Destination: Estonia

Relocation Guide

Estonia.eu

Positively surprising

WELCOME TO ESTONIA™

REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA

CAPITAL

Tallinn

AREA

45,227 sq. km

POPULATION

1,315,000

CURRENCY

Euro

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On the cover: Reet Aus PhD, designer. Lives and works in Estonia. Photo by Madis Palm
The Relocation Guide was written in cooperation with Talent Mobility Management www.talentmobility.ee

1. COUNTRY OVERVIEW

Key Facts and Figures

Capital city:
Tallinn

Official name:
Republic of Estonia

Official language:
Estonian

Population:
1.31 million
(2014)

Total area:
45,227 sq. km
(17,462 sq. mi.)

Government:
Parliamentary democracy

National flag

Calling code:
+372

Drives on the right

Units of measure:
Metric system

Electricity:
220 V

Member of
EU, NATO, OECD, WTO, Schengen zone

Currency:
Euro (€)

112

Emergency number:
112

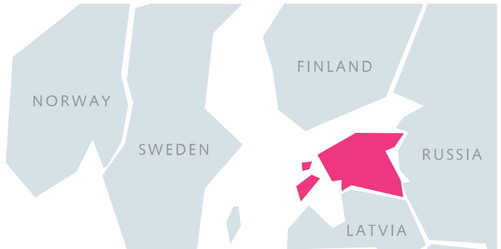
Time zone:
UTC+2

Main cities

Helsinki	85 km
Riga	310 km
St. Petersburg	350 km
Stockholm	375 km

Number of islands: 1,521. The largest islands are Saaremaa, Hiiumaa and Muhu.

Number of lakes: More than 1,400. The largest lakes are Peipsi and Võrtsjärv.



Geography

Estonia is located on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea, being the northernmost of the three **Baltic States.** Estonia is one of Europe's smallest countries, almost the same size as Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland or Denmark.

Estonia is a lowland country, with about half of its mainland covered with **forests.** Estonia has the world's largest exploited deposits of **oil shale,** which provide raw materials for power production and the chemical industry. Of other mineral resources, Estonia has limestone, dolomite, sand, gravel and clay.

Climate and Weather

The climate in Estonia is **temperate** and milder than would be expected from such a northern latitude (thanks to the warm maritime air). The weather is very **variable,** with strong winds, high precipitation and fluctuations in temperature.

There are **four seasons** of virtually equal length.

Estonia has great seasonal variation in daylight. In winter, the days are short and dark; in summer, the days are long. The longest day of the year is 21 June with 19 hours of full daylight.

Summer

The average temperature in summer (June to August) is 18°C, however, the temperature might go up to 30 °C for shorter periods.

Autumn

Autumn (September to October) is typically the wettest season, although rainfall can occur during any month of the year.

Winter

Winter (November to February) can be fairly cold with a lot of snow, and the temperature may drop below –20°C, usually in January or February.

Spring

Spring arrives in March or April and is usually sunny but chilly.

Additional Information: Estonian Weather Service www.ilmateenistus.ee

Population

Estonia is one of the **smallest countries in Europe** in terms of population. Within the EU, only Cyprus, Malta and Luxembourg have smaller populations. Out of 1.31 million people, 68% live in cities with about one-third (approximately 400,000 inhabitants) of the total population living in the **capital city of Tallinn,** which is also the biggest city. The other main cities are Tartu with 98,000 and Narva with 65,000 inhabitants.

The largest ethnic groups

Estonians (69%)

Russians (26%)

Ukrainians (2%)

Belarusians (1%)

Finns (1%)

Additional Information: Statistics Estonia www.stat.ee

Language

The official language in Estonia is **Estonian,** which belongs to the Finno-Ugric language family and is closely related to Finnish. Estonian is different from the other Baltic languages – Latvian and Lithuanian – and from Russian. The Estonian language uses the Latin alphabet, plus the Germanic additions of ä, ö, ü, as well as õ, š, ž. Estonian identity is closely connected to the language, and about 1.1 million people in the world use it as a mother tongue.

English is widely spoken in Estonia, especially among younger people. Russian as the first language is spoken by about 25% of people in Estonia and is heard mostly in Tallinn and the eastern part of Estonia (Narva and Kohtla-Järve). Finnish is also widely spoken in Tallinn, while German and French are less common.

Religion

Since the 16th century, Estonia has been a predominantly protestant (Lutheran) country.

Up until the 19th century, the church was the only source of education in the countryside, and only a few villages are without an architecturally impressive church at its centre.

Today, Estonia is one of the least religious countries in Europe with about 70% of the population defining themselves as not religious. Among the religious population, Lutheran Christians and Orthodox Christians are the most prevalent.

Additional Information: Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church www.eelk.ee Estonian Council of Churches www.ekn.ee

Politics and Government

Estonia is a parliamentary democracy in which the **Prime Minister is the head of government.** The people exercise their supreme power in the elections of the Estonian Parliament (Riigikogu). The Estonian Parliament has 101 members who are elected for a period of four years.

The head of state is the President, elected by the Riigikogu for a five-year term. The current President, Mr Toomas Hendrik Ilves, was elected for a second term in August 2011.

The President has, in addition to symbolic functions, representational tasks and formal domestic duties. The President may veto a parliamentary bill and have it sent back for revision. The President is also the supreme commander of the armed forces.

The government has executive power and is headed by the Prime Minister. The parliament is empowered to appoint and recall the Prime Minister. As a counterweight, the government can dismiss the parliament, with the consent of the President, and call new elections if the parliament expresses no confidence in the government.

Additional Information: The Parliament of Estonia www.riigikogu.ee

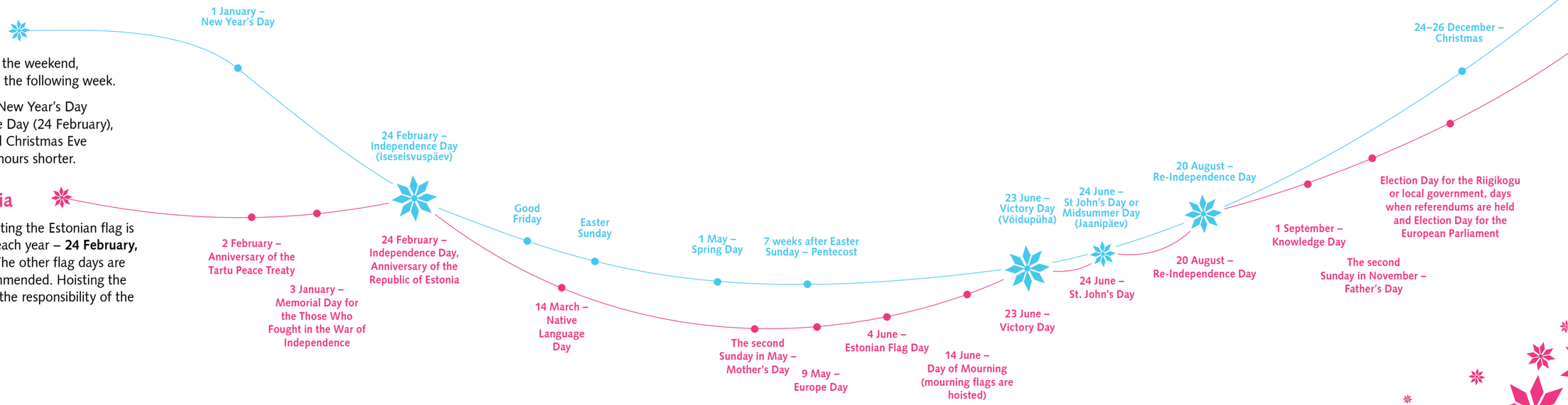
Public Holidays

If a public holiday falls on the weekend, a free day is not observed the following week.

The working days before New Year's Day (1 January), Independence Day (24 February), Victory Day (23 June) and Christmas Eve (24 December) are three hours shorter.

Flag Days in Estonia

According to the law, hoisting the Estonian flag is obligatory on three days each year – **24 February, 23 June** and **20 August.** The other flag days are optional, but highly recommended. Hoisting the flag on a private house is the responsibility of the owner or tenant.



2. MOVING TO ESTONIA

Residence Permits

For Citizens of the EU, EEA and Swiss Confederation

A citizen of the EU may stay in Estonia without a residence permit on the basis of a valid travel document or identity card for a period of up to three months.

In order to obtain the right of temporary residence, an EU citizen must contact the local government authority nearest to his or her place of residence and register his or her residence within three months from the date of entering Estonia. The right of temporary residence is granted for a period of five years.

Generally, an EU citizen who has resided in Estonia permanently for five successive years on the basis of the right of temporary residence shall obtain the right of permanent residence.

For Third Country Nationals

A residence permit may be temporary (with a validity period up to five years) or long-term.

A temporary residence permit may be issued to an alien:

- for settling down with a spouse or close relative permanently residing in Estonia;
- for study;
- for work;
- for business;
- in case of substantial public interest;
- extension of residence permit in existence of permanent legal income.

A temporary residence permit may be extended if the basis for the permit has not changed and the application is justified. An alien residing in Estonia on the basis of a temporary residence permit who desires to stay outside Estonia for more than 183 days per year must register his or her absence from Estonia with the Citizenship and Migration Bureau.

