

# Estonia

Estonia is a European Union country located in northeastern Europe, on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea. Estonia is one of the three Baltic countries and shares borders with Latvia and Russia. It has a population of 1.3 million (the census was taken in 2023) and the official language of the country is Estonian, which is spoken by about 1.1 million people.



Estonia has about 1500 islands in the Baltic Sea, including Saaremaa and Hiiumaa (the largest), located in the mouth of the Gulf of Riga.

❖ Estonia joined the European Union on 1 May 2004 and adopted the Euro (€) currency on 1 January 2011, having previously had the Estonian kroon since 1928. Its capital city is Tallinn which is its largest city with 430 thousand

inhabitants.

## History:

- ❖ Estonia has a long and turbulent history, as its strategic location in the Baltic Sea made it a target of various powers. Since the Middle Ages, the region has been conquered by the Danes, the Germans and later by Sweden. In 1561, during the Livonian War, Estonia came under Swedish control, a period considered favorable for local development. In 1721, after the Great Northern War, Estonia was incorporated into the Soviet Union. In 1918, after the October Revolution, Estonia declared independence, but in 1940 it was annexed by the Soviet Union. During World War II, it was briefly under German occupation (1941-1944), but after the war it rejoined the Soviet Union. Its independence was restored on 20 August 1991.

## Cultural Traditions :

- ❖ **Saint John's Day:** The summer equinox is one of the most beloved holidays in Estonia. People light big bonfires, sing traditional songs and celebrate nature.
- ❖ **Sauna Culture:** Sauna is an integral part of Estonian culture, combining relaxation, social interaction and traditions such as weddings, births and celebrations.
- ❖ **National clothing:** Traditional Estonian clothing is an important element of Estonian identity as it is usually worn on private occasions or celebrations. It includes colourful skirts, embroidered shirts and characteristic accessories such as belts and hats.

## Famous personalities:

- ❖ **Arvo Part:** is one of the world's most important composers who has written dozens of classical and religious music compositions. Some of his compositions are 'Tabula Rasa' , 'Fratres' , 'Te Deum' and many more

## Famous monuments and sites:

- ❖ The Russalka Monument is a bronze monument built by Amandus Adamson in 1902 in Kadriorg, Tallinn, Estonia to mark the 9th anniversary of the sinking of the Russian warship "M en Route to Finland". The monument depicts an angel holding an Orthodox cross in the supposed direction of the shipwreck.
- ❖ The Maarjamäe monument is a monument in Tallinn, Estonia built by architect Allan Murdmaa and sculptor Matti Varik. The memorial is dedicated to those who had fallen during World War II. The central part of the monument is a 35-metre obelisk built in 1960. In addition to the obelisk, the palm of the hand-prints and bronze seagulls called "Perishing seagulls" have also been erected.

## Traditional food and drink:

- ❖ **Verivorst:** blood sausages which are especially served at Christmas time.
- ❖ **Mulgipuder:** mashed potatoes with pearl barley and bacon.
- ❖ **Kama:** a mixture of ground cereals eaten with sour milk or kefir.
- ❖ **Modu:** traditional honey-wine i.e. Estonian honey-malt
- ❖ **Kohv:** coffee is very popular and is often accompanied by Estonian sweets such as kringel (sweet bread with cinnamon).

### **Festivals and events:**

- ❖ **Laulupidu:** a singing festival held every 5 years in Tallinn and is one of the largest choral festivals in the world, with thousands of singers and dancers.
- ❖ **Parnu Film Festival:** the oldest documentary film festival in the Baltic region, attracting international filmmakers.