

Estonia

The secret's out of the Baltic bag: Estonia is one of Europe's coolest destinations (in more respects than one). Since its become a full-fledged member of the EU, ever more tourists have ventured this far northeast...and liked what they saw. They return with images of endless coastline, tales of technology overload and strange ramblings about cheap beer and blood sausages.

The last 100 years has been full of twists and turns for the small country: it went from being a province of the Russian empire to an independent country, then a republic of the Soviet Union, an independent nation once again and now an EU member. Anxious to accent what distinguishes it from the rest of Europe, Estonia's strutting its stuff and waiting to be admired.

Apart from the obvious charms of the capital Tallinn and its enchanting Unesco-protected Old Town, the country boasts a one-two combination of low population and stretches of fabulous nature. That means that despite Estonia's miniature size, you can enjoy its unspoilt seaside or be alone on an island, all while enjoying the comforts of a thoroughly modern e-savvy country.

In Tallinn, brush up on your medieval history while exploring the city's café and bar culture. In Tartu, have fun finding out what 'Tartu spirit' means. In Pärnu, tend to your sunburn all night in beachside discos. On the island of Saaremaa, visit vestiges of WWII and an intact castle. Add a few drops of a strange brew called Vana Tallinn to accompany you on all this, and you're set to experience the new, revamped Estonia – version 5.0 and counting.

FAST FACTS

- **Area** 45,226 sq km
- **Capital** Tallinn
- **Currency** kroon (EEK); €1 = 15.7EEK; US\$1 = 12.3EEK; UK£1 = 23EEK; A\$1 = 9.3EEK; ¥100 = 10.5EEK; NZ\$1 = 7.9EEK
- **Famous for** Eurovision, Skype & Kazaa, saunas
- **Official Language** Estonian
- **Phrases** *aitäh* (thanks); *Tere!* (Hi!); *Mis on su nimi?* (What's your name?); *Kui palju see maksab?* (How much does this cost?)
- **Population** 1.32 million
- **Telephone Codes** country code ☎ 372; international access code ☎ 00
- **Visa** No visa required for citizens of the EU, USA, Canada and Australia for stays of up to 90 days



HIGHLIGHTS

- Find medieval bliss hanging out on Tallinn's **Raekoja plats** (p323) and exploring nooks and crannies in the historic **Old Town** (p323).
- Put on your nature lover's cap and head to the **Lahemaa National Park** (p331), where you can scout for beavers, go canoeing or count boulders.
- Head out to lovely **Saaremaa** (p343) to check out a **meteorite crater** (p343) with a bottle of local brew in hand.
- Try a floating sauna, sweating it up atop a raft travelling through bog country in **Soomaa National Park** (p341) for an experience you'll be recounting for years.

ITINERARIES

- Five days** Hit Tallinn at a weekend, get your sightseeing, partying and café-bar culture fill, then head out to Lahemaa National Park or west to the islands of Saaremaa and/or Hiiumaa and enjoy nature on an organised tour or on your own. A trip to Pärnu or Tartu will complete the picture.
- Two weeks** There will be time to explore Tallinn more deeply and take a trip to an island off shore. Saaremaa should be on your agenda, as well as Tartu, from where you can head deep into southern and southeastern Estonia, taking in Suur Munamägi and Setumaa. Or you can opt for fun in the sun in Pärnu, with a venture out to the remote island of Kihnu from there.

CLIMATE & WHEN TO GO

Between May and September is the best time of the year to travel to Estonia as there's better weather and longer days. 'White nights', when the skies darken slightly for only a few hours each night, peak in late June but the sun rarely sets from mid-May to mid-August. June can still be nippy; the warmest temperatures come in July to August (see Climate Charts p911). Winter is temperate, dark and damp but has a special magic. Slushy, drizzly March is the only really depressing month.

HISTORY

It's commonly held that in the mid-3rd millennium BC Finno-Ugric tribes came either from the east or south to the territory of modern-day Estonia and parts of Latvia, and mixed with the tribes who had been present from the 8th millennium BC. They were little influenced

HOW MUCH?

- Espresso in café 15-18EEK
- Bottle of Vana Tallinn 75-85EEK
- Ten-minute taxi ride 75EEK
- Traditional knitted sweater 300-400EEK
- Parking violation 480EEK

LONELY PLANET INDEX

- Litre of unleaded petrol (95) 14EEK
- Litre of bottled water 12EEK
- Half-litre of beer 20EEK
- Souvenir T-shirt 225EEK
- Street snack (roasted nuts) 25EEK

from outside until German traders and missionaries, followed by knights, were unleashed by Pope Celestinus III's 1193 crusade against the 'northern heathens'. In 1202 the Bishop of Riga established the Knights of the Sword to conquer the region by conquest; southern Estonia was soon subjugated, the north fell to Denmark.

After a crushing battle with Alexander Nevsky in 1242 on the border of present-day Estonia and Russia, the Knights of the Sword were subordinated to a second band of German crusaders, the Teutonic Order, which by 1290 ruled the eastern Baltic area as far north as southern Estonia, and most of the Estonian islands. Denmark sold northern Estonia to the Knights in 1346, placing Estonians under servitude to a German nobility that lasted till the early 20th century. Throughout later Swedish and Russian rule, German nobles and land barons maintained great economic and political power. The Hanseatic League (a mercantile league of medieval German towns bound together by trade) encompassed many towns on the routes between Russia and the west and prospered under the Germans, although many Estonians in rural areas were forced into serfdom.

By 1620 Estonia had fallen under Swedish control. The Swedes consolidated Estonian Protestantism and aimed to introduce universal education, however frequent wars were devastating. After the Great Northern War (1700-21), Estonia became part of the Russian Empire. Repressive government from Moscow and economic control by German powers slowly



forged a national self-awareness among native Estonians. Serfs were freed in the 19th century and improved education and land-ownership rights promoted culture and welfare.

Independence

The Soviets abandoned the Baltic countries to Germany at the end of WWI with the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918. Estonian nationalists had originally declared independence on 24 February. The resulting War of Independence led to the Tartu Peace Treaty on 2 February 1920, in which Russia renounced territorial claims to Estonia, supposedly forever.

Damaged by the war and hampered by a world slump and trade disruptions with the USSR, independent Estonia suffered economically even as it bloomed culturally. Prime Minister Konstantin Päts declared himself President in 1934 and ruled Estonia as a relatively benevolent dictator who also quietly safeguarded the USSR's interests.

Soviet Rule & WWII

The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 23 August 1939, a nonaggression pact between the USSR and Nazi Germany, secretly divided Eastern Europe into Soviet and German spheres of influence. Estonia fell into the Soviet sphere and by August 1940 was under occupation. Estonia was 'accepted' into the USSR after fabricated elections and, within a year, over 10,000 people in Estonia were killed or deported. When Hitler invaded the USSR in 1941, many saw the Germans as liberators, but during their occupation about 5500 people died in concentration camps. Some 40,000 Estonians joined the German army to prevent the Red Army from reconquering Estonia; nearly twice that number fled abroad.

Between 1945 and 1949, with Stalinism back on course, agriculture was collectivised and industry nationalised, and 60,000 more Estonians were killed or deported. An armed resistance led by the now-legendary *metsavennad* (forest brothers) fought Soviet rule until 1956. With postwar industrialisation, Estonia received an influx of migrant workers from Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, all looking for improved living conditions but with little interest in local language and customs. Resentment among Estonians grew as some of these immigrants received prized new housing and top job allocations. Within the USSR, Estonia had the reputation of being the most

modern and European of all the republics, mainly due to its proximity to Finland, and enjoyed a relatively high standard of living.

New Independence

On 23 August 1989, on the 50th anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, an estimated two million people formed a human chain across Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, calling for secession from the USSR. Independence came suddenly, however, in the aftermath of the Moscow putsch against Gorbachev. Estonia's declaration of complete independence on 20 August 1991 was immediately recognised by the West and by the USSR on 6 September.

In October 1992 Estonia held its first democratic elections, which brought to the presidency the much-loved Lennart Meri, who oversaw the removal of the last Russian troops in 1994. Throughout the 1990s, the government focused on launching radical reform policies and joining the EU and NATO.

The decade since independence, with its sweeping transformations on all levels of society, saw frequent changes of government and no shortage of scandal and corruption charges; this even as the country came to be seen as *the* post-Soviet economic miracle. Today former secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, Arnold Rüütel, is president and Andrus Ansip prime minister. In 2004, Estonia officially entered both NATO and the EU. While there are a large number of Euro-sceptics, the majority of Estonians are happy to return to the European fold. Estonia plans to adopt the euro as its currency in 2008.

PEOPLE

Estonia's population is 68% Estonian, 26% Russian, 2% Ukrainian, 1% Belarusian and 1% Finnish. In 1934 over 90% of the population was native Estonian. Ethnic Russians are concentrated in Tallinn and in the industrial northeast, forming 40% and up to 96% of the respective populations. While much was made of tension between Estonians and Russians in the 1990s, the two communities live together in relative harmony. The youngest generations now mix freely, but in general Estonians and Russians have little to do with each other.

Estonians are closely related to the Finns, and more distantly to the Sámi (indigenous Laplanders) and Hungarians, but not to the Latvians and Lithuanians, who are of Indo-European heritage. Estonians are originally a

CHARITY

Estonia's **Lastekaitse Liit** (☎ 631 1128, www.lastekaitseliit.ee in Estonian, liit@lastekaitseliit.ee) has been involved in dozens of projects since 1988 to promote the interests of and defend the rights of children and teenagers. They hold conferences, provide self-awareness education, have an HIV-prevention campaign and directly aid many underprivileged children – plus they give them a good time with camps and activities. If you're looking and able to make a donation, this is a good place to channel some funds!

rural people, historically cautious of outsiders and stereotypically most comfortable when left alone. Women are less shy and more approachable than men, though both exude a natural reticence and cool-headed distance in social situations. In general, the younger the Estonian, the more relaxed, open and friendly they'll be. Travellers will find it relatively easy to strike up a conversation and make friends.

RELIGION

From 1987 to 1990 there was a surge of interest in religion as the state Lutheran Church allied itself to the independence cause. However, that enthusiasm has now waned and many have gone back to their secular ways. There's little sense of Estonia as a religious society. While numerous sects and religious organisations have set up shop in Estonia, these have largely made inroads with Russian-speakers. There

are several thousand Muslims in Estonia and some 600 registered Buddhists and 260 Jews.

ARTS

Most travellers are likely to notice paintings and ceramics of bright pastel colours and fanciful animal compositions as emblematic of contemporary Estonian art, especially works by the one-man industry Navitrolla, whose playful world vision adorns postcards, coffee mugs, posters and café walls. The arts and crafts world in Estonia is much wider than that, however, even though some disciplines have reached a level of excellence (jewellery and ceramics, for example) at the expense of others (art photography is noticeably undeveloped).

Music

Estonia has a strong and internationally well-respected classical music tradition, most notably its choirs. The Estonian Boys Choir has been acclaimed the world over. Hortus Musicus is Estonia's best-known ensemble, performing Middle Ages and Renaissance music. Composer Arvo Pärt is among the world's most renowned living composers for his haunting sonic blend of tension and beauty, with outwardly simple but highly complex musical structures. The three main Estonian composers of the 20th century are Rudolf Tobias, Mart Saar and Eduard Tubin. Veljo Tormis writes striking music based on old runic chants.

Hard rock thrives in Estonia with groups like Vennaskond, Tuberkuloited and the U2-style Mr Lawrence. The more approachable Ultima Thule and Genialistid are two of the

LAND OF DREAMS

Estonia is a land of young talent and creative, dynamic entrepreneurs who have already changed the world, or are waiting to do so. Usually, they're well under 25. Two of the biggest success stories are that of Skype and Kazaa, two of the planet's most downloaded programs in history (over 450 million and counting). Both were created by Estonians. The story doesn't end there.

We asked one of these geniuses just why Estonia is so conducive to spawning creative talent and provides the opportunity to realise dream projects. Sten Saar and his company Realister (www.realister.ee) hit upon a simple idea: he developed a new kind of student academic notebook whose look and practicality filled a hole in the marketplace. His first printing was of 1000; 18 months later, he'd received an order for 90,000. Now he's expanding into other countries – when he's not busy creating a program for state TV or participating in swimming competitions.

'Estonia is a tremendously developing country – our economic growth is more than three times bigger than the EU average. Estonia's the best place for entrepreneurs because of its location (between the EU and Russia), very good economic policy (it's easy to establish a company, there are great opportunities for investments) and educated labour force. This business-friendly environment allows me to unleash the entrepreneurial tiger in me...'

country's longest-running and most beloved bands. Jäääär are also at the top, with their album *Tartu-Väike Puust Linn* (Tartu – Small Wooden Town) ranking among the best Estonian albums. Excellent folk bands include Unsakond and Väikeste Löötspillide Ühing.

The pop and dance-music scene is strong, exemplified by Estonia's performances in that revered indicator of true art, Eurovision (they hosted the contest in 2002). The tough-girl band Vanilla Ninja has become a hot ticket throughout Europe. Maarja-Liis and Tanel Padar are popular pop singers, while Hedvig Hanson blends jazz and rock with surprising results. Exciting names in electronica are the mesmerizingly talented Paf and house kings Rulers of the Deep.

See the excellent www.estmusic.com for detailed listings and streaming samples of Estonian musicians of all genres.

Literature

Estonian literature began with the poems and diaries of Kristjan Jaak Peterson, who died when he was but 21 years old in the early 19th century. His lines 'Can the language of this land/carried by the song of the wind/not rise up to heaven/and search for its place in eternity?' are engraved in stone in Tartu and his birthday is celebrated as Mother Tongue Day (14 March).

Until the mid-19th century, Estonian culture was preserved only by way of an oral folk tradition among the peasants. Many of these stories were collected around 1861 to form the national epic *Kalevipoeg* (The Son of Kalev), by Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald, inspired by Finland's *Kalevala*. The *Kalevipoeg* relates the adventures of the mythical hero, and ends in his death, his land's conquest by foreigners and a promise to restore freedom. The epic played a major role in fostering the national awakening of the 19th century.

Lydia Koidula (1843–86), the face of the 100EEK note, was the poet of Estonia's national awakening and first lady of literature.

Anton Hansen Tammsaare is considered the greatest Estonian novelist for his *Tõde ja Õigus* (Truth and Justice), written between 1926 and 1933. Eduard Vilde (1865–1933) was a controversial turn-of-the-century novelist and playwright who wrote with sarcasm and irony about parochial mindsets.

Jaan Kross (b 1920) is the best-known Estonian author abroad, and several of his most

renowned books, including *The Czar's Madman* and *The Conspiracy and Other Stories*, have been translated into English. Tõnu Õnnepalu and Mati Unt are two main figures in modern Estonian literature.

Cinema

The first 'moving pictures' were screened in Tallinn in 1896, and the first theatre opened in 1908. The nation's most beloved film is Arvo Kruusement's *Kevade* (Spring; 1969), an adaptation of Oskar Luts' country saga. Grigori Kromanov's *Viimne reliikvia* (The Last Relic; 1969), was a brave, unabashedly anti-Soviet film which has been screened in some 60 countries.

More recently Sulev Keedus' lyrical *Georgica* (1998), about childhood, war, and life on the western islands, and Jaak Kilmi's *Sigade Revolutsioon* (Pigs' Revolution; 2004), about an anti-Soviet uprising at a teenager's summer camp, have made the rounds at international film festivals. René Vilbre, with his *Mat the Cat* (2005), as well as Ivar Heinmaa, with his *Wounds of Afghanistan* (2005), are among the most creative directors in Estonia today.

Theatre

It is telling of the role theatre has played in Estonia's cultural life that many of the country's theatre houses were built solely from donations collected from private citizens. The Estonia Theatre and the Estonia Drama Theatre in Tallinn, the Vanemuine Theatre in Tartu and others throughout the country were all built on proceeds collected door to door.

Modern theatre is considered to have begun in 1870 in Tartu, where Lydia Koidula's *The Cousin from Saaremaa* became the first Estonian play performed in public.

Experimental theatre and multimedia performances are still in their nascent stages. Fine 5 Dance Theatre (www.fine5.ee) and Nordstar Dance Theatre are two of the finest modern dance and performance troupes in the country, and Vanemuine's Ruslan Stepanov one of the scene's most creative performers and directors.

SPORT

With over 3700km of coastline, all forms of water sports are popular in Estonia come the summer sun. As Estonia is a flat country, cross-country skiing and bicycling are hugely popular sports. Major bike marathons are held in and around Tartu (p335). Otepää (p336) is

WIFE-CARRYING WORLD CHAMPS

Forget decathlons and cross-country skiing: Estonian wife carriers rule! Since the traditional Finnish sport of wife carrying was revived in 1992 in the northern Finnish village of Sonkajärvi, Estonians have upstaged their Scandinavian cousins by winning several world championships and capturing the world record (yes, there is such a thing).

Men must carry their wives (or a suitable substitute) any way they wish through a 253m-long difficult obstacle course – through water, over barriers. Even Dennis Rodman, visiting the 2005 championships, only managed to do the final 100m of the race, noting that it was too gruelling to complete without practise.

While there are few Estonia-based wife carrying competitions, you may be lucky enough to spot a few couples practising on beaches or stretches of forests during your stay!

the country's cross-country (and what passes as downhill) skiing capital. Basketball is the official national sport, and courts small and large are found all over Estonia.

A well-known name in the sports world is Erki Nool, the decathlon gold-medal winner at the 2000 Olympics. Kristina Smigun was the darling of the 2006 Winter Olympics, picking up two gold medals for cross-country skiing.