A long-term residence permit may be issued to an alien:

- who has stayed in Estonia permanently on the basis of a temporary residence permit for at least five years;
- holds a valid temporary residence permit;
- has registered residence, health insurance and permanent legal income for subsistence in Estonia;
- and has knowledge of the Estonian language at least at a basic level.

Additional Information: Citizenship and Migration Bureau www.politsei.ee

Moving Pets

Moving Pets to Estonia from EU Countries

All dogs and cats need a **microchip and passport** for moving and travelling within the EU. The EU Pet Passport is identical for all European countries and contains obligatory information concerning the individual animal: identification number and proof of valid vaccine against the rabies virus. It is valid for the lifetime of the pet.

All vets should have the relevant information and be able to prepare a pet for travel.

Moving Pets to Estonia from non-EU Countries

Animals from outside the EU may enter Estonia if they have:

- a valid Veterinary Certificate or Pet Passport;
- a microchip (ISO 11784);
- a valid rabies vaccine.

Once in Estonia, **a local vet can issue an EU Pet Passport** allowing travel within Europe.

Additional Information Estonian Veterinary and Food Board www.vet.agri.ee

Moving Your Car

Importing a Car from an EU Country

Under EU law, a private vehicle may be temporarily imported to another EU country and used for up to six months in any 12-month period. However, the vehicle must be re-registered if it is owned and used by a resident of that country.

Importing a Car from Outside the EU

It is allowed to import a car into Estonia duty-free as part of your household shipment; however, cars imported and sold within the first year of arrival will be subject to import tax and value added tax (VAT).

If you are importing the car as a part of your household shipment from a non-EU country, it is necessary to pass **customs clearance** first. Customs clearance and car registration must be done as quickly as possible, but **not more than 5 working days** after getting the Estonian residence permit.

If a car is imported from a non-EU country, two conditions must be met to qualify for tax exemption:

- **permanent residence** outside the EU has lasted for at least 12 months without interruption;
- the car has been in the owner's possession for at least **six months.**

For **registering a car** in Estonia, it is necessary to:

- hold a residence permit;
- take the car for inspection to a local bureau of the Estonian Road Administration.

Additional Information Estonian Tax and Customs Board www.emta.ee
Estonian Road Administration www.mnt.ee

3. HOUSING

Renting Property

The Estonian real estate market is characterised by **a very high level of home ownership.** The rental market has a minority share. For housing rental, it is recommended to contact real estate agencies. Several dedicated internet sites also list properties for rent, though it is advisable to consult with a real estate professional in order to understand the lease agreement in detail before signing it.

The lease agreement may be concluded for a fixed or unspecified term. **The rental period can be freely negotiated** by the parties. Rental agreements are regulated by the Law of Obligations, and the law is intended to protect the interest of the tenant.

Fixed term agreements will expire according to the agreement. The law provides only a finite number of possibilities for cancellation of the agreement before the maturity date. Open-ended lease agreements can be cancelled by either party with an advance notice of three months.

Security Deposit

A security deposit is usually equivalent to **1 to 3 months** of rent. The landlord shall keep the deposit in a segregated bank account earning at least the local average interest. The deposit shall be **paid back** to the tenant upon the termination of the lease contract together with the earned interest, unless the landlord has a right to keep the amount in order to satisfy a claim.

Rental Payments, Utilities and Fees

Rental payments are usually paid at the beginning of each month via a bank transfer, and the payment **due date is fixed in the contract.** It is possible that advance payments for the rent are asked at the signing of lease.

The payment obligation for **utilities** is regulated in the contract. The utilities are sometimes included in the rental price, and in some cases utilities are paid separately.

In case of renting from a business operator, value added tax may be added to the rental payments.

Taxes related to the property are paid by the landlord, unless agreed otherwise.

Real estate agency fees are usually equivalent to one month's rent and paid by the tenant, unless agreed otherwise.

In case of short-term lease agreements up to three months, the above-mentioned information does not apply.

Buying and Selling Immovable Property

Buying property in a foreign country is one of the most complex decisions in the process of relocation. It is recommended to use a real estate agency and consult a notary or law firm in the process.

Buying Property

Individuals and companies who are not members of the European Union or EEA are allowed to buy a house or plot of land with the **permission of the local authorities.** In most cases, there are no restrictions on buying apartments.

The sales contract must always be notarised. The notary public also prepares the application to the Land Register for the transfer of the ownership and title. The parties must sign the transfer documents at the notary.

Useful websites:

www.city24.ee

www.kv.ee

www.estate24.ee

www.kodud24.ee

Main Real Estate agencies in Estonia:

Uus Maa www.uusmaa.ee

Arco Vara www.arcovara.ee

1Partner Kinnisvara www.1partner.ee

Ober-Haus www.ober-haus.ee

Rime Kinnisvara www.rime.ee

Pindi Kinnisvara www.pindi.ee

Domus Kinnisvara www.domuskinnisvara.ee

ELECTRICITY

Utilities

The standard electricity supply in Estonia is 220 volts and 50 Hz, and the plugs are the **European two pin.**

The electricity market in Estonia has been open since 2013. There are several providers of electricity (for more information avatud2013.ee/elektrimyyjad). The price of electricity on the open market is set by a combination of the exchange price, the customer's electricity consumption and competition.

There is also a **network service fee** added to your bill. The network service is the transmission of electricity over power lines to your place of consumption. The cost of this fee is controlled by the authorities and set for three years. VAT is added to the electricity prices.

If you rent a house or a flat, you need to sign a **contract with a service provider** or agree with the landlord about electricity payments in case the service contract remains under the landlord's name. If you buy a house or a flat, you should choose the most suitable electricity package and sign a contract with the service provider.

The gas supply in Estonia is provided by a single supplier: **Eesti Gaas.** If you rent a house or flat that uses gas for heating, the owner has a gas purchase contract, and you have to make an agreement with the owner about gas payments. In order to sign an individual service contract with Eesti Gaas, a copy of the lease agreement or proof of ownership is required.

Every residence should register with the **Water and Sewerage Company** serving their district in order to receive service. To see which water company covers your area, visit www.evel.ee/organisatsioon/liikmeskond-2 or ask your local municipality.

Each address has a single supplier. When you move into your new home, the **water meter** must be read, and the reading must be set as the primary reading of your service contract. If your residence is located in an apartment building, the water and sewerage service is arranged by the cooperative housing association or the real estate management company. If you rent a house, you need to sign a contract with a service provider or agree with the landlord about the water payments in case the service contract remains under the landlord's name.

GAS

WATER

RECYCLING

Recyclable, sorted waste can be taken to public containers:

- green containers for glass;
- blue containers for paper;
- yellow containers for mixed packages (plastic, metal);
- red containers for clothes.

There are public containers for free disposal of packaging waste all over Estonia, including around 450 in Tallinn.

When you buy **bottled or canned drinks,** in most cases you will pay a small deposit which is refundable when you return the empty bottles or cans to the return vending machines (located in most stores). You will receive a receipt which you can use to pay for your purchase or exchange for cash in the grocery store.

Hazardous waste (electronics, tires, batteries, etc.) can be taken to a waste transfer station. Check with your local community for more information about recycling in your area.

Telecom Services

Estonia is known for its high-tech lifestyle. Feeling connected is very important for Estonians. Almost everyone, from executives to children, communicates by mobile phones and e-mail.

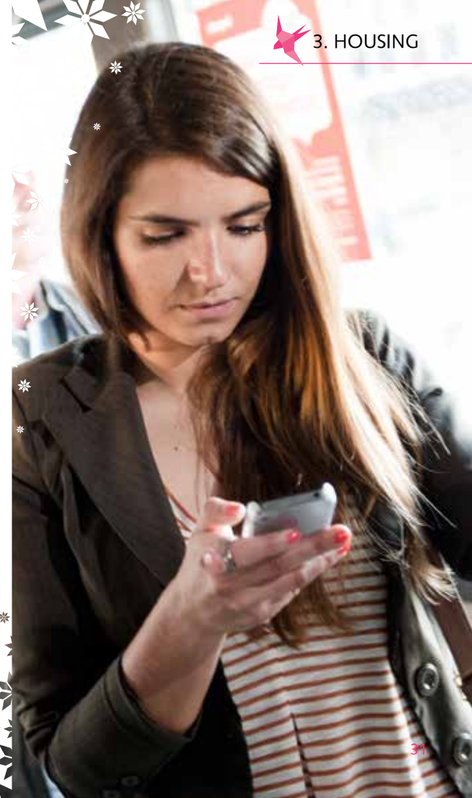
Estonia has one of the highest numbers of mobile phones per capita in the world – there are more mobile phone contracts than residents in Estonia. Many people don't use landlines any longer. There are no public phone booths in Estonia.

Phones

Mobile phones have become very important in everyday life. They are used for paying for parking, for making payments in some shops and restaurants and for buying public transport and movie tickets. Most mobile phone service providers also offer mobile internet services.

The major mobile phone service providers in Estonia are EMT, Tele2 and Elisa.

Calling cards (rechargeable prepaid SIM cards) have no monthly payments, but slightly higher per-minute rates, and can be bought from all petrol stations and newsstands. Popular brands are Simpel, Smart, Diil and Zen.



All **landline phone** numbers in Estonia have 7 digits. For international calls, dial 00, then the country code, area code and phone number. The country code for Estonia is +372.

Ekspress Hotline is an English-speaking information hotline in Estonia. The hotline number is 1182 and the website is www.1182.ee.

