

ICYE FINLAND



NATIONAL PROFILE 2024-25



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TERVETULOA! WELCOME TO FINLAND!

We at Maailmanvaihto – ICYE Finland are very happy to welcome you for a volunteer period in our Northern country. Whatever your reason to choose Finland is – whether you are interested in observing the Finnish education system in practise, you are fond of the nature and looking forward to see the Northern Lights or you love Finnish music – we hope that you will have a positive experience in *Suomi*, Finland!

Volunteering in Finland will surely be an important intercultural learning experience for you. You will be learning about the Finnish lifestyle and different cultures – and also gaining a deeper understanding of yourself and your own cultural background! The volunteer year is full of adventures and new friends, but also everyday life with its challenges, and that is often where the deeper learning happens. So, in addition to warm clothes, please remember to bring with you a positive and open mind!

This National Profile was made for you in order to give you a basic view on the ICYE program in Finland – and a short introduction to the Finnish society and culture, so that you can better imagine what lies ahead of you. But of course the reality will always be a bit different than you expect, so you just need to come and experience the dark winter days and sunny summer nights yourself!

Reading this National Profile is one of the first steps you can take to prepare yourself for the coming volunteer year in Finland. In fact, your extended

volunteer period starts as you read it! We will arrange your hosting in Finland and support you in having a beneficial and enjoyable volunteer experience – you just need to be motivated and have a positive attitude!

When it comes to the Coronaviruspandemic and travelling to Finland for volunteering, we follow closely the development of the Coronavirus situation in Finland and keep in touch with our volunteers and their receiving communities about the safety measures needed. We also inform them about possible changes in the programme due to the Coronavirus situation. It is our aim that all parties can join in the co-operation safely.

We are looking forward to meeting you!

Mari Takala

The Program Coordinator
of Maailmanvaihto – ICYE Finland

P.S. It is very important that all the volunteers arrive early enough so that they will be able to participate the On-Arrival Training camp in the end of August. The window dates for arriving in Finland will be confirmed later.



MaaIlmanvaihto – ICYE Finland was established in 1958. In the photo, volunteers are celebrating the 60th anniversary of MaaIlmanvaihto a few years ago.

1. MEET US: MAAILMANVAIHTO – ICYE FINLAND

The Finnish ICYE committee aims at providing possibilities for intercultural learning for volunteers from different cultural backgrounds.

MaaIlmanvaihto – ICYE Finland (the Finnish name meaning “world exchange”) is a non-profit organisation founded in 1958. We welcome about 30–40 volunteers annually from abroad to do volunteer work in different types of host organisations around Finland. The volunteers come through three different programs: **International Cultural Youth Exchange (ICYE), European Solidarity Corps (ESC) volunteering, and Internationaler Jugendfreiwilligendienst (IJFD)**. Every year we also send about 30–40 Finnish volunteers to Asia, Africa, Europe, Latin America and Oceania.

MaaIlmanvaihto organizes intercultural learning experiences for young adults and advances their social development and personal growth. MaaIlmanvaihto aims at advancing intercultural

understanding, equality and peace in the world. Our values are global responsibility, intercultural learning, and equality. We are a part of the ICYE **Federation**, which has member committees in about 40 countries all over the world.

ACTIVITIES ON A VOLUNTARY BASIS

Voluntary co-workers play a significant role in MaaIlmanvaihto, because many of our activities are organised with the help of Finnish volunteers. In cooperation with the ICYE staff, our co-workers organise annual activities like the On-Arrival and Mid-Term camps. Our co-workers are often former ICYE or European Solidarity Corps volunteers or people interested in intercultural activities.

ICYE FINLAND'S BOARD AND STAFF

MaaIlmanvaihto is run by a board consisting of 10–12 members, mostly people in their 20s and 30s. Often they are returnees and they all work on a voluntary basis. In 2024, the chairperson of the board is **Sasu Katajamäki**. The board normally meets once a month and is entrusted with the power to make decisions outside the General Assembly. Every board member has a field of responsibility, such as PR & advertising, training camp activities or support persons. They work on these fields together with the office staff and co-workers of MaaIlmanvaihto.

The organisation is led by the General Assembly that is held once a year. At this assembly the board of ICYE Finland and its chairperson are elected.

We have three staff members working in the office: Secretary General **Anni Koskela** is the director of the organization and responsible for the outgoing volunteers' program. Program Coordinator **Mari Takalo** is responsible for the incoming volunteers' program in Finland. Communications Officer **Minna Räisänen** works with PR and media relations.

Normally there is also a trainee, a volunteer or other temporary staff working at the ICYE Finland office. Please feel free to contact us in case you have feedback or ideas on the MaaIlmanvaihto activities!

OFFICE IN HELSINKI

Our office is located in the centre of Helsinki in Kruunuhaka district, just a 10 minute walk from the Central Railway Station. Our office address is Oikokatu 3. Please see the map and accessibility information at our website:

<https://www.maaIlmanvaihto.fi/en/contact-information>

The office is open from Monday to Friday from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. The volunteers should always feel free to call, e-mail or stop by at the office with any issues that might arise. However, if you plan to visit us, please let us know beforehand, just to make sure we will be available.

ICYE FINLAND STAFF MEMBERS



Secretary General Anni Koskela

Outgoing Program, Finances,
General coordination



Program Coordinator Mari Takalo

Incoming ICYE and ESC Programs



Communications Officer Minna Räisänen

Media Relations and Information,
School visiting activities

2. THE ICYE PROGRAM

Maailmanvaihto – ICYE Finland warmly welcomes you to join the Intercultural Youth Exchange (ICYE) program in Finland! Here is how it works.

Countries	ICYE countries
Age	18 to 30 years of age; volunteers 30+ are also welcome to participate if their profile and motivation fits the program.
For whom	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Positive and open attitude towards adapting in a new lifestyle and culture• Motivation to dedicate oneself in a long-term volunteer project and to work in assistant positions in the host organisation• Mature and independent enough – able to manage in new situations• Basic English skills and interest in learning Finnish language• No requirements concerning the educational or professional background
Start	Mainly August
Duration	Mainly 12 months, sometimes 6 months
Cost	Participation Fee
Pocket money	The monthly sum of 110 € paid by the local hosting volunteer workplace
Voluntary workplace	ICYE Finland organises a suitable voluntary workplace for the volunteer
Working hours	20–40 hours / week
Support person	Organised by ICYE Finland (see page 9)
Camps/Training	3 training camps organised by ICYE Finland: On-Arrival Training (August), Mid-Term Evaluation (January) and Final Evaluation (May)
Insurance	Insured by Dr. Walter GmbH, insurance brokers, Germany (health, third-party, accidents)
What the ICYE program is <u>NOT</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• University or study exchange program• Professional work program• Touristic holiday period abroad
What about a paid job?	Getting a paid job in Finland during your volunteer year is not possible! Volunteers receive a monthly amount of pocket money, which is not salary. The ICYE program participants do not get a work permit to Finland, but a residence permit.