ENVIRONMENT

With an area of 45,226 sq km, Estonia is only slightly bigger than Denmark. It is mainly low lying, with extensive bogs and marshes; Suur Munamägi (318m; p337) in the southeast near Võru is the highest point. In Southern Estonia, the regions of Võrumaa and Setumaa (p337) are characterised by attractively rolling, gentle hills. Nearly 50% of the land is forested and 22% is wetlands, with peat bogs 7m deep in places. The 3794km-long coastline is heavily indented. More than 1500 islands make up nearly 10% of Estonian territory and there are over 1400 lakes, the largest of which is Lake Peipsi (3555 sq km), the fourth-largest in Europe.

The Baltic Glint is Estonia's most prominent geological feature. Made up of 60-million-year-old limestone banks that extend 1200km from Sweden to Lake Ladoga in Russia, they form impressive cliffs along Estonia's northern coast, especially in the east – at Ontika the cliffs stand 50m above the coast.

Since independence there have been major 'clean-up' attempts to counter the effects of Soviet-era industrialisation. Toxic emissions in the industrialised northeast of Estonia have been reduced sharply and new environmental-impact legislation aims to minimise the effects of future development. However, heavy oil-shale burning in that area keeps air pollution levels there high.

National Parks

Most of the population of Estonia's rare or protected species can be found in one of the several national parks, nature reserves and parks. There are beavers, otters, flying squirrels, lynx, wolves and brown bears in these areas. White and black storks are common in southern Estonia.

Estonia's western islands and some areas in national parks boast some of the most unspoilt landscapes in Europe, and air pollution, even in the cities, remains very low by European standards. About 11% of Estonia's lands are protected to some degree as national parks, or as nature, landscape and biosphere reserves. Thus far, the only Unesco World Heritage site is Tallinn's Old Town (p323). Some of the most popular parks are Lahemaa (p331), Soomaa (p341) and the Haanja Nature Park (p337).

FOOD & DRINK

The conventional excuse for the heaviness of the local cuisine is the northern climate...but that's used as an excuse for many local habits and only goes so far in explaining the proclivity towards fatty and carbohydrate-heavy meals. The Estonian diet relies on *sealiha* (pork), other red meat, *kana* (chicken), *vurst* (sausage), *kapsa* (cabbage) and *kartul* (potato). Sour cream is served with everything but coffee, it seems. *Kala* (fish) appears most often as a smoked or salted starter, most likely *forell* (trout) or *lõhe* (salmon). *Sült* (jellied meat) is likely to be served as a delicacy as well. At Christmas time *verivorst* (blood sausage) is made from fresh blood and wrapped in pig intestine (joy to the world indeed!). Those really in need of a culinary transfusion will find blood sausages, blood bread and blood dumplings available in most traditional Estonian restaurants year-round.

Though the idea that a meal can actually be spicy or vegetarian has taken root, you'll need to hit one of Tallinn's or Tartu's ethnic restaurants for exotic spices or mains that don't include meat. Veganism is completely unknown, except to the local Hare Krishnas. Delicious and inexpensive freshly baked cakes, breads and pastries are available everywhere.

Restoran (restaurants) and **kohvik** (cafés) are plentiful and pubs also serve meals. Most Estonians have their main meal at lunch time, and accordingly most establishments have excellent-value set lunches.

Õlu (beer) is the favourite alcoholic drink in Estonia and the local product is very much in evidence. The best brands are Saku and A Le Coq, which come in a range of brews. **Viin** (vodka) and **konjak** (brandy) are also popular drinks. Vana Tallinn, a seductively pleasant, sweet and strong (40% to 50% alcohol) liqueur of unknown extraction, is an integral part of any Estonian gift pack. Eesti Kali is the favourite (Estonian) brand of **kvass**, originally made from fermented bread but containing no alcohol.

TALLINN

pop 400,000

Picture a heady mix of medieval church spires, glass-and-chrome skyscrapers, imported DJs spinning tunes in underground clubs, cosy wine cellars inside 15th-century basements, lazy afternoons soaking up sun and beer suds on Raekoja plats, plus bike paths to beaches and forests and yacht rides in a sprawling bay – with a few Soviet monuments thrown in for added spice. That's today's Tallinn, remixing Medieval and cutting-edge and coming up with a new vibe of its own.

The jewel in Tallinn's crown remains the two-tiered Old Town, a 14th- and 15th-century jumble of turrets, spires and winding streets. Most tourists see nothing other than this fabulous, cobble-stoned labyrinth of intertwining streets and picturesque courtyards. Tallinn's relentlessly modern dimension – its new chrome and glass mini-skyscrapers, the wi-fi that bathes much of the city, the sumptuous, hip clubs – are pleasant surprises and harmonious counterbalances to the city's Old World charms.

Whatever your pleasure – fantasising about yesteryear or indulging in the thoroughly modern – Tallinn's seductively laid-back groove is easy to fall for.

HISTORY

In 1219 the Danes set up a castle and installed a bishop on Toompea ('Tallinn' comes from the Danish *taani linnus*, which means 'Danish castle'). German traders arrived and Tallinn joined the Hanseatic League in 1285, becoming a vital link between east and west. By the mid-14th century, after the Danes had sold northern Estonia to the German knights, Tallinn was a major Hanseatic town. The merchants and artisans in the lower town built a fortified wall to separate themselves from the bishop and knights on Toompea.

Prosperity faded in the 16th century as Swedes, Russians, Poles and Lithuanians all fought over the Baltic region. The city grew in the 19th century and by WWI had a population of 150,000. In 1944 Soviet bombing destroyed several central sectors including a small section on the Old Town's fringes. After WWII, industry developed and Tallinn expanded quickly, with much of its population growth due to immigration from Russia. Politically and economically, Tallinn is the driving force of modern Estonia.

ORIENTATION

Tallinn fronts a bay on the Gulf of Finland and is defined by Toompea (*tom-pe-ah*), the hill over which it has tumbled since the Middle Ages. Toompea, the upper Old Town, has traditionally been the centre of Tallinn and the medieval seat of power. The lower Old Town spreads around the eastern foot of Toompea, still surrounded by much of its 2.5km defensive wall. Its centre is Raekoja plats (Town Hall Square).

Around the Old Town is a belt of green parks which follows the line of the city's original moat defences, as well as the modern city centre.

INFORMATION

Bookshops

Apollo (☎ 654 8485; Viru tänav 23) Lots of Lonely Planet and travel titles.

Rahva Raamat Viru Keskus (☎ 644 9444; Viru Väljak 4/6); Old Town (☎ 644 3682; Pärnu mnt 10) These shops have the city's largest selection, with good English, art and travel books.

Internet Access

There are some 300 wireless internet (wi-fi) areas throughout the capital (see www.wifi.ee for a detailed list), so with your laptop in hand, it's never a problem to surf for free.

Otherwise, there are terminals for hire on the 2nd floor of Stockmann department store, as well as pricey ones on the 2nd floor of the Central Post Office.

Jumping Jacks (Suur Karja tänav 13; ☎ 11am-9pm; per hr 30EEK) Basement-level, slightly dingy place for internet connection.

Metro (☎ 610 1515; Viru Väljak 4/6; ☎ 7am-11pm Mon-Fri, 10am-11pm Sat & Sun; per hr 35EEK). Downstairs on the bus terminal level of the Viru Keskus shopping centre (p330), you'll find this flashy, techno-style internet café.

Laundry

EcoClean (☎ 646 6193; Roosikrantsi tänav 23; most garments 50-90EEK; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun) Wide range of dry-cleaning services using environmentally friendly substances.

Sauberland (☎ 661 2075; Maaakri tänav 23; self-wash & dry 5kg 75EEK; ☎ 7.30am-8pm Mon-Fri, 8am-6pm Sat) Wash and wait, or pick-up services in ultra clean surroundings.

Medical Services

Aia Apteek (☎ 627 3607; Aia tänav 10; ☎ 8.30am-midnight) One of the many well-stocked pharmacies around town.

East Tallinn Central Hospital (☎ 620 7015; Ravi tänav 18; ☎ 24hr) Full range of services, including a polyclinic and a 24-hour emergency room.

Südalinna Arstide (☎ 660 4072; Kaupmehe tänav 4; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri) This private clinic has ear, nose and throat specialists, gynaecologists, psychologists and other general practitioners on staff.

Money

Currency exchange is available at all transport terminals, exchange bureaus around the city, the post office and inside all banks and major

hotels. ATMs are plentiful. There's a Western Union pickup point at the central post office (see Post).

Äripank (☎ 668 8000; Vana Viru tänav 7) The Business Bank has some of the city's best rates.

Estravel (☎ 626 6266; www.estravel.ee; Suur-Karja tänav 15; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat) A travel agent and the official agent for Amex.

Tavid (☎ 627 9900; Aia tänav 5; ☎ 24hr) This exchange bureau is convenient but has so-so rates unless you change large amounts.

Post

Central post office (☎ 625 7300; Narva mnt 1; ☎ 7.30am-8pm Mon-Fri, 8am-6pm Sat) Full postal services, including express mail, fax (send to ☎ 661 6054; 12EEK per page) and telegrams.

DHL (☎ 680 855; Hobujaama 4; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) Express courier services.

Telephone

If you're one of the odd few not glued to a mobile phone, you can buy 30EEK, 50EEK and 100EEK chip cards from newsstands to use for local and international calls at any one of the blue phone boxes scattered around town. Otherwise, post offices and some newspaper kiosks sell mobile phone starter kits with prepaid SIM cards.

Tourist Information

1182 (☎ 1182; www.1182.ee) This information service costs 7EEK per minute, but their website is just as useful.

Infotelefon (☎ 626 1111) This provides free, practical information in English 24 hours a day.

In Your Pocket (www.inyourpocket.com) The king of the region's listings guide has up-to-date information on everything to do with arriving, staying and having fun in Tallinn and other cities in Estonia. Its booklets are on sale at bookshops.

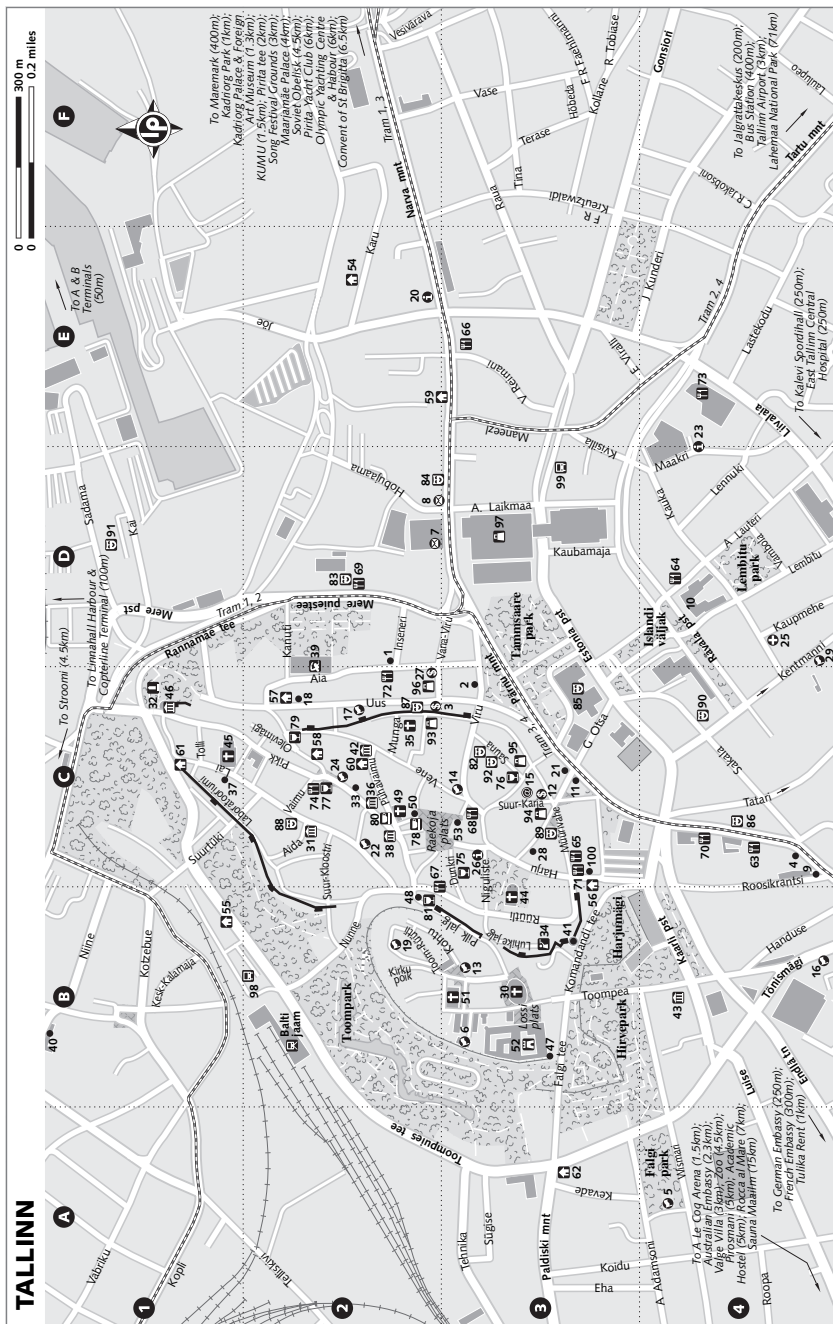
Tallinn Tourist Information Centre (☎ 645 7777; www.tourism.tallinn.ee; Niguliste tänav 2; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun May-Jun, 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun Jul-Aug, 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun Sep, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat Oct-Apr) This centre offers a full range of services, though it helps if you're very clear with what you're looking for. Here you can purchase the Tallinn Card (130EEK to 450EEK), which offers free rides on public transport, admission to museums, free excursions and discounts at restaurants, valid from six to 72 hours.

Travel Agencies

Baltic Tours (☎ 630 0430; www.baltictours.ee; Pikk tänav 31)

TALLINN IN TWO DAYS

Wander thoroughly around the **Old Town**, climbing **Oleviste Church** (p324) for a great view, stopping at several café's and pubs around the **Raekoja plats** (Town Hall Square). On the second day, do what most tourists don't – step out of the Old Town, explore the **Kadriorg** (p325) region with its old homes, sprawling parks and great museums, and head out to **Pirita** (p325) for a few hours on the beach. Hit a **nightclub** (p329) or go **bar-hopping** (p329) before calling it a day.



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Estonian Holidays (☎ 627 0520; www.holidays.ee; Rütli tänav 28/30)
Union Travel (☎ 627 0627; www.uniontravel.ee; Vana Posti 2) Smaller than most, but friendly, creative and down-to-earth. It can easily arrange visas to Russia and the former USSR.

SIGHTS
Old Town
RAEKOJA PLATS & AROUND
 Compact Raekoja plats (Town Hall Square) has been the centre of Tallinn life since markets began here probably in the 11th century. It's dominated by the only surviving Gothic **town hall** (☎ 645 7900; adult/student 35/20EEK; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Sat Jun-Aug, by appointment Sep-May) in northern Europe (early 14th century, reconstruction 1402-04) and faced by pretty, pastel buildings from the 15th to 17th centuries. Old Thomas, Tallinn's symbol and

guardian, has been keeping watch from his perch on the weathervane atop Town Hall since 1530. You can also climb the building's **tower** (adult/student 25/15EEK; ☎ 11am-6pm Jun-Sep).
 The square is Tallinn's pulsing heart: all summer outdoor cafés implore you to sit and people-watch; come Christmas time, a huge pine tree stands in the middle (a tradition some 550 years old). Whether bathed in sunlight or sprinkled with snow, it's always an inviting spot.
 The **Raeapteek** (Town Council Pharmacy), on the northern side of Raekoja plats, is another ancient Tallinn institution; there's been a pharmacy or apothecary's shop here since at least 1422, though the present façade is 17th century. Duck through the arch beside it into the charming Saia käik (White Bread Passage), at the far end of which is the lovely 14th-century Gothic **Pühavaimu kirik** (Holy Spirit Church;

☎ 644 1487; ☎ 10am-3pm). Its colourful clock on the wall outside is the oldest in Tallinn, the lavish carvings inside date from 1684 and the tower bell was cast in 1433.

A medieval merchant's home houses the **Linnamuseum** (City Museum; ☎ 644 6553; www.linnamuuseum.ee; Vene tänav 17; adult/student 35/10EEK; ☎ 10.30am-6pm Wed-Mon Mar-Oct, to 5pm Wed-Mon Nov-Feb) which traces Tallinn's development from its beginnings through to 1940 with some quirky displays and curious artefacts.

Also on Vene tänav (Estonian for 'Russian', named for the many Russian merchants who lived on the street), in the courtyard at No 18, is the 1844 **Sts Peter & Paul Catholic Church**, whitewashed and looking like it belongs in Spain. A door in the courtyard leads into the **Dominican Monastery** (☎ 644 4606; Vene tänav 16/18; adult/student 45/15EEK; ☎ 9.30am-6pm mid-May-mid-Sep), founded in 1246 as a base for Scandinavian monks. Today the monastery complex houses Estonia's largest collection of **stone carvings**, which leave an impression on visitors eager to catch a glimpse of medieval-looking life; there are often concerts and medieval-tinged activities and even rituals taking place there.

The majestic 15th-century **Niguliste Church** (☎ 631 4330; Niguliste tänav 3; adult/student 35/20EEK; ☎ 10am-5pm Wed-Sun), a minute's walk south of Raekoja plats, is now used to stage concerts and serves as a **museum** of medieval church art.

At the foot of the slope below the Niguliste Church is the carefully exposed wreckage of the buildings that stood here before the Soviet bombing of Tallinn on the night of 9 March 1944.

