services to and from the Kauppatori Market Square operate once or twice an hour all year round. In addition to several museums, the summer theatre and the shops for artisan products, the island has a number of very popular cafés and restaurants, and even a small brewery.

Further information in English and Swedish:

[www.suomenlinna.fi](http://www.suomenlinna.fi) & information about Ehrensärd Society guided tours at [www.suomenlinnatours.fi](http://www.suomenlinnatours.fi)

## Rastila Camping

An unusual place to stay in Helsinki is the camping site next to Rastila metro station, just 17 minutes from the city centre. The site has 165 caravan spaces, over 100 places for tents, plus a few cottages and log cabins. In addition to accommodation services, the camping site offers a restaurant, saunas, a beach, winter swimming, and bicycle and kayak rentals. Rastila Camping is the most popular camping site in Finland.

### Contact information

Rastila Camping, Karavaanikatu 4, 00980 Helsinki

tel: + 358 9 321 6551, fax: + 358 9 344 1578

e-mail: [rastilacamping@hel.fi](mailto:rastilacamping@hel.fi)

Reception open: 28th May–28th August 2005: 24 hours, other times 8.00–22.00

For further information in English or Swedish:

[www.hel.fi/liv/rastila/rastila.html](http://www.hel.fi/liv/rastila/rastila.html)



➤ With 1.3 million visits in 2004, Linnanmäki Amusement Park is Helsinki's and Finland's most popular tourist destination.

Visits to main Helsinki attractions in 2004

Attraction	Visitors
Linnanmäki Amusement Park	1 338 000
Suomenlinna Maritime Fortress	626 000
Tempeliaukio Church	558 000
Korkeasaari Zoo	547 000
Uspenski Cathedral	478 000
Ateneum, National Gallery	312 000
Helsinki Cathedral	257 000
Casino RAY	255 000
Helsinki Festival	246 000
Sea Life Helsinki	234 000
Kiasma, Museum of Contemporary Art	182 000
National Museum of Finland	115 000
Museum of Art and Design	112 000
Linnanmäki Museum	109 000

Attractions with over 100 000 visitors

Source: Helsinki City Tourist and Convention Bureau

➤ In 2004, the Tourist Information Offices of the City of Helsinki helped some 380,000 visitors. Young "Helsinki Help" guides patrolling in the streets also assist tourists.

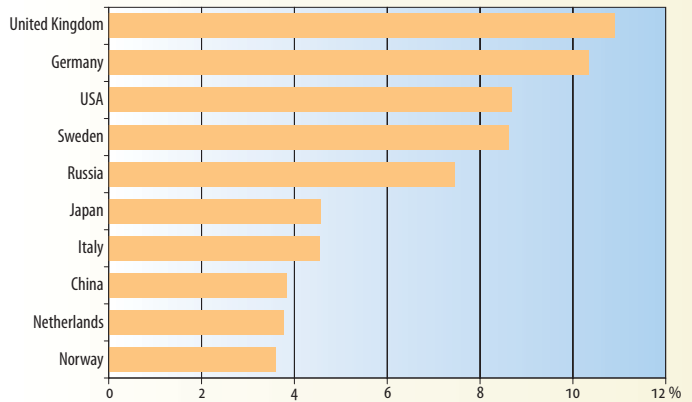


HELSINGIN KAUPUNGIN KUVAAPANKKI / HANSI PARK



HELSINGIN KAUPUNGIN KUVAAPANKKI / MIKA LAPPALAINEN

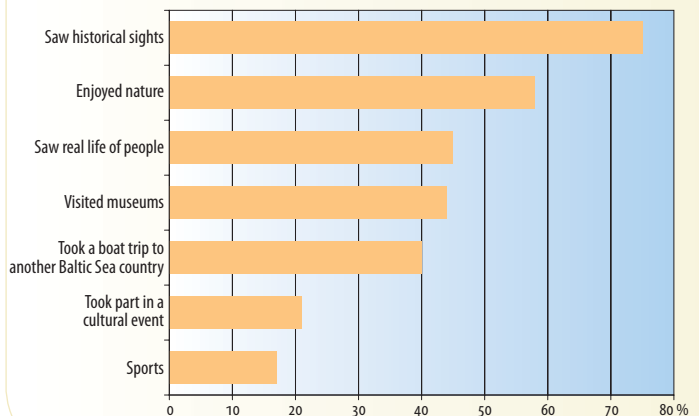
Top ten visitor nationalities in Helsinki in terms of overnight stays in 2004



Other countries account for 33.7% of all 1,527,896 overnight stays made by foreigners.