ORIENTATION AND LANGUAGE TRAINING

MaaIlmanvaihto organises an On-Arrival Training every August for the incoming volunteers. At the training, volunteers are given an introduction to topics like the Finnish culture, conflict management and volunteer work in the Finnish context. We also offer for the volunteers an introduction to the Finnish language (approx. 30 hours of language learning), either as through an online course or other support for language learning. The volunteers have the possibility to become familiar with their peer volunteers and with ICYE Finland co-workers and staff. It is very important that all ICYE volunteers arrive in Finland on time to participate in the On-Arrival Training. Therefore, please apply for your residence permit well in advance (3 months). The On-Arrival Training camp is held in the end of August. The volunteers should arrive in Finland a day or two before the camp begins.

Most of our incoming ICYE volunteers arrive in August, but applicants are also welcome to apply for a period starting in January. Volunteers arriving in January must notice that the On-Arrival Training

Camp is only organised once a year in August. Volunteers arriving in January will receive some support for learning Finnish but a full-time language course will not be organised for them.

For the European Solidarity Corps volunteers, the compulsory On-Arrival Training is provided by the Finnish National Agency for Education. European Solidarity Corps volunteers are welcomed and encouraged to join the ICYE orientation and language training as well.

MID-TERM AND FINAL EVALUATION

In January, ICYE organises a Mid-Term Evaluation camp. It provides a chance for the volunteers to discuss and explore their stay in Finland so far and to evaluate and develop their volunteer work period further. The Final Evaluation Meeting will be organised in May and its purpose is to evaluate the learning experience and personal growth process of the volunteer, as well as to orientate oneself to returning home.

At the trainings, ICYE volunteers get to know each other. Here are volunteers at the on-arrival training camp organised by ICYE Finland.



3. VOLUNTARY WORKPLACES

The volunteers are scattered across Finland from the Southern capital city of Helsinki to the North and from the flat farmlands of the West to the hilly lake regions of the East. Most volunteers live in the countryside or in small towns. Wherever you are located, we wish that you will get the best out of your experience!

Most of the volunteers who come to Finland work in the fields of social work and education. Some volunteers spend their year in a Folk High School (Scandinavian 'boarding school') where they may, for example, work as teaching assistants or in janitorial service and maintenance. We also cooperate with kindergartens and elementary schools, as well as institutes of special education. Sometimes we can also arrange volunteer work among the elderly, disabled people or young people.

For more information on the types of volunteer workplaces we can offer, please have a look at the Work Profile of ICYE Finland or go to icye.org and search for long-term projects in Finland.

TOWNS AND COUNTRYSIDE LOCATIONS

Most of the volunteer work placements provided by MaaIlmanvaihto are situated in small towns and villages in Southern and Mid-Finland. Most of Finland is quite scarcely populated, so you should be prepared for a peaceful environment close to nature! The most densely populated is the area surrounding Helsinki, but we can provide only a few placements in the city, due to challenges of organising accommodation.

Some of the volunteers live in small villages which can be quite isolated places in countryside surroundings. The distances between houses and villages are often long, but luckily the internet and mobile networks reach everywhere. One's own activeness and initiative are nevertheless important in adapting to the Finnish countryside

and understanding its charm.

Public transportation in the countryside is often not frequent, and travelling can be challenging. There might be very few daily connections to the nearest village or city centre, and public transportation in Finland is also relatively expensive. No need to worry though, a member of the host family or a co-worker from the voluntary workplace might be glad to offer you a ride to the closest city centre or the train/bus station.

ACCOMMODATION

Volunteers in Finland are accommodated either at their voluntary workplaces or in host families. Major part of the volunteers live at their voluntary workplaces; usually in a community or a student dormitory. Some volunteers live with Finnish host families. Family, as is the case in most societies, is an important element of the Finnish social life, and many Finns like to spend their free time home with their family members. In terms of socio-economic status, most host families represent the predominant middle class. However, as there is no such thing as 'a standard family', the family compositions in Finland are quite diverse. Our host families also represent different political and religious views that might differ from the volunteer's views. It is important for a volunteer to remember that they will be an equal member of the host family with equal rights and responsibilities. Flexibility and good social skills are good things to have when living in a host family.

BUDDIES

ICYE Finland aims at offering all volunteers a local Buddy if they wish to have one. A Buddy is someone who lives in the nearby area and is interested in getting to know the volunteer and helping them in the adaptation process. The Buddy is a friend with whom the volunteer can meet regularly throughout the voluntary work period. The Buddy helps especially in the beginning of the period in adjusting to the Finnish society and local environment, for example by helping with finding hobbies and

spending free-time together. Some of the Buddies are former ICYE volunteers so they are aware of the questions that the volunteers might have and the problems they might confront during the year.

Even if we aim at connecting all volunteers with Buddies, we cannot Buddies for all the volunteers. In case we don't find a Buddy for the volunteer nearby, we may offer the volunteer an online Buddy from further away in Finland.

Volunteers and support persons meet and get to know each other at the on-arrival camp at the beginning of the volunteering season.



4. INFORMATION ON FINLAND

SOME BASIC FACTS

Population: approx. 5.6 million.

Population density: 18 inhabitants per km²

Currency: euro (€), the common European currency.

Languages: national languages: Finnish 91.5 %, Swedish 5.5 %; other languages include e.g. Sámi languages, Romani, Finnish sign language, Karelian language, Russian, Estonian and Somali

Area: 338,000 km². The longest distance you can drive is from the Southern Peninsula of Hanko to the Northern Lapland town of Utsjoki: 1,157 km. The highest point is mt. Halti: 1,328 m.

Capital city: Helsinki with some 630 000 inhabitants – Greater Helsinki Area (includes the cities of Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa and Kauniainen) has a population of ca. 1,2 million.

Major cities: The majority of the Finnish population lives in cities. The major cities are Helsinki, Espoo, Tampere, Vantaa, Turku and Oulu.

Number of employed persons: In September 2023, the number of employed persons was 2,628,000. The number of unemployed persons 198,000. (stat.fi)

Family structure: Most Finnish people live in nuclear families. The average family size is 2.8 people/household. The average number of children

in families with children is 1.8. Single-parent households are common. Same-sex marriage has been legal since the beginning of March 2017. In 2002–2017 the registration of partnership was available for same-sex couples.

Persons with a foreign background: In 2020, there were about 444 000 people with a foreign background (persons whose both parents or the only known parent were born abroad).

Religion: The majority of Finns (65,2 %) belong to the Evangelical Lutheran Church, although many people mainly go to church for family ceremonies such as weddings, or on important Christian holy days such as Christmas. Another traditional Finnish Church is the Finnish Orthodox Church with 1.1 % of the population belonging to it. The rest either belong to some other religion (1,8 %), or do not belong to any religious community or their information is unknown (32 %). (2022, https://www2.stat.fi/tup/suoluk/suoluk_vaesto_en.html)

President: Mr Sauli Niinistö, elected in 2012 for 6 years and re-elected again in 2018 for 6 years.

Parliament: The legislative power lies with a unicameral parliament with supreme executive power vested in the Cabinet and the President. The 200 members of the parliament are elected every four years. In the parliamentary election in 2023, the three major parties were the National Coalition Party (20,8 %), True Finns (20,1 %), and the Social Democratic Party (19,9 %).

