

Royal Photographic Society

Travel Group visit to Helsinki: July 5 – 11, 2020



Helsinki is a comfortable city - big enough to have all the trappings of a capital but small enough for everything to be close at hand, within walking distance. This is backed up by an excellent public transport system that's properly integrated – a network of buses, trams, trains and ferries, all of which can be used with the multi-day travel card.

It's a Nordic city, so is clean and has the designer feel about it – blending the new with the old seamlessly. In the summer, much seems to be centred around the water (Helsinki has the largest archipelago in the world.) It has a wide range of quality architecture, from stark modernism through classical romantic. It has museums and public art in abundance and lots of events (the Helsinki Festival takes place while we're there – the largest arts event in Finland.) And then there's the countryside around it with public parks and country houses to enjoy.

As the trip will take place before the main summer tourist season starts, locations will be less crowded, but most key venues and activities will be available, and the weather should be good. And of course there are those long Nordic days and short nights.

The plan is to provide an informal event – one with an umbrella itinerary covering this very photogenic city and its islands, surrounding locations and even the historic centre of Tallinn in neighbouring Estonia. Participants will make their own travel and accommodation reservations and join together under an umbrella of events according to their interests. They can choose to spend as many or as few days engaged in the trip as they wish, and can mix and match their choices of following the itinerary or enjoying their own self-led travel/exploration. The aim is to provide a framework of activities that enable like-minded enthusiasts of travel photography to meet together and share photographic experiences.

Helsinki Area Photographic Attractions

National Museum of Photography. Always has a major exhibition, and others, featuring Finnish or well known international photographers.

Suomenlinna Island. An old naval fortress actually spread over several islands and now a World Heritage Site. It's reached by a 15 minute ferry ride from the east harbour.

Seurasaari Open Air Museum. On an island within the city, you'll find old buildings in rural settings from around Finland, many staffed by interpreters often in costume.

Esplanadi. This is a tree lined boulevard dropping down from the city centre to the harbour and, with its pavement cafés and parks, is the place to people watch.

Status: August 1, 2019

Old Porvoo. Founded nearly 800 years ago, Porvoo is the second oldest city in Finland . The old town, on the river Porvoo close to the Gulf of Finland, retains its colourful traditional wooden buildings and cobbled streets. But it is a living town, and is widely recognised for its photogenic attractions

Architecture. For those interested in architecture, the city offers rich pickings. There are many interesting buildings – for example the Church in the Rock, Helsinki Market Hall, the National Museum, the Cathedrals, the Parliament building, Finlandia Hall, the Fish Market. Add in the Neoclassical and Art-Nouveau quarters, and the city gives great opportunities for street and architectural photography. Just outside Helsinki is Hvittrask, a country house formerly the home (and now museum) of Finnish architects Gesellius, Lindberg & Saarinen.

Söderskär. A 2 hour boat trip to this island in Helsinki's outer archipelago, with its old lighthouse, flora, and birds. So peaceful so photogenic, but only in summer.

Further Afield. Hanko to the west is another photogenic old town with traditional wooden buildings. Saimaa to the north east of Helsinki is the heart of Finland's lake district (and where Russian traditions remain strong). Rovaniemi lies on the Arctic circle with Finnish (and Norwegian) Lapland beyond. Just across the Baltic, Tallinn is an easy day trip by comfortable ferry, with its largely unspoilt old quarter. Less than four hours on a high speed train will take you to St. Petersburg (check visa requirements). West, via the Stockholm ferry, are the tranquil Åland islands. Or just go out and enjoy Finland's lakes and forests.