LOWER TOWN

From Pühavaimu kirik, you can stroll along Pikk tänav, which runs north to the **Great Coast Gate** – the medieval exit to Tallinn's port. Pikk tänav is lined with the 15th-century houses of merchants and gentry as well as buildings of several old Tallinn guilds. In the 1440 building of the **Great Guild**, to which the most important merchants belonged, is the **History Museum** (Ajaloomuuseum; ☎ 641 1630; Pikk tänav 17; adult/student 15/10EEK; ☎ 11am-6pm Thu-Tue). It features Estonian history up to the 18th century and has ceramics, jewellery and archaeological delights. No 18 is the 1911 **Draakoni art gallery** (☎ 646 4110; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun) with its fabulous sculpted façade.

Crane your neck up at Pikk tänav 19 – there's a coy black cat waiting to surprise

you. The **Brotherhood of Blackheads** and **St Olaus' Guild** are in adjoining buildings at Pikk tänav 24 and 26. The Blackheads were unmarried, mainly foreign merchants whose patron saint, Mauritius, appears with his head between two lions on the building's façade (dating from 1597).

At the northern end of Pikk tänav stands a chief Tallinn landmark, the gargantuan **Oleviste Church**. Anyone unafraid of a bit of sweat should head up, way up, to the superb **observation deck** (☎ 621 2241; adult/student 20/10EEK; ☎ 10am-6pm mid-Apr-mid-Oct) halfway up its 124m structure. It offers the city's best views of the Old Town.

First built in the early 13th century, it was once the world's tallest building (it used to tower 159m before several fires and reconstructions brought it down to its present size). The church is dedicated to the 11th-century King Olav II of Norway, but linked in local lore with another Olav (Olaf), the church's architect, who fell to his death from the tower. It's said that a toad and a snake then crawled out of his mouth. The incident is recalled in one of the carvings on the east wall of the 16th-century **Chapel of Our Lady**, which adjoins the church.

Just south of the church is the **former KGB headquarters** (Pikk tänav 59), whose basement windows were sealed to conceal the sounds of interrogations.

The Great Coast Gate is joined to **Paks Margareeta** (Fat Margaret), the rotund 16th-century bastion which protected this entrance to the Old Town. Inside the bastion is the **Maritime Museum** (Meremuuseum; ☎ 641 1408; Pikk tänav 70; adult/student 25/10EEK; ☎ 10am-6pm Wed-Sun). The exhibits are ho-hum, but there are nice views from the rooftop café.

Just beyond the bastion stands the **broken line monument**, a black, curved slab in memory of victims of the Estonia ferry disaster. In September 1994, 852 people died when the ferry sank en route from Tallinn to Stockholm.

While Pikk was the street of traders, Lai tänav, running roughly parallel, was the street of artisans, whose traditions are recalled in the **Applied Art & Design Museum** (Tarbekunsti ja Disainimuuseum; ☎ 627 4600; Lai tänav 17; adult/student 30/15EEK; ☎ 11am-6pm Wed-Sun). You'll find an excellent mix of historical and contemporary ceramics, glass, rugs, metal and leatherwork.

Suur-Kloostri tänav leads to the longest-standing stretch of the **Lower Town Wall**, with nine towers along Laboratooriumi tänav.

TOOMPEA

A regal approach to Toompea is through the red-roofed 1380 **Pikk jalg gate tower** at the western end of Pikk tänav in the lower town, and then uphill along Pikk jalg (Long Leg). The 19th-century Russian Orthodox **Alexander Nevsky Cathedral** (☎ 8am-7pm, also for special religious occasions) greets you at the top. It was built as a part of Alexander III's policy of Russification, and sited strategically across from **Toompea Castle**, Estonia's traditional seat of power. The *riigikogu* (parliament) meets in the pink baroque-style building, an 18th-century addition to the castle. Nothing remains of the original 1219 Danish castle. Still standing are three of the four corner towers of its successor, the Knights of the Sword's Castle. Finest of these towers is the 14th-century **Pikk Hermann** (Tall Hermann) at the southwestern corner, from which the state flag is raised at sunrise and lowered at sunset to the tune of the Estonian anthem. A path leads down from Lossi plats through an opening in the wall to the **Danish King's Courtyard** where, in summer, artists set up their easels.

Nearby **Kiek-in-de-Köök** (☎ 644 6686; Komandanti tee 2; adult/student 25/8EEK; ☎ 10.30am-6pm Tue-Sun), a tall tower built in about 1475, is a museum that holds models of old Tallinn, weapons and a photographic gallery. Its name is Low German for 'Peep into the Kitchen' – from the upper floors of the tower medieval voyeurs could see into Old Town kitchens.

The Lutheran **Toomkirik** (Dome Church; ☎ 644 4140; Toom-Kooli tänav 6; ☎ 9am-4pm Tue-Sun) is Estonia's oldest church. Positioned on the site of a 1219 Danish church, it dates from the 14th century. Inside the impressive, austere and damp church are finely carved tombs and coats of arms. From Toomkirik, follow Kohtu tänav to the city's favourite **lookout** over the Lower Town.

The **Museum of Occupation & Fight for Freedom** (☎ 668 0250; Toompea tänav 8; adult/student 10/5EEK; ☎ 11am-6pm Tue-Sun), just down the hill from Toompea, has a worthwhile display of Estonia's history of occupation, focusing on the most recent Soviet one.

Kadriorg

To reach the pleasant, wooded **Kadriorg Park** 2km east of the Old Town along Narva maantee, take tram 1 or 3 to the last stop. The park and the 1718-36 Kadriorg Palace were designed for Peter the Great for his wife Catherine I. The **Kadriorg Palace** (☎ 606 6400;

Weizenbergi tänav 37; adult/student 45/25EEK; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Wed & Fri-Sun, 10am-9pm Thu May-Sep, 10am-5pm Wed-Sun Oct-Apr) and **Foreign Art Museum** (adult/student 15/5EEK; ☎ 10am-5pm Wed-Sun), housed in the same magnificent building, make for a dreamy hour or so – the 17th- and 18th-century foreign art is mainly unabashedly romantic, and the palace unashamedly splendid.

Nearby is the brand new **KUMU** (☎ 602 6000; Weizenbergi tänav 34; adult/student 75/40EEK; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Wed & Fri-Sun, 10am-9pm Thu May-Sep, 10am-5pm Wed-Sun Oct-Apr), the country's largest museum by far. A spectacular, massive structure of limestone and green glass, it contains a large amount of Estonian art as well as constantly changing contemporary exhibits.

Towards Pirita

Jutting north of Kadriorg alongside the sea coast is **Pirita tee**, Tallinn's greatest promenade. Summer sunsets around midnight are particularly romantic from here, and it's the city's nicest biking and rollerblading area. North of Kadriorg you come to the **Lauluväljak**, the Song Festival grounds, an impressive amphitheatre which hosts song festivals and big-name concerts. Under two kilometres north of Lauluväljak, **Maarjamäe Palace** (☎ 601 4535; Pirita tee 56; adult/student 10/8EEK; ☎ 11am-6pm Wed-Sun Mar-Oct, 10am-5pm Wed-Sun Nov-Feb) contains the part of the Estonian History Museum covering the mid-19th century onwards.

Heading further north, you pass the foreboding **Soviet obelisk** locally dubbed 'the Impotent's Dream'. It's the focal point of a 1960 Soviet war memorial that's now more crumbling than inspiring. A small German cemetery is behind it. **Pirita Yacht Club**, some 2km beyond Maarjamäe Palace, and the **Olympic Yachting Centre** were venues for the 1980 Olympic sailing events. International regattas are still held here, and there is the small **Pirita harbour**.

North of the bridge are a beach backed by pine woods and the 15th-century Swedish **Convent of St Brigitta** (☎ 605 5044; Merivälja tee 18; adult/student 20/10EEK; ☎ 9am-7pm Jun-Aug, 10am-6pm Sep, Apr & May, noon-4pm Oct-Mar), ruined by war in 1577. This is an essential Tallinn visit; the labyrinthine ruins are a natural treat for kids too. The long stretch of clean beaches on the other side of Pirita tee is *the* place to shed your clothes in Tallinn summertime. Buses 1, 8 and 34 run between the city centre and Pirita.

Zoo & Rocca al Mare

About 4.5km southwest from the Old Town, the **Tallinn Zoo** (☎ 694 3300; Paldiski mnt 145; adult/child 50/25EEK; 🕒 9am-7pm May-Aug, 9am-5pm Mar-Apr & Sep-Oct, 9am-3pm Nov-Feb) boasts one of the world's largest collections of mountain goats and sheep and 334 different species of animals, birds, reptiles and fish. Opposite the zoo is **Tivoli** (☎ 656 0110; Paldiski mnt 100; free admission, pay per ride; 🕒 11am-8pm) a small amusement park for kids.

A kilometre beyond the zoo, Rannamõisa tee turns right towards Rocca al Mare and leads to the **Open Air Museum** (☎ 654 9117; Vabaõhumuuseumi tee 12; adult/child 50/30EEK; 🕒 10am-5pm Oct-Apr, buildings 10am-6pm May-Sep, grounds 10am-8pm May-Sep). Most of Estonia's oldest wooden structures (mainly farmhouses as well as a 1699 chapel and a windmill) are preserved here. On Sunday mornings there are folk song-and-dance shows. There's also a **tavern** (mains from 75EEK; 🕒 10am-6pm) serving traditional Estonian meals. Kids will love the entire place – and not only the pony rides. Buses 21 or 21B from the train station stop here, or you can take trolleybus 6 or 7 then walk the remaining 1.5km along Rocca al Mare tee.

ACTIVITIES

Waterparks are all the rage in Estonia; the biggest in Tallinn is the **Kalev Spa** (☎ 649 3300; www.kalevspa.ee; Aia tänav 18; adult/student from 80/60EEK; 🕒 6.45am-10.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-10.30pm Sat-Sun). Soon to be dwarfed by competitors, this super-modern water emporium boasts an Olympic-

sized pool, several Jacuzzis and slides and other ways to get your skin wrinkled.

Saunas are an Estonian institution and come close to being a religious experience. If you're looking to convert, the best public sauna is **Kalma Sauna** (☎ 627 1811; Vana-Kalamaja tänav 9A, Tallinn; 🕒 10am-11pm), but you should try **Sauna Maailm** (☎ 609 9888; www.saunamaailm.ee; from 400EEK per hr) a makeshift village with four different kinds of saunas, 16km from central Tallinn on the road to Keila & Paldiski.

The most popular beaches are at Pirita and Stroomi. You can rent rowing boats and pedal boats at **Pirita Rowboat Rental** (☎ 621 2105; Kloostri tee 6; per hr from 35EEK; 🕒 10am-10pm May-Sep) beside the bridge over the river. For an unforgettable yacht trip out into Tallinn Bay, contact **Emerald** (☎ 504 3031; www.spinnaker.ee). It offers three- and four-hour cruises from €120 for 12 persons.

The folks at both Matkad.ee and Reimann Retked (see p344) can organise something more energetic for adventure-seekers.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Jazzkaar (www.jazzkaar.ee; mid-Apr) One of Tallinn's hot-ticket events, this brings together jazz greats from around the world in a series of concerts.

Old Town Days (www.vanalinnaevad.ee; early Jun) Usually lasting four days, this sees the Old Town come alive with market stalls, concerts, dancing and medieval-themed merry-making.

Beer Summer (www.ollesummer.ee; early Jul) One of the most popular festivals of the year, this beer-guzzling, rock

band-listening extravaganza happens under and around big tents near the Lauluväljak (Song Festival) grounds.

Dance Festival (www.saal.ee; Aug) International modern dance troupes usually stage exciting performances.

SLEEPING

It's not easy to be disappointed in Tallinn's accommodation scene. With a wide array of tasteful, clean, often unique and sumptuous hotels and guesthouses to choose from, your lodging is likely to be a highlight of your visit. Each year the selection gets larger; by 2008, bed spaces in Tallinn will have increased 50% over the 2005 figure, and many of these will be in the upper-budget classes. See www.visitestonia.ee for accommodation of all sorts.

Apartment Rental

There are dozens of apartments to rent in the capital – a great alternative for those who prefer privacy and self-sufficiency. A good bet is Old House Guesthouse (see right), which has stunning apartments throughout the Old Town.

Ites Apartments (☎ 631 0637; www.ites.ee; Harju tänav 6) This effective bunch offers several too-good-to-be-true apartments in the Old Town for 1100EEK to 2100EEK per day, with discounts for stays of more than one night.

Budget

Hostel Alur (☎ 631 1531; www.alurhostel.com; Rannamäe tee 3; dm/s/tr 235/500/845EEK, d 720-875EEK; 📍) Not the liveliest of hostels, but it's clean, friendly, (a bit too) quiet and just a stone's throw from the train station and Old Town. Prices are around 15% cheaper from September to April and there's a 10% discount for ISIC and HI card-holders year-round.

Old House (☎ 641 1464; www.oldhouse.ee; Usu tänav 26; dm 290EEK, 1-/2-/3-/5-/6-person r 550/650/975/1450/1740EEK) You won't get a better location than at this refurbished hostel in the Old Town. Sure, the walls are paper-thin, but it's cosy and the breakfast is hearty. There's a 10% discount with ISIC.

Academic Hostel (☎ 620 2275; www.academichostel.com; Akadeemia tee 11; d 495EEK) Situated on the edge of the Tallinn Technical University campus grounds, this is a bright, happy, freshly done-up hostel with a lively atmosphere. With 108 rooms spread out along five colour-coded floors, it feels more like a modern budget hotel than hostel with a young, vivacious, international clientele. Trolleybus 3 will drop you off at the nearby Keemia stop.

AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Valge Villa (☎ 654 2302; www.white-villa.com; Kännu tänav 26/2; s/d/ste 550/780/980EEK; 📍) A villa in more than name only, this three-storey home in a quiet residential area 3km south of the centre is a great option, somewhere between a B&B and a hotel. All rooms boast antiques or wooden furniture, some have fireplace, slanted roof, kitchenette, bathtub, and all have coffee machine, fridge and internet! Take trolleybus 2, 3 or 4 from the centre to the Tedre stop.

Old House Guesthouse (☎ 641 1464; www.oldhouse.ee; Usu tänav 22; s/d/tr 450/650/975EEK) Nearly adjacent to the Old House and run by the same people, the guesthouse has the same pros and cons, though the rooms here are more spacious and private. Their sumptuous apartments scattered throughout the Old Town are excellent value (1300EEK to 2500EEK) and can fit four persons.

Midrange

Dorell (☎ 626 1200; www.dorell.ee; Karu tänav 39; s 550-700EEK, d 600-800EEK; 📍) One of the best deals in this category if being in the centre is important. What it lacks in aesthetic splendour it makes up for with convenience.

Reval Hotel Central (☎ 633 9800; Narva mnt 7C; s/d/ste from 900/1100/1800EEK; 📍 📞) One of the best options smack in the centre. Large but friendly, staffed with down-to-earth and helpful people, it offers all the services of a big hotel. Rooms, save for the gorgeous superior doubles and suites, are less than breathtaking, but there are so many other pluses, it hardly matters.

Unique Stay (☎ 660 0700; www.uniquestay.com; Paldiski mnt 1 & 3; s 1400EEK, d 1500-2120EEK apt 2100-2325EEK; 📍 📞) Here local traditions and folk elements merge with Japanese sparsity, quirky eccentricity and modern furnishings to create one of the most interesting places to lay your head in the city. The pricier 'Zen' doubles are worthwhile for the extra harmony, prices drop around 10% from October to April.

Top End

Olevi Residents (☎ 627 7650; www.olevi.ee; Olevimägi tänav 4; s/d/ste from 1100/1600/3500EEK; 📍 📞) Each splendid room has its own character in this Old Town oasis; some with antiques, others

ISLAND ESCAPE

Who says you can't relive your favourite scenes from *The Blue Lagoon* in Nordic Estonia? Sure, it's no Bora Bora, but the country offers its share of lovely shoreline and remote island landscapes to play around in.

Tiny Aegna, just 3 sq km, has been populated for centuries by local fishermen and, from 1689, postal workers who operated mail boats from there to Sweden via Finland. During Soviet times it was an off-limits military base. There are traces of its military past, an old church and cemetery, remains of a medieval village and long stretches of almost-always deserted beaches.

Naissaar, much larger at 11km by 4km, has a livelier history and more tourism possibilities. It was off-limits in Soviet times, and there's the remnant of an old army village, bunkers and mine factory to explore. There's a church from 1856 and other attractions, but again, stretches of quiet beach are its largest draws. Just up the hill from the dock is the Nature Park Centre where you can get info, coffee and a meal.

For information about excursions and overnight stays on Naissaar, contact Tiit Koit (tiit.koit@lk.ee). Tallinn's tourist information centre can suggest accommodation on both islands. **MS Monika** (☎ 56 638 000; www.saarereisid.ee) runs boats from Pirita's harbour to Aegna (30 minutes; adult/student/bicycle 100EEK; three times daily Tue-Sun) and to Naissaar (one hour; adult/student/bicycle 125/100EEK; twice daily Sat-Sun). It's possible to stay overnight on either island, or just spend about five hours wandering or biking and return to Tallinn the same day.

with arched ceilings and bits of the original medieval building showing through. The suites are worth a splurge. The rooms on the top floor have a sea view.

Three Sisters Hotel (☎ 630 6300; www.threesistershotel.com; Pikk tänav 71; s/d/ste from 5320/5790/8140EEK; ☒ ☒) Sumptuous luxury in a lovingly refurbished medieval building; original design elements have been preserved alongside hi-tech comforts. Cool your wine in a hole in the centuries-old wall, run a bath in an old-fashioned tub and dream away...

