

Youth budget travel in Helsinki: A guide to affordable adventures

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<p>This is a product-based thesis with a budget travel guide as the final product. The thesis is created for CheapSleep Hostel Helsinki, a budget accommodation provider for visitors in the capital of Finland. The guide offers information and ideas about affordable and free-of-charge places to see, activities to do and how to get the most out of Helsinki with a thin travel budget, among other things. The aim of the guide is to give domestic and international visitors an idea of what Helsinki is beyond the common assumptions of high cost of living and being a widely unaffordable destination on the global scale. Additionally, with the help of the guide, readers will be able to get a more authentic feel of Helsinki and the way many locals live.</p> <p>To begin with, Finnish tourism and Helsinki as a travel destination are introduced, explaining the strengths and weaknesses of the city. The authors elaborate what youth budget travel is with its general demographic as well as their motives and values. The reader is familiarized with different forms of accommodation that are typical for the traveler type in question, in addition to notable youth budget travel destinations. Ways of creating a convenient and enjoyable guide are also presented with a research base.</p> <p>Based on the theory priorly researched, a survey is conducted for budget travelers of the target age group in order to compile content as relevant as possible for the guide. For example, the respondents are asked about their preferences, dislikes, habits and expectations when visiting a budget destination, along with general background information. The survey process is explained in detail after which the responses are analyzed. The final product, budget travel guide, is then created not only based on the survey results, but also on the theoretical framework and the authors' own preferences.</p> <p>The guide contains plenty of ideas for visiting Helsinki on a budget without having to compromise on the travel experience. In addition, general information of Finland is presented together with useful local tips and cultural elements, i.e. habits and customs that make it easier for the reader to understand the culture and local lifestyle. The content of the guide is planned so that it serves the readers in a versatile way, giving valuable information and unique aspects for both domestic and international travelers willing to explore the capital differently.</p> <p>Ultimately, the necessity and relevance of the budget travel guide, findings of the theoretical and operational parts, working methods used and the progress of the thesis process are concluded. The success of the entire project is assessed by a set of criteria established in the introduction together with feedback from the commissioning company. The authors' learning outcomes are then discussed and reviewed from both academic and personal viewpoints.</p>	
Keywords Budget travel, youth travel, Helsinki, guide	

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1 Introduction

Finland is among the 25 richest countries in the world (Suneson 2019), which is why it is fair to assume that Finland would also be a very expensive country. In fact, it is the 8th most expensive country in Europe when analyzing each country's consumer goods and services (Yle 2018). While it is true that the cost of living is quite high and there are many things in Finland and especially Helsinki that can be very expensive, we want to let foreigners and domestic tourists know that this is not solely the case. Our product-based thesis will give visitors of Helsinki a compact guide of tips on what to do, see and eat in Helsinki on a budget.

The topic of youth budget travel is close to both of our hearts as we are very familiar with traveling around the world on a thin budget. We have discovered that often the cheaper way is closer to the authentic and local way, since those places are not marketed for tourists and do not take advantage of their wealth. Attractions at destinations try to maximize the revenue of tourists and logically target the pricier options to them, according to our own experience. Talking to other budget travelers from plenty of different countries and studying the topic online, we have noticed that a lot of people conceive Finland as an avoidable destination due to expensiveness. As researched among Chinese and Dutch people, Finland and Helsinki are perceived unsuitable for budget traveling (Aihaiti 2014, 43; Platinga 2017, 2). We want to prove this bias wrong with the information, insights and viewpoints provided in the thesis.

Our commissioning company, CheapSleep Hostel Helsinki, is relevant and supports our topic as they represent budget travel and are the most affordable, registered accommodation provider in Helsinki (Booking.com 2020). In addition, their biggest customer segment is young travelers from ages 18 to 35 (Pripachkin 2020).

1.1 Aim and objectives

The thesis is product-based, which means that research has only little emphasis in the project, but instead the focus is on creating a final product in form of a travel guide. The guide will be downloadable in PDF, however having a suitable format for a printed version for the distribution of our commissioning company. Additionally, it will be available for public on the web page of CheapSleep Hostel Helsinki if the company so chooses. Our objective is to create a guide that helps people see and experience Helsinki as a more inexpensive destination compared to how it is generally viewed and branded today. As stated before, Helsinki is often considered a "high-end" travel destination with little possibilities for

budget traveling. We see the potential in inexpensive Helsinki that does not need to stay unknown.