A VERY BRIEF HISTORY OF FINLAND 1100–

- 1155 The first Christian missionaries arrive to Finland from Sweden. Finland becomes a part of the Swedish Kingdom.
- 1527 As a result of the Reformation Finland transforms from a Roman Catholic country into a Lutheran (Protestant).
- 1543 The first book in Finnish (a book of grammar) is compiled by the Lutheran reformer Mikael Agricola.
- 1640 The first University of Finland is established in Turku.
- 1809 Sweden cedes Finland to Russia after the Finnish War of 1808-09. The Russian Czar, Alexander I, declares Finland as an Autonomous Grand Duchy within the Russian Empire, with himself as its ruler.
- 1812 Helsinki is declared the Capital of Finland.
- 1828 The University is moved from Turku to Helsinki.
- 1860 Finland creates its own currency, the Finnish mark (*markka*).
- 1863 Finnish language gains equal status with Swedish as a language of administration in Finland.
- 1906 The first unicameral and modern parliament is established in Helsinki. Full suffrage is granted - women are granted full political rights (one of the first countries in the world).
- 1917 Finland declares independence from the newly formed Soviet Union on 6th of December (the Finnish Independence Day). The new state is first recognised by the Soviet Union, France, Germany and Sweden.
- 1918 Civil war breaks between the Whites (the Nationalists) and the Reds (the Communists and the Socialists). The Nationalists gain victory, and consequently a German prince, Friedrich Karl, is chosen as the King of Finland, but he renounces the nomination within a month, without ever setting foot in Finland.
- 1919 The Finnish Parliament decides to introduce a President-led form of Republic.
- 1921 The Aland Islands (situated between Finland and Sweden) are granted autonomy.
- 1939-40 The Winter War starts as the Soviet Union (the USSR) attacks Finland.
- 1941-44 The Continuation War: fighting between Finland and the USSR resumes. Massive offensive by the Soviet troops in the summer of 1944 forces the Finns to surrender. Important Eastern provinces are ceded to the USSR, but Finland is not occupied and preserves its independence and sovereignty.
- 1944-45 Lapland War: The peace agreement made with the USSR forces Finnish troops to banish German troops occupying the Northern Province of Lapland. This leads to a disastrous retreat to Norway.
- 1948 The Finno-Soviet Pact of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance is signed, but officially Finland remains neutral.
- 1952 The summer Olympics are held in Helsinki – this leads to the period of economic growth that transforms Finland from a poor agrarian society into its current form, a thriving high-tech society.
- 1955 Finland becomes a member of the United Nations and the Nordic Council.
- 1970 Finland adopts a 40-hour working week.
- 1975 The important Cold War meeting between the Western and Eastern blocs, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, takes place in Helsinki.
- 1977 Finland signs a free-trade agreement with EEC – precursor of the EU.
- 1991–93 Deep economical recession followed by the fall of the Soviet Union.
- 1995 Finland joins the European Union.
- 2000 First female president is elected.
- 2002 The Finnish national currency *markka* is replaced by the euro.

GEOGRAPHY AND NATURE

Finland is the sixth largest country in Europe.

Roughly 1/3 of the country lies north of the Arctic Circle. Finland shares a common border with Norway in the north and a remarkably long border (1,269 km) with Russia in the east. In the south Finland is bordered by the Gulf of Finland (Estonia lies south of it), and in the west by the Gulf of Bothnia and Sweden.

Most of Finland is lowland but in the far Northwest some mountains over 1,000 m high can be found. The country lies mostly on ancient granite bedrock shaped and fractured by numerous ice ages. These marks can still be seen for example in the complex lake system or the equally complex archipelagos. Finland has three main physical regions: the coastal lowlands, the central lake system, and the northern uplands. The Finnish coastal lowlands extend along the two coasts of the Gulfs of Finland and Bothnia where thousands of scenic rocky islands lie – the principal archipelagos are the Aland Islands and the archipelago of Turku. The Finnish Lake District in central Finland is an interior plateau heavily forested and studded with lakes, swamps, and bogs. The Northern Finnish Highland (Lapland), much of which lies north of the

Arctic Circle, consists of infertile soil and is also the most sparsely populated region of Finland. In the far north, arctic forests and swamps eventually turn into tundra.

Finland is home to a grand total of some 42,000 species of plants, animals and fungi. The large wild animals that exist in Finland include, for example, brown bear, golden eagle, elk, deer, lynx, reindeer, white-tailed eagle, wolverine, and wolf. The Saimaa ringed seal is found only in Finland's largest lake, Saimaa, and since there are only around 250 such seals left, they are considered to be one of Europe's most endangered mammals.

There is a high number of the so-called 'summer cottages' (*mökki*) in the countryside and the wilderness – there are almost half a million of them! Almost all of these cottages or cabins are close to lakes or the seashore. Many of the cottages are rather basic, in other words, there is no electricity or running water and many Finns prefer it that way – even though there has been a rise in the number of 'luxury summer cottages' in recent years. You will most probably be invited at least once to such a cottage during your stay in Finland. Make sure you do not miss the opportunity to get to experience Finnish cottage life!

DID YOU KNOW THAT...

- 76 % of Finland is covered by forests and woodland, the highest proportion in the world.
- 10 % of Finland is covered by water. There are 187,888 lakes in Finland. The biggest one is called Saimaa.
- The longest river in Finland is Kemijoki – the River Kemi (483km).
- The highest tunturi (arctic mountain) in Finland is mt. Halti (1,328 metres)

DID YOU KNOW THAT...

Finland's traditional rights of common access, known as everyman's rights (*jokamiehen oikeus*), provide a legal basis for the free exploitation of 'the fruits of nature'. Everyone in Finland has the right to roam in the forests and to pick wild berries and mushrooms – no matter who owns the land. Hunting rights are however dependent on the permission given by the landowner, and also most types of fishing require permits from the local authorities, who generally grant fishing rights to outsiders for a payment of a small fee.

FINNISH SOCIETY

After World War II Finland developed into a wealthy Nordic welfare state. In Finland, social segregation is less visible than in many other countries, and social class or status do not define one's friendships or schools. It is rather normal to speak to a new acquaintance in first person singular (informally) right from the beginning regardless of their social status or age. Finland has an extensive public healthcare and education system available to all residents, and public libraries have excellent facilities open to everyone (including free internet). Many services, such as swimming halls, gyms and cross-country skiing tracks, are offered by the municipalities sometimes free of charge or at a rather low cost.

The relatively high unemployment rate has affected the Finnish society in recent years, but it has been improving since the economic slump of the early 1990s – though the 2008 financial crisis led again to a rise in unemployment. The unemployment rate has fortunately declined since. The unemployment rate varies in different parts of the country: it is lower in the Greater Helsinki

area and higher in the Eastern and Northern parts. This is one of the causes of depopulation of the Finnish countryside as higher unemployment rates in the countryside and in smaller cities drive the population to bigger cities. Consequently, urbanisation causes many universally known problems in cities, such as expensive housing, traffic congestion and pollution, though on much smaller scale than in many other countries. Unfortunately, mostly due to socio-economic disadvantagedness and lack of cultural exposure, some areas in Finland are still favourable breeding grounds for racism and intolerance.

Like in most parts of the world, increasing crime and drug abuse are problems in Finland as well. Still, Finnish cities are considered much safer than most other European cities. Loneliness encountered by the elderly in this fast paced career driven society and alienation of those who have failed to adapt to it are some of the gravest social problems in Finland.

Alcohol is perhaps the most destructive social and health problem in Finland (generally connected to unemployment and alienation). The consumption of alcohol per person per year may be higher in some other countries but the manner in which

WATCH OUT FOR TICKS!