TV / Internet / Landlines

The easiest and most convenient way to set up telecom services in your home is to contact one of the service providers that offer packages including all the necessary services you need – landline, TV and internet. The prices of such services are low compared to other countries, starting from approximately 20 EUR per month and depending on your specific needs. You can choose which TV channels you would like to access (local and international) and the type of internet connection you prefer (the speed and capacity). You can also choose among additional services, e.g. recording your favourite shows, video rentals, etc.

If you rent an apartment **in a bigger apartment building,** the telecom services might be pre-arranged by the cooperative housing association.

The **main service providers** that offer internet, TV and landlines are Elion, Starman and STV.

Postal Services

Eesti Post is the Estonian national postal service provider. Eesti Post has post offices all over Estonia. Post offices are open on weekdays and some on Saturdays, with opening hours that may vary greatly. Information about the post offices and opening hours is available on the Eesti Post website www.omniva.ee.

Mailboxes in Estonia are orange. You can find them outside all post offices, in shopping centres and at most gas stations. To send mail, put letters and postcards in an Eesti Post official orange mailbox. Pick up times are noted on each box. Mail will not be picked up from your home mailbox. Most letters take between one to three days to arrive within Baltic and Nordic countries and up to a week to other countries. You can buy **stamps** at post offices, kiosks and most grocery stores.

Use a postal code when addressing letters. Postal codes for all Estonian localities are listed on the Eesti Post website.

Mail is delivered daily from Monday to Saturday, except on holidays.

Other postal and courier service providers:

TNT www.tnt.com

DHL www.dhl.ee

UPS Kullerteenus www.ups.com

ITELLA Smartpost OÜ www.smartpost.ee

Express Post www.expresspost.ee

Moving Inside Estonia

Changing Your Residence Address in the Population Register

Any change of address in Estonia must be reported **within 30 days** in person, by mail or by e-mail to the local government register (and the individual must have an ID card). In the case of smaller local governments, the change must be reported directly in the local government's office with the person responsible for the registers. Family members can present a joint notice of place of residence.

Mail Forwarding

The Estonian national postal service provider Eesti Post can arrange for mail to be forwarded to a new address. It is necessary to complete an application form and submit it to the closest post office in person. The mail (except newspapers and magazines) will be forwarded to your new address for six months. You have to make arrangements for forwarding newspapers and magazines directly with publishers.

Maintenance of Sidewalks

Keeping sidewalks clean and safe is the **duty of the owner** of the building or private house. In winter, owners must:

- ensure the de-icing of the pedestrian walkways bordering their property and provide sanding materials, if necessary;
- check the roof and facade regularly;
- remove built-up snow and icicles.

If you rent a house, the winter maintenance should be regulated in the contract.

Additional Information Ministry of the Interior www.siseministeerium.ee

4. WORKING

Work Permits

Citizens of the EU do not need a separate permit to work in Estonia.

Third country nationals residing in Estonia on the basis of a residence permit have the right to work in Estonia, unless otherwise stipulated by the law.

An alien may work in Estonia temporarily for up to six months in a 12-month period on the basis of visa or a visa-free stay if employment has been registered prior to the commencement of work.

Additional Information Citizenship and Migration Bureau www.politsei.ee

Employment Contracts

Work relations are regulated by:

- The Employment Contracts Act;
- The Law of Obligations Act;
- The Individual Labour Dispute Resolution Act;
- The Occupational Health and Safety Act.

Employment contract

Work is normally carried out based on an employment contract. Employment contracts offer employees better protection and greater rights. It is always advisable to conclude the employment contract in writing in two copies. The contract can be amended by the mutual agreement of both parties. The probation period is usually four months.

As a rule, an employment contract is concluded for an **unspecified period.** In order to enter into an employment contract for a specified period, the employer must be able to justify the **temporary** nature of the work (e.g. a short-term increase in workload or seasonal work).

- **The wage** is freely negotiable. However, the wage cannot be less than the official minimum wage in Estonia (355 EUR in 2014).
- Wages are due at least once a month and are transferred to the employee's **bank account.** Wages are paid in the net amount, and it is the employer's obligation to calculate and withhold all payroll taxes.
- **Full-time working hours** are 40 hours per week, i.e. 8 hours per day. An employer and employee can agree on shorter working hours, i.e. part-time. Special requirements apply for overtime work, work during the night and public holidays.
- An employee is entitled to at least 28 calendar days of **vacation** in a calendar year.
- Special conditions apply for pregnant or breastfeeding women and parents of small children.

Additional Information Ministry of Social Affairs www.sm.ee

Setting Up a Company

It is easy to start your own company in Estonia. You can do this in person or online, and paperwork takes only a few days. For online registration, an **ID card** is required for authentication and digital signing. The Commercial Code regulates establishing a company.

You can find more detailed information about setting up a company from the website of the Estonian Investment Agency: www.investinestonia.com.

Activity Licenses

Activity Licenses are required for the following activities:

- Construction;
- Financial and insurance activities;
- Information and communication;
- Selling alcohol and tobacco;
- Media;
- Agriculture;
- Transport and industry;
- Energy;
- Education;
- Environment;
- Entertainment;
- Welfare;
- Tourism;
- Labour market;
- Special activities.

Applications can be submitted to the **Register of Economic Activities** of Estonia online. The register is held by the Ministry of Economics.

Please check whether your area of activity is among the areas of activity subject to special requirements: mtr.mkm.ee.

Finding a Job

Finding a job you like is always a challenge, especially in a foreign country. For most of the positions advertised in the Estonian job market, the **Estonian and/or Russian language** is required. However, there are also possibilities for **English-speaking people,** for example in the IT or hospitality sectors.

There are different ways to look for a job in Estonia. Many jobs are not advertised, but the positions are filled through professional networks and personal references. Many companies go through their employees' networks to find candidates or they use executive search companies.

You can find more detailed information about working in Estonia from the Work in Estonia website: www.workinestonia.com.

Additional Information

https://ec.europa.eu/eures
www.cv.ee
www.cvkeskus.ee
www.tootukassa.ee

The most common ways to look for a job in Estonia:

- responding to a job advert that you find in **newspapers** (e.g. Äripäev, Eesti Ekspress, Postimees, Eesti Päevaleht, etc.) or on the internet (e.g. CV-Online, CV Keskus, etc.);
- registering your CV with some of the many **job databases** that will contact you once they find potential matches (CV-Online, CV Keskus);
- contacting **Executive Search Companies** in Estonia (e.g. Fontes, Ariko Reserv, Amrop, Mercuri Urval, MPS, etc.);
- establishing a **professional network** and making it known that you are looking for work, which may lead to good contacts and eventually a job;
- contacting the Estonian **Unemployment Insurance Fund** (*Eesti Töötukassa*).

Job offers and useful information on employment and living conditions in Estonia can also be found at EURES – The European Job Mobility Portal. The EURES (European Employment Services) advisers in Estonia work at the Unemployment Insurance Fund offices.

Recognition of Diplomas and Qualifications

Academic recognition

If you wish to continue your **studies** in Estonia on the basis of a foreign academic certificate, diploma or degree, you must apply directly to the higher education institution for admission. Recognition of studies is carried out by the ENIC/NARIC Centre in Estonia: www2.archimedes.ee/enic.

Academic recognition before seeking employment is not officially required (i.e. in non-regulated professions). However, some people prefer to obtain academic recognition for professional purposes, as it helps employers to better understand the employee's academic qualification.