The Visit Helsinki website is an excellent resource for visitors on all aspects of the city. www.visithelsinki.fi

Sample Itinerary

Day 1	Fly to Helsinki Vantaa airport Transit to city by public transport, check in to hostel/hotel
Day 2	Suomenlinna Island, Fortress and boatyard (ferry) Meet for dinner
Day 3	City exploration/ Architecture/ Museum of Photography Meet for dinner
Day 4	Day trip to Tallinn Meet for dinner
Day 5	Seurasaari Island and Open Air Museum Meet for dinner
Day 6	Old Porvoo wooden town (boat out and/or bus return) Meet for dinner
Day 7	City exploration/ Harbour/Canal cruise or other local activity Depart for airport (by public transport) and flight home

This is a suggested itinerary. Participants can

- join or leave it as they wish (notification appreciated)
- add on regional tours before or after joining this core activity
- make alternative arrangements, while in Helsinki, to visit other photographic venues
- join group activities e.g. the cruise and dinners (may require pre-registration/deposits/pre-payment)

Reservations & Travel Information

Although this is an informal trip, and travellers will make their own arrangements for individual travel, accommodation, meals, entry fees, etc., it will be necessary for the Travel Group to make a small charge to cover administration and organisational expenses. Also deposits may be necessary for group activities requiring payments/contracts. See booking form.

A more detailed information pack will be distributed to registered travellers nearer the date of the trip. This will include information on suggested group activities as well as arrangements for making reservations for them.

Insurance. Travellers should ensure they have adequate travel insurance arrangements in place before making any reservations.

Travel from UK: Direct flights from Heathrow (BA, Finnair), Gatwick (Norwegian), Manchester (Finnair) and Edinburgh (Finnair)

Travel (Helsinki area): A multi-day Regional ticket is recommended – it covers buses/trains/ferries/trams. Available from the Visit Helsinki desks at the airport and central railway station, and other outlets within Helsinki. Another option is the Helsinki Card that includes unlimited local travel, admission to major sights and museums, as well as discounts in shops, restaurants, the Finnair airport bus, etc.

Accommodation: To maximise group interaction, two locations are suggested, each offering good value and quality within their class.

Hostel: CheapSleep hostel (www.cheapsleep.fi) has dorm beds from around €20/night through to private double rooms at around €70/night. (It may be possible for a group of travellers to block-book a smaller dorm room for exclusive use, which could be cheaper than buying private rooms.) Breakfast is included

Hotel: For a full service hotel, the Radisson Blu Seaside hotel (www.radissonblu.com/seasidehotel-helsinki) is less than 10 minutes out of the centre (by tram) has double rooms en-suite with breakfast from around €110/night.

Additionally, a wide range of accommodation at all levels/budgets is available throughout Helsinki to suit travellers' preferences. Prices shown are for indication only and subject to change/availability. It is recommended that hotel/hostel reservations are made in good time, as demand arising from other events could affect prices.

Restaurants: Suggested venues for each night's dinner will enable travellers to meet as a group if they wish and share their day's experiences. Optional group dinners with speakers may be arranged and notified before the trip starts (reservations required.)

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Booking Form: Helsinki 2020

Please reserve me places for the Helsinki trip, July 5th to 11th, 2020.

The maximum group size will be limited to 9 participants.

I enclose a cheque (payable to the RPS Travel Group) for £25 per person (Travel Group Members) or £35 per person (other RPS Members), for the event Registration fee.

Participant 1	Participant 2
Name:	Name:
Address:.....	Address:.....
Phone Number:	Phone Number:
E-Mail Address:	E-Mail Address:
RPS Membership Number:	RPS Membership Number:
Travel Group Member? Yes / No (please delete as appropriate)	Travel Group Member? Yes / No (please delete as appropriate)

It may be necessary to request deposits to support reservations for specific events if required by the providers of those events. Travellers will be notified of this nearer the date of the trip, as details become available.

Cancellations must be notified by May 4th, 2020 for refund of Registration fee. Any payments made for travel, accommodation, restaurants, or other activities may not be refundable.

Signed:.....

Date:.....

Please note: The last date for Registrations to be received by the organisers is May 4th, 2020

Send to: Richard Lewis ARPS, Chase House, West Chase, Mundon, Essex CM9 6PD

Status: August 1, 2019