When going around in the beautiful nature in Finland, one of the things to watch out for are ticks, as they can be infected with *Borrelia* bacteria which cause Lyme disease in humans.

A much more rare disease that can be transmitted by tick bites is tick-borne encephalitis. Ticks are met more widely in some parts of the country than in others. You can protect yourself from ticks by covering yourself with clothes and using tick repellent.

alcohol is consumed in Finland differs from many other European countries: for some Finns a typical night out includes a session of binge drinking – in other words: drinking too much too fast. Most Finns nevertheless know their limits.

CLIMATE AND SEASONS

Finland's climate shows both maritime and continental influences. The Atlantic and Arctic Oceans as well as the surrounding Baltic Sea cool the climate in the coastal regions during spring, and vice versa, warm it in the autumn. In the Eastern and Northern parts of the country the climate turns more continental, or more extreme if you wish. The far North, however, has a rather marine climate because of the influence of the Arctic Ocean. The Finnish summer is short, only two to four months, but the summer days are very light, even during the night. The annual mean temperature in the South, in the Capital City of Helsinki, is 5.3 degrees Celsius.

Finland has four distinctive seasons, which differ greatly from each other: winter, spring, summer, and autumn.

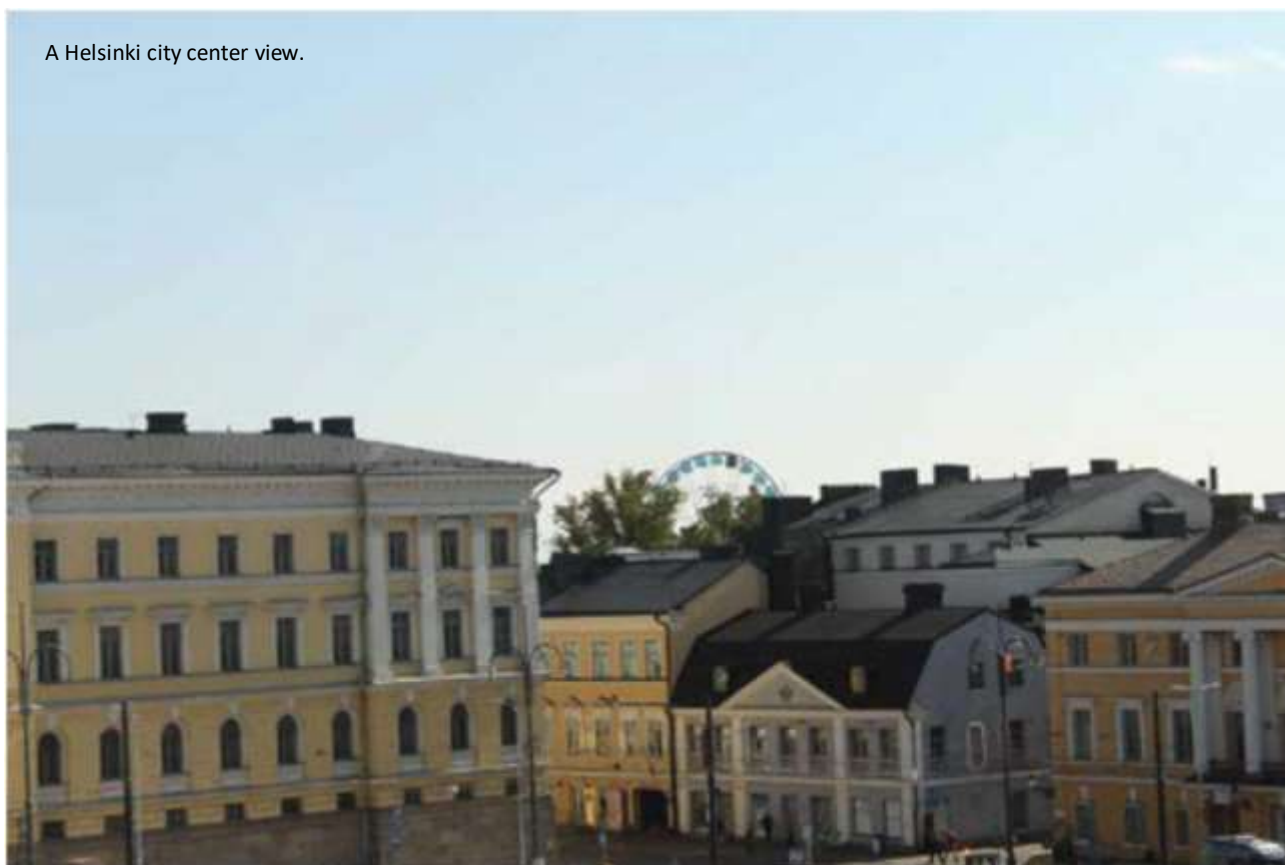
Autumn (*syksy*) is usually quite rainy, dark, and chilly throughout the country. Yet there are plenty of people who love the mystical feeling of autumn. *Ruska* (forest glowing with autumn tints) and morning mist give the autumn a special feeling.

Winter (*talvi*) temperature sometimes falls as low as -20 C and sometimes it can get even colder. It may be hard to imagine how cold that actually is, but in comparison the temperature inside an average freezer is 'only' -18 C! The coldest temperature ever measured was -51.5 C. That record was broken in Kittilä, Lapland in January 1999. Recently, though, due to global warming, winters have become milder especially in the southern parts of the country. By wearing enough warm clothes outside the coldness can easily be beaten – and then it's time to enjoy winter time activities such as ice skating or cross-country skiing as well as to enjoy beautiful winter time views with snow! Besides, the central heating and insulation of the houses and workplaces is usually excellent.

The winter is also a season of strikingly short days. In the northern part of Finland the sun does not rise for 51 days (polar nights) during the winter. This period is called *kaamos*. During this time it is possible to see the wonderful Northern Lights (Aurora Borealis) especially in the northern part of the country.

The darkness is the one thing that the volunteers often find hardest to cope with. There is light for about 6 hours a day in the south of Finland. During winter, some people seem to be less social. Some people also feel like they cannot sleep enough even after 12 hours of sleep. Having snow fortunately

A Helsinki city center view.





Volunteers & the map of Finland.

GETTING TO KNOW A FINN

The stereotype about Finns claims that Finns are shy and sometimes even introverted. Some truth might indeed lie in the claim, though each person living in Finland, of course, has their own unique style of communicating. In general, Finns are perhaps not the most skillful in starting conversations with strangers, and in some situations, such as in buses or waiting lobbies, it can typically be considered normal to sit in silence.

However, if the first move is made by the other party, many will happily engage in the conversation. Thus, one should not be afraid of being the initiator. Some can be slightly cautious and shy with new people, and it requires some more time get to familiar with them. But when one does, there might be no traces left from the shyness. Make contact with Finns! Having local friends can pay off in terms of learning about the culture and language.

It is nevertheless worth realising that in Finland silence is occasionally even appreciated and considered a form of politeness. In addition to learning through experiences, asking and talking about the different ways of communication and forms of politeness is probably the best way to gain a mutual understanding.

In some cases, what appears to be shyness can actually be the result of a language barrier. Especially for the older generations, speaking in a foreign language may be more uncommon which is why anxiety increases and it feels easier to escape from the situation. It is good to keep in mind that this kind of behaviour is most likely not a sign of intentional rudeness towards you.

makes the season feel lighter and so does Christmas with lots of candles and delicious food.