Schlössle Hotel (☎ 699 7700; www.schlössle-hotels.com; Pühavaimu tänav 13-15; s/d/ste from 4800/5500/7900EEK; ☒ ☒) These breathtaking rooms in a complex of buildings that have witnessed 600 years of Tallinn life are among the most impressive in the country. All needs are catered for under its five stars, and the cellar restaurant is first-rate.

EATING

Many ethnic restaurants can be found serving anything from Turkish meze to Thai Kai Phad – though even on exotic dishes, be prepared for an Estonian touch (the sudden appearance of sour cream or cucumbers for example)! Very reasonable lunch specials abound in the city (35EEK to 60EEK), so it's economical to fill up during the daytime. Most of the cafés listed under Drinking also serve food.

Budget

Kohvik Narva (☎ 660 1786; Narva mnt 10; mains 35-65EEK) One of the only places left in Tallinn where you can step back into the USSR, this is kitsch without being aware of it. The décor is decidedly brown and faded red, the service dismissive and the menu full of Russian staples from the times of yore. Have fun!

Kompressor (☎ 646 4210; Rataskaevu tänav 3; mains from 40EEK) Eat one of the enormous, stuffed pancakes and you'll be full for the rest of the day. The large hall and casual atmosphere make it a great hang-out too; the big tables make it easy to chat up locals.

Peeetri Pizza (☎ delivery 656 7567; Pärnu mnt 22 & Mere puistee 6; pizzas 45-75EEK) This chain opened as soon as Estonia broke free from the USSR and still doles out tasty thin-crust and pan pizzas.

Texas Honky Tonk (☎ 631 1755; Pikk tänav 43; mains from 50EEK) No one does Americana quite so well in Tallinn. The menu is mostly Tex-Mex

(the burritos are superb), and the atmosphere lively and yippee-ayo-ta-yay fun.

Pizza Americano (☎ 644 8837; Müürivahe tänav 2; pizzas from 85EEK) Thick, tasty pizzas of every possible permutation and combination are on offer here, including several vegetarian options.

There are decent fast-food options inside the Viru Keskus shopping centre.

Midrange

Bestseller (☎ 610 1397; Viru väjak 4/6, 3rd fl; mains from 55EEK; ☒ ☒ 9am-9pm; ☒) Located inside the city's best bookstore, this café is more than a place where beautiful people come to pop open their Apple laptops. Some of the finest food (in delicate, French portions) is served here, delicious, healthy meals and the best *crème brûlée* east of France.

Café VS (☎ 627 2627; www.cafévs.ee; Pärnu mnt 28; mains from 65EEK) One of the first 'trendy' spots to open in Tallinn, it's still going strong as a bar, club (come evening) and eatery, thanks to some of the city's most stunning Indian meals. Vegetarians head over here! The menu is exhaustive, so there's something for everyone.

Eesti Maja (☎ 645 5252; www.eestimaja.ee; A Lauteri tänav 1; buffet 75EEK, mains from 100EEK) Here's a good place to sample traditional Estonian fare, in a folksy interior. The weekday lunch buffet is a good deal and lets you try some of the heavy, exotic food without a full-plate commitment.

Pirosmani (☎ 639 3246; Üliõpilaste tee 1; mains from 55EEK) Worth the hike out here for succulent Georgian food in a lively atmosphere. You can sit outside among the pine trees or inside among the Russians and enjoy mouth-watering delicacies at affordable prices. Take trolleybus 3 (or your bike) to the Ehitajate stop, then south for 300m.

Top End

Olde Hansa (☎ 627 9020; Vana turg 1; mains from 175EEK; ☒) One of the few touristy places that's truly worth a visit, this Medieval-themed restaurant boasts the friendliest service in the country, delicacies like juniper cheese and exotic dishes like boar and bear, all impeccably presented.

Gloria (☎ 644 6950; www.gloria.ee; Müürivahe tänav 2; mains 240-380EEK) Voted as one of the world's 100 best restaurants by *Condé Nast*, it's no surprise that this Old World wonder, the *crème de la crème* of Estonia since the 1930s, lives up to all expectations on all levels. For the best wines (and atmosphere) in the city, visit their wine cellar downstairs.

Self-Catering

Don't wait to be served, get it all yourself at the best supermarkets in the centre: **Toidu-maailm** (Viru väjak 4/6; ☒ ☒ 8am-10pm) inside the Viru Keskus shopping centre, the grocery section of **Stockmann** (Liivalaia tänav 53; ☒ ☒ 9am-10pm Mon-Fri, 9am-9pm Sat & Sun), and **Rimi** (Aia tänav 7; ☒ ☒ 9am-10pm).

DRINKING

Tallinn without its café and bar culture is simply inconceivable. Even in Soviet times Tallinn was renowned for its cafés. Due to the charm of the surroundings, the Old Town is the obvious place to head to for cellar bars and absurdly cosy cafés.

Note that as of 1 May 2007, an antismoking ban takes effect across Estonia. No one knows how this will change the bar and club landscape yet, but smoking will only be permitted in specially censored areas, and no service of food or drink will be permitted there.

Dejà Vu (☎ 645 0044; www.dejavu.ee; Sauna tänav 1) A stylish lounge bar bathed in red is cosier than others of its ilk and boasts a stupendous cocktail menu, plus the largest choice of teas in Estonia. Tasteful live music most evenings adds to the atmosphere.

Kehrwieder (☎ 644 0818; Saiaikäik 1) The city's cosiest café where you can stretch out on a couch, read by lamplight and bump your head on the arched ceilings. Excellent coffees, teas, light meals and ambience galore. A must!

Maia-smokk (Sweet-Tooth; ☎ 646 4066; Pikk tänav 16) The city's longest-running café (open since 1884) still draws a (slightly older) crowd who appreciate the classic feel, elaborate ceiling mirror and the pastries (some of which look like they've been there since opening day, but who cares – the atmosphere's great!).

Hell Hunt (☎ 681 8333; Pikk tänav 39) A trouper on the pub circuit for years, this place boasts an amiable atmosphere and reasonable prices for local-brewed beer and cider (half-litre for 24EEK).

Von Krahli Teater Baar (☎ 626 9096; Rataskaevu tänav 10/12) One of the city's best bars, it also serves inexpensive meals and sometimes features live bands and fringe plays. A good place to meet interesting locals.

Levist Välgas (☎ 507 7372; Õlevimägi tänav 12) In this cellar bar, it's not only telephones which are 'out of range' (what its name translates to) – so are the clientele! The wobbly seats, cheap

booze and draughty interior attracts a refreshingly motley crew of friendly punks, grunge kings, has-beens and anyone else who strays from the well-trodden tourist path.

Beer House (☎ 627 6520; Dunkri tänav 5) Tallinn's only micro brewery offers up the good stuff in a huge, tavern like space where, come evening, the oompah-pah music can rattle the brain into oblivion. Fun and sometimes raucous, it's for those who have had an overdose of cosy at other venues.

ENTERTAINMENT

It's a small capital as capitals go and the pace is accordingly slower than in other big cities, but there's lots to keep yourself stimulated, whether in a nightclub, laid-back bar or concert hall. Buy tickets for concerts and main events at **Piletilevi** (www.piletilevi.ee) and its central locations, like inside Viru Keskus. Events are posted on city centre walls and advertised on flyers found in shops and cafés.

Nightclubs

Most of Tallinn's nightclubs have an entrance fee, ranging from 50EEK to 200EEK, with most under 100EEK. Many clubs are free to enter from Monday to Wednesday.

Hollywood (☎ 627 4770; www.club-hollywood.ee; Vana-Posti tänav 8) A multilevel emporium of mayhem, this is the one to draw the largest crowds, especially of foreigners.

Terrarium (☎ 661 4721; Sadama tänav 6) A very down-to-earth club experience is ensured here; prices are lower and there's less attitude than in the posher Old Town clubs. But the DJs still kick out the disco and the twenty-something, mostly Russian crowd laps it up.

Bon Bon (661 6080; Mere puistee 6e) This club attracts a 25- to 35-year-old clientele who still want to party; stylish, almost lavish but not elitist, the club plays excellent music and creates an atmosphere hard to leave.

Gay & Lesbian Venues

X-Baar (☎ 692 9266; Sauna tänav 1) The only place in the Old Town actually flying the rainbow flag is Tallinn's premier gay bar, whose minuscule dance floor comes alive late at weekends.

Angel (☎ 641 6880; Sauna tänav 1) Open to all sexes and orientations, this mainly gay club has become one of the liveliest spots in town for fun of all kinds. A heady mix of dark

corners, sweat, Madonna impersonators and throbbing beats – amongst other things.

G-Punkt (☎ 688 0747; Pärnu mnt 23) To see what Eastern European gay clubs were like 15 years ago, head to this underground bar, mainly attracting lesbians, with no sign advertising itself. Retro heaven.

Theatre

The places listed tend to stage performances in Estonian only, save of course for modern dance shows or the rare show in English or other languages.

Estonia Theatre & Concert Hall (☎ theatre 626 0215, ☎ concert hall 614 7760; Estonia puistee 4) The city's biggest concerts and shows are held here. It's Tallinn's main theatre, and also houses the Estonian national opera and ballet.

Linnateater (City Theatre; ☎ 665 0800; www.linnateater.ee; Lai tänav 23) This theatre always stages something memorable – watch for its summer plays on an outdoor stage or different Old Town venues.

Teater No99 (☎ 660 5051; www.no99.ee; Sakala tänav 3) More experimental productions happen here, but definitely come by for the jazz bar downstairs on Friday and Saturday evenings – a true jazz club the likes of which Tallinn has been sorely lacking for years.

Drugoi Teatr (The Other Theatre; ☎ 534 15169; Narva mnt 7) This small, grass-roots Russian theatre stages some good, lively productions (mainly performed in Russian), which are mildly alternative.

Cinemas

Check out what's on at www.superkinod.ee. No dubbing here (this is a civilised country!); all films play in their original languages, subtitled into Estonian and Russian.

There are a few art-house venues in town. **Kinomaja** (☎ 646 4510; Uus tänav 3) is your best bet for alternative cinema, and **Sõprus** (☎ 644 1919; www.kino.ee; Vana-Posti tänav 8), housed in a magnificent Stalin-era theatre, has an excellent repertoire of European, local and independent productions.

Sport

A Le Coq Arena (☎ 627 9940; Asula tänav 4c) About 1.5km southwest of town, this sparkling, newly refurbished arena is home to Tallinn's football team Flora, which is filled with Estonia's toughest, meanest players. Watching a match is great fun.

Kalevi Spordihall (☎ 644 5171; Staadioni tänav 8) Basketball is Estonia's most passionately watched game, and the best national tournaments are usually held in this stadium just south of the centre.

SHOPPING

The Old Town is full of small shops selling Estonian-made handicrafts, costumes, leather-bound books, ceramics, jewellery, silverware, stained-glass and objects carved from limestone. These are traditional Estonian souvenirs – these and a bottle of Vana Tallinn, of course! They are also on sale on the fourth floor of the **Viru Keskus** (☎ 610 1400; Viru Väljak 4/6; ☎ 8am–10pm) and other shopping centres. The Draakoni art gallery (p324) sells some lovely handmade glassware. There are also several antique shops selling Soviet memorabilia and Russian icons; there are a few lined up along Aia tänav in the Old Town.

Domini Canes (☎ 644 5286; Katerina käik) A lovely gallery-workshop where the ancient craft of glassmaking is revived for all to see. There are beautiful stained-glass works.

Kodukäsitöö (☎ 631 4076; Müürivahe 17) One of the many good places to find locally made handicrafts.

Ivo Nikkolo (☎ 699 9888; Suur Karja tänav 14) A leading name in the Estonian fashion design world, you'll find trendy and conservative clothes for men and women.

L & L (☎ 631 3254, Vana Viru 11) Some way-out, super innovative clothes designs.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air For detailed information on flights in and out of Tallinn see p347. **Tallinn airport** (☎ 605 8888; www.tallinn-airport.ee) is just 3km southeast of the city centre on Tartu maantee. There are helicopter rides throughout the day to Helsinki run by **Copterline** (www.copterline.ee); see also p347.

Boat

See p347 for information about the many services available between Tallinn and Helsinki and Stockholm. Tallinn's sea-passenger terminal is at the end of Sadama, a short, 1km walk northeast of the Old Town. Tram 1 and 2 and bus 3 and 8 go to the Linnahall stop, five minutes' walk from terminals A, B and C. Terminal D is at the end of Lootsi tänav, better accessed from Ahtri tänav. A taxi

between the centre and any of the terminals will cost about 50EEK.

Bus

Bus services to places within about 40km of Tallinn depart from the platform located next to the train station. You can get information and timetables from **Harju Liinid** (☎ 644 1801). For detailed bus information and to purchase advance tickets for all other destinations, contact the central bus station **Autobussijaam** (☎ 680 0900, likely to be English speakers available; www.bussireisid.ee; Lastekodu tänav 46), which is southeast of the centre. Trams 2 or 4 will take you there.

Car & Motorcycle

There are 24-hour petrol stations at strategic spots within the city and along major roads leading to and from Tallinn.

Car rental in Tallinn can often be arranged by your hotel, via these trusted options, or via Ites (p327):

Hertz (☎ 605 8923; www.hertz.ee) At the airport.

Tulika Rent (☎ 612 0012; www.tulika.ee; Tihas tänav 34)

Train

Tallinn's **Balti jaam** (Baltic Station; ☎ 615 6851; www.edel.ee) is on the northwestern edge of the Old Town, a short walk from Raekoja plats, or three stops on tram 1 or 2 north from the Mere puistee stop. There are domestic services to many cities and towns throughout Estonia and to/from Russia.

GETTING AROUND

To/From the Airport

Bus 2 runs every 20 to 30 minutes between port terminals A and D via Gonsiori tänav in the centre to the airport. From the airport, it's just five bus stops to the centre. A taxi to/from the centre should cost about 60EEK to 70EEK. It's best to order a taxi (right) as the ones stationed at the airport are among the city's most expensive.

Public Transport

Tallinn has an excellent network of buses, trolleybuses and trams that run from 6am to midnight. **Piletid** (tickets) are sold from street kiosks (adult/student 10/7EEK) or can be purchased from the driver (15EEK). Validate your ticket using the hole punch inside the vehicle. Your Tallinn Card (see

p321) will give you free transport. All public transport timetables are available online at www.tallinn.ee.

Taxi

Save for some jowly mafia-wannabe drivers at the train station, port, airport and along Viru tänav, drivers are honest and rides metered, costing from 5.50EEK to 9EEK per kilometre. Try **Iks Takso** (☎ 638 1381) or **Taxi Marabu** (☎ 650 0006). The ecologically sound **Velotakso** (☎ 508 8810) offers rides on egg-shaped vehicles run by pedal power and enthusiasm, and charges 35EEK anywhere within central Tallinn.

NORTHEASTERN ESTONIA

This region has received much less attention by tourists than more popular destinations like Pärnu and Tartu but shows a unique side of Estonia. Directly to the east of Tallinn is a splendidly unspoilt national park and beyond that stretches of impressive, limestone cliff-top views out to sea and historic sites. The vast majority of the population here is Russian-speaking which adds another flavour to the Estonian cultural mosaic, and some places feel like Soviet relics (like Sillamäe, a living museum of Stalin-era architecture). Time to explore!

LAHEMAA NATIONAL PARK

A rocky stretch of the north coast – encompassing 251 sq km of marine area plus 474 sq km of hinterland with 14 lakes, eight rivers and many waterfalls – forms the lovely Lahemaa National Park, a perfect getaway for a day or more in nature.

Information

The **Visitors Centre** (☎ 329 5555; www.lahemaa.ee; ☎ 9am–7pm May–Aug, to 5pm Sep, to 5pm Mon–Fri Oct–Apr) is located in Palmse, 8km north of Viitna (71km east of Tallinn) in the park's southeast. It's worth getting in touch with them before heading out. For an outstanding personal guide to the park (and to any area in northern Estonia), contact the outgoing and multilingual **Anne Kurepalu** (☎ 569 13786; anne@phpalmse.ee).

Sights & Activities

There is an unlimited amount of sightseeing, hiking, biking and boating to be done here;

remote islands can also be explored. A highlight would be a canoe trip down one of the rivers running through the park; the visitors centre can help organise this. The park has several well-signposted nature trails (a popular one is the Beaver Trail) and cycling paths winding through it. The small coastal towns of **Võsu**, **Käsmu** and **Loksa** are popular seaside spots in summer. Käsmu is a particularly enchanting village, one of Estonia's prettiest. There are also **prehistoric stone barrows** (tombs) at Kahala, Palmse and Vihula, and a **boulder field** on the Käsmu Peninsula.

Lahemaa also features some historic **manor houses**: Kolga, Vihula, Palmse and Sagadi. **Palmse Manor** (adult/student 40/15EEK; ☎ 10am-7pm May-Sep, 10am-1pm Oct-Apr), near the visitors centre, was once a wholly self-contained Baltic-German estate and **Sagadi** was another opulent residence (built in 1749) that now houses the **Forest Museum** (☎ 676 7878; www.sagadi.ee; museum & manor adult/student 30/10EEK; ☎ 10am-6pm May-Sep, by arrangement Oct-Apr) and a hotel (see Sleeping & Eating).

Sleeping & Eating

The visitors centre arranges accommodation to suit every budget and can advise on the best camping spots. Prices are 15 to 20% cheaper from October to April.