With the information provided in the thesis, visitors coming to Helsinki will be able to experience the city with a lower budget and find the material more easily as they will be gathered in one place. The travel guide will introduce and elaborate affordable and free-of-charge ways and insider tips in which Helsinki can be experienced; ways that many tourists or out-of-towners might not know. These include information about restaurants, cafes, bars, sights, attractions, activities, entertainment, events and transportation. Though we have a specific target group, we want to provide this information to everyone regardless of their motives behind traveling to Helsinki or their budget during their travels in Helsinki. The best possible outcome for the thesis project is to reshape the idea of tourism in Helsinki and bring out a travel segment that encourages visitors on all budgets to explore the capital more comprehensively.

While a traveler in Finland might not consider themselves a budget traveler, they still might want to save on some expenses, for example food or accommodation, to be able to spend more on other areas, such as events or attractions. As traveling is becoming increasingly accessible for everybody due to the growth of budget airlines (Blackall 2019), we want to provide and bring forth budget options to all kinds of travelers whether they perceive themselves as budget travelers or not.

As the primary meaning of the project is to create a budget travel guide of Helsinki, there are certain steps, or sub-goals, required to be fulfilled in order to get the product completed in a well thought-out and timely manner. Creating focus points helps the process stay organized and focused, leading to an outcome that meets our thesis expectations.

The sub-goals for the travel guide are:

- Conducting a survey to gather data about our target group's preferences
- Familiarizing ourselves with the attractions, events etc. for the guide
- Forming the layout and design
- Creating the content
- Receiving feedback and making possible edits

To be able to measure the success of a project at its completion, it is necessary to establish a series of criteria beforehand. Examining the scope, schedule, budget, team satisfaction, customer satisfaction and quality help assess the effectiveness of the project.

(Eskander 2018.) In the thesis and the travel guide, measuring budget success is excluded as there are no costs involved. Additionally, as the thesis is commissioned, customer satisfaction is reviewed along with the commissioner feedback.

First and foremost, examining the scope means whether the outcome of the project fulfills its initial purpose and intention (Eskander 2018); creating a travel guide about budget-friendly options in Helsinki. It is also important to assess the starting conditions and reflect on how they affected the thesis process. We evaluate the schedule to see if we completed different phases of the thesis in time or not, and if it was planned realistically (Eskander 2018). Team satisfaction defines whether the authors are pleased with the whole process of making the thesis as well as with the end result. Since the thesis is done as a pair work, it is important to discuss the level of fulfillment of both parties. Then again, customer satisfaction targets our commissioning company, CheapSleep Hostel Helsinki. It examines whether the project and the product bring value for the company and if their needs are met in terms of the final product. The last criterion, quality, measures the authors' ability to deliver the intended outcome and what kind of adjustments are made to ensure the quality (Eskander 2018). In this part, the consistency of the content is examined in addition to whether the quality of the text is appropriate and according to the authors' standards and Haaga-Helia guidelines.

1.2 Commissioning company

CheapSleep Hostel Helsinki is the most affordable registered accommodation provider in Helsinki, located in Vallila area, Southern Helsinki, just 10 minutes from Helsinki city centre by public transportation (Booking.com 2020; CheapSleep Helsinki 2018). It was founded in 2012 by a British citizen Oliver Lewis with a founding partner, Chinese-born Juni Yao. The hostel is currently managed by Stella Dinh and Gleb Pripachkin and additionally employs 16-20 staff members including receptionists, housekeepers, breakfast hosts and bar staff. (Pripachkin 2020.)

CheapSleep Hostel Helsinki offers different types of accommodation, for both budget seekers and travelers with higher standards. They have 276 bed places including dorm rooms of 4 to 26 beds and private rooms of 2 to 4 beds. The rates vary from as low as 15€ to approx. 80€ per night depending on the size and type of the room. Additionally, the high season from July 26th to September 21st, and special events and holidays affect the bed prices and staff volume. All rates come with free buffet breakfast, unlimited Wi-Fi, personal safe, reading light, electrical outlet and linen. The guests can enjoy home-like range of services under one roof – bathroom facilities are shared among all rooms apart from one ensuite double room, and there are two communal kitchens with all standard equipment a fully functional kitchen would have. (CheapSleep Helsinki 2018; Pripachkin 2020.) Thus, the guests can save money and cook their own food instead of having to eat in a restaurant. In addition, there are washing machines for use and other services such as

public transportation tickets and commodities for sale (CheapSleep Helsinki 2018; Pripachkin 2020).