Spring (*kevät*) is the time the days get lighter and the snow begins to melt away. Nature goes through another one of its transformations. It is uplifting to see the first spring flowers blooming, leaves beginning to reappear and the migrant birds returning for the summer.

Summer (*kesä*) is the time of light nights. During the night there is dusk instead of darkness. Some people find it hard to sleep because of that! In the far north regions of Finland, the sun does not set for 73 days – these are the famous ‘white nights’. The summer temperatures are normally around +18–25 C, though occasionally the summer temperature can rise above +30 C.

During summer many people seem to be really happy and content and it seems as if they do not need any sleep. The seasons have effects not only on volunteers but on Finns, too. Indeed, the

influence of the changing seasons is an important part of the Finnish character!

FINNISH LANGUAGE

Finnish, unlike most of the other languages in Europe, does not belong to the Indo-European language family, but it is one of the Finno-Ugric languages, of which the major ones in addition to Finnish are Hungarian and Estonian. Most of the other Finno-Ugric languages, such as the Sami languages spoken in Lapland, are tiny or even near to extinction.

Finnish has quite a notorious reputation as being a difficult language. Of course it might feel like that for someone who has studied mainly Indo-European languages closely related to each other, but if you compare it to the languages of the world in general, it is actually not very complicated nor

special. One of the tricky things is the amount of noun cases, though: Finnish has about 14–16 of them (depending on the way you define them). Adding a suffix (for example, a case marker) at the end of a word, often triggers some change in the original word root, which makes things even more complicated.

Sounds scary? Do not worry! The spelling is very phonological, which means that with few exceptions, you write what you hear. You do not have to worry about articles or choosing the correct grammatical gender, as there are none in Finnish (e.g. the Finnish pronoun *'hän'* denotes a person of any gender). And even if the nouns with all those cases can make your head spin, the verb system is rather simple: Finnish does not even have a separate grammatical future tense!

It is good to keep in mind that studying any foreign language requires a lot of work and commitment. Finnish is definitely no exception. But each year a number of volunteers become fluent in Finnish! The more effort you put into studying Finnish, the more you will learn and the language will give you a completely new perspective to the country and its people.

After all this talk about the Finnish language, it is good to remind ourselves that not all the Finns speak Finnish! The other official national language of Finland is Swedish. The Swedish-speaking minority, living mainly at the coast and in the island of Åland, comprises about 5.4 % of the whole population (although most of them are bilingual in both Finnish and Swedish). So if your project is situated in an area where Swedish is a dominant language, you might feel like focusing on that instead of Finnish.

WAY OF COMMUNICATION

The Finnish way of talking is sometimes described as short-worded and somewhat frank. This can hold true in some situations: sometimes brief expressions and sticking to the facts are considered a virtue. Often so is also "talking for a purpose", as a contrast to "pointless blabbering", talking for the sake of talking, which can be perceived as unnecessary. This is perhaps the reason why small talk can prove to be difficult for many Finns. Being short-worded or very frank can give a rude impression in some situations but once again it is

good to remind oneself that this most probably is not the intention. In addition, you will surely meet individuals who talk a lot, which again proves that ways of communicating very much depend on the individual.

The stated frankness/directness of the Finns is another controversial issue. On one hand, people appreciate direct answers and honesty a lot. For example, if a person forgets a wallet to a café, it will more likely be returned to the waiter than stolen. On the other hand, there are situations when honesty is challenging for Finns. For example, offering direct negative feedback is difficult. When it comes to humor, quite many Finns are not that direct but they use sarcasm and might say one thing, when they mean exactly the opposite.

RELATION TO TIME

Finns are rather punctual and like to arrive at meetings on time. Arriving in time is especially important in official/formal contexts such as going to work or a meeting in a public office. It is good to keep in mind that the volunteer is seen as an equal employee and is, therefore, expected to arrive on time. If being late cannot by any means be avoided, it is considered polite to call and let the person waiting know. Depending on the context, it is polite to call already in case of being, for example, ten minutes late. The punctuality normally applies to the schedules of public transportation as well.

ABOUT GENDERS AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION

In relative terms, women and men in Finland are rather equal both in the public and private spheres of life. The Act on Equality between Women and Men in 1995 introduced a quota provision. The quota provision ensures an equal proportion of women and men working in public institutions. The provision applies to government appointed committees, advisory boards and other corresponding bodies as well as to municipal bodies. A share of either gender in those organs must be at least 40 %.

Women who do not have a paid job outside work are a rarity in today's Finland. Women usually seek for full-time employment and they do not leave their jobs when they get married or when they have children. Widespread participation of

women in working life has not, however, led to complete salary-related or position-connected equality between genders in the labour market. A rather clear division into men's and women's jobs still exists. However, this boundary is becoming ever so blurred. The division of labour between genders is especially evident in salary levels. Women's salaries in both private and public sector are still below those of men – even though women are often more highly educated than men. One of the reasons is the aforementioned division of labour, as men tend to orientate towards higher paying sectors such as business and engineering.

At home, a mother's opinion is usually just as authoritative as that of a father. There are also a lot of single parent households since divorce rate in Finland is relatively high – almost half of the marriages end in a divorce. It is also very common that couples live together in a common-law marriage without officially getting married. Young people move away from home at an early age (usually around 18–20) and subsequently lead a relatively independent life.

It is illegal to discriminate people on the grounds of gender identity and expression or sexual orientation within the labour market, public sector and education. One's sexual orientation is considered a private matter, and attitudes towards sexual relations are quite liberal. Attitudes towards sexual and gender minorities are, for the most part, rather tolerant, but there is work to be done to prevent discrimination from occurring.

ABOUT CULTURAL AND OTHER DIVERSITY

Finland is a multicultural country with traditional national cultural minorities, such as Swedish Finns and the Roma people, and the Sami people as indigenous people, and people with an immigrant background.

It is prohibited by the Non-discrimination to discriminate someone on the grounds of their origin, nationality, language, religion, belief, disability, for example. Unfortunately though, discrimination does sometimes take place. Most vulnerable for discrimination are those people who belong to groups which face negative stereotypes and prejudices.

It is important to constantly work on advancing equality and preventing discrimination from taking place, both on a personal and organisational level, as well as not to leave a victim alone and seek for help in case discrimination happens.

At MaaIlmanvaihto, we wish to create in all our activities together with all the participants [safer spaces](#) in which everybody can feel themselves welcome and respected. To advance equality in our organization, we have created [an Equality plan](#).

CITY VS COUNTRYSIDE

Urbanisation, the movement of people from rural areas to the cities, began in the 1960s and still continues today. Traditionally this movement has been towards the Greater Helsinki area, but also

Summer! The summer temperatures are normally around +18–25 C, though occasionally the summer temperature can rise above +30 C. Here is volunteer Sidedla in the summer time nature.

other university cities have shown rising population figures. A slight 'counter-urbanization' also occurred in Finland during the 1990s as some longed to get back in touch with nature and moved back to the more rural areas.

Finland's most densely populated and urbanized areas lie in the South and Southwest of the country and the majority of Finns live in this relatively small area which also happens to be the most fertile part of the Country. This area has historically been the core of Finland and exemplifies the uneven distribution of population inside the country's borders. The average population density might be 18 people per land km² (2016) but the density in the Province of Uusimaa, which includes Helsinki, is 178 people per km². Lapland is the province with the lowest population density with only 2 people per km². Out of the municipalities in Finland the city of Helsinki has the highest density of people, a bit over 2 900 people per km².