Professional recognition

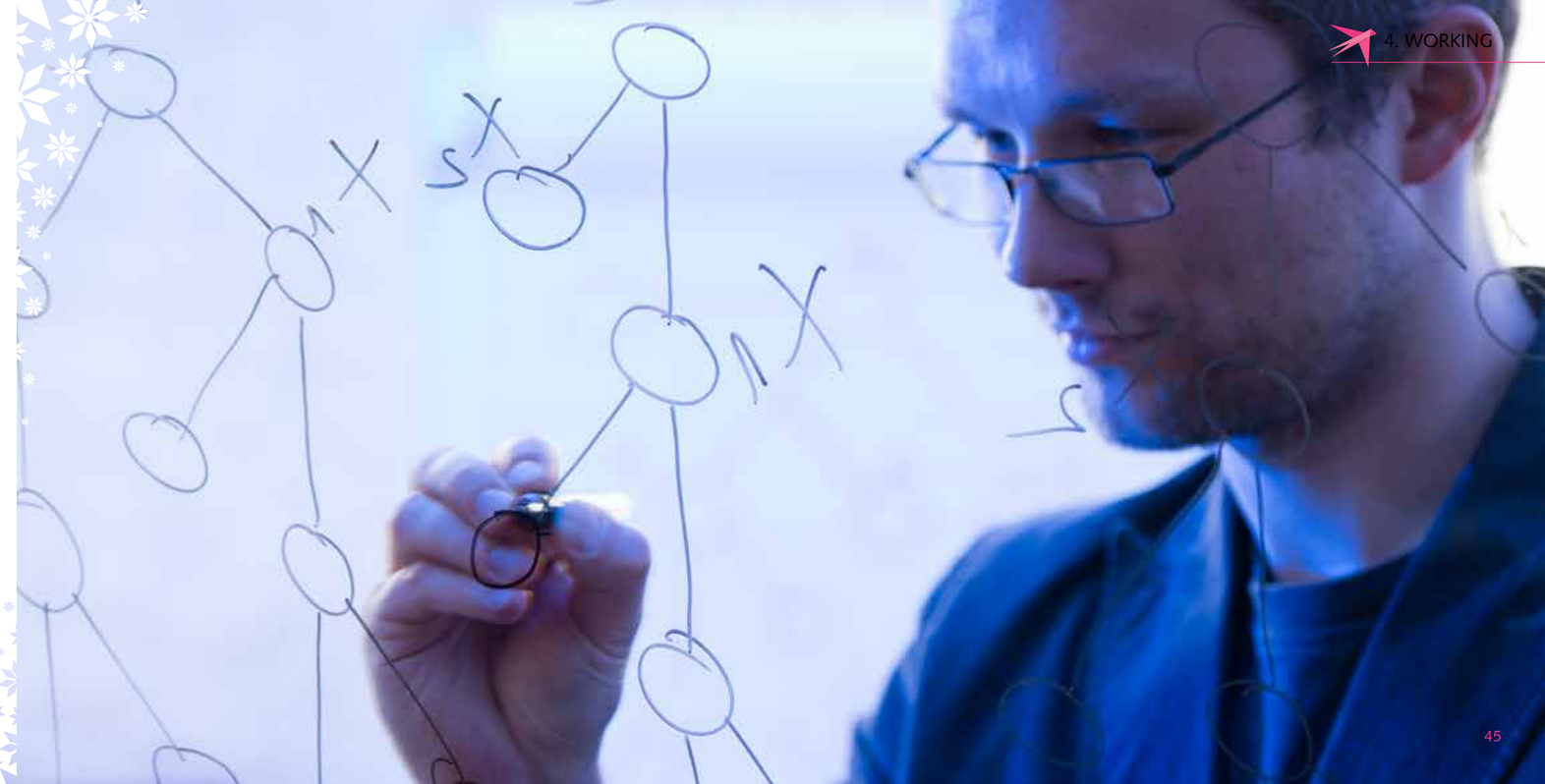
Professional recognition is a procedure that enables a person with a foreign professional qualification to be admitted to a regulated profession or professional activity in Estonia.

You can find the list of regulated professions in Estonia from the website of the Academic Recognition Information Centre.

The recognition of foreign professional qualifications is regulated by the Recognition of Foreign Professional Qualifications Act.

Additional Information

The Estonian ENIC/NARIC (Academic Recognition Information Centre)
www2.archimedes.ee



5. TAXES AND BANKING

General Taxes

The Estonian tax system consists of **national taxes** and **local taxes** collected by local governments in their jurisdiction. National taxes include income tax, social tax, land tax, gambling tax, value added tax, duty and excise taxes and heavy goods vehicle tax. Local governments have the authority to impose local taxes, but effectively only a few have introduced local taxes (in particular: boat tax, advertisement tax, tax for closing streets, motor vehicle tax, tax on keeping domestic animals, amusement tax and parking fees).

Estonia does not impose any gift, inheritance or estate taxes. Various transactions may be subject to payment of state fees (stamp duties).

The main principles of the Estonian tax system are **simplicity and low rates.**

Income Tax

Residents pay tax on their worldwide income. Taxable income includes income from employment, business income, interest, royalties, rental income, capital gains, pensions and scholarships (except scholarships financed from the state budget or paid on the basis of law). Taxable income does not include dividends paid by Estonian or foreign companies when the underlying profits have already been taxed.

Non-residents pay tax only on their income received from Estonian sources.

The tax rate is **21% of the taxable income** in 2014 and **20% starting in 2015.**

Additional Information Estonian Tax and Customs Board www.emta.ee

Everyday Banking

The financial services market in Estonia is very competitive and offers a full range of financial services. Banks operating in Estonia are predominantly subsidiaries or branches of Nordic banks; local banks make up only around 5% of the market. Banks offer a wide range of services starting from everyday banking to sophisticated wealth management. Non-life and life insurance products are offered by insurance companies. Most of the banks also have insurance and leasing subsidiaries.

The largest banks in Estonia are Swedbank, SEB, Nordea and Danske Bank.

Internet banking is highly developed. The use of debit/credit cards is widespread.

Banks, insurance companies and investment firms are supervised by the Estonian Financial Supervision Authority (FSA).

Opening a Bank Account

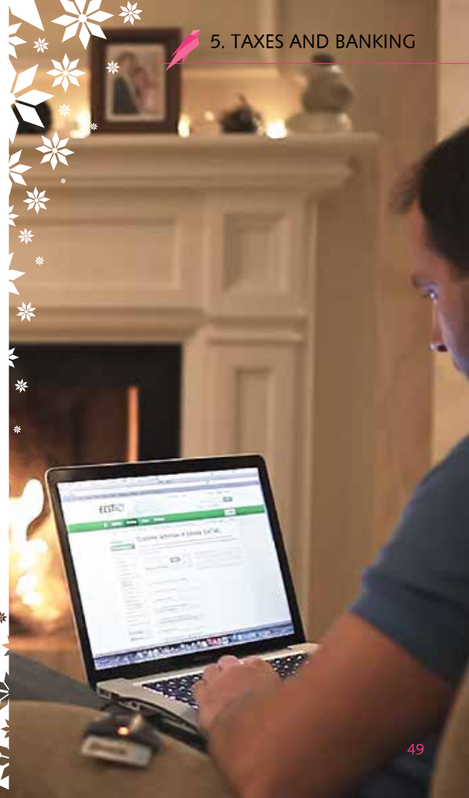
To open a bank account, you have to visit one of the banks' branches in person and present your identification document (passport or ID card). If you already have an Estonian Residence Permit or Working Permit, the account will be opened immediately. If not, it may take a few weeks before the account is opened.

Bank accounts are opened in euros but may also be used to handle multiple currencies.

Banking Services

Bank transfers are widely used for private and business transactions. Local interbank transfers are executed on the same day in Estonia and in a couple of days within the euro area. International transfers take longer depending on the currency and destination.

Banks offer their clients a wide selection of consumer finance and mortgage products. A car purchase is usually financed by leasing or a car loan.



6. EDUCATION

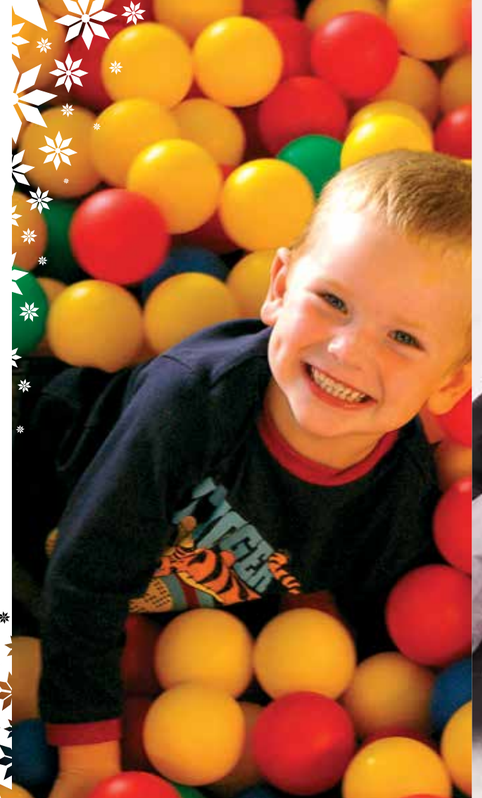
Pre-school Education (ages 3–6)

In Estonia, children usually stay home until the age of 1.5 years. Until then, families receive the **parental benefit,** and one of the parents can stay home. When the parent returns to work, the child may go to infant care or stay at home with grandparents or a caregiver.

Most Estonian children go to **kindergarten** (*lasteaed*) at the age of 3. Those who prefer to stay at home can participate in different activities organised by either a pre-school institution or a school. There are also childcare centres (*lastehoid*), but these do not provide pre-school education.

There are two types of kindergartens in Estonia – municipal (93%) and private (7%). In municipal kindergartens, the parents pay a small tuition fee as well as the cost of meals. The fee may vary according to different factors. In private kindergartens, the fee is much higher.

Parents are free to choose a suitable kindergarten for their child. Local governments ensure a place for every child in each school district. However, in some districts children may be wait-listed before admission due to the lack of available places. The parent must submit an application and a doctor's certificate issued by the family doctor.



Private kindergartens may set additional admission conditions.

The **language of** instruction in most kindergartens is Estonian. In about 13% of kindergartens, the language of instruction is Russian, but Estonian is taught as a second language.

All of the English-speaking kindergartens in Estonia are privately owned.

English-speaking kindergartens/pre-schools in Tallinn:

International Kindergarten www.kindergarten.ee
International Preschool of Estonia www.ise.edu.ee/et
Tallinn European School www.est.edu.ee

English-speaking childcare centres in Tartu:

Tartu International Daycare daycare.istartu.ee

Basic Education
(ages 7–15; grades 1–9)

Basic education is **compulsory** in Estonia. All children living in Estonia, including children from other countries, are required to attend school from age 7 until grade 9 or age 17. This is the minimum general education that provides the right to acquire secondary education or to enter working life.

There are municipal, state and private schools in Estonia. The majority are **municipal schools.** These are mostly local government schools and assignment is mainly based on district area. The education at municipal and state schools is free.

There are also schools for children with **special needs** (such as blind or deaf children) who need treatment that regular schools cannot provide.