The rooms are located on two floors and along with the communal kitchens, there is a lounge area with a bar together with arcade and board games. There the guests get to socialize, play, have a drink or join different free events that CheapSleep Hostel Helsinki hosts according to the occupancy level. (Pripachkin 2020.) As to our experience, events are a great way to boost the sense of community, be immersed in local activities and get to know other travelers for the ones seeking it, and therefore increase customer satisfaction. Some of the events that have been organized during the last 12 months are e.g. pub crawls, movie and quiz nights, sledging events, game tournaments and sauna visits – all with a great response from the guests (Pripachkin 2020).

The main customer group of CheapSleep Hostel Helsinki is young adults from ages 18 to 35, as most of the actual visitors fit into this category. However, the marketing of the company does not centre around a specific age group, but is rather tied to different events like festivals, holidays, sports events and other celebrations, that often cause a peak in the occupancy rates. The majority of the hostel's customers come from Finland, followed by travelers from Russia, Germany, France and Japan. 80% of all customers are solo travelers, and the average length of stay is 2.15 days. (Pripachkin 2020.)

2 Helsinki as a travel destination

In recent years, tourism in Helsinki (figure 1) has hit a record count. Growth in the number of visitors has been faster than in the neighbouring capitals, and Helsinki has become the busiest passenger harbour in all of Europe. One of the city's strengths is that tourists come from multiple market areas all over the world. Helsinki's appeal in the tourism industry is its proximity to nature as well as the city and event culture. With more popular European cities suffering from overtourism, smaller cities like Helsinki have a better opportunity to offer memorable experiences to visitors. (Helsingin kaupunki 2018.)

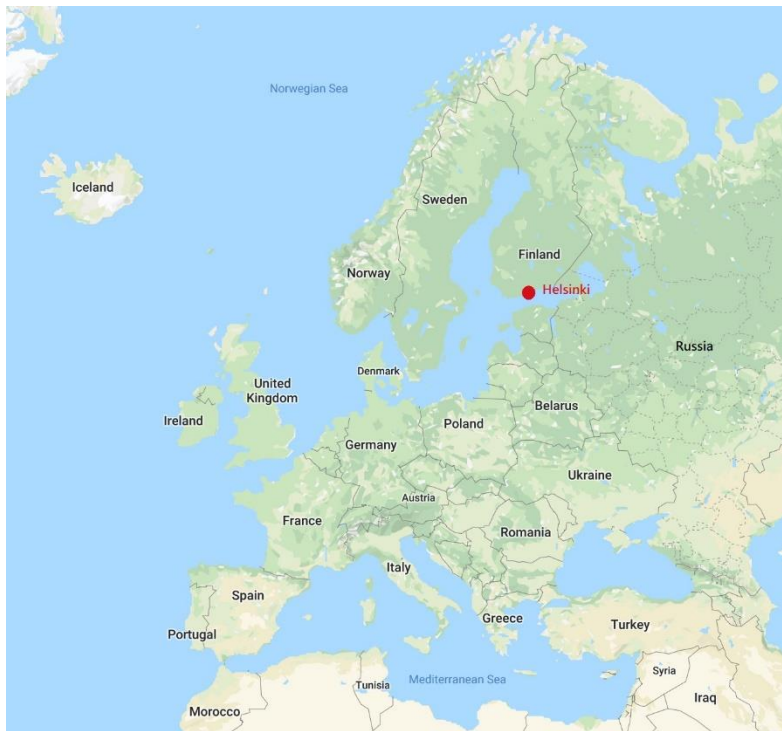


Figure 1. Helsinki on the map (adapted from Google Maps 2020)

2.1 Tourism in Finland

Located in Northern Europe by the Baltic Sea, bordering Russia, Sweden and Norway, Finland is an EU country of 5.52 million inhabitants. The capital area of Helsinki is home to 1.4 million Finns (Finland Toolbox 2020a, 2, 7). In the European scale, Finland is the 33rd most visited country with 8.5 million international arrivals, most of which from Russia, Estonia and Sweden (Business Finland 2019a, 5; The World Bank 2019). A considerable part of Finnish tourism, over one third, consists of day trippers (Business Finland 2019a, 19). While the daily visits are decreasing, in 2019, Finland's growth in overnight stays by foreign visitors was higher than anywhere else in Europe, whereas, for example, in other