It is important to keep in mind that even though the bigger Finnish cities (still small on a global

scale) do not differ a lot from the ones in Europe in general, the countryside does. In a small village of 2,000 people, the majority of people do not live in the village centre, but rather the houses are scattered across the whole municipality. Distances between neighbours can be surprisingly long and as already mentioned, the available public transportation is often not exactly frequent.

FINNISH CULTURE AND ARTS

There are many interesting museums and galleries around Finland that are really worth visiting – ranging from museums of modern art to historical castles and local oddities like the spy museum of Tampere. Normally an entrance fee must be paid, but sometimes some of the biggest museums organise special events free of charge.

One of the most important pieces of Finnish literature is the national epic *Kalevala*. It consists of oral poems from the Karelian region of Finland, collected and composed into a single story by Elias



GREETING

When people meet for the first time, they normally greet by shaking hands. Finns are not very used to greeting by kissing on the cheek which is why it might feel it a slight violation of personal space. Among friends, no physical contact necessarily takes place every time when meeting one another; the greetings are often merely verbally uttered. Hugging is typical when meeting friends or family after a slightly longer break, or among very close friends or lovers. It is naturally good to keep in mind that greeting manners, like all ways of communication, always depend on the individuals.

Winter time activities:
sliding down the hill.

Lönnrot in the 19th century. The poems tell epic tales of great mythical heroes and their adventures. Translations of *Kalevala* are available in most major languages and in addition to *Kalevala*, there are plenty of other famous works from Finnish authors that have been widely translated. These authors include **Mika Waltari**, the author of *The Egyptian*, **F.E. Sillanpää**, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1939, **Arto Paasilinna**, an author widely known in Central Europe and **Tove Jansson**, the creator of the *Moomins*.

If you appreciate fine arts, it is worth seeing the works by such artists as **Akseli Gallen-Kallela**. **Jean Sibelius** was a Finnish composer, who among other things composed 7 symphonies. His most famous compositions include *Finlandia* and *Valse Triste*. There are many Finnish world class opera singers and directors of orchestra. Finland is also well known for its architecture and design. You might have heard of **Alvar Aalto**, **Eliel** and **Eero Saarinen**, **Tapio Wirkkala** or *Marimekko*. More recent trends in the field of arts include the **Kaurismäki Brothers**, **Aki** and **Mika**, both film directors. Aki Kaurismäki's *Man Without a Past (Mies Vailla Menneisyyttä)* won the Grand Prix at the Cannes Film Festival in 2002.

Finnish music, with the exceptions of classical or heavy music, is not really very well known outside of the country. In the past years some bands have gained a bit of recognition abroad. Perhaps you have heard of HIM, Darude, Nightwish, The Rasmus, Children of Bodom or Apocalyptica? If you have the opportunity, go to one of the many outdoor music festivals during the summer months. It will definitely be a good chance to listen to some Finnish music – there's a music festival for almost every genre: ranging from heavy metal to classical or folk.

Even at the risk of circulating clichés, whenever we talk about Finland, Father Christmas (or *Joulupukki*) must be mentioned. The rumours about him coming from the North Pole are considered absolute nonsense by all Finns. Ask anyone in Finland and they will tell you the same: Santa's a native Finn! His original headquarters is located at the peak of Korvatunturi (a fell in Lapland); however, after hitting mainstream, he seems to have moved most of his commercial operations to the Santa Park in Rovaniemi, where thousands of tourists get to meet him every year.

ECONOMY

Finland is an advanced industrial/high-tech economy. Two thirds of the country's economic output comes from the service sector. Forests remain the most crucial resource, although engineering and high-tech industries, led by Nokia, have long been the leading sectors of the Finnish industry. The structure of Finnish industrial exports has changed dramatically over the past decades. The wood and paper industry, which accounted for over half of the exports less than thirty years ago, is now equally important to both electronics/high-tech and metal/engineering sectors. High-tech is the most spectacular success story in the history of Finnish commerce. Its huge growth in the 1990s was mainly based on mobile phones and other telecommunication equipment. The success of mobile phone manufacturing, however, is only one of the examples. Companies and brands such as F-Secure, Linux, Kone, Marimekko, Metso, Polar, Suunto, Fiskars, and Exel are all world-class Finnish brands.

EDUCATION

Education in Finland is public and mainly free for all. In general, there is very little demand for private schooling. The aforementioned, as well as the high quality of teacher education, are generally held as the

SAUNA

Sauna is probably the most beloved feature of the Finnish lifestyle. There are over three million saunas in Finland (consider the rate per capita!). There is a sauna in almost every house, and nowadays you can often find one also in the smaller apartments in central of Helsinki. Traditionally Finns went to the sauna once a week (every Saturday night) but depending on the family sauna can be used even every day. Keep in mind that in Finland an invitation to the sauna bears no sexual connotations, even when nudity (for hygienic reasons) is a requirement.

Learn more about sauna from the website of the the Finnish Sauna Society:

<https://sauna.fi/en>

main reasons for Finland's success in international student assessments like the PISA. All Finns, between the ages of 7 and 16 receive their elementary and secondary education by law. Afterwards, their compulsory education continues until they 18 years old. This means that after secondary education, the students must continue their studies at a general upper secondary (3 years) or a vocational (2–5 years) school, for example. After that, students often apply to one of the universities or other institutions of higher education (e.g. polytechnic). The rapid development of the Finnish knowledge-based high-tech economy owes much to the free education and development work done in Finnish universities.

Two other popular forms of education are the systems of folk high schools that offer non-formal education and the so-called *työväenopisto* or *kansalaisopisto* ('adult education institute') that offers evening courses in various academic subjects, including Finnish language.

FOOD

A basic meal in Finland traditionally consists of the combination of potatoes, bread, meat and/or fish, and usually some vegetables or a salad on the side. The meals Finns often wash down with some milk. As in any other aspect of everyday life, here too, globalisation has left its mark as pasta, rice, or their more exotic cousins often replace the traditional potato. In addition to this, these days an increasing number of Finns follow a vegetarian diet. One of the more curious facts about Finns' habits is that with a consumption of some 10 kg per person annually, Finns drink relatively more coffee than any other nation! Finns also enjoy utilising the local 'fruits' of the nature; different berries and mushrooms found in abundance almost anywhere outside the cities. Finnish food is not at all spicy and newcomers often find it lacking salt as well. Whether you initially consider the food a tad bland or not, it is certainly something you'll have to get used to – it is a big part of the culture.

Volunteers gathering to admire the sunset at their on-arrival camp.



5. IMPORTANT TO KNOW

RESIDENCE PERMIT TO FINLAND

1. European volunteers

If you are a citizen of an EU Member State, Liechtenstein or Switzerland, you do not need a residence permit to stay in Finland, but when you stay in Finland longer than 3 months, you will need to register your right of residence at the Finnish Immigration Service (Migri). The registration fee is 54€ (in 2023). You need to have your passport and volunteering agreement with you when visiting Migri. You can start the registration online at EnterFinland: <https://enterfinland.fi/eServices/info/european-permits> and book an appointment to the nearest Immigration Office service point after your arrival in Finland. More information: <https://migri.fi/en/eu-citizen>

2. Volunteers from Asia, Africa and the Americas

If you are not a citizen of the above-mentioned countries, you will need to apply for A RESIDENCE PERMIT before entering Finland. The fee for the first residence permit is 380€ for an online application and 480€ for paper application (in 2023. Please, note that we cannot guarantee that the fees will remain the same in 2024). Depending on the local currency, exchange rates and service fees, the cost can slightly vary.