Source: Helsinki City Tourist and Convention Bureau

What tourists did during their holiday in southern Finland 2002



Source: Baltic Palette II (2002): Market analysis II



SUOMEN URHEILULITTO / MARK SHEARMAN

## First IAAF World Championships in Athletics were held in Helsinki

From the outset of the Olympic Games in Athens, in 1896, athletics have been an important part of the event. The first European athletics championships were held in 1934, and soon other continents, too, started to arrange similar events of their own. The IAAF World Championships, however, came along only in 1983, when they were held in Helsinki. These first IAAF World Championships in Athletics were attended by a total of 1,572 athletes from 153 countries. Altogether, 27 nations won medals, with 14 winning gold medals.

The king of these championships was young US sprinter Carl Lewis, who won the 100 metre and long jump events and anchored the US in the 4 x 100 m relay for an overwhelming victory and a new world record of 37.86 seconds. Among other stars of the week were power-pack Czechoslovakian 400- and 800-metre winner Jarmila Kratochvilova, and Mary Decker from the USA, whose strong finish earned her gold in both 1,500 and 3,000 m races.

◆ Steve Cram winning the 1500m in the World Championships in Helsinki 1983.

The women's team from the GDR, including 18 year old long jumper Heike Daute, were a class of their own and took eight golds. West Germany surprise winner over 800 metres Willi Wülbeck, whose winning time 1 min 43.65 secs still remains the national record of Germany – and of Helsinki's Olympic Stadium. Among other surprise winners were 19-year-old Soviet pole vaulter Sergei Bubka.

The men's marathon was won by Australian Rob de Castella with a time of 2 hours 10 mins 03 secs, still the fastest time ever on Finnish soil. In the pioneering women's marathon, Norway's Grete Waitz took the gold.

Finland's Arto Bryggare was awarded a silver medal in the 110 m hurdles event, and Martti Vainio earned a bronze over 5,000 m. Finland's star moment was when Tiina Lillak gained a gold in the javelin with her winning throw of 70.82 metres.

## Helsinki Cup

July in Helsinki sees the Helsinki Cup, an international football tournament for children and adolescents. The event gives young Finnish players an opportunity to gain international experience and meet fellow sports enthusiasts from other parts of the world. A key principle of the Helsinki Cup is to give all players in the team an equal opportunity to play in the game.

The first Helsinki Cup, in 1976, gathered 211 teams from five different countries. During its 30 years of existence, the

event has grown steadily, and in 2004, 816 teams from 17 different countries took part. Over the years, teams from 52 different countries altogether have played in the tournament, which has been praised not only for its untiring promotion of football for youngsters, but also for its work against ethnic and racial prejudices.

Helsinki Cup: [www.helsinki-cup.fi](http://www.helsinki-cup.fi), in English, Swedish, German, French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese

## Fifteenth Olympic Games in Helsinki 1952

The 1952 Olympic Games were undoubtedly the most important sports event ever held in Finland. Taking place so shortly after the Second World War, these games were of great importance to Finland both culturally and psychologically.

Life was harsh in Helsinki in 1952: sugar and coffee, for example, were rationed, and war indemnities were being paid to the Soviet Union. At the time, Helsinki's population was 384,521. The first traffic lights in the city were installed in time for the Olympics, and luxuries such as Coca-Cola and chewing gum reached the war-stricken country. The games put Finland on the map of the world for many people, while for Finns it was the first time that many met a foreigner.

A new airport, Helsinki-Vantaa, was inaugurated for the occasion, and so was the new harbour terminal, today still called the Olympic Terminal. Helsinki had originally hoped to host the Olympics in 1940, but the war intervened. Constructed in the 1930s, the Olympic Stadium is still an important venue for major competitions. Many other facilities were also built for the Olympics, such as the Swimming Stadium, the Velodrome, the Rowing Stadium and the Tennis Palace.

The Helsinki Olympics were held during politically uncertain times: the Korean War was at its height and the Cold War at its coldest. Nevertheless, the Helsinki Games brought together competitors from 70 nations, more than any previous games. The Soviet Union participated for the first time, and Germany and Japan took part again, for the first time since the war. Among the participating nations, 43 received medals with 27 winning gold medalists. 70,000 foreign spectators came to Helsinki to watch the games.

Among the athletes, Finns still remember Emil Zátopek (1922–2000), one of the greatest runners of the 20th Century. "The Locomotive" or the "Bouncing Czech", as he came to be known, established his reputation by winning the 5,000 m, the 10,000 m, and the marathon during those 1952 Olympics in Helsinki.