Ojaäärse hostel (☎ 628 1532; puhkus@rmk.ee; dm 200-250EEK, s 300EEK; Ⓟ) A dream version of a hostel, this is a lushly converted 1855 farmhouse 1.5km southeast of Palmse right by a lake. Dorms have between two and eight beds, toilets are shared, and there's plenty of room to pitch a tent.

Toomarahva (☎ 325 2511; www.zone.ee/toomarahva; Altiä village; camp sites 25EEK, s/d/2-person barn/apt 400/600/500/800EEK; Ⓟ) 'Rustic' is an cliché, but this lovely guest/farmhouse deserves it. A two-minute walk from the sea in the tiny village of Altiä (10km by road east of Võsu). The split-level barn is bucolic heaven. Other meals beside breakfast can be ordered, and there's bike rental.

Sagadi Hotell (☎ 676 7888; sagadi.hotell@rmk.ee; s/d 700/900EEK; Ⓟ) Stylishly decorated, splendid rooms are available for rent inside the Sagadi manor itself. The most spacious are rooms 2, 4 and 6. In such perfect surroundings, and with a restaurant downstairs, you'll need little else to keep you happy.

Vihula Manor (☎ 322 6985; www.vihulamoi.ee; s 350-500EEK, d 700-1200EEK, ts 800-900EEK; Ⓟ) Probably the park's most impressive accommodation option, this manor, 6km east of Sagadi,

has been lovingly restored with wood paneling and a great attention to detail. There's boat and bike rental.

Getting There & Away

There are about 20 buses daily from Tallinn to Rakvere, which stop at Viitna (40EEK to 60EEK, one hour), and one a day from Tallinn to Võsu (40EEK, 1¼ hours). From Viitna, you can hike or hitchhike to the visitors centre, or call a **taxi** (☎ 509 2326) from Võsu to pick you up. You can bring your bikes on the bus.

NARVA & AROUND

pop 69,000

Estonia's easternmost town is separated only by the thin Narva River from Ivangorod in Russia and is almost entirely populated by Russians. Narva was a Hanseatic League trading point by 1171 and later became embroiled in Russia's border disputes with the German knights and Sweden. Ivan III of Muscovy founded Ivangorod in 1492 and its large castle still menacingly faces Narva's castle, providing a unique and picturesque architectural composition. Narva was almost completely destroyed in WWII.

The **tourist information centre** (☎ 356 0184; www.tourism.narva.ee; Puškini tänav 13) is in the city centre. The bus and train stations are located together at Vaksali tänav 2, opposite the Russian Orthodox Voskresensky Cathedral. Walk north up Puškini tänav to the castle (500m) and the centre.

Sights

Restored after WWII, **Narva Castle**, guarding the Friendship Bridge over the river to Russia, dates from Danish rule in the 13th century. The castle houses the **Town Museum** (☎ 359 9230; adult/student 30/10EEK; ☎ 10am-6pm Wed-Sun). Contact the tourist information centre for night-time, candle-light excursions through the castle, usually on the last Friday of the month. In early August, the **Narva Historic Festival** (teadus@narvamuseum.ee) recreates ancient battles and puts on handicraft displays.

On the square in front of the train station is a **monument** to the Estonians who were loaded into cattle wagons here in 1941 and deported to Siberia. Also worth a visit is the **Kunsti Galerii** (☎ 359 2151; Vestervalli 21; ☎ 10am-6pm Wed-Sun), an excellent art gallery some 500m north of the border point.

About 12km north of Narva is the resort of **Narva-Jõesuu**, popular since the 19th century

for its long, white, sandy beaches. There are many unique, impressive early-20th-century wooden houses and villas throughout the slightly run-down town.

Sleeping & Eating

The tourist information centre can recommend guesthouses, hotels and restaurants.

Hostel Jusian (☎ 356 2656; jusian@hot.ee; Kreenholmi tänav 40; d with shared bathroom 350EEK; Ⓟ) On the bare-bones side, but perfectly comfortable.

Mereranna Hostel (☎ 357 2827; Aia tänav 17; dm/s/d 200/350/400EEK; Ⓟ) Located right by the beach in Narva-Jõesuu, this four-storey complex feels like a mini spa and offers plenty of services.

Hotel King (☎ 357 2404; www.hotelking.ee; Lavestrovi tänav 9; s/d/ste from 690/890/1100EEK; Ⓟ) Just two blocks from the border is your best option in town – a stylish, very comfortable hotel-restaurant (meaty mains from 70EEK).

Modern (☎ 356 0207; Puškini tänav 12; mains from 40EEK) One of Narva's most welcoming spots, this bar-club-café has simple, decent meals and live music, exhibitions or just lots of activity going on.

German Pub (☎ 359 1548; Puškini tänav 10; mains from 60EEK) Cosy pub serving great food (lots of sausages!) in cheerful surroundings.

Getting There & Away

Narva is 210km east of Tallinn on the road to St Petersburg, a further 140km away. From Tallinn there are over 20 buses (95EEK to 120EEK, three to 3½ hours) and a train daily (85EEK, 3½ hours). There are 10 daily buses from Narva to Tartu (85EEK to 110EEK, 3½ hours) and many to nearby cities. Buses go to Narva-Jõesuu throughout the day (10EEK, 20 minutes).

SOUTHEASTERN ESTONIA

Southeastern Estonia comes as a pleasant shock to anyone who knows only the flat north. South of the historic university city of Tartu, a sparsely-populated, attractive region of gently rolling hills and hundreds of lakes opens up. It's also the traditional land of the Setu people, with their own language and customs.

TARTU

pop 100,000

Tartu lays claim to being Estonia's spiritual capital. Locals talk about a special Tartu

vaim, or Tartu spirit, encompassed by the time-stands-still, 19th-century feel of many of its streets, lined with wooden houses, and by the ethereal beauty of its parks and riverfront.

Small and provincial, with the quietly flowing Emajõgi River running through it, it's also a university town with students making up nearly one-fifth of the population; this injects a boisterous vitality into the leafy, serene and pleasant surroundings. During the Student Days festival at the end of April, carnival-like mayhem erupts throughout the city.

Around the 6th century, there was an Estonian stronghold on Toomemägi Hill. In 1030, Yaroslav the Wise of Kyiv is said to have founded a settlement here called Yuriev. The university, founded in 1632, developed into one of the foremost 19th-century seats of learning. The Estonian nationalist revival in the 19th century had its origins here, and Tartu was the location for the first Estonian Song Festival in 1869.

Tartu provides visitors with a truer glimpse of the Estonian rhythm of life than Tallinn, boasts great museums and is a convenient gateway to exploring southern Estonia. It's also undergoing a delayed construction boom and there's a feeling of a bright future ahead.

Orientation

Toomemägi Hill and the area of older buildings between it and the Emajõgi River are the focus of 'old' Tartu. At its heart is Raekoja plats (Town Hall Square). Ülikooli tänav and Rüütli tänav are the main shopping streets; ATMs are scattered throughout the centre.

Information

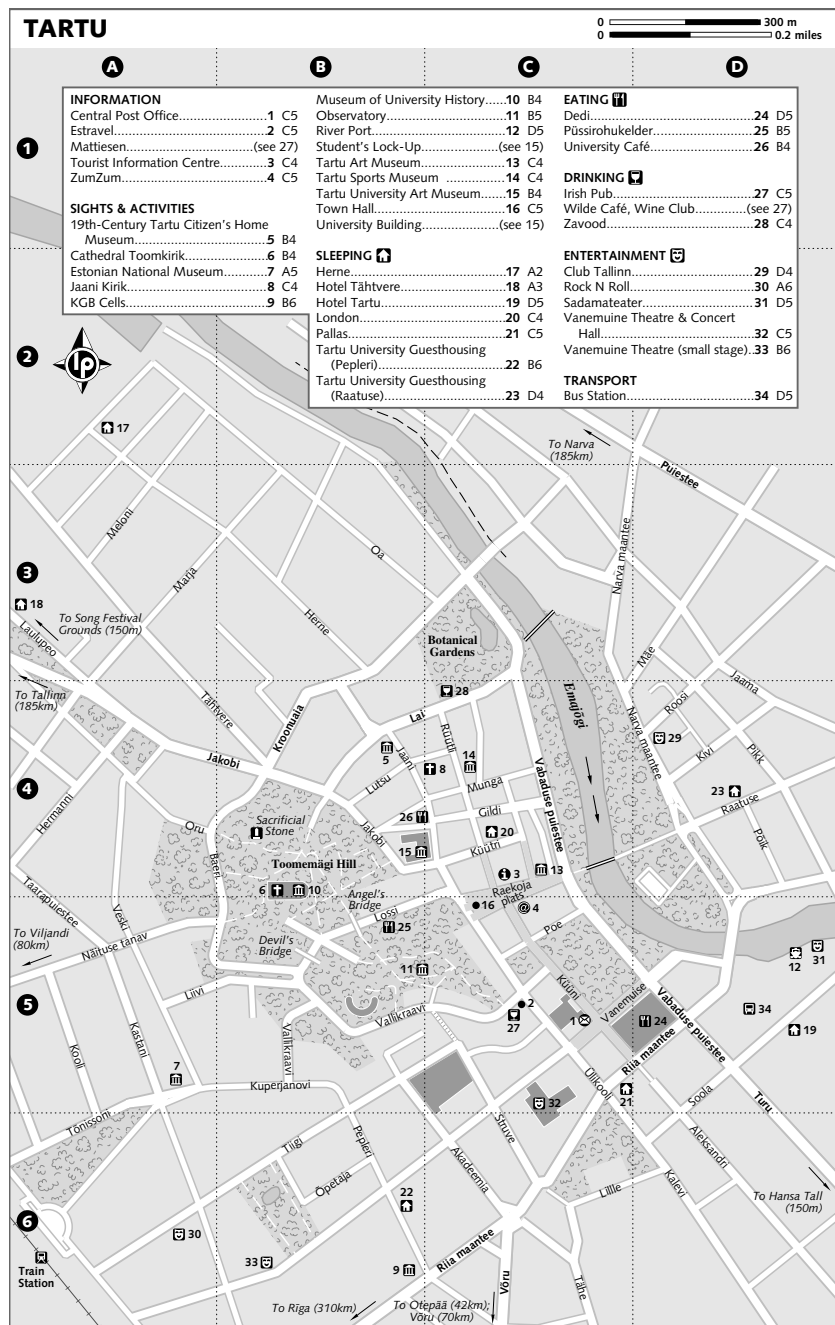
Central post office (☎ 744 0600; Vanemuise tänav 7; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat)

Estravel (☎ 744 0300; www.estravel.ee; Vallikraavi tänav 2) Official Amex agent; can offer general help.

Mattiesen (☎ 730 9721; Vallikraavi tänav 4) Bookshop that stocks an extensive range of maps.

Tourist information centre (☎/fax 744 2111; www.visittartu.com; Raekoja plats 14; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat & Sun) This centre has an excellent range of local maps, books and brochures, can book accommodation and tour guides and sells listings guides. They're also the best to recommend excursions outside the city.

ZumZum (☎ 742 3443; Küüni 2; ☎ 11am-11pm; 25EEK/hr) If you can't enjoy one of the city's 75 wi-fi hotspots, head to this basement internet café.



Sights & Activities

At the town centre on Raekoja plats is the **town hall** (1782–89), topped by a tower and weather vane and fronted by a statue of lovers kissing under an umbrella, an apt, jolly symbol of Tartu. At the other end of the square, the former home of Colonel Barclay de Tolly (1761–1818) is a wonderfully crooked building housing the **Tartu Art Museum** (☎ 744 1080; www.tartmus.ee; Raekoja plats 18; adult/student 25/10EEK; ☹ 11am–6pm Wed–Sun).

The main **university building** (☎ 737 5100; Ülikooli tänav 18) dates from 1803. It houses the **Tartu University Art Museum** (☎ 737 5384; adult/child 8/5EEK; ☹ 11am–5pm Mon–Fri) and **Student's Lock-Up** (adult/child 5/4EEK; ☹ 11am–5pm Mon–Fri), where 19th-century students were held for their misdeeds. Further north, the Gothic brick **Jaani Kirik** (St John's Church; ☎ 744 2229; Jaani tänav 5; free admission), founded in 1330, recently underwent massive reconstruction and boasts its proud collection of some 1000 rare terracotta sculptures surrounding the main portal.

Tartu Sports Museum (☎ 730 0750; Rüütli tänav 15; adult/student 30/20EEK; ☹ 11am–6pm Wed–Sun) showcases much more than Estonian Olympic excellence. There's a sweet display of the life of a 19th-century postman, and excellent temporary exhibits. Nearby, the **19th-Century Tartu Citizen's Home Museum** (☎ 736 1545; Jaani tänav 16; adult/student 8/5EEK; ☹ 10am–4pm Wed–Sun) is worth a peak; inside you can see how a burgher from the 1830s lived – and have a cup of tea.

Rising to the west of Raekoja plats is the splendid Toomemägi Hill, landscaped in the manner of a 19th-century English park and perfect for a leisurely stroll. The 13th-century Gothic **cathedral Toomkirik** at the top was rebuilt in the 15th century, despoiled during the Reformation in 1525, and partly rebuilt in 1804–07 to accommodate the university library, which is now the **Museum of University History** (☎ 737 5674; adult/student 20/5EEK; ☹ 11am–5pm Wed–Sun).

Also on Toomemägi Hill are the 1838 **Angel's Bridge** (Inglisild), with a good view of the city; the 1913 **Devil's Bridge** (Kuradisild); and the **observatory** (☎ 737 6932), open only by special reservation.

Tartu, as the major repository of Estonia's cultural heritage, has an abundance of first-rate museums. Among them is perhaps the country's best: the **Estonian National Museum** (☎ 742 1311; www.erm.ee; Kuperjanovi tänav 9; adult/student 20/14EEK, free Fri; ☹ 11am–6pm Wed–Sun), which

traces the history, life and traditions of the Estonian people. The former KGB headquarters now house the sombre and highly worthwhile **KGB Cells** (☎ 746 1717; Riia mnt 15b; adult/student 5/3EEK; ☹ 11am–6pm Tue–Sat).

For information about Emajõgi River **cruises** from Tartu's **river port** (Sadam; ☎ 734 0026; Soola tänav 5), contact **Laevatöö** (☎ 734 0025). Services run twice-weekly to the remote island of Piirissaar.

Festivals & Events

Some of the country's main sporting events happen in and around Tartu, and all of them have the word 'marathon' attached to them. The **Tartu ski marathon**, a 60km cross-country trek from Otepää, involves hundreds of enthusiastic skiers in mid-February; in May both the **Tartu Bicycle Marathon** (a 136km event; a shorter one is held in September) and the **Tartu Running Race** take place. See www.tartumaraton.ee for details.

Sleeping

BUDGET & MIDRANGE

Hotel Tähtvere (☎ 742 1708; Laulupeo puistete 19; s/d from 125/250EEK; P) A pleasant 1km walk west from the centre, this run-down but perfectly decent place is by a park and concert stadium. It has comfortable, if nondescript, rooms with TV and private toilet. A great deal for the non-fussy!

Herne (☎ 744 1959; Herne tänav 59; per person 225EEK) A 1km walk northwest of the city through a traditionally poor neighbourhood of charismatic wooden houses brings you to this lovely B&B with four rooms and a clean, shared bathroom.

Tartu University Guesthousing (☎ 740 9955; www.kyla.ee; s 250–300EEK, d 400–500EEK; X) Raatuse (Raatuse tänav 22); Pepleri (Pepleri tänav 14) Two student dorms offer cheap, clean, central accommodation. The Raatuse locale is functional but bathrooms are shared between three rooms and morning noise levels are high; better is the more expensive Pepleri, also modern and spiffy, but each room has private toilet. Advance reservations are a must.

Hotel Tartu (☎ 731 4300; Soola tänav 3; dm/s/d 300/725/1075EEK; P) Being across from the bus station doesn't make for the most charming of locations (or views), but this hotel's recently renovated rooms are sleek and comfy. The dorm rooms hold only three and are spotless. There's an additional 15% student discount.

TOP END

Pallas (☎ 730 1200; www.pallas.ee; Riia mnt 4; s/st 995/2000EEK, d 1275-1800EEK; (P) ☎ ☒ ☒) Named after a local art school, this is among the nicest surprises in the country, with many doubles and all suites featuring original art on the walls and ceilings. The views towards town are superb as well. Worth the extra.

London (☎ 730 5555; www.londonhotel.ee; Riiulitänav 9; s 1150, d 1630-2300EEK, ste 2500EEK; (P) ☎ ☒ ☒) The city's only four-star offering is Zen and luxury rolled into one, with the most peaceful lobbies you could imagine and spacious, elegant rooms for the discerning customer.

Eating & Drinking

Dedi (☎ 731 4850; Tartu Kaubamaja, 3rd fl; mains from 35EEK; ☎ ☒) A great two-in-one combo – a sleek café/terrace provides great budget meals while the adjacent bar-restaurant (with magnificent terrace overlooking a park) ups the ante with superb food, cocktails and design.

Püssirohukelder (☎ 730 3555; Lossi tänav 28; mains 40-100EEK) Set majestically in a cavernous old gunpowder cellar, this doubles as a boisterous pub, has hearty meals and the city's largest wine selection.

Wilde Café, Wine Club & Irish Pub (☎ 730 9764; Valikraavi tänav 4; mains from 55EEK) One of the city's most pleasant places to relax, no matter your mood – choose grace and elegance in the café/wine club or something more lively at the upstairs pub (with a killer terrace and great menu).

Hansa Tall (☎ 730 3400; Alexandri tänav 46; mains 70-120EEK) Had enough of slick lounge/bars and want some good old oompah-pah homestyle tradition? Head to this meticulously decked-out tavern. You need not try the chicken gizzards or salted pork fat to enjoy the diverse, hearty menu, live music and even livelier locals.