The residence permit application should preferably be submitted 2–3 months before the planned date of arrival in Finland, as the application process normally takes at least 1–2 months. You can apply for the Finnish residence permit on the grounds of an international volunteer work program as soon as you have been accepted as a participant of the ICYE volunteer program and you have received the ICYE agreement. It is important to start the process quickly after you have been accepted.

IMPORTANT: You need to initiate the application process and visit the nearest Finnish embassy for identification. Please, be aware that if there is no Finnish embassy in your country, you need to travel abroad to the nearest Finnish embassy. You can find information of Finnish Embassies from the homepage of the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <https://>

[um.fi/finland-s-representation-abroad-by-country](https://migri.fi/finland-s-representation-abroad-by-country)

Please, carefully fill in the application form and attach the required attachments. If any information is missing from the application, its processing will be delayed. Please, write the form in English. The attachments must also be in English. Please, use an authorised translator when having your documents translated.

Please, note that since 2022 it has been possible for ICYE volunteers to apply online for the residence permit on the grounds of “other voluntary work”. Further information: <https://migri.fi/en/other-voluntary-work>

Here is a link to the enterfinland eServices: <https://enterfinland.fi/eServices/>

Required attachments:

- Documentation about the exchange programme (= the ICYE volunteer agreement from MaaIlmanvaihto – ICYE Finland – this is the only document you need from us and can be added in several places, if needed)
- Valid passport (you must present it when you submit the residence permit application)
- Passport photo complying with [the passport photograph quality requirements of the Police of Finland \(pdf, poliisi.fi\)](#)
- Document showing that you are legally staying in the country where you submit the application (if it is not in your home country)
- Form MP_1 (if you already are in Finland and apply for your first residence permit)

Please, make sure that you have all the information needed presented in your application form so that your application will be processed without any delay. If you have any questions concerning the application process or filling in the form, you may contact the closest Finnish Embassy or the Program Coordinator of ICYE Finland, Mari Takalo: hosting@maailmanvaihto.fi

After you have submitted your residence permit application, your application will be examined and the decision will be made at the Finnish Immigration Service in Helsinki, Finland. When the Finnish Immigration Service has decided to grant you the residence permit, you will receive a residence permit card, which will be sent to the

embassy, where you have visited to initiate the process. The residence permit will be issued in Finland and delivered to the embassy, from where you can collect it. It takes about 2–3 weeks for the card to arrive to the embassy after the decision has been made. The embassy will contact you when the card has arrived for you to collect it. You are ready to travel to Finland as soon as you have received your residence permit card!

July is the time of Finnish summer holidays and many of the government offices are closed during summer holidays. If you apply for the residence permit only in the end of June or in July, be aware that you might miss the On-Arrival camp in mid-August. So please, don't leave completing the Residence Permit application to the summer months!

Finland is part of the European free travel zone, the Schengen Area, which means that when you have the residence permit issued by Finland, you also have the right to travel to other Schengen countries without applying for another visa. Schengen countries are Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland. However, keep in mind that if you have a journey connecting through a country, such as the UK, which has not implemented the Schengen Agreement, you might need a transit visa. When it comes to UK, you can check whether you need one from the website of the UK Border Agency: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-visas-and-immigration>

CONTRACTS AND INSURANCES

Your sending National ICYE Committee should give you a Tri-Party Agreement, a contract, which ICYE Finland makes with all our ICYE volunteers and their sending organizations. Please read it through carefully and if you agree with the terms, send a signed copy to ICYE Finland. Once we receive the signed copy from you, we will sign it and send you a copy.

ICYE Finland will also send you for you to sign an ICYE volunteering agreement. The agreement is meant to support your residence permit application process.

ICYE (and IJFD) volunteers are insured for the period of their stay in Finland with PROTRIP-WORLD-VOLUNTEER insurance. The insurers are Allianz Worldwide Care SA, Generali Versicherung AG and Europ Assistance AG. Your insurance covers normal medical care in the case of an unexpected illness or accident, including dental treatment for the relief of pain up to a limited amount. However, routine check-ups, preventive health-care, and medication without a doctor's prescription are not covered by your insurance. Your personal items (i.e. luggage and property) are not covered.

You will receive more information regarding the insurance from your sending National Committee, who will also give you the Guide for Volunteers, which includes more detailed instructions related to your insurance. If you have any questions related to insurance issues, please contact the insurance company: Dr. Walter GmbH T: info@dr-walter.com or +49 (0) 22 47 91 94 - 0.

VACCINATIONS

As a safety measure, from January 2022 on Maa-ilmanvaihto only accepts to host volunteers who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19. If you are not for some reason able to get vaccinated in your country of residence, you should agree to get vaccinated in Finland soon after your arrival, in order to participate in the ICYE volunteer program.

We recommend that you also check that your polio, tetanus and diphtheria vaccinations are valid, as they are the vaccinations expected for everyone to have in Finland.

6. PRACTICAL ADVICE

ARRIVAL TO FINLAND AND TRAVELLING

Someone from ICYE Finland will be meeting you at the airport. Please do not leave the airport on your own! Before your arrival we will send you a letter that will give you more detailed information about your first days in Finland as well as our contact information.

During your stay in Finland you will travel to camps around Finland, visit different locations, and perhaps do trips with friends or on your own. Please note that your travel time is limited to four weeks in a one year programme and that it is rather expensive to travel in Finland: a train trip of a couple of hours may cost up to some 40 €, for instance.

Usually volunteers take their holidays during the summer months. However, the holidays in any case always need to be negotiated with your voluntary workplace. Volunteers collect 2 days off from work every month and should negotiate with the voluntary workplace on how to spend them.

When planning to take some time off work for travels, always negotiate first with your voluntary workplace about your travel plans and of your need for any extra holidays. You are not allowed to travel during working weeks if not agreed beforehand. Make sure that your hosts (voluntary workplace and possible host family) know where you are and how you can be reached. Always inform about possible changes in your travel plans to your hosts. In addition, always inform the ICYE office when you are travelling for more than three days or out of Finland. If you are planning to travel abroad at the end of your year, ICYE Finland must approve your plans.

CLOTHING

When coming to Finland you should be prepared for all kinds of weather. Finland has four distinct seasons: spring (April & May), summer (June, July & August), autumn (September, October & November) and a long winter (December, January, February & March).

Finnish winters are cold, often freezing, and for this reason you should be well equipped. A warm hat, gloves, boots, a woollen scarf, a warm wind & rainproof coat etc. are essential. If you do not want to bring some with you, you can also buy them in Finland – your hosts or ICYE co-workers will give you practical advice. However, it is good to bear in mind that buying new clothing in Finland is quite expensive. This is why many choose to buy clothes from second hand shops – in Finnish cities and towns they exist in abundance and the clothes are usually of good quality.

During autumn and spring seasons you might find water & wind proof clothes useful. The summer is usually relatively warm: summer clothing such as shorts and t-shirts are a necessity, and don't forget to bring swimming gear – this is after all the land of thousands of lakes!