More about the Olympics in Helsinki in English:

[www.urheilumuseo.org](http://www.urheilumuseo.org)

◆ *Spectators on their way to the Olympic Stadium in 1952.*





# Special features and characteristics of Helsinki



A small but competitive metropolis

Young and well-educated people live in Helsinki

Public transport moves the city dwellers

### Characteristics of the economy in Helsinki, the Helsinki Region and Finland in 2004

	Helsinki	Helsinki Region	Finland
Average income per income earner (state taxable, 2003), €	26 321	27 454	20 874
Proportion of national GNP, 2002, %	..	33.6	100
GNP per capita, when EU25 average is 100 (1998–2002, purchase-power-weighted)	..	162	111
Employment rate in 2004 (employed 15–64 year olds / all 15–64 year olds)	73	73	67
Unemployment rate, 2004, %	7.2	6.6	8.8
Men in the labour force, %	73	74	69
Women in the labour force, %	70	70	63
Business premises in 2003	35 600	66 500	255 800
Jobs in 2003, total	371 000	658 300	2 263 100
Percentage of all Finnish jobs	16	29	100
Self-sufficiency of jobs, 2003, %	135	107	100
Of which:			
Primary production (SIC A-B), %	0.1	0.4	4.2
Processing (SIC C-F), %	13.3	17.3	25.2
Services (SIC G-Q), %	85.6	81.3	68.7
trade, transport, business activities (SIC G-K), %	50.3	49.9	36.3
public services (SIC L-Q), %	35.3	31.4	32.4
Information sector (production of goods, services and information content), %	17.8	15.7	9.1

Source: City of Helsinki Urban Facts; Statistics Finland

## A small but competitive metropolis

The Helsinki Region is Finland’s only metropolis, and by international standards a relatively small one. However, it is home to almost a quarter of Finland’s population and accounts for over one-third of its gross national product and almost one-third of its jobs.

On a European scale, Helsinki has a small population for a capital. Nevertheless, Helsinki is a prosperous and competitive city. In 2004, the European Competitiveness Index listed the Helsinki Region as Europe’s number one in terms of competitiveness and creativity. This is largely the result of continuous investment in re-

➔ *Although the bicycling season starts only in April and ends in October, biking is a popular means of getting around and taking exercise in Helsinki. The city authorities provide a system of “city-bikes” in town that anyone can borrow.*



HELSINGIN KAUPUNGIN KUVAPANKKI / MIKA LAPPALAINEN



HELSINKI KAUPUNGIN KUVA-PANKKI / BOY HULDEN

### Milestones in the History of Helsinki

- 1550** Helsinki was founded at the mouth of the Vantaa River
- 1640** Helsinki moved to its present location on the southern peninsula
- 1748** The construction of the Suomenlinna Fortress started
- 1809** Finland became a Grand Duchy within the Russian Empire
- 1812** Helsinki became the capital of the Grand Duchy of Finland
- 1828** University moved to Helsinki from Finland's previous capital city, Turku
- 1837** Regular steamship service started between Helsinki and St. Petersburg
- 1855** The fortress of Suomenlinna bombarded by the British and French navies
- 1862** Opening of the Helsinki-Hämeenlinna railway line
- 1881** Opening of the first public library in Helsinki
- 1902** Completion of the National Theatre building
- 1907** The population of Helsinki exceeded 100,000
- 1908** Completion of the National Museum building
- 1917** Finland became an independent state
- 1924** Air services to Tallinn and Stockholm started
- 1940** Inauguration of the Olympic Stadium
- 1952** Helsinki hosts the 15th Olympic Games
- 1966** Population of Helsinki exceeded 500,000
- 1975** CSCE conference in Helsinki
- 1982** Opening of the first metro line
- 1983** First IAAF World Championships in Athletics held in Helsinki
- 1995** Finland joined the European Union
- 2000** Helsinki is one of the European Cities of Culture
- 2005** 10th IAAF World Championships in Athletics held in Helsinki

Source: Klinge, Matti & Kolbe, Laura (1999): Helsinki, Daughter of the Baltic. A short biography, Ottawa; City of Helsinki Urban Facts

search and development: over 40 per cent of Finnish R&D takes place in the region.

Helsinki is a centre of highly specialized business, and the information sector is especially vibrant. Private service industries account for every second job in the area. Helsinki also plays a major role as a centre of administration and logistics, characterised by a strong higher education sector and a lively cultural life.