In schools where the **language** of instruction is not Estonian, Estonian as a second language is a compulsory subject, starting in the 1st grade. If the mother tongue of the pupil is not the same as the language of instruction at the school, it is possible to study the mother tongue as an elective subject. Studies will be organised if an application is made to the director of the school by the parents of at least 10 pupils with the same mother tongue.

For pupils from abroad, the teachers' council of the school decides the grade to which the new pupil will be admitted, based on the knowledge and skills of the pupil, and implements an individual curriculum if needed.

School Year

The school year begins on the 1 September and ends usually at the beginning of June (the date may be different in private schools). **School holidays** are in autumn (one week), during Christmas (usually two weeks) and in spring (one week). The exact schedule of the school year is determined by the Ministry of Education. Private schools may have a different holiday schedule.

Secondary Education (ages 16–18; grades 10–12)

Secondary education is based on basic education and is divided into **general secondary education** and **vocational secondary education.**

General Secondary Education

General secondary education is acquired within three school years in a gymnasium (gümnaasium), upper secondary school (keskkool) or lyceum (lütseum). General secondary education provides the right to continue studies at the higher education level. Teaching at an upper secondary school may take place as day, evening or distance study. Graduation is also possible for an external pupil.

The state and local governments must ensure the availability of secondary education to everyone. **Admission** to gymnasium (upper secondary school, lyceum) generally takes place according to the graduation results from a basic school. Schools may carry out tests to fill available places. Admission is decided by the school's admission commission.

Vocational Secondary Education

Vocational secondary education is acquired in a vocational education institution, on the basis of either basic a school or general secondary education. A graduate from a vocational secondary education institution has the same possibilities to **continue studies** in a higher education institution as a learner having a general secondary education.

The school year in secondary school is similar to basic school.

Schools where the language of instruction is English

Tallinn

International School of Estonia (IB programme) www.ise.edu.ee/et

Tallinn European School (EB programme) www.est.edu.ee

Tallinn English College (IB programme) www.tik.edu.ee/en

EBS High School (only secondary education) www.ebs.ee

Tartu

Tartu International School www.istartu.ee

Miina Härma Gümnaasium (IB programme) mhg.tartu.ee

Language Immersion Programmes

Estonia is implementing language immersion as a national programme. Language immersion is a study form, the aim of which is to **improve a child's Estonian language skills** as a second language through its active use in kindergarten or schools without harming the child's mother tongue skills. In the immersion classes and groups, the volume of studies in Estonian exceeds 50% of the total volume of studies. The language immersion programmes are carried out in 24 kindergartens and 40 schools all over Estonia.

Higher Education

Higher education may be acquired as **professional** higher education or **academic** higher education. All students with secondary education or equal foreign qualifications have the right to apply for a place in a higher education institution.

Institutions that provide higher education curriculums in Estonia:

- 7 universities;
- 17 institutions of professional higher education;
- 2 vocational schools.

Professional higher education is provided by institutions of professional higher education or at universities' colleges. Two vocational schools also offer professional higher education programmes. The standard period of study in professional higher education is three to four years (180-240 ECTS). A professional higher education diploma enables **access to Master's study.**

At a **university,** higher education can be acquired at three levels: Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral study. The nominal duration of Bachelor's study is three to four years (180-240 ECTS), Master's study is one to two years (60-120 ECTS), and Doctoral study is three to four years (180-240 ECTS).). The standard period of Bachelor's and Master's study is at least five years in total. Medical training, veterinary training, pharmacist training, dentistry training, architectural studies, civil engineering studies and teacher training are based on an integrated curricula of Bachelor's and Master's study, the nominal duration of which is **five to six years** (300-360 ECTS).

Universities in Estonia:

University of Tartu www.ut.ee

Tallinn University www.tlu.ee

Tallinn University of Technology www.ttu.ee

Estonian Academy of Arts www.artun.ee

Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre www.ema.edu.ee

Estonian Business School (private university) www.ebs.ee

Estonian University of Life Sciences www.emu.ee

Continuous Education

Adult education is divided into formal education and continuing education (work-related and non-formal education). **Flexible** study opportunities have been created for adult students: part-time study, as an external student or with a limited workload, as well as participation in various courses.

In **formal education** it is possible to:

- acquire a basic education and general secondary education through part-time study or as an external student at an adult secondary school or in the evening or distance learning department of an ordinary school;
- to study at a vocational education institution or institution of higher education with a limited workload.

Adults can also participate in **continuing education** that is organised at vocational educational institutions, institutions of higher education, training centres and private educational institutions.

Additional Information

Estonian Ministry of Education and Research www.hm.ee
Research in Estonia www.researchinestonia.eu
Study in Estonia www.studyinestonia.ee
Language Immersion Centre www.kke.ee

7. HEALTHCARE

Health Insurance

The Estonian healthcare system is built on **solidarity-based** health financing. The medical service does not depend on the amount of social tax paid for the person.

Estonia has **obligatory health insurance** funded by the social tax, which in total is 33% of the gross salary of an employee (of which 20% is for pension insurance and 13% is for health insurance) and is paid by the employer.

Health insurance is organised by the Estonian Health Insurance Fund (Eesti Haigekassa).

Who has the right to health insurance in Estonia?

An insured person is a permanent resident of Estonia or a person living in Estonia by virtue of a temporary residence permit or by the right of permanent residence who pays the social tax or for whom the social tax is paid. Children under 19 years of age and pregnant women have equal status to insured persons.

You can find the full list of people covered by Estonian Health Insurance or who have equal status to insured persons on the Estonian Health Insurance Fund website.

It is also possible to get **private health insurance** from Estonian insurance companies.

In Estonia, everyone has the right to receive **emergency medical care** regardless of whether they have health insurance or not.

Additional Information

Estonian Health Insurance Fund www.haigekassa.ee
Medicine Estonia www.medicineestonia.eu

Family Physicians

Everybody has a right to **choose a family physician.** This is the first person to consult in the case of illness.

The family physician:

- sends the person to a medical specialist;
- gives advice concerning the prevention of diseases;
- takes preventive measures and issues health certificates, certificates of incapacity for work;
- issues prescriptions. Doctors can prescribe medications for patients using computer software and forward an electronic prescription to the national database. The **e-prescription** is then immediately accessible in any pharmacy at the patient's request.

In case of acute illness, the family physician must see the patient on the same day. Otherwise, they must see a patient within five working days.

It is possible to register with a family physician by submitting an application to the selected physician. It is also possible to change a practitioner with an **application** to the new family physician. It is recommended to choose a doctor who is seeing patients as close to the residence of the patient as possible. The residents of Tallinn can also use the help of the Social and Health Care Board to find a family physician.

A visit to the family physician is always free for the insured person registered with that doctor. The family physician can ask a fee only for a home visit (up to 5 EUR) or for the issuance of documents (except for certificates of incapacity for work and prescriptions).

A person **who does not have health insurance** may also contact a family physician. In such cases, the person has to pay for the provided medical service.

There are several private clinics where general practitioners consult with patients for a fee.

Many doctors in Estonia speak good **English**. However, the administrative staff may speak limited English. You can find the list of family doctors on the Estonian Health Insurance Fund website.

The advisory line for family physicians is 1220. If your family physician is not available or you just need some quick advice, then you can call 1220. This line operates 24 hours a day, every week day. Advice is provided only in Estonian and Russian. From abroad, dial +372 630 4107.

Specialised Medical Care

In most cases, you need a **referral from** a family physician to visit a medical specialist. A referral is not needed for visiting a psychiatrist, gynaecologist, dermatovenerologist, ophthalmologist, dentist, pulmonologist (for tuberculosis treatment), infection specialist (for HIV/AIDS treatment), surgeon or orthopaedist (for traumatology).

The **visitation fee** for specialised medical care is up to 5 EUR, but may vary among different practitioners. There is no visitation fee for pregnant women, children under the age of two and in case of immediate hospitalisation. In addition to public clinics and hospitals, there is also a possibility to consult with good medical specialists in private clinics, but the Estonian Health Insurance Fund does not cover those expenses.

In the case of **emergency,** you can always go to the Emergency Room of a hospital or call an ambulance. Transportation by ambulance in the case of an emergency is free of charge, but hospitalisation incurs an in-patient fee of up to 2.50 EUR per day and for up to 10 days per hospitalisation.

There is no in-patient fee:

- for children under the age of 18;
- in cases related to pregnancy and childbirth;
- in the case of intensive care.

Dental Care

All **children** under the age of 19 with valid health insurance are entitled to free dental care.

Dental care for **adults** is not covered by the Estonian Health Insurance Fund. Adults are entitled to free dental care only if postponement of dental care or failure to receive care could cause the death of the individual or result in permanent damage.

You can find a dentist at www.hambaarst.ee (*website is in Estonian*).

Emergency Rooms and Hospitals

In an emergency situation, call 112.
Calls to emergency numbers are free and can be made from any phone, including mobile phones from any service provider. The service is provided in English, Estonian and Russian, and also in Finnish in northern Estonia.

In the case of emergency, you may go directly to the Emergency Room (if possible).

Emergency Rooms in Tallinn:

- North Estonia Medical Centre in Mustamäe (Põhja-Eesti Regionaalhaigla, J. Sütiste tee 19);
- East Tallinn Central Hospital (Ida-Tallinna Keskhaigla, Ravi tn 18).

Children under the age of 15 should go to Tallinn Children's Hospital (Tallinna Lasteahaigla, Tervise 28).