However, one of the important practical principles in Finland is that everyone carries their own luggage. This is good to remember when packing for the departure. Do not take too many things with you!

THINGS TO BRING ALONG

- **Your passport!** You will need it at the airport and when proving your age and identity. It is very difficult to open a bank account without one.
- All your ICYE papers (collect them in a file).
- Some information about your own country: maps, family pictures, slides, etc.
- Small things to give as presents to your host family and new friends.
- If possible, learn some national dances, plays, games or cookings – anything distinctive of your country – to be used as program items for the camps and for you to share with us.
- A sleeping bag. It will be good both on camps and on your own holiday trips. You might need it if you, for example, go hiking in the beautiful

wilderness of Lapland.

- If you use medication, try to bring with you enough medication and/or prescriptions for the entire year. (Pharmacies in Finland are strict about prescriptions).
- Check if you need an adapter for your electronic devices.
- Warm clothes and small important things like a toothbrush and a towel.

NB: You do not need to bring your own linens, they will be provided to you by the project or host family.

POCKET MONEY AND LIVING COSTS

The ICYE volunteers will receive a small monthly allowance of 110 euros from their host placements. It is good to keep in mind that Finland is quite expensive in comparison to most other countries. **In Finland, 110 euros is not much.** Therefore, it might be a good idea to have some of your own savings. Especially transportation is expensive in Finland and since you will most likely want to visit friends around the country and see different parts of Finland during your free time, having a bit of extra money is advisable!

Please keep in mind that there will be more expenses during your first weeks of stay in Finland than later on. ICYE Finland recommends that at the arrival to Finland, the volunteer should have some euros in cash. It is safer not to carry big amounts of cash with you, though.

Some examples of the price level in Finland, prices approximately:

Urban area bus ticket (Helsinki):	3 €
Train ticket Helsinki–Tampere, adult one way	25 €
Youth Hostel, dormitory bed, one night	18 €->
Chocolate bar	1 €
Beer (a bottle in a shop)	1 €
Beer (a pint in a restaurant)	4–6 €
Cappuccino (in a café)	3 €
Cigarettes (pack of 20)	4.5 €
Hamburger	4 €
Pizza	8–12 €
Stamps (post cards worldwide)	2,25 €
Jeans	35 € ->
Sweater	30 € ->
Toothpaste	2–4 €
Shampoo	3–5 €
Movie ticket	7.50–15 €
Swimming hall, single entry ticket	3–5 €
Ice-hockey game in Helsinki	11–35 €
Opera / theatre ticket	14–62 €
Finnish language course	30 € ->
Finnish–English–Finnish pocket dictionary	16 € ->
Mobile phone call within Finland	0.06 € / minute ->

1 EUR ~ 1.07 USD (November 2023)

7. HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR VOLUNTEER WORK PERIOD?

A volunteer work year in Finland provides you with a unique opportunity to experience living in Finland. Here are a few tips that might help you to get the most out of your time here.

1. Be curious and willing to learn!

Do not be afraid to ask questions, they are a good way to learn. As the saying goes, “The one who is afraid of asking is ashamed of learning!”

2. Be quick to observe but slow to judge.

Some things might seem strange at first sight but often when you learn more about them they do not seem so strange anymore.

3. Mistakes are natural.

Do not be afraid to make mistakes – or to be corrected. Mistakes can help you understand your environment and the world more fully.

4. Appreciate hospitality.

People hosting you are sharing their homes with you and do it voluntarily. Do appreciate their hospitality.

5. Try to adapt to the new situation.

You may not like living in Finland all the time but that is only natural: there are ups and downs in living anywhere. Try to adapt and get along with people.

6. Trying to speak Finnish is important.

Trying to speak Finnish helps you to get to know the Finnish culture, habits and people. Take the

challenge! Finnish language might be challenging but definitely not impossible to learn. It is logical and in many ways simple. Numerous volunteers before you have shown it can be learned.

7. Humour helps in many situations!

Do not forget humour as it is the best remedy in many cases.

8. The more you give, the more you get.

The right attitude is very important during your volunteer work year. “When you help someone, you make two people happy!”

9. Enjoy your time, relax!

Do not be afraid to try out new things. All you really need to survive is a proper dose of curiosity.

10. Be prepared to encounter the unexpected!

During your volunteering period you will get to learn about the cultural differences and see them in practice. You will spend a long period of time surrounded by cultural patterns and family customs that might be very different from those you are accustomed to. Do not expect too many things but be prepared to encounter the unexpected! It might surprise you in many positive ways!

8. SOME USEFUL WORDS IN FINNISH

yes	kyllä/joo
no	ei
thank you	kiitos
here you are / please	ole hyvä
excuse me / sorry	anteeksi (colloquial: sori)
good morning	hyvää huomenta
good day	hyvää päivää
good night	hyvää yötä
Hello!	Hei!
Hi!	Moi! Terve!
Bye!	Hei hei! / Moi moi! / Heippa!
How are you?	Mitä kuuluu?
(I am) fine / good	(Minulle kuuluu) hyvää
open	avoinna, auki
closed	kiinni, suljettu
toilet	WC, vessa
telephone	puhelin
train	juna
railway station	rautatieasema, juna-asema
bus	linja-auto, bussi
bus station	linja-autoasema, bussiasema
airport	lentokenttä
harbour	satama
taxi	taksi
one, two	yksi, kaksi
three, four	kolme, neljä
five, six	viisi, kuusi
seven, eight	seitsemän, kahdeksan
nine, ten	yhdeksän, kymmenen

Welcome!
Tervetuloa! (Finnish)
Välkommen! (Swedish)

9. LINKS TO FURTHER INFORMATION

The Internet is probably the quickest and the easiest way to find more information on Finland. Here are some useful links.

- The webpage of ICYE Finland: <https://www.maailmanvaihto.fi>
- Wikipedia entry on Finland: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Finland>
- Useful information on the Finnish society: <https://www.infofinland.fi>
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland: <https://um.fi/frontpage>
- Lots of useful information on Finland and Finns: <https://finland.fi>
- Information on Finland for tourists: <https://www.visitfinland.com>
- A collection of sites in which you can learn Finnish
<https://www.infofinland.fi/en/living-in-finland/finnish-and-swedish/finnish-online>
- Yle News on Finland: <https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news>
- Newspaper Helsingin Sanomat: <https://www.hs.fi/english>
- English newspaper Helsinki Times: <https://www.helsinkitimes.fi>
- SixDegrees, a magazine on Finnish culture and society: <http://www.6d.fi>
- The City of Helsinki: <https://www.hel.fi/helsinki/en>
- The Finnish National Agency for Education cooperation and mobility in the Finnish society with specific emphasis on education, training, working life, culture and young people: <https://www.oph.fi/en>

If you are searching for webpages of Finnish cities and municipalities, normally it is possible to find them by writing *www.name of the city.fi* For example: Tampere = *www.tampere.fi*, Jyväskylä = *www.jyvaskyla.fi*. NB: If there are dots in the name of the city, you should not include them into the web address. Ä -> A & Ö -> O

Finland is one of the countries with the highest number of internet connections per person. This nevertheless does not mean that every place has a computer or that the volunteer could freely use any computer. However, if there is no internet connection in the voluntary workplace, free internet connection can be found, for instance, in local libraries.



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FINLAND