Zavood (☎ 744 1321; Lai tänav 30) This low-key bar attracts an alternative, down-to-earth

crowd with its inexpensive drinks and lack of attitude. It sometimes features a student band.

Entertainment

Club Tallinn (☎ 740 3157; Narva mnt 27) This often gets the vote as the best club in Estonia. It shines with top-notch DJs, theme evenings and an enthusiastic and fashionable young crowd.

Rock N Roll (☎ 53 434 307; www.rocknroll.ee; Tiigi tänav 76A) An antidote to all the stylish clubs is this den of rock, punk, funk, tattoos and sweat. Hyperbolic, down-to-earth and gritty.

Vanemuine Theatre & Concert Hall (☎ 744 0165, 737 7530; www.vanemuine.ee, www.concert.ee; Vanemuise tänav 6) The first Estonian-language theatre troupe performed here in 1870 and the venue still regularly hosts an array of theatrical and musical performances. It also stages performances at its **small stage** (☎ 744 0160; Vanemuise tänav 45A) and **Sadamateater** (☎ 734 4248; Soola tänav 5B). The latter has a prime location on the banks of the Emajõgi and tends to stage the most modern, alternative productions.

Getting There & Away

Some 50 buses a day run to/from Tallinn (65EEK to 100EEK, 2½ to 3¼ hours). There are also three trains daily (85EEK to 125EEK, 3¼ hours). Tartu is the main hub for destinations in south and south eastern Estonia, and has frequent connections with all other towns, including some 20 buses a day to Pärnu (100EEK to 120EEK, 2¾ hours).

OTEPÄÄ

pop 2200

The small hilltop town of Otepää, 44km south of Tartu, is the centre of a scenic area beloved by Estonians for its hills and lakes – and thus its endless opportunities for sports. The area is dubbed (tongue-in-cheek) as the 'Estonian Alps' as this is where most of the country's skiing activities are centred. There are also well-tended stretches of bike paths.

Orientation & Information

The centre of town is the triangular main 'square', Lipuväljak, with the bus station just off its eastern corner. There you'll find the **Tourist information centre** (☎ 766 1200; www.oteppa.ee; Lipuväljak 13; ☎: 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat & Sun mid-May–mid-Sep, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat

mid-Sep–mid-May). The post office, bank and main food shop are beside the bus station.

Sights & Activities

Otepää's pretty little 17th-century **church** is on a hilltop about 300m northeast of the tourist information centre along Tartu maantee. It was in this church in 1884 that the Estonian Students' Society consecrated its new blue, black and white flag, which later became the flag of independent Estonia. The former vicar's residence now houses two museums: **Eesti Lipu Muuseum** (Flag Museum; ☎ 765 5075) and **Suusamuuseum** (Ski Museum; ☎ 766 3670; suusamuuseum@hotmail.ee). Both can be visited by appointment, or just show up and try your luck.

The tree-covered hill south of the church is the **Linnamägi** (Castle Hill), a major stronghold from the 10th to 12th centuries. There are traces of old fortifications on top, and good views of the surrounding country.

The best views, however, are along the shores of the 3.5km-long **Pühajärv** (Holy Lake) just southwest of town. The lake was blessed by the Dalai Lama and a monument on the eastern shore commemorates his visit in 1992. The lake is the area's main attraction year-round.

It would be a shame to visit and pass by the lovely countryside surrounding the town. To rent bikes, rollerblades, skis and snowboards, and for fun bike and canoe tours, contact **Fan Sport** (☎ 767 7537; www.fansport.ee), which has three offices in Otepää. There's lots to do and see in the **Otepää Nature Park** (☎ 765 5876; Kolga tee 28), which incorporates 232 sq km of the region's lakes, forest and very well-marked hiking trails. Activities can be planned by calling them directly or via the tourist information centre.

Sleeping & Eating

Low season here is April to May and September to November; at this time hotel prices are about 10 to 15% cheaper.

Edgari (☎ 765 4275; www.hot.ee/karnivoor; Lipuväljak 3; s/d from 200/400EEK) One of the cheapest places to stay right in town, this is a guesthouse that feels like a hostel, with thin walls, a shared kitchenette and communal lounge, all in a pleasant but bland atmosphere.

Setanta Irish Pub & Hotel (☎ 766 8200; www.setanta.ee; Nüpli village; d 500-1500EEK; mains 70-100EEK; (P)) Better known for its Irish Pub, this lively place just 3km southeast of Otepää has rooms which

boast great views over Lake Pühajärv. On the minus side, their weekend discos are clearly heard in the rooms.

Pühajärve Spa Hotel (☎ 766 5500; www.pyhajarve.com; Pühajärve village; s/d/ste 700/900/1490EEK; (P) ☎ ☒ ☒) Situated right by the lake, this refurbished complex offers a full range of activities, sports and services.

Getting There & Away

Daily bus services to/from Otepää include Tartu (25EEK to 30EEK, 45 minutes to 1½ hours, 15 daily), Tallinn (100EEK, 3¼ hours, three daily) and Võru (30EEK, 1¼ hours, one daily).

HAANJA NATURE PARK

This 17,000-hectare protected area south of the city of Võru includes some of the nicest scenery in the country and is where several of the best tourist farms in the region are located. The nature park's **headquarters** (☎ 782 9090) in the village of Haanja can provide detailed information about the area as well as hiking and skiing opportunities, though you're more likely to get information in English at the **Tourist information centres in Tartu** (p333) or **Võru** (☎ 782 1881; voru@visitestonia.com). The coolest website devoted to the area is www.haanja.kompass.ee.

Suur Munamägi

Suur Munamägi (literally Great Egg Hill!), 17km south of Võru, is the highest hill in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania at just over 318m, though it's still easy to miss if you're not on the lookout for it. It's covered in trees, though you can climb to the top and then walk up the 29m **observation tower** (☎ 787 8847; adult/student 30/15EEK elevator 60EEK; ☎: 10am-8pm May-Aug, 10am-5pm Sep, 10am-8pm Sat & Sun Oct). On a very clear day you can see Russia, Latvia and lots of lush trees. The summit and tower are a 10-minute climb from the Võru-Ruusmäe road, starting about a kilometre south of the otherwise uninspiring village of Haanja.

SETUMAA

In the far southeastern part of Estonia is the (politically unrecognised) area of Setumaa. Unlike the rest of Estonia, this part of the country never came under the control of the Teutonic and German tribes, but fell under Novgorod's and later Pskov's subjugation. The Setu people, originally Finno-Ugric, then

AUTHOR'S CHOICE

University Café (☎ 737 5405; www.kohvik.ut.ee; Ülikooli tänav 20; mains from 35EEK) Some of the most economical meals in town are waiting at the café/terrace-style 1st-floor café while upstairs is a labyrinth of elegantly decorated rooms that create worlds unto themselves, both Old World grand and embracingly cosy. There, delicious, artfully presented dishes are served.

became Orthodox, not Lutheran. The whole of Setumaa was contained within independent Estonia between 1920 and 1940, but the greater part of it is now in Russia. There are only approximately 4000 Setu left in Estonia (about another 3000 in Russia), half the population of the early 20th century.

Aside from the large, silver breastplate that is worn on the women's national costume, what sets the Setu aside is their singing style, known as *runnoverse*: a phrase is sung by one singer (traditionally the community elder) and then repeated several times by a chorus. There is no musical accompaniment and the overall effect archaic.

Museums worth visiting here include the **Setu House Museum** (adult/student 12/5EEK; ☎ 11am-5pm Tue-Sun May-Oct) in the quaint village of Obinita, where there's also a formidable **stone statue** of the Setu Song Mother lording over a small lake, and the **Setu Farm Museum** (☎ 505 4673; www.hot.ee/setumuseum; Pikk tänav 40; adult/student 20/10EEK; ☎ noon-5pm Tue-Sun) in Väraska. They host the annual Seto Lace Days in early May, a chance to witness Setu handicraft-making. The **tourist information centre** (☎ 785 4190; www.hot.ee/setotour) in Obinita is a good source of information and can advise on a number of local places to stay, including working farms which are always fun for the kids.

There are six daily buses between Tartu and Väraska (70EEK, 1¼ hours), four per day between Tartu and Haanja (55EEK to 70EEK, two to 2½ hours) and one a day between Tartu and Obinita (80EEK, 2½ hours).

WORTH THE TRIP

One of this area's highlights is the **Setomaa Tourist Farm** (☎ 50 87 399; info@setotalu.ee) outside the village of Meremäe, some 7km south of Obinita (you'll need to travel by car or bike to get there). In glorious surroundings, it's possible to partake in traditional Setu arts and crafts, have a smoke sauna and even stay the night in a log house decorated with natural textiles (with prior reservations; camp site 50EEK, s 440EEK, entire house 2800EEK). The food's great, staff super friendly and you have the impression of partaking in tradition without feeling touristy. No one leaves disappointed. It's 1.7km from the village of Meremäe towards Vaatseliina.

SOUTHWESTERN ESTONIA & THE ISLANDS

PÄRNU

pop 43,700

Pärnu (*pair-nu*), 127km south of Tallinn on the road to Riga, is Estonia's leading seaside resort and a magnet for party-loving Estonians and mud cure-seeking Finns. Its name alone is synonymous with fun in the sun. Most of the town, however, is docile, with wide leafy streets and sprawling parks intermingling with grand, turn-of-the-century villas which reflect Pärnu's rich past as a resort capital of the Baltic region.

In the 13th century the Knights of the Sword built a fort here. Pärnu became a Hanseatic port in the 14th century and flourished in the 17th century under Swedish rule. A huge beach and relatively good weather set Pärnu's fate as a resort, and mud baths from the mid-19th century started attracting international visitors. Pärnu is still filled with treatment centres, water parks and of course, watering holes galore.

Information

The town lies on either side of Pärnu River's estuary, which empties into Pärnu Bay.

Central post office (☎ 447 1111; Akadeemia tee 7; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat)

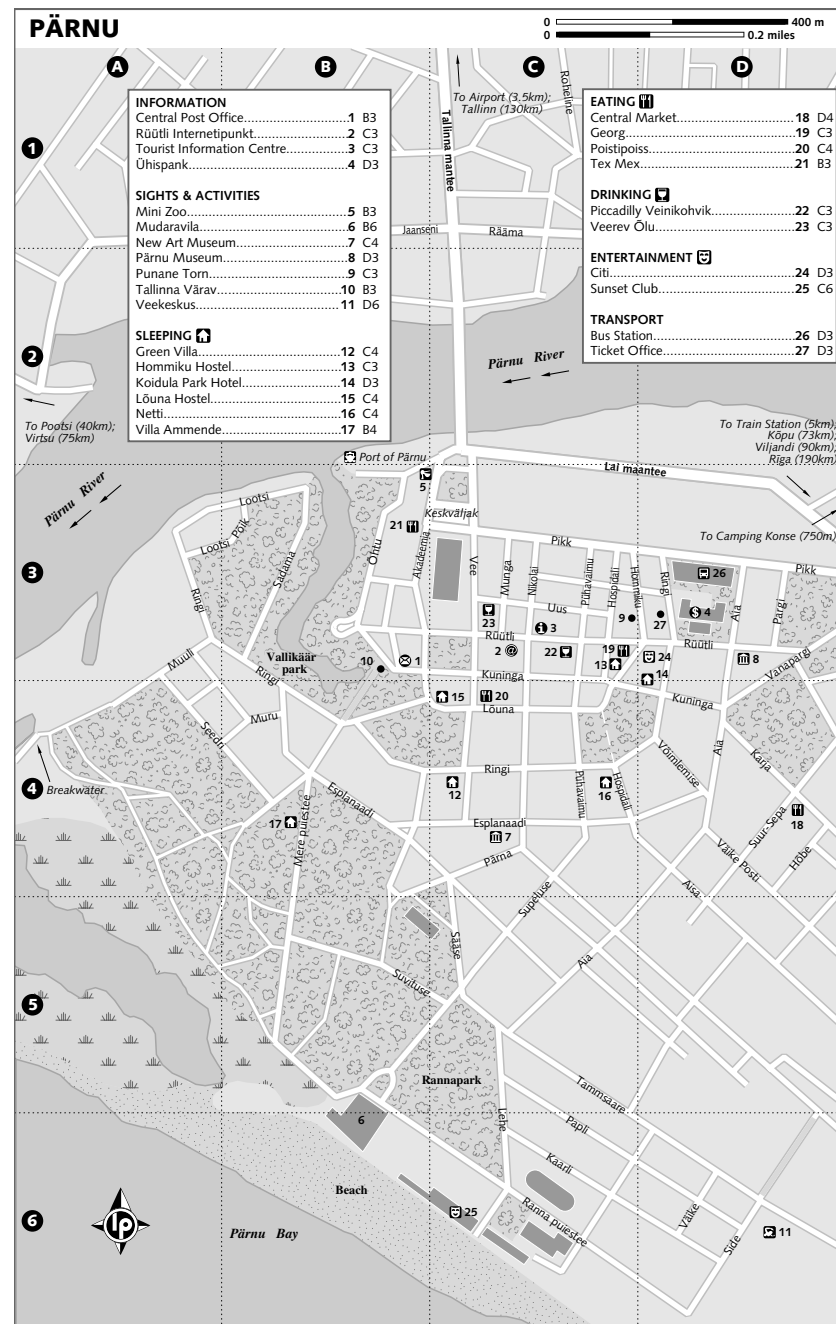
Rüütli Internetipunkt (☎ 443 1552; Rüütli tänav 25; per hr 25EEK; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Fri, to 6pm Sat & Sun) You can access the internet here and at the New Art Museum (p340; per hr 30EEK).

Tourist information centre (☎ 447 3000; www.parnu.ee; Rüütli tänav 16 ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri 10am-4pm Sat & Sun Jun-Aug, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri Sep-May) On the main commercial street in the heart of the Old Town, around 150m southwest of the bus station.

Ühispank (☎ 447 7100; Rüütli tänav 40A) Behind the bus station; cashes travellers cheques and gives cash advances on credit cards.

Sights & Activities

The wide, white-sand beach and Ranna puistee, whose fine buildings date from the early 20th century, are among Pärnu's finest attractions. Note especially the handsome 1927 neoclassical **Mudaravila** (☎ 442 5525; Ranna puistee 1) mud bath cure complex. It is possible to walk west along the coast from here to the 2km stone breakwater that stretches out into the mouth of the river.



A sparkling new water park with pools, slides, tubes and other slippery fun, **Veekeskus** (Water Park; ☎ 445 1166; www.terviseparadiis.ee; Side tänav 14; adult 180-270EEK, student 120-190EEK; ☎ 10am-10pm) is a big draw, especially when bad weather ruins beach plans. Prices dive by as much as 40% from September to May.

The **Punane Torn** (Red Tower; Hommiku tänav 11; adult/student 10/5EEK; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 3pm Sat), the city's oldest (and despite its name, white) building, survives from the days of the Knights of the Sword. Parts of the 17th-century Swedish moat and ramparts remain in Vallikäär Park, including the tunnel-like **Tallinna Värav** (Tallinn Gate) at the western end of Kuninga tänav.

Check out local history and temporary art exhibits at the **Pärnu Museum** (☎ 443 3231; Rütüli tänav 53; adult/student 30/15EEK; ☎ 10am-6pm Wed-Sun). An eclectic collection of snakes, spiders, geckos and passive pythons await you at the worthwhile **Mini Zoo** (☎ 551 6033; Akadeemia tee 1; adult/child 35/15EEK; ☎ 10am-7pm May-Aug, noon-4pm Mon-Fri, 11am-4pm Sat & Sun Sep-Apr).

The **New Art Museum** (☎ 443 0772; www.chaplin.ee; Esplanaadi tänav 10; adult/student 25/10EEK; ☎ 9am-9pm), southwest of the centre, is among Estonia's cultural highlights, with its café, bookshop and exhibitions which always push the cultural envelope. It hosts the ever-popular **Documentary & Anthropology Film Festival** in early July.

Sleeping

Most of Pärnu's sleeping options are up to 40% cheaper outside high season (June to August). Prices listed here are summer prices.

BUDGET

Lõuna Hostel (☎ 443 0943; www.hot.ee/hostellouna; Lõuna tänav 2; dm 200-250EEK, s 500-575EEK, d 500-800EEK, ste 1350EEK) Overlooking a park, this spotless hostel in a grand Jugendstil building offers quality budget accommodation in two- to eight-bed spacious rooms with high ceilings. The shared kitchen doubles as social room, where people exchange fun-in-the-sun tales.

Hommiku Hostel (☎ 445 1122; www.hot.ee/pav; Hommiku tänav 17; s/d/tr 500/800/1000EEK) There are only eight rooms here, each with a kitchenette, TV, spacious bathroom and fluffy blankets. Wow; hostel Estonian style! The catch is that the walls are thin and pipes creaky. There's a triple with its own separate entrance, a dream for privacy lovers.

Camping Konse (☎ 53 435 092; www.konse.ee; Suur-Jõe 44a; tent sites/d/tr from 60/650/850EEK; ☎) Perched on a perfect spot by the river only 1km from the Old Town, they offer tent and camper sites and a variety of bright, perky rooms with shared facilities. There's sauna, rowboat and bike rental. It can get crowded, but that makes it easier to meet people.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Green Villa (☎ 443 6040; www.greenvilla.ee; Vee tänav 21; s/d/tr/ste 600/700-1200/1300/1600EEK; ☎) This refurbished villa is impossible to miss, standing stately and grand in all its greenness. Most rooms have private bathrooms and there's a shared kitchen. The décor is eyesore post-Soviet kitsch, but price and location are right!