Emergency Rooms in Tartu:

- Tartu University Hospital (Tartu Ülikooli Kliinikum, L.Puusepa 8);
- Tartu Children's Clinic (Tartu Lastekliinik, N. Lunini 6).

The biggest hospitals in Tallinn and Tartu:

North Estonia Medical Centre (Põhja-Eesti Regionaalhaigla)
www.regionaalhaigla.ee

East Tallinn Central Hospital (Ida-Tallinna Keskhaigla)
www.itk.ee

West Tallinn Central Hospital (Lääne-Tallinna Keskhaigla)
www.ltkh.ee

Tallinn Children's Hospital (Tallinna Lastehaigla)
www.lastehaigla.ee

Tartu University Hospital (Tartu Ülikooli Kliinikum)
www.kliinikum.ee

The full list of hospitals in Estonia is available on the Estonian Health Insurance Fund website.

8. TRANSPORT

Driving in Estonia

Driving Licences

Citizens of the EU, EEA and Swiss Confederation

- **Driving licences** issued by EU, EEA and Swiss Confederation countries are valid in Estonia. You are not required to change them after settling in Estonia, unless they are valid for a period longer than 10 years (or for an unspecified term).
- Driving licences issued for a period longer than 10 years must be exchanged for a driving licence of the Republic of Estonia within 24 months of being granted the right of residence or settling in Estonia.
- As a rule, driving licences will be **replaced** without examinations (except when you fail to exchange a driving licence within the period of 24 months or the driving licence expired more than five years ago).
- You can **apply** for an Estonian driving licence after living in Estonia for at least 185 days.

Citizens of non-EU Countries

- Driving licences issued by non-EU countries are **valid for 12 months** after moving to Estonia and must be replaced with Estonian driving licences after that time. The data of the Estonian population register will be used to certify the place of permanent residence.
- You can **apply** for an Estonian driving licence after living in Estonia for at least 185 days.
- Driving licences issued by a member state of the Geneva Convention of 1949 on road traffic (e.g. the USA, Canada, Argentina, etc.) are valid in Estonia only together with an International Driving Permit. They can be replaced with Estonian licences only after passing the theory examination and the driving test.

You can find detailed information about the rules of exchanging driving licences from a specific country on the website of the Estonian Road Administration.

Basic Road Rules

- Drive on the right.
- Headlights must be on at all times.
- Pedestrians on the crosswalk have the right of way.
- It is not allowed to make a right turn at a red traffic light.
- Never cross a solid white line.
- Certain lanes are reserved for public transport, e.g. lanes where “BUS” is painted on the street or there is a square blue road sign with a bus and an arrow.
- On the roads where the maximum speed is 50 km/h, a public bus re-entering the traffic or blinking to change lanes has the right of way.
- When entering a traffic circle, cars already in the circle have the right of way.
- Vehicles coming from the right have priority, unless otherwise regulated.

Ice roads are open between islands in winter if the weather permits. Follow the strict rules of traffic while driving on a temporary ice road between the mainland and islands. You can find information about opening and closing the ice roads on the Estonian Road Administration website.

Speed Limits

Speed limits in towns and smaller urban areas: 50 km/h.

Speed limits on country roads and two-lane highways: 90 km/h.

From May until September, the speed limit may be temporarily raised to 110 km/h on two-lane highways.

The main inter-city roads are equipped with speed cameras that take photographs of speeding cars.

Speeding is frequently monitored by the police.

Regulations for Drivers and Passengers

- The minimum age for driving a car is 18. Limited driving rights may be granted to persons aged 16 to 17 years in specific cases.
- There is zero tolerance for blood alcohol concentration for drivers in Estonia.
- The driver and all passengers must wear a seat belt, including in the back seat(s).
- When transporting a child, you must use appropriate security equipment for the child's height and weight. The safety cradle must be fitted rear-facing. Do not drive with a child in the front passenger seat while the airbag is activated.
- You may not transport more people in your vehicle than the number of places noted on the car registration.
- You must have a first aid kit, warning triangle, fire extinguisher, reflective vest and wheel chocks in your car.
- It is illegal to use a hand-held mobile phone while driving. You may use hand-free sets.
- Use of winter tires is compulsory from 1 December until 1 March, but studded tires can be used from 15 October until 30 March.

Pedestrians must wear a reflex reflector in autumn and winter to make themselves visible to drivers in the dark.

Additional Information Estonian Road Administration www.mnt.ee

Your Car

Buying a Car

» If you buy a new or used car from an authorised car dealer, the dealer will take care of the registration procedure for you.

» If you buy a car from an individual, the change of ownership of a vehicle must be registered with the Estonian Road Administration. After submitting all needed documents, the bureau of the Estonian Road Administration will issue the vehicle's new Registration Card and licence plate number.

Selling a Car

» When you sell your car, the change of ownership of a vehicle must be registered with the Estonian Road Administration.

» Customs and taxes will be assessed for the sale of a car imported from a non-EU country and sold within one year of its date of registration in Estonia. This applies to new and used cars.

» After the sale, do not forget to cancel insurance and obtain a refund for the already paid fee.

Car Insurance

Third party liability insurance

All vehicles must have third party liability insurance issued by a licensed Estonian insurance company or by a local branch of a foreign insurance company.

» The insurance must be valid in Estonia, in the countries of the European Economic Area (including the European Union) and in Switzerland.

» It must be valid outside the European Economic Area in other green card countries.

Kasko Insurance (Car damage insurance)

Kasko insurance compensates damage caused by you. There are different types of insurance packages available.

» Generally, Kasko Insurance is valid in all European countries.

» It is compulsory for leased cars.

Major insurance companies in Estonia

IF Kindlustus www.if.ee

Seesam Kindlustus www.seesam.ee

ERGO Kindlustus www.ergo.ee

Salva Kindlustus www.salva.ee

Note! A compulsory third party liability insurance agreement must be signed right after registering the car.

Technical inspection is mandatory for all cars registered with the Estonian Road Administration.

Additional Information Estonian Insurance Association www.eksl.ee

In Case of an Accident

Dial 110 for the Police (Politsei) if:

- there are injuries and it is necessary to request an ambulance;
- there is a disagreement about how to share the responsibility between the drivers or the driver and the person/persons who has/have received damage (even if no one has been injured).

Dial 112 for the Rescue Board (Päästeamet) if:

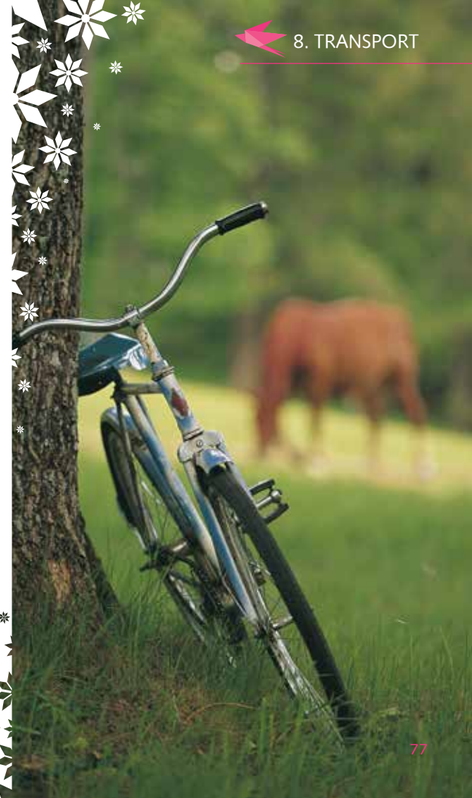
- there is an injury that requires medical aid;
- the normal traffic flow or safety of the environment cannot be guaranteed;
- there has been a collision with a wild animal.

It is advisable to use the "Traffic Accident Notification" form for accident registration. A similar claim form is used throughout the European Union, and it simplifies the procedure when both parties are from different countries. **The claim forms** are available from insurance agencies and gas stations. If there are more than two parties, several sets of "Traffic Accident Notification" forms should be completed.

Parking

- A parking **fee** is usually required in city centres. Signs indicate the prices for different times and parking zones. Blue lines on a parking space also indicate that it is in a paid parking area. Parking tickets can be purchased from street-side parking meters. It is also possible to pay for parking using a mobile phone. The **first 15 minutes** of parking in municipal parking areas are **free of charge** if you indicate the starting time using a parking clock.
- Parking **fines** are placed under wiper blades or otherwise attached to windshields.
- Parking fine data is available at www.parkimine.ee.
- Parking garages have a blue sign with a large white "P". When spaces are available, a green sign indicates "*vaba*" ("free"). When the garage is full, a red sign is lit.
- Use the **entrance** marked "*sisse*" ("entrance"). In most cases you have to take the parking ticket with you and pay at the parking machine before returning to your car. Your paid ticket is valid for a short period of time (usually ten minutes).

Additional Information Parkimine.ee www.parkimine.ee



Public Transport

Buses

The most widely used public transport between cities in Estonia is bus. Main lines are well equipped and have free wireless internet on board.

The **Tallinn Bus Station** *(Autobussijaam)* is the main inter-city bus station of Estonia. It is located near the city centre.

For detailed bus information and tickets to all destinations, visit www.bussijaam.ee.

Trains

The Baltic Station *(Balti jaam)* in Tallinn is the main railway station in Estonia. All local commuter, inter-city and international trains depart from this station. It is situated close to the Old Town.

For timetables and tickets visit www.baltijaam.ee.