Between 1995 and 2002, the Helsinki Region was one of Europe's fastest growing regions, with double the overall EU average gross value added per capita. Production growth in the Helsinki Region averaged 6.5 per cent during those years. In future, growth is forecast to slow down as in most other major urban regions, nonetheless Helsinki is expected to remain among the fastest growing metropolises in Europe for the coming few years.

### Young and well-educated people live in Helsinki

Helsinki has a relatively young age structure. It has a large number of people of working age compared with the numbers of children and elderly people. Today, the 25–29 year olds make up almost 10 per cent of the city's population, making them the the largest age group. As a result, Helsin-



## Characteristics of the population of Helsinki, the Helsinki Region and Finland in 2005

Population 1.1.2005	Helsinki	Helsinki Region	Finland
Population	559 046	1 224 257	5 236 611
Projection of population for 2010	572 648	1 301 228	5 309 656
Percentage of the national population	11	23	100
Population density (persons per sq km of land)	3006	396	17
Life expectancy, years (Helsinki 1996–2000; Finland 2004)	76.8	..	78.2
Men, %	46.6	47.9	48.9
Women, %	53.4	52.1	51.1
Population of working age (15–64 year olds), %	72	70	67
Finnish-speaking, %	86.7	88.0	91.9
Swedish-speaking, %	6.2	6.5	5.5
Foreign language-speaking, %	7.1	5.5	2.5
Foreign nationals, %	5.2	4.1	2.1
Families among households, 2004, %	48	57	60
Families with children among families, (children under 18), %	40	45	42
One-person households, %	49	41	39
their percentage among population	25	19	18
Fertility rate (births per 1 000 women aged 15–44)	47,4	57,3	58,1
Demographic dependency rate 2004 (<15 and >64 year olds / 15–64 year olds)	0.394	0.473	0.499

Finland is a bilingual country, with Finnish and Swedish as official languages

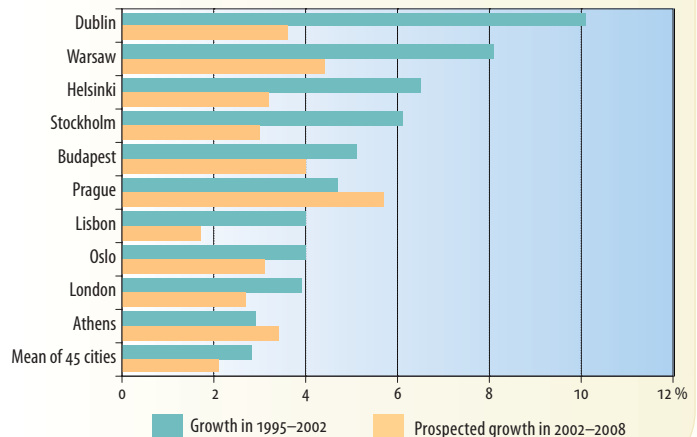
Source: City of Helsinki Urban Facts; Statistics Finland

ki has one of the lowest demographic dependency ratios among European cities. Essential for the city's competitiveness and industrial structure is also the high overall level of education of its population: one in three Helsinki citizens has tertiary level education, which is one of the highest rates in Europe, and 56 per cent of those are women.

### Public transport moves the city dwellers

70 per cent of the city's residents commute to work by public transport to the city centre, and of all trips made in motor vehicles in inner Helsinki, 60 per cent are made on public transport. Commuter trains, the metro and trams together account for over 50% of the transport system, which is very good for the environment and air quality in the city. Estimates suggest the production of electricity for rail transport accounts for just two or three

### Gross value added growth and projected growth in selected European metropolises (% per annum)



Source: The Regional Economy of Helsinki from a European Perspective, City of Helsinki Urban Facts, Statistics 2004:17

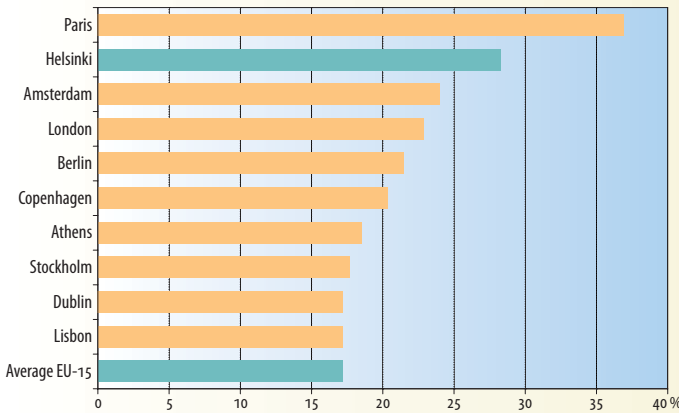
### International passenger traffic in Helsinki