Netti (☎ 516 7958; www.nettihotel.ee; Hospidali tänav 11-1; s/ste 800/1200EEK; ☎ ☎) Each room in this amazing place is a suite in and of itself; the price is good for up to four persons. Your vibrant host will make sure you enjoy your stay, and your privacy, to the fullest. One of the best places in the city.

Koidula Park Hotel (☎ 447 7030; www.koidulaparkhotel.ee; Kuninga tänav 38; s/d/tr 870/1190/1700EEK Apr-Oct; ☎ ☎) Serenely facing the leafy Koidula Park in the town's centre is this humble, full-service hotel which boasts the environment-friendly Green Key. Rooms are snug and on the small side, but the Old World elegance makes up for that.

Villa Ammende (☎ 447 3888; www.ammende.ee; Mere puiestee 7; d 1550-3100EEK, ste 4300-6500EEK; ☎ ☎ ☎) If money's no object, this is where to spend it. Class and luxury abound in this fabulously refurbished 1905 Russian Art Nouveau mansion, which lords over sprawling grounds. This hotel-restaurant's gorgeous exterior is matched by an elegant lobby, individually antique-furnished rooms and top-notch service. A dream!

Eating & Drinking

Georg (☎ 443 1110; Rütüli tänav 43; mains 30-55EEK) This smoky cafeteria-style café has the cheapest eats in town. Soups, salads and daily specials for a quick fill-up.

Piccadilly Veinikohvik (☎ 442 0085; Pühavaimu tänav 15; mains from 40EEK) The city's only wine bar offers down-tempo bliss in comfy surroundings, a great wine and tea selection, sumptuous desserts, the largest choice of salads in town and the occasional impromptu concert.

Veerev Õlu (☎ 442 9848; Uus tänav 3A; mains 50-85EEK) This wins Friendliest and Cosiest Pub Award by a long shot – a tiny space with lots of good

vibes, cheap beer and killer live rock-folk bands. It also serves up decent meals.

Tex Mex (☎ 443 0929; Akadeemia tänav 5; mains 50-100EEK) The colourful, cheerful interior is reason enough to chow down here, and the menu boasts a tempting array of first-rate Mexican fare.

Poistipoiss (☎ 446 4862; Vee tänav 12; mains 65-200EEK) One of Pärnu's highlights, this converted 17th-century postal house serves scrumptious, memorable Russian meals. Weekend evenings get mighty gleeful after a few vodka shots.

The **central market** (cnr Karja & Suur-Sepa tänav; ☎ 8am-5pm) is southeast of the centre.

Entertainment

Sunset Club (☎ 443 0670; Ranna puiestee 3) Pärnu's biggest and most famous nightclub, set in a grandiose 1939 seafront building. Imported DJs and bands plus a wild young crowd keep things moving until the early hours.

Citi (☎ 444 1847; Hommiku tänav 8) By far the liveliest spot downtown, this rustic tavern-style bar-café gets rowdy and smoky, but it's a friendly place for quick grub and to meet under-35-year-olds.

Getting There & Away

More than 20 buses daily connect Pärnu with Tallinn (80EEK to 100EEK, two hours). Tickets for a multitude of other destinations, including Riga and beyond, are available at the Pärnu bus station **ticket office** (☎ 447 1002; Ringi tänav; ☎ 5am-8.30pm), across from the bus station. There are also two daily Tallinn–Pärnu trains (60EEK, 2¼ hours), though the train station is an uncomfortable 5km away from the centre, down Riia maantee.

KIHNU & RUHNU ISLANDS

Six-kilometre-long Kihnu (population 530), in the Gulf of Riga 40km southwest of Pärnu, is almost a living museum of Estonian culture. Many of the island's women still wear traditional colourful striped skirts and the community adheres to Orthodox traditions. Transport to and from the island is easy and the number of tourists is increasing every year. Find out more at www.kihnu.ee.

Harder to reach is the remote and tiny Ruhnu (population 100), 100km southwest of Pärnu. For several centuries the island supported a Swedish population of 300, who abandoned it on 6 August 1944 to escape the advancing Red

Army. Traces of the community, including a 1644 **wooden church**, poignantly remain.

Kihnurand Travel Agency (☎ 446 9924; kihnurand@kihnu.ee) on Kihnu is the best agency for arranging full-day or longer excursions there.

There are regular ferries operated by **Veeteed** (☎ 443 1069; www.veeteed.ee; Pärnu) from both the port of Pärnu (adult/student/car/bike 70/35/180/25EEK, 2 hours) and from the **Munalaid port** (☎ 449 6312; adult/student/car/bike 30/15/150/10EEK, 1½hrs) in the village of Pootsi, 40km southwest of Pärnu. Tickets can be purchased at both ports. Regular flights to Kihnu (adult/student 120/30EEK, 15 minutes, one to four times daily) and Ruhnu (adult/student 300/200EEK, 25 minutes, three to four times a week) leave from **Pärnu airport** (☎ 447 5000; www.eepu.ee), a 20-minute ride northwest on bus 23 from the central bus station.

VILJANDI & AROUND

pop 20,500

One of Estonia's most charming towns, Viljandi, 90km east of Pärnu, is a relaxed place to stop for a day or more or to use as a base for exploring the country's largest floodplain and bog area (no laughing!). The town itself, settled since the 12th century, has a gentle 19th-century flow to it. The **tourist information office** (☎ 433 0442; Vabaduse väljak 6; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat & Sun) can help with accommodation and tours and has a computer terminal for free internet access.

A highlight is visiting **Lossimäed** (Castle Park), which sprawls out from behind the tourist information office. A picturesque green area with spectacular views over Lake Viljandi, here are the ruins of a 13th- to 15th-century castle founded by the German Knights of the Sword, open for all to muck about in. The excellent **Kondase Keskus** (☎ 433 3968; Pikk tänav 8; adult/student 15/5EEK; ☎ 10am-7pm Wed-Sun) is the country's only art gallery devoted to *art naïf*.

Some 40km west of Viljandi is the **Soomaa National Park** (☎ 445 7164; www.soomaa.com), a rich land of bogs, marsh, crisscrossing rivers and iron-rich black pools of water, perfect for a quick summer dip. Much more interesting than what the word 'bog' implies, this 37,000-hectare park is full of quirky opportunities: from a walk through the unique landscape of swampland, to a single-trunk canoe trip down one of the rivers, or an unforgettable sauna atop a floating raft. Their summertime night

canoe expeditions offer a mildly spooky way of exploring swampland.

One of Estonia's most popular festivals takes place here in late July, the **Viljandi Folk Festival** (www.folk.ee), which brings out the flower power in everyone.

Sleeping & Eating

The folks at Soomaa National Park can set you up with accommodation on their territory. Viljandi is full of nice pub-restaurants, cafés and B&Bs, which the tourist information office can recommend.

Ingeri (☎ 443 4414; Pikk tänav 2C; s 400, d 500-600EEK; P ☒) This small guesthouse inside a health centre on one of Viljandi's most charming streets has spacious rooms. The largest room is worthwhile for its balcony and views onto Castle Park.

SoSo Juures (☎ 55 665 295; Posti tänav 6; mains from 45EEK) Succulent Armenian cooking in Estonia is found in this unassuming café with outdoor terrace – the *harcho* (spicy lamb and rice soup) and lamb dishes will have you purring.

Tegelaste Tuba (☎ 433 3944; Pikk tänav 2B; mains from 45EEK) Their terrace overlooking the park is the hit at this tavern-style restaurant – as are the comfy interiors on cold, rainy days.

Getting There & Away

Viljandi is served by at least 17 daily buses from Tallinn (90EEK to 105EEK, 2½ hours), 14 from Pärnu (75EEK, 1½ hours) and 15 from Tartu (50EEK to 80EEK, one hour). There is no public transport to the Soomaa National Park, but by car, the well-signposted visitors centre is 24km west of the village of Kõpu, itself 17km west of Viljandi. **Unistar Auto** (☎ 445 5920; www.unistar-auto.ee; Tehnika tänav 2) in Viljandi has cars for rent from 350EEK a day – a convenient way to explore Soomaa National Park.

HIIUMAA

pop 10,500

Hiiumaa, Estonia's second-biggest island, is a quiet, sparsely populated haven, rich in bird life, with some delightful stretches of coast. The commercial centre of the island is Kärda, where you'll find the **tourist information centre** (☎ 462 2232; www.hiiumaa.ee; Hiiu tänav 1; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat & Sun May-Sep, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri Oct-Apr) and most of the island's services, including a bank, post office and supermarket. Get great information about the island from <http://turism.moonsund.ee>.

Sights

The Hiiumaa headquarters of the **Biosphere Reserve of the West Estonian Archipelago** (☎ 462 2101; info@hiiuloodus.ee; Vabriku väljak 1; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri) and the tourist information centre can organise boat trips (from 200EEK per hour for up to five persons) and advise on other nature tourism opportunities around the Takhuna Peninsula, Käina Bay and Hiiumaa Islets reserve.

Headquartered 3km from Lihula on the mainland, the **Matsalu Nature Reserve** (☎ 472 4236; www.matsalu.ee), encompassing coastal areas on both the mainland and on Hiiumaa, is a prime migration stopover and an essential destination for bird enthusiasts.

Other attractions on Hiiumaa are its light-houses; **Kõpu Peninsula** was the site of an ancient 16th-century lighthouse (although the present one dates from 1845). Another guaranteed memory for life is the walk along the 3km **Sääre Tõpp** on the southern coast of Kassari; it's a narrow spit of land and rock which winds ever thinner into the sea.

At **Suuremõisa**, 6km inland from Heltermaa port, you can explore the majestic grounds of the late-baroque **Suuremõisa manor & park** (adult/student 15/5EEK; ☎ 10am-5pm May-Sep).

Sleeping & Eating

The Kärda tourist information centre can advise on a range of accommodation options throughout Hiiumaa. Most hotels cut their rates by up to 30% from September to April.

Allika Guesthouse (☎ 462 9026; www.allika.com; Suuremõisa; s from 500, d 700-1000EEK) Part of the very green, gorgeous Suuremõisa castle complex, this was originally the servant's quarters. The rooms are airy, country-style but vibrantly modern.

Padu Hotel (☎ 463 3037; Heltermaa mnt 22; s/d/st 600/750/900EEK; P) A convenient place in the centre of Kärda, it boasts older and newer wings, each tastefully decorated, inviting and comfy-cosy.

Adramadrus (☎ 443 2082; Vabaduse tänav 15, Kärda; mains from 50EEK) This is the perfect place to try out the locally brewed beers: the old-style tavern feel is warm and inviting, and the menu is varied.

Vetsi Tall (☎ 462 2550; Kassari; tent space/trailer space/s/d 50/200/220/440EEK; P) Located on the road to Orjaku on the sparse, scenic Kassari peninsula in the south of Hiiumaa, this is a camping

ground with a sense of humour; the wooden cabins are round, log-shaped. Tiny too!

Getting There & Away

SSC (☎ 452 4444; www.laevakompanii.ee) operates ferries between Rohuküla and Heltermaa (adult/student/car 25/12/75EEK, 1½ hours, four to six times daily). Two daily buses from Tallinn travel with the ferry directly to Kärda or Käina (160EEK, 4½ hours). **Avies Air** (☎ 605 8022; www.avies.ee) flies between Tallinn and Kärda (adult/student one way 245/215EEK, 30 minutes, once or twice daily).

SAAREMAA

pop 35,700

Saaremaa (literally 'island land') is synonymous to Estonians with space, spruce, peace, fresh air and killer beer. Tourists would add 'charming, rustic villages, remains of WWII, a meteorite crater and a fairy-tale castle' to the list – plus second the vote for beer! Saaremaa has a long history of beer home-brewing, and even its factory-produced brew has a great reputation. Tuulik and Tehumardi are the most popular (but don't mention that they're now brewed in Tartu). The country's second-biggest beer festival takes place in the end of July.

During the Soviet era, the entire island was off-limits (due to an early-radar system and rocket base). This unwittingly resulted in a minimum of industrial build-up and the protection of the island's rural charm. Estonia's largest island offers idyllic getaways among juniper groves or along poetically deserted stretches of coastline.

Orientation & Information

To reach Saaremaa you must first cross Muhu, the small island where the ferry from the mainland docks and which is connected to Saaremaa by a 2.5km causeway. Kuressaare, the capital of Saaremaa, on the south coast is a natural base for visitors.

Kuressaare's **tourist information office** (☎ 453 3120; www.saaremaa.ee; Tallinna tänav 2; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat, to 3pm Sun May-Sep, to 5pm Mon-Fri Oct-Apr) can help you make the best of your stay. Internet access is available at **Kultuurikeskus** (Tallinna mnt 6; per hr 20EEK; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat).

You can change money at the bus station or at any of the several banks on Raekoja plats. The **post office** (Torni mnt 1) is north of the town square.

Sights

The yellow **town hall** in the main Raekoja plats (Town Hall Sq) dates from 1654. Opposite stands the baroque **Weighing House** built in 1663.

The island's most distinctive landmark is the fantastic **Bishop's Castle** (1338-80) at the southern end of the town. It looks plucked from a fairy tale, and now houses the **Saaremaa Regional Museum** (☎ 455 6307; adult/child 30/15EEK; ☎ 11am-7pm May-Sep, 11am-7pm Wed-Sun Oct-Apr).

At Angla, 40km from Kuressaare just off the road to the harbour on the Leisi road, is a photogenic group of five **windmills** by the roadside. Two kilometres away, along the road opposite the windmills, is **Karja church**, a striking 13th- to 14th-century German Gothic church.

At Kaali, 18km from Kuressaare on the road towards Muhu, is a 110m-wide, water-filled **crater** formed by a meteorite at least 3000 years ago. In ancient Scandinavian mythology the site was known as 'the sun's grave'. It's Europe's largest and most accessible meteorite crater, but looks mighty tiny up close!

Saaremaa's magic can really be felt along the **Sõrve Peninsula**, jutting out south and west of Kuressaare. This sparsely populated strip of land saw some of the heaviest fighting in WWII. Some bases and antitank defence lines still stand. A bike or car trip along the coastline provides some of the most spectacular sights on the island. Several daily buses from Kuressaare bus station head down the coast of the peninsula. Yet a trip anywhere on this island is likely to be memorable – particularly the sparsely populated, wilder northwestern section.

Tours

Arensburg travel agency (☎ 453 3360; abr@tt.ee; Tallinna mnt 25, Kuressaare) This reliable agency offers many tours, specialising in boat trips to remote islands such as Abruka.

Saaremaa Reisibüroo (☎ 455 5079; Lossi tänav 11, Kuressaare) Another group of winners who can help arrange your excursions.

Sleeping

The tourist information office can organise beds in private apartments throughout the region. Farm stays are available across the island. Hotel prices are up to 40% cheaper September through April.

Kämping Mändjala (☎ 454 4193; www.mandjala.ee; camp site/cabin per person/double 25/160/700EEK (P)) Just 10km west of Kuressaare is this pleasant, well-organised camping ground, with cabins and separate houses for two to four persons. Buses from Kuressaare to Torgu or Sääre (three per day) go to the Mändjala bus stop. There are water-sporting possibilities.

Saaremaa School Hostel (☎ 455 4388; www.syg.edu.ee; Kingu tänav 6, Kuressaare; dm 130-145EEK, s/d 250/350EEK) A very cool hostel; being attached to a school, there's a small gym and internet room. A bonus is that dorm rooms hold no more than four persons. On the minus side, there hasn't been much renovation here in ages.

Lossi Hotel (☎ 453 3633; lossihotell@tt.ee; Lossi tänav 27, Kuressaare; s/d/ste 1090/1350/1750EEK; ♿) Located right on the castle grounds, this dainty little hotel is a nice slice of a dream come true, with an Art Nouveau touch. The main attraction here is the castle and surrounding park right at your doorstep. Mosquitoes love the nearby moat, however, so arm yourself!

Pädaste Manor (☎ 454 8800; www.padaste.ee; Pädaste village, Muhu; s/d/ste from 1740/2425/4305EEK; (P) ♿) In recent years, this manor has distinguished itself from all others in offering ridiculously beautiful scenery plus a combination of stunningly but humbly furnished rooms, one of the best restaurants in the country, a small spa with alternative therapies and a full menu of activities including horseback riding and fishing.

Eating & Drinking

Wildenbergi (☎ 454 5325; Tallinna mnt 1, Kuressaare) The atmosphere is so inviting in this subdued, elegant café/bar, time seems to have stopped within. Some of the island's best coffees, teas and cakes are the main draw.

Kalaküla (☎ 538 58966; Jõepepa village; mains from 80EEK) You came all the way to Saaremaa; you need to try the fish. This is your best bet – fresh fish served up deliciously in idyllic surroundings. It's 25km north east of Kuressaare on the main road to Muhu and Tallinn.

Veski (☎ 453 3776; Päma tänav 19, Kuressaare; meals 45-145EEK; (P)) How often can you say you've dined inside a windmill? Without being too touristy, this place keeps both quality and ambience at a premium. There are some vegetarian choices, plus a children's menu.

La Perla (☎ 453 6910; Lossi tänav 3, Kuressaare; mains 50-120EEK) Right off Raekoja plats, this homy Italian restaurant is the island's gastronomic

saviour – some of the best food in Saaremaa is found here.