Ports

The Port of Tallinn is one of the biggest and busiest passenger ports in the Baltic region. More than 8 million passengers pass through the Port of Tallinn's passenger terminals each year.

Of its five harbours, three serve passengers: Old City Harbour, Paldiski South Harbour and Saaremaa Harbour.

Tallink, Eckerö Line and Viking Line boats and ferries depart from the Old City Harbour for Helsinki, in addition to the Tallink vessels operated on the Tallinn – Stockholm route and St. Peterline vessels on the Tallinn – St. Petersburg route.

For more information about the port, shipping companies operating the lines and its timetables, visit the Port of Tallinn website: www.ts.ee.

Estonia's biggest **islands** – Saaremaa, Hiiumaa and Muhu – have regular ferry connections with the mainland. Discovering the islands by bicycle, car or bus is easy, and the ferries are fast and comfortable.

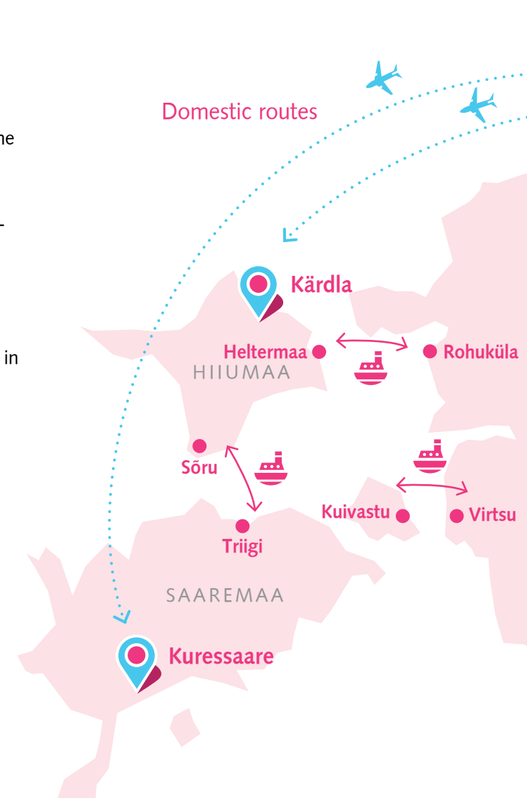
Saaremaa and **Muhu** are connected to the coast via the Virtsu – Kuivastu ferry route. The ferry route between **Hiiumaa** and **the mainland** is called Rohuküla – Heltermaa. Rohuküla harbour is located close to the small seaside resort town of Haapsalu.

The Triigi – Sõru ferry route connects **Saaremaa** and **Hiiumaa.** During the off-season, ferries go twice every other day: one trip in the morning and one in the evening.

Timetables:

Tuule Laevad (Saaremaa, Hiiumaa, Muhu)
www.tuulelaevad.ee

Kihnu Veeteed (Kihnu, Ruhnu, Vormsi, Prangli, Aegna, Piirissaar)
www.veeteed.com



Airports

Lennart Meri Tallinn Airport is the main airport in Estonia. The airport is located just 4 km from the city centre.

The other airports in Estonia are Tartu Airport, Pärnu Airport, Kuressaare Airport (Saaremaa) and Kärdla Airport (Hiiumaa). There are limited domestic routes from Tallinn to Kuressaare and Kärdla.

For information about international and domestic flights, visit www.tallinn-airport.ee.

Pärnu

Tartu

Public Transport in Tallinn

Buses, trolleybuses and **trams** operate regularly from 5.00 to 24.00.

The **residents of Tallinn** may use public transport for free.

In order to use public transport in Tallinn, residents of Tallinn have to purchase the so-called 'green card' *(Ühiskaart)* and register it. People from outside Tallinn can also buy the 'green card' which enables them to load the amount of money needed for transport tickets onto the card. The cards can be purchased at various locations.

One-way tickets are available from the driver for cash only or can be purchased using mobile phone. Purchase instructions can be found in all buses, trolleybuses and trams.

Additional Information Ticket information www.pilet.ee. Connections, flights and walking routes www.peatus.ee.

Taxis

Taxis can be **ordered by phone,** and there are also taxi stands located at major intersections and in front of the bigger hotels and shopping malls. **Rates** are posted on a passenger window. Be sure to check the base fair and per kilometre rates before entering the taxi. The total cost for a ride is monitored by a taximeter. **Credit cards** are widely accepted, but cash is recommended. All taxi drivers must provide a receipt upon request.

Bigger taxi companies:

Tulika Takso www.tulika.ee

Tallink Takso www.talllinktakso.ee

Krooni Takso www.kroonitakso.ee

Sõbra Takso www.sobratakso.ee

Marabu Takso www.marabu.ee

9. EVERYDAY LIFE

e-Estonia

"e-Estonia" is the term commonly used to describe Estonia's emergence as one of the most advanced e-societies in the world. For citizens of Estonia, e-services have become routine: e-elections, e-taxes, e-police, e-healthcare, e-banking and e-school. The "e" prefix for services has almost become trite in the sense that it is the norm.

e-services for Citizens:

- e-Elections – the opportunity to vote electronically www.valimised.ee;
- e-Tax Board – the possibility to declare income taxes electronically www.emta.ee;
- e-Business – creating a company via the internet ettevotjaportaal.rik.ee;
- e-Banking – internet banking;
- e-Ticket – a virtual bus ticket that is registered via the personal ID card.

e-services in Healthcare

- digital prescription – an electronic prescription of medicine that is not printed out on paper but is sent to the prescription centre www.e-tervis.ee;
- e-Health record – a medical information system where people can view their own digital medical history www.e-tervis.ee.

e-services in Education

- e-School – web-based school-home communication environment www.ekool.ee;
- university via internet – a system uniting higher-education databases with students' exam results.

Additional Information e-Estonia www.e-estonia.com

Media

Television

Estonian Public Broadcasting (*Eesti Rahvusringhääling, ERR*) is a public service media organisation. ERR has two TV channels – ETV and ETV2.

ETV is Estonia's biggest public service TV channel. Its programmes include education, science, culture, lifestyle, current affairs and entertainment programmes, sports coverage and the popular daily evening news show *Aktuaalne Kaamera*.

ETV2's programming consists of cultural and educational broadcasts, documentaries, TV shows and films. It has a special daily children's slot and some programming in Russian, including a daily news broadcast.

Films and imported programmes are mostly in their original language with Estonian subtitles. This also applies to private television stations in Estonia.

The best-known private channels are Kanal2 and TV3.

Radio

Estonian Public Broadcasting (ERR) offers four different programmes in Estonian (Vikerraadio, Raadio2, Klassikaraadio, Raadio Tallinn) and one in Russian (Raadio4).

In addition to public radio, Estonia has a number of private broadcasters. Among the biggest radio broadcasters are Sky Media Group and Trio Radio Group.

For a list of radio stations streaming live on the internet, visit www.listenlive.eu/estonia.html.

Newspapers

Newspapers and magazines play an important role in Estonia. There are four daily, nationwide newspapers (Postimees, Eesti Päevaleht, Äripäev and Õhtuleht) and nine weekly newspapers (Eesti Ekspress and Maaleht are the most popular ones). Regional papers are published all over Estonia.

You can find the full list of papers on the Estonian Newspaper Association website: www.eall.ee.

Magazines are published for different target groups. Family, home and lifestyle magazines are the most popular.

Estonian and international newspapers and magazines are sold in bigger shopping centres and R-kiosks.

English-Language Media in Estonia

Estonian Public Broadcasting news in English: news.err.ee.

Postimees in English news.postimees.ee Postimees is one of the four daily newspapers published in Estonia: news.postimees.ee.

Baltic Business News (BBN) is mainly based on the daily news flow from the business newspaper, Äripäev: www.bbn.ee.

The Baltic Times is an independent biweekly newspaper that covers the latest political, economic, business and cultural events in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania: www.baltictimes.com.

Baltic News Service is the largest news agency in the Baltic States and a leading source of information about the Baltic countries. Subscription is required: www.bns.ee/en.

Shopping

The larger shops in Estonia and almost all grocery stores are open **seven days a week.** The shopping malls in bigger towns are open from **9:00–23:00.** Only on Christmas Day, New Year's Eve and New Year's Day do stores in the centre close earlier. Some smaller stores may be closed or close earlier on Sundays.

If there are special products you need, be sure to stock up on the essentials before travelling to the smaller islands or the **countryside.** Opening hours of small village shops may vary greatly, and some shops may not be open all year.

Alcohol is only sold from 10:00–22:00, including in the shops in petrol stations.

The main hypermarket and supermarket chains in Estonia are:

Selver www.selver.eu

Rimi www.rimi.ee

Prisma www.prismamarket.ee

Konsum, Maksimarket www.etk.ee

Most shopping centres have free parking, wireless internet access, ATMs, a currency exchange or bank, a pharmacy and places to eat and drink. It is safe to pay with credit and debit cards. Major cards are accepted, and the American Express card can be used in banks and larger supermarkets, but not in smaller stores. There is an extensive network of ATMs available in Estonian cities and towns. However, if you are travelling to the countryside or to smaller Estonian islands, be sure to take some cash with you.

You can find farmer's markets in most cities and smaller towns. **Markets** are open from 8:00–14:00 during weekdays and until 17:00 on weekends. Fresh fruit and vegetables, meat and dairy products, handicrafts and household necessities are available in the markets.