Nordic and Baltic countries overnight stays have only decreased (Official Statistics of Finland 2020). As to 2018, the number of international overnights in Finland was 6.8 million, which is 14% of the total 49.5 million overnights in all Nordic countries (Business Finland s.a.). Other Nordic capitals, like Stockholm in Sweden, Oslo in Norway and Copenhagen in Denmark, are regarded as the biggest competitors for Helsinki in the world tourism market. They simultaneously target the same tourists yet benefit from each other's success as travelers tend to visit several of these cities during one trip. (Mustonen 2018a.)

Finland can be divided into four major tourism regions – Helsinki region, coast and archipelago, lake district and Lapland, of which the majority of international overnights are spent in Helsinki region (43%) and Lapland (25%) (Business Finland s.a.). Some of the main pull factors of travelers coming to Finland are pure nature and clean, fresh air as well as Northern lights and Lapland's arctic seasons (Sullström 2019). However, culture and entertainment also play a significant role in travelers' destination choices regarding Finland (Business Finland 2019a, 16). As stated by Virkkunen, there is growing international interest towards Finland, and when examined from the perspective of global markets, Finland's diversity attracts people and creates competitiveness (Business Finland 2019b).

2.2 Helsinki in tourism numbers

Out of all international overnight stays in Finland, the majority of them are spent in Helsinki area, 60% of which during the summertime (Visit Finland s.a., 7, 33). Positive progress in terms of international overnight stays has continued in the capital area for the fifth year in a row, spiking an all-time high in 2017 both among international and domestic travelers (Mustonen 2019; Visit Finland s.a., 8). In 2018, almost 5 million trips were made to Helsinki region, whereas the rest of the country had only about 3.5 million trips (Business Finland 2019a, 27). "Tourism in Helsinki has thereby risen to a new level that is clearly higher than before. The city is drawing interest, which is evident in both overnight stays and record-breaking air passenger numbers" (Mustonen 2019). It should be pointed out that the figures of overnight stays only cover nights at registered establishments and do not count alternative accommodation arrangements, such as Airbnb (Mustonen 2018b). Currently, Helsinki is undergoing a major tourism development boom as 30 new hotels are set to open in the upcoming years. What is more, terminal space, baggage handling capacity and number of gates at Helsinki-Vantaa International Airport will be nearly doubled by 2022 (Kantomaa 2019; Teivainen 2019).

Aside from 49% of travelers in Helsinki being domestic, the most dominant traveler nationalities are Russia, Germany, China and Hong Kong (Visit Finland s.a., 7, 8). Nevertheless, Chinese tourists spend more money than other foreign tourist groups. In the last five years

their overnight stays in Helsinki's accommodation providers have more than doubled. (Riipinen 2019.) Two out of five travelers in the capital area come from continental Europe and every fifth from Asia. Holiday and leisure trips are the ruling purpose of travel for foreign visitors in Helsinki, visiting friends and family having the second greatest segment and business trips the third (Visit Finland s.a., 13, 39).

Linnanmäki amusement park was the most visited attraction in Helsinki in 2019, followed by Suomenlinna Sea Fortress, Temppeliaukio Rock Church, Uspenski Cathedral, Helsinki Cathedral and Korkeasaari Zoo. Over a million locals and foreigners spent time in Linnanmäki last year, while Korkeasaari had less than half of the number of visitors. (City Executive Office s.a., 32.)

2.3 Strengths

Aside from Helsinki being a destination renowned in design, architecture and Nordic cuisine (Wong s.a.), it has worthy potential for a budget destination. First and foremost, Helsinki has a functional public transportation system that is easy, affordable, reliable and fast (HSL s.a.; MyHelsinki s.a.a). In addition to the efficient public transportation, Helsinki is a compact city with short distances and a variety of landscapes – according to Rinkineva, being deep in the Finnish forest or in total tranquility by the seaside takes only 20 minutes from the city centre (Riipinen 2019). Consequently, the small size of the capital works as an asset as travelers can cut time on traveling and enjoy the destination itself. The easiness of getting around is also supported by the level of English language skills. Most Helsinki locals have a good command of English in addition to their mother tongue of Finnish or Swedish, and often they even speak a third language such as Spanish, French or German. In addition to the restaurant industry staff all over Helsinki having a good command of English, a variety of cultural and arts services, events and programmes as well as leisure activities are offered in Helsinki for English speakers to enjoy. "Helsinki is an attractive city internationally and defined by a high level of know-how. It is easy to get by in the capital no matter what your language background." (MyHelsinki s.a.b.)