Getting There & Around

A year-round vehicle ferry runs throughout the day from Virtsu on the mainland to the island of Muhu, which is joined by a causeway to Saaremaa. At least eight direct buses daily travel each way between Tallinn and Kuressaare (170EEK to 200EEK, 4½ hours) via the ferry. There are also three daily buses to/from Tartu (205EEK to 225EEK, five hours), and Pärnu (200EEK to 220EEK, five hours). **Avies Air** (☎ 605 8022; www.avies.ee) flies from Tallinn to Kuressaare twice per day Monday to Friday and once on Sunday (adult/student one way 350/255EEK, 45 minutes).

ESTONIA DIRECTORY

ACCOMMODATION

Finding a decent place to lay your head in Estonia is not a problem; even budget (roughly defined in this chapter as places offering beds for under 350EEK per night) places far afield tend to be tasteful, clean and very orderly. Tallinn has a glut of amazing top-end hotels (defined here as places charging over 1200EEK per double) with full services and luxuries, and a so-so selection of midrange choices, however in smaller towns and villages it shouldn't be a problem finding budget accommodation at a B&B or hostel for under 300EEK per person. HI cards are widely accepted in most hostels. There are a few *kämpingud* (camping grounds; open from mid-May to September) that allow you to pitch a tent, but most consist of permanent wooden cabins, with communal showers and toilets. Places are listed in our Sleeping sections in order of ascending price.

Farms and homestays offer more than a choice of rooms and in many cases meals, sauna and a wide range of activities are on offer. Your best bet would be to book via the regional tourist information centres throughout Estonia. There's a search engine at www.visitestonia.com for all types of accommodation throughout the country.

ACTIVITIES

Many travel agencies can arrange a variety of activity-based tours of Estonia. A detailed list of companies keeping tourists active can be found at www.turismiweb.ee. **Matkad.ee** (☎ 508

7600; www.matkad.ee; Kadaka puistete 31, Tallinn) is an excellent contact. It organises superb rafting, canoe (daytime as well as night) and hiking trips among other things, and can tailor-make an expedition to suit your desired adrenaline levels. **Raeturist** (☎ 668 8400; www.raeturist.ee; Narva mnt 13A, Tallinn), offers a nine-day bicycle trip throughout Estonia. **Jalgrattakeskus** (☎ 637 6779; Tartu mnt 73, Tallinn), rents bicycles by the hour with deals for long-term rentals.

Cross-country skiing is extremely popular. Head to Otepää (p336) where there are several ski centres that hire out equipment. See www.otepaa.ee for more information.

The word scuba diving is more associated with Egypt and Thailand than Estonia with its frigid Baltic waters, but the devoted crew at **Maremark** (☎ 601 3446; www.maremark.ee; L Koidula 38, Tallinn) offer introductory courses and organises events for amateurs and professionals alike all summer long. Thrilling sea kayaking excursions, as well as other ecofriendly activities are offered by the highly recommended **Reimann Retked** (☎ 511 4099; www.retked.ee).

BUSINESS HOURS

Shops are generally open every day in Estonia, from 9am to 6pm or 7pm Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm Saturday and Sunday. Food shops and supermarkets are mainly open until 11pm every day. Alcohol can only be sold until 11pm. Restaurants are generally open from 11am to 11pm Sunday to Friday and until 1am or 2am on Friday and Saturday. Cafés often open at 8am and close by 9pm. Clubs are generally open Wednesday to Saturday from 10pm to 5am or 6am. Only exceptions to this general rule are listed in the text.

CUSTOMS

If arriving from another EU country, the limits for alcohol and tobacco are generous; see www.customs.ee for the latest restrictions. Antique objects made outside Estonia before 1850 or in Estonia before 1945 need special permits to be taken out of the country; these can be obtained from the **National Heritage Board** (☎ 640 3050; www.muinas.ee; Uus tänav 18).

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

For up-to-date contact details of Estonian diplomatic organisations as well as foreign embassies and consulates in Estonia, contact the **Estonian Foreign Ministry** (☎ 637 7000; www.vm.ee; Islandi Väljak 1, Tallinn).

Estonian Embassies & Consulates

Australia (☎ 02 9810 7468; estikon@ozemail.com.au; 86 Louisa Rd, Birchgrove, Sydney NSW 2041)

Canada (☎ 1-613-789 4222; www.estemb.ca; 260

Dalhousie St, Suite 210 Ottawa, Ontario K1N 7E4)

Finland (☎ 9-622 0260; www.estemb.fi; Itäinen

Puistotie 10, 00140 Helsinki)

France (☎ 01-56 62 22 00; 46, rue Pierre Charron, 75008 Paris)

Germany Berlin (☎ 30-25 460 600; www.estemb.de; Hildebrandstrasse 5 10785 Berlin); Hamburg

(☎ 40-450 40 26; Badestrasse 38, 20143 Hamburg)

Ireland (☎ 1-219 6730; embassy.dublin@mfa.ie; Riversdale House St Ann's, Ailesbury Rd, Dublin)

Latvia (☎ 781 20 20; www.estemb.lv; Skolas iela 13, Riga)

Lithuania (☎ 5-278 0200; www.estemb.lt; Mickeviciaus gatvė 4a, Vilnius)

Netherlands (☎ 3120-316 5440; embassy.hague@mfa .nl; Snipweg 101, 1118 DP Schiphol)

Russia Moscow (☎ 495-290 5013; www.estemb.ru; ul Malo Kislavsky 5, 103009 Moscow); St Petersburg

(☎ 812-702 0920; Bolshaya Monetnaya ul 14, St Petersburg)

Sweden (☎ 08-5451 2280; www.estemb.se; Tyrgatan 3, Stockholm)

UK (☎ 020-7589 3428; www.estonia.gov.uk; 16 Hyde Park Gate, London SW7 5DG)

USA Washington DC (☎ 202-588 0101; www.estemb.org; 2131 Massachusetts Ave, NW, Washington DC 20008); New York (☎ 212-883 0636; www.nyc.estemb.org; 600 3rd Ave, 26th fl, New York, NY)

Embassies & Consulates in Estonia All embassies and consulates are in Tallinn unless otherwise indicated.

Australia (☎ 650 9308; mati@standard.ee; Marja tänav 9)

Canada (☎ 627 3311; tallinn@canada.ee; Toomkooli tänav 13)

Finland (☎ 610 3200; www.finland.ee; Kohtu tänav 4)

France (☎ 631 1492; www.ambafrance-ee.org; Toom-Kuninga tänav 20)

Germany (☎ 627 5300; www.tallinn.diplo.de; Toom-Kuninga tänav 11)

Ireland (☎ 681 1888; embassytallinn@eircom.net; Vene tänav 2)

Latvia (☎ 627 7850; embassy.estonia@mfa.gov.lv; Tõnismägi tänav 10)

Lithuania (☎ 641 2014; www.hot.ee/lietambasada; Uus tänav 15)

Netherlands (☎ 680 5500; www.netherlandsembassy .nl; Rahukohtu tänav 4-1)

Russia Tallinn consulate (☎ 646 4146; www.estonia.mid .ru; Lai tänav 18); Narva (☎ 356 0652; konsol@narvanet .ee; Kiriku tänav 8)

Sweden (☎ 640 5600; www.sweden.ee; Pikk tänav 28)
UK (☎ 667 4700; www.britisembassy.ee; Wisnari tänav 6)
USA (☎ 668 8100; www.usemb.ee; Kentmanni tänav 20)

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Estonia has a busy festival calendar, encompassing all kinds of cultural interests. A good list of upcoming major events throughout Estonia can be found at www.culture.ee.

All-Estonian Song Festival (www.laulupidu.ee) Convenes every five years and culminates in a 30,000-strong traditional choir, due in Tallinn in 2009.

Baltika International Folk Festival A week of music, dance and displays focusing on Baltic and other folk traditions, this festival is shared between Riga, Vilnius and Tallinn; the next one will be in Tallinn in June 2007.

Jaanipäev (St John's Eve; Jun 23) The biggest occasion in Estonia; a celebration of the pagan Midsummer's Night, best experienced far from the city along a stretch of beach where huge bonfires are lit for all-night parties.

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

While open displays of same-sex affection are infrequent in Estonia, the overall attitude is more of curiosity and openness than antagonism. For more information, you can contact the **Estonian Gay League** (☎ 653 4812; gayliit@hotmail.com), or **Mea Culpa** (☎ 645 4545; info@meaculpa.ee), both NGOs. A repository of all that is gay in Estonia can be found at www.gay.ee. Tallinn has its own Gay Pride Week in early August (www.pride.ee).

HOLIDAYS

New Year's Day 1 January

Independence Day 24 February

Good Friday & Easter March/April

Spring Day 1 May

Victory Day (1919; Battle of Võnnu) 23 June

Jaanipäev (St John's Day; Midsummer's Night) 24 June

Day of Restoration of Independence (1991) 20 August

Christmas Day 25 December

Boxing Day 26 December

LANGUAGE

Like Finnish, Estonian belongs to the Finno-Ugric family of languages. It's a fantastically difficult language to learn, with 14 cases and a lack of gender, double infinitives, articles and even a lack of the future tense. Most every Estonian in Tallinn speaks at least some English, and those under 25 speak it fluently. Elsewhere in the country, people have at least

some knowledge of English. Fewer Russians speak English as fluently.

A growing number of Russians in Estonia speak Estonian, and most Estonians speak some Russian.

See the Language chapter at the back of the book for pronunciation guidelines and useful words and phrases.

MONEY

Estonia introduced its own currency, the kroon (EEK; pronounced krohn) in June 1992; it's now pegged to the euro. The kroon comes in two, five, 10, 25, 50, 100 and 500EEK notes. One kroon is divided into 100 sents, and there are coins of 10, 20 and 50 sents, as well as one- and five-kroon coins. The euro is expected to be introduced as common currency in 2008.

The best foreign currencies to bring into Estonia are euros and US dollars, although all Western currencies are readily exchangeable.

All major credit cards are widely accepted; Visa is the most common, Amex the least. Most banks (but not stores and restaurants) accept travellers cheques, but their commissions can be high. There are frequent student, pensioner and group discounts on transport, in museums and in some shops upon presentation of accredited ID.

The *käibemaks* consumption tax (VAT), levied on most goods and services, is 18%. Tipping in service industries has become the norm, but generally no more than 10% is expected.

POST

Mail service in and out of Estonia is highly efficient. There is a poste restante bureau, where mail is kept for up to one month, at Tallinn's **central post office** (Narva mnt 1, Tallinn 10101). To post a letter up to 20g to Europe/rest of the world costs 6.50/8EEK.

TELEPHONE

All telephone numbers in Estonia are written as full seven-digit numbers, the first two of which used to be indicated separately as regional codes. To call Estonia from abroad, dial the country code ☎ 372 followed by the seven digit local number or the seven or eight digit mobile phone number, which always begins with ☎ 5. There is no international operator here: the regular operator (no English spoken) is ☎ 165.

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

- 24-hour roadside assistance ☎ 1188
- Fire, ambulance and urgent medical advice ☎ 112
- Police ☎ 110
- Tallinn's First Aid hotline ☎ 697 1145 can advise you in English about the nearest treatment centres

VISAS

Ensure your passport will last at least two months more than your travels. Citizens of EU countries, plus Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the USA and many other countries can enter Estonia visa-free for a maximum 90-day stay over a six-month period. South African citizens need a visa to enter, though if they already possess a visa for Latvia or Lithuania they can enter on that visa.

Visa regulations are constantly changing, so check with an Estonian consulate or embassy or directly with the **Estonian Foreign Ministry** (☎ 631 7600; www.vm.ee; Islandi Väljak 1, Tallinn). Note that visas cannot be obtained at the border.

TRANSPORT IN ESTONIA

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

The national carrier **Estonian Air** (code 0V; ☎ 640 1101; www.estonian-air.ee; Vabaduse väljak 10) links Tallinn with some 20 cities in Europe and Russia, and at reasonable prices. Other airlines serving **Tallinn airport** (www.tallinn-airport.ee), include **Air Baltic** (code BT; ☎ 640 7750; www.airbaltic.com), which has flights to Vilnius and **Finnair** (code AY; ☎ 611 0905; www.finnair.com), with flights to Helsinki.

Copterline (www.copterline.ee) runs pricey helicopter flights between Helsinki and Tallinn's Copterline Terminal, at the Linnahall harbour, nearly hourly from 7am to 7pm weekdays (one way 1395EEK to 3100EEK, 18 minutes).

Land

BUS

Buses are the cheapest but least comfortable way of reaching the Baltics. **Eurolines** (☎ 680 0909; www.eurolines.ee; Bus Station, Lastekodu tänav 46, Tallinn) connects Tallinn with several cities in

Germany and Poland, and from there to cities throughout Europe. Direct services connect Tallinn to Riga (200EEK to 230EEK, five to 5½ hours, ten daily) and Vilnius (430EEK, 10½ hours, two daily).

Buses leave Tallinn for St Petersburg five times daily (270EEK to 350EEK, eight hours). There is also one bus from Tallinn to Kaliningrad daily (350EEK, 15 hours).

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

From Finland, just put your vehicle on a Helsinki-Tallinn ferry. If approaching Estonia from the south or Western Europe, make sure to avoid crossing through Kaliningrad or Belarus – not only will you need hard-to-get visas for these countries, you are likely to face hassles from traffic police and encounter roads in abominable conditions!

TRAIN

An overnight train runs every evening between Moscow and Tallinn (870/530EEK in 2nd/3rd class, 15½ hours) operated by **GO Rail** (☎ 615 6850; www.gorail.ee). There is currently no train service to St Petersburg.

Sea

FINLAND

About 25 ferries, hydrofoils and catamarans cross between Helsinki and Tallinn daily. Ferries make the crossing in 2½ to 3½ hours, hydrofoils in just over an hour. All companies provide concessions, allow pets and bikes (for a fee) and charge higher prices for weekend travel. Expect to pay around the price of an adult ticket extra to take a car. Prices are considerably cheaper for ships operating mid-August through May. There's lots of competition, so check all the companies for their special offers and packages.

Tallink (☎ 640 9808; www.tallink.ee) runs up to three ferries and seven catamarans daily. Ferry tickets start from 280EEK and catamaran tickets cost from 390EEK to 670EEK. **Lindaline** (☎ 699 9333; www.lindalini.ee) makes up to eight hydrofoil crossings each way daily (single/return 450/660EEK), leaving from the Linnahall harbour (behind the huge, monstrous concrete edifice). **Eckerö Line** (☎ 631 8606; www.eckeroline.ee) operates a daily car-carrying catamaran from Terminal B, making the crossing in 3½ hours (single/return 345/380EEK, cabins from 310EEK).

Nordic Jet Line (☎ 613 7000; www.njl.ee) has several car-carrying catamarans departing

Terminal C, making the trip in around 1½ hours, seven times a day (single tickets from 420EEK). **Silja Line** (☎ 611 6661; www.silja.ee) has ferries and catamarans leaving from terminal A (singles from 520EEK) and offer worthwhile day-trip packages to Helsinki. **Viking Line** (☎ 666 3966; www.vikingline.ee) operates large car ferries, departing twice daily from Terminal A (single from 735EEK).

SWEDEN

Tallink (☎ 640 9808; www.tallink.ee) runs nightly ferries from Tallinn's Terminal D to Stockholm (from 360EEK up to 5740EEK for a luxury suite, 15 hours), as well as daily ferries from Paldiski, 52km west of Tallinn, to Kappelskär near Stockholm (from 375EEK, 12 hours). There are reductions for students and children under 18. Tickets should be booked well in advance in Tallinn or Stockholm's Free Harbour **Frihamnen** (☎ 08-667 0001).

GETTING AROUND

Air

Avies Air (☎ 605 8022; www.avies.ee) operates flights from Tallinn to Kuressaare on Saaremaa once or twice daily from Sunday to Friday, and daily flights to Kärdla on Hiiumaa. Flights to the island of Ruhnu leave from **Pärnu airport** (☎ 447 5000; www.eepu.ee).

Bicycle

Estonia is small and predominantly flat with relatively good roads and light traffic – perfect for this green mode of travel. As few locals cycle within main cities, be wary of inconsiderate motorists. However, between cities, cycling has exploded in recent years as a sport and mode of transport. Estonia has some 4000km of well-signed bike trails crisscrossing its territory and is working hard to develop ecotourism. There are Tallinn cycling road maps at www.tallinn.ee, listed under public transport timetables, and on sale at bookstores.

Bus

Buses are a good option, as they're more frequent, and faster than trains, and cover many destinations not serviced by the limited rail network.

Buses to within about 40km of Tallinn leave from the local bus station beside the train station. Information and timetables can be had via **Harju Liinid** (☎ 644 1801; ☎ 24hr). For detailed bus information and advance tickets for all other country destinations, contact the central bus station **Autobussijaam** (☎ 680 0900; www.bus.sireisid.ee; Lastekodu tänav 46; ☎ 6.30am-9pm).

Car & Motorcycle

An International Driving Permit (IDP) is necessary, as are your vehicle's registration papers and compulsory accident insurance, which can be bought at border crossings. Fuel and service stations are widely available, though spare parts for sports or luxury cars might be hard to find.

In general, Estonian drivers are reasonably compliant with the laws and quite vigilant for police traps, which are nonetheless relatively few. Speed limits are changed yearly, even seasonally, depending on the previous year's accident record on the respective routes. Intercity speed limits are usually 90 to 100km/h, with some stretches up to 110km/h. Anyone stopped for speeding will have their breath analysed; the blood-alcohol limit is 0.02%. Wearing a seatbelt is compulsory but not strictly enforced. Road conditions between towns tends to be decent to good – most are well-maintained and very safe to drive on; within cities they are not always as good.

Train

Trains are slower and rarer than buses; the most frequent trains service the suburbs of Tallinn. Regional train schedules are listed at www.edel.ee. The affordable first-class wagon on trains to Tartu make a great alternative to bus travel.

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