Food

Traditional Estonian food:

- rye and graham bread;
- pork with boiled or oven-baked potatoes and vegetables;
- hot-smoked flounder, smoked small herring, bream, eel;
- self-picked mushrooms and berries;
- sandwiches are common for breakfast.

Mulgikapsad (sauerkraut) **and verivorst** (black pudding) have been Estonian Christmas specialities for centuries.

Beer is the most common beverage for Estonian adults, and it is consumed with meals and on other occasions. A variety of beers, both light and dark, are commonly available. Estonians prefer beers produced by local breweries.

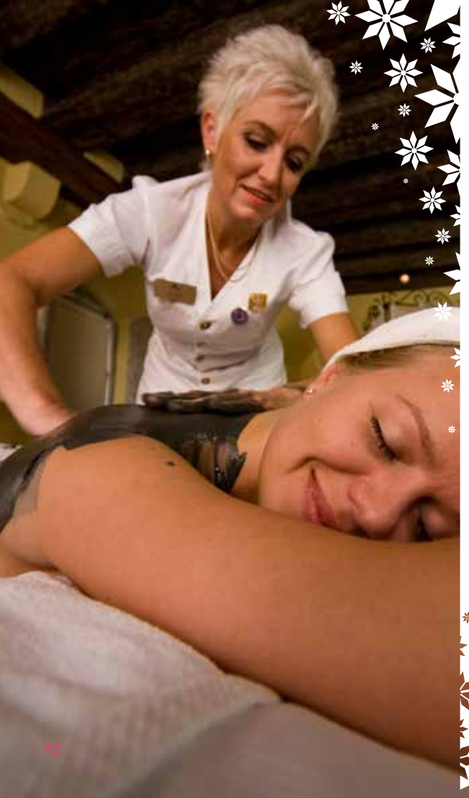
Eating out

Most Estonian **cafés and restaurants** offer good value for money. A typical restaurant or pub meal will cost 5–20 EUR. Pubs often have happy hours or drink promotions. Estonia has also several high-end restaurants, mostly in Tallinn.

Tallinn is an important tourist town, so there are numerous restaurants (especially in Old Town). Most of them are oriented towards tourists and therefore have premium pricing – a glass of beer can cost 4–5 EUR and a meal 20–30 EUR.

A list of restaurants throughout Estonia can be found through the TripAdvisor web page.

Tipping in Estonia is voluntary, and Estonians are pretty casual about tipping. However, 10% of the bill is polite and in many places it is expected for good or exceptional service.



Health and Beauty Services

Beauty salons in Estonia provide a wide range of services, including haircuts, manicures, pedicures, facial treatments, waxing, body wraps, aromatherapy and massages.

Hair styling is also provided separately at hair salons. Many of these are located in bigger shopping centres. In most cases, you need to make an appointment in advance.

Estonia is well known as a **provider of spa vacations**:

- **medical spas** draw up a rehabilitation plan based on the state of your health;
- **wellness spas** offer a wide range of treatments and procedures;
- **spa hotels** have pools and saunas and are a great place to take a break with children (who can enjoy their own activities and treatments);
- **day spas** offer a wide selection of health and beauty services without offering accommodation.

Several spas use Estonian peat, mud and mineral water in their treatments. These have healing qualities that have been renowned for hundreds of years.

Additional information Estonian Spa Association www.estonianspas.eu

Sports and Leisure

Cross-country skiing is the most popular winter sport. During winter, there are many indoor facilities for aerobics, bodybuilding, swimming, volleyball, basketball, badminton, tennis, squash, athletics and bowling.

In summer, there are even more outdoor activities to engage in, including swimming, biking, roller-skating, canoeing, tennis, football, volleyball, golf, etc.

There are many lit bike trails on the outskirts of Tallinn, in smaller towns and even in the countryside.

For fitness clubs, sport facilities or walking paths throughout Estonia, visit www.eestisport.ee.

Major Public Sports Events

- SEB Tartu Rattamaraton (MTB race);
- SEB Tartu Rulliuisumaraton (Skating race);
- Tartu Suusamaraton (Worldloppet ski event);
- SEB Tallinna Maraton (Running).

Cultural Life

Music

Estonian's are not called a singing nation without good reason. From amazing classical music to one of a kind alternative bands to international superstars, the country enjoys a vivid and diverse music scene which has much to offer every taste and age group.

There are numerous festivals happening every season of the year, the most remarkable of which is the Estonian Song and Dance Celebration. Held every five years, more than 100,000 people gather in the Tallinn Song Festival Grounds to sing together and celebrate the nation. The event is designated a Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO.

Theatre

Estonians are a theatre-loving nation with more than half of the population regularly attending performances and average annual audience numbers reaching one million. The theatre landscape is varied, from professional state, municipal and private theatres to numerous amateur theatre groups.

Museums

Estonia has more than 250 museums and collections. These range from fine arts, nature and technology to photography and design. For a complete list of museums, visit www.muuseum.ee.

Biggest festivals and culture events in Estonia:

- Estonian Song and Dance Celebration www.laulupidu.ee
- Tallinn Music Week www.tmw.ee
- Eesti Kontsert www.concert.ee
- Estonian National Opera www.opera.ee
- Jazz festivals www.jazzkaar.ee
- Black Nights Film Festival www.poff.ee
- Tallinn Design Festival www.disainioo.ee
- Night of Museums www.muuseumioo.ee

Additional Information

The Estonian Culture Guide cultureguide.culture.ee
Culture.ee www.culture.ee
Visit Estonia www.visitestonia.com
Ticket retailer www.piletilevi.ee
Ticket retailer www.ticketpro.ee

Travelling in Estonia

Many Estonians prefer to spend their holidays and weekends travelling around Estonia. There are plenty of picturesque small towns and villages you can visit and many possibilities to enjoy the beautiful nature. Many Estonians who live in bigger cities have country homes on the islands or in some other part of the country.

It's easy to **get around** Estonia either by bus, train or car. It takes no more than four hours to drive from one end of the country to the other. If you want to visit an island, check the ferry connections beforehand.

There are plenty of places to visit and interesting things to do. It is necessary to book **accommodation** in advance, and during the short summer season hotels are often full.

Rural Tourism

Estonia is known for its beautiful nature. There are many possibilities for nature lovers: wildlife watching, bird watching, hiking, canoeing, bog shoeing, etc.

RMK

The State Forest Management Centre (RMK) maintains, grows and manages the state forests of Estonia. It also maintains forest roads, builds hiking trails, maintains accommodation facilities, marks scenic recreational areas and prepares camping sites and campfire places.

RMK has set up diverse facilities for forest recreation in 13 locations across Estonia. Recreation areas provide fire places, hiking tracks, campsites, cottages and huts.

Find out more about the facilities and recreation areas loodusegakoos.ee/en.

Tourist Information Centres in Estonia

There are official Tourist Information Centres in all bigger cities and county centres. Tourist Information Centres provide information and advice on local points of interests and activities in the area. Ask for tips about wining and dining and how to make the most of your visit in Estonia.

Most offices are **open every day during business hours**, but check their individual times to be sure.

Additional Information Visitestonia.com www.visitestonia.com
Estonian Rural Tourism www.maaturism.ee

USEFUL WORDS AND PHRASES IN ESTONIAN

Welcome	»	Tere tulemast
Hello	»	Tere
Good morning	»	Tere hommikust
Good day	»	Tere päevast
Good evening	»	Tere õhtust
Good bye	»	Head aega/Nägemist
Thank you	»	Aitäh/Tänan
Please/Here you are	»	Palun
My name is…	»	Minu nimi on…
I don't understand	»	Ma ei saa aru
Do you speak English?	»	Kas te räägite inglise keelt?
I'm sorry/Excuse me	»	Palun vabandust /Vabandage
Please help me	»	Palun aidake
What time is it?	»	Mis kell on?
Where is…?	»	Kus on…?/Kus asub…?
How much is this?	»	Kui palju see maksab?
I would like	»	Ma sooviks
Yes	»	Jah
No	»	Ei
Monday	»	Esmaspäev
Tuesday	»	Teisipäev
Wednesday	»	Kolmapäev
Thursday	»	Neljapäev
Friday	»	Reede
Saturday	»	Laupäev
Sunday	»	Pühapäev

USEFUL FACTS ABOUT ESTONIA

- Estonia has more start-ups as well as international supermodels per capita than any other EU country.
- Some of the most innovative e-solutions such as Skype, Transferwise and GrabCAD are developed by Estonians.
- The Estonian language is a nightmare to learn. Luckily English and also Russian are widely spoken by the locals.
- "Jää-äär" is a real word.
- The Estonian drinking toast "Terviseks!" can be easily remembered as something similar-sounding to "Terrible Sex!"
- Estonians are world champions in the wife-carrying competition.
- Estonia has a population of just 1.3 million but is still larger in size than Denmark or Holland.
- Does the sun ever shine in Estonia? Yes!
- Almost 50% of Estonia is covered by forest.
- Estonians and hiding in the woods is actually a 'thing' – almost every family has a cottage in the countryside.
- Another important local weekend ritual is the sauna. Commonly practiced naked.
- Estonia has over 1,500 islands.
- Great food is everywhere. You can even eat marinated bear in Estonia.
- There are no polar bears in Estonia. But Santa Claus lives rather close by.
- Once you come, you won´t want to leave.

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www.visitestonia.com