

March 2012

Helsinki – Pearl of the Baltic Sea

The city of Helsinki (Swedish: Helsingfors), founded in 1550, lies in the South of Finland directly at the Gulf of Finland. While the city of Turku in the West of Finland had been the capital before, Helsinki was promoted to capital by Tsar Alexander I. in 1812. And although the old town of Turku had been named Capital City of Culture in 2011, Helsinki already won



this title in 1999. The city includes a very big territory with about 330 lakes of all sizes belonging to it. Helsinki itself has, with about 600.000 inhabitants, the same number as Glasgow in Scotland, Stuttgart or Dortmund in Germany, Nantes in France, Rotterdam in the Netherlands, Washington in the USA or Vancouver in Canada. But with the close-by cities of Espoo and Vantaa by far over one million people are living in this

metropolis. Besides the expression "Pearl of the Baltic Sea", Helsinki is also called "Engel-City", because four of the impressive buildings at the Senate Square in neo-classical style, including the world famous dome cathedral, had been created by the German architect C.L. Engel between 1822 and 1852. In this center you can view a big part of all the sights. The all overlooking and impressive dome is the symbol of the city and is situated on a little hill at one of the most beautiful harbors of Europe. Right here the huge ferries of the *Finnlines*, *Silja Line* and the *Viking Line* are taking off to Travemünde, Rostock, Stockholm, Tallin und St. Petersburg. Also our ferries to *Suomenlinna* will leave from here.

In the near vicinity of the harbor you can see the *orthodox Uspenski Cathedral*, built in 1868 which demonstrates the Russian influence during this time, and is considered the biggest Orthodox Church in Western Europe. At the colorful marketplace *Kauppatori* at the harbor and close to the old market hall *Wanha Kauppahalli* you can purchase different Finnish and Northern delicatessen and very picturesque handicrafts and souvenirs. About 300 meters away from the harbor's promenade towards town you will then



come to the Esplanade Park with the very beautiful Cafe-Restaurant *Kappeli*. In the short but lively Finnish summertime when it barely gets dark, public concerts of all types are being presented here on a stage and the people relax on the grass of the park with food, drinks and music. In all tests and surveys of Lifestyle Magazines, Helsinki together with Vienna, Zurich, Munich and Vancouver regularly takes one of the first places in the list of the most livable cities in the world. Additionally, the town is well known as the conference place for the negotiations of the OSCE agreement from 1972 to 1975. Here you will find a Cosmo political, modern lifestyle in very good harmony with nature and the city calls itself "Future City" now as well. There are over 80 museums, and the *Helsinki-Philharmonic* has become world famous with classical concerts and recordings. Helsinki offers many interesting cafés,



bars and clubs and some excellent restaurants with magnificent cuisine. A must during our visit to the Pearl of the Baltic Sea is *Suomenlinna*, a very big Sea Fortress which was built in the 18th century on several islands before the town as a bulwark against Russia and has become a UNESCO world heritage site. The islands are still inhabited and offer some museums, restaurants, cafés and a great historical Multi Vision - Show. The unique Rock Church *Temppeliaukio* with its round roof of copper pipes and a wonderful acoustic is absolutely worth seeing.

Another site to visit is the Sibelius monument, which honors the great Finnish composer *Jean Sibelius*.

Ice-hockey has been the national sport in Finland for many years, and the final games of the world championship are being held this year in the *Hartwall Areena* of Helsinki. Those of you who will arrive by train will admire the impressive building of the main train station of Helsinki. In 1919 it was completed by *Eliel Saarinen*, and from here you could reach St. Petersburg in Russia by train in just a few hours.

For a longer time already Finland and especially Helsinki, has been known for its innovative and creative design of architecture, furniture and fashion. The city has an own “Design District” where you can purchase popular products of big brands like Iittala (Glass Items), Pentik (Interior Decorations), Arabia (China) and Marimekko (Women’s Fashion).



Helsinki has also been nominated as the World Design Capital in 2012