Passengers year 2004	Million	
Via Helsinki–Vantaa Airport	10,7	of which 73% international
Via Port of Helsinki	8,7	98% to/from Sweden or Estonia
Via Helsinki Main Railway Station (2003)	42,5	of which 85% on commuter trains

Source: Helsinki City Urban Facts

### Proportion of people having a higher education in selected European capitals in 2001

(Qualified at levels 5-6 ISCED)



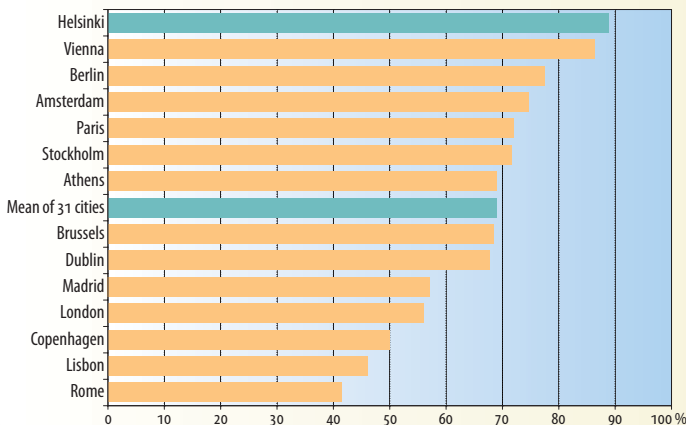
Source: Urban Audit, www.urbanaudit.org

per cent of total emissions into the air from transport and traffic in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area.

Besides transport over land, Helsinki residents also have good sea transport services. The ferry to the Suomenlinna fortress islands operates all year round, and in summer, there are 15 scheduled waterbus services daily. International ferries depart daily all year around to the Estonian capital of Tallinn and to the Swedish capital of Stockholm. And in summer, there are also regular services to St. Petersburg, Rosstock and Visby.

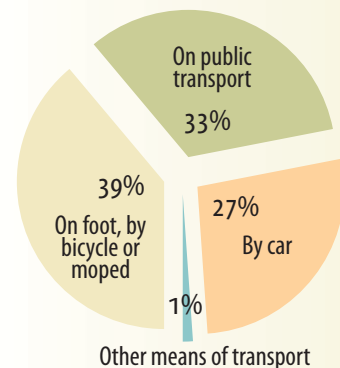
Road traffic in Helsinki is relatively safe: in a comparison between 170 European cities in 2001, Helsinki had the third least number of people seriously injured or killed in road traffic.

### Proportion of inhabitants satisfied with public transport in their city



Source: Urban Audit perception survey, 2004, www.urbanaudit.org/UAPS%20leaflet.pdf

### Trips made in Inner Helsinki, by means of transport in 2000



Source: Traffic in Helsinki, Statistics 2003:3, Helsinki City Urban Facts



HELSINGIN KAUPUNGIN KUVA-PANKKI / PAUL WILLIAMS

◆ *Metro station in Vuosaari.*

**Further information sources on the internet**

*In English and Swedish if not otherwise stated*

- ★ City of Helsinki: [www.hel.fi](http://www.hel.fi) (In English, Swedish, German, French and Russian)
- ★ City of Helsinki Urban Facts provides statistics and information about Helsinki: [www.hel.fi/tietokeskus](http://www.hel.fi/tietokeskus).  
Urban Facts internet publications: [www.hel.fi/tietokeskus/eng/publications.html](http://www.hel.fi/tietokeskus/eng/publications.html)
- ★ Guide Map of Helsinki and the Metropolitan area: [kartta.hel.fi](http://kartta.hel.fi)
- ★ Journey Planner gives public transport routes and timetables for the Helsinki Metropolitan Area: [www.reittiopas.fi](http://www.reittiopas.fi)
- ★ Statistics Finland is the central statistical office in Finland: [www.stat.fi](http://www.stat.fi)
- ★ Virtual Finland provides comprehensive information about Finland: [virtual.finland.fi](http://virtual.finland.fi) (English, French, Germany, Spain, Russian)

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- Urban Audit, Database for European urban statistics, [www.urbanaudit.org](http://www.urbanaudit.org).



MIKA LAUNIS





HELSINGIN KAUPUNGIN KUVA-PANKKI / ANTERO AALTONEN

# Nature, Recreation *and* Sport *in* Helsinki