Safety and security are some of the main concerns of international travelers (CNN Travel 2017). Helsinki is ranked the safest and most secure city in the world regarding the impact of crime, terrorism and law enforcement (World Economic Forum 2019, 35). Not only is Helsinki safe, it also pioneers in tourism development concerning sustainability, digitalization, cultural heritage and accessibility. In 2019, Helsinki took first place in the European Commission's new European Capital of Smart Tourism competition with exemplary smart tourism practices. (Sustain Europe 2019.) High-speed Wi-Fi is unrestricted and free throughout the whole city and almost twice as powerful as an average home broadband in

London (Mirani 2015). This can contribute to the convenience of going around, feeling safe and the untroubled enjoyment of travelers.

Finland sets an example with its environmental consciousness. Out of 140 economies compared, it received the fifth spot in environmental sustainability in The Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report 2019 (World Economic Forum 2019, 78). The air and drinking water qualities are some of the cleanest in the world and the City of Helsinki has implemented a strategy for Helsinki to be fully carbon neutral by 2035 (Bhatia 2019; MyHelsinki s.a.c; The Telegraph 2018). In addition to nature never being more than a short walk away, even in the city centre, there are plenty of arboretums, parks and wild nature areas within a short distance as well as an extensive coastline of 40 000 kilometres that includes Helsinki (Huttunen 2017). More than 70% of Finland is covered by trees, which makes it the most forested country in Europe (Finland Toolbox 2020b).

Along with the assets mentioned above, Helsinki has plenty of options for the budget-conscious. For example, several churches, museums, galleries and botanical gardens are of free entry, some of them at least once a month. Additionally, there are lots of free events, concerts and shows throughout the year. (Lehtinen 2018.) As nature is one of the travelers' pull factors of Helsinki, the wilderness, archipelago and all national parks are free to explore. This is due to "jokamiehenoikeus", i.e. everyman's right, "the freedom to roam the countryside, forage, fish with a line and rod, and enjoy the recreational use of natural areas". (Visit Finland 2020.)

Helsinki's advantage in tourism is also its location. It is the northernmost capital in continental Europe as well as the easternmost capital of the European Union, which makes it a unique crossover of the eastern and western European culture (Business Finland 2019b; Finland Toolbox 2020a; Google Maps 2020). Due to the beneficial geographical location, it is also the shortest connection between Europe and Asia by air as Helsinki-Vantaa International Airport works as "the leading transfer hub between Europe and Asia" (ACI Europe 2016).

2.4 Weaknesses

Finland is perceived as an expensive market with cold weather and a remote location compared to West European countries' tourism market (Wang 2018). These projections are logical and much supported by research and comparisons of both Finland's and Helsinki's price levels, climate and location.

When it comes to price competitiveness, Finland drops down the 122nd spot out of 140 countries compared (World Economic Forum 2019, 77). Therefore, not surprisingly, Helsinki is ranked more expensive than 80% of cities in the world and considered a high income economy (Expatistan 2020; World Economic Forum 2019, 101). Though price levels are not quite as high as e.g. in Stockholm, the capital of Sweden, Helsinki still feels quite costly compared to almost any other European city. Some main attractions in the city can be quite affordable, but hotels and even hostels are fairly expensive on an international level, especially in the busier summer season. (Price of Travel 2020.) In fact, there are not many registered budget accommodation options at all with, for example, Hostelworld offering only 8 hostels in Helsinki, and only three of them with a very central location. In comparison to more expensive Stockholm, there are nonetheless over 15 budget accommodation options and almost all of them are within two kilometres or less from the city centre. (Booking.com 2020; Hostelworld 2020a; Hostelworld 2020b.)

Besides Helsinki functioning as a gateway city between Asia and Europe, its location can also work as a disadvantage. Being widely surrounded by water and having a far-off location, Finland is one of the world's most northern and geographically remote countries (Britannica 2020; Google Maps 2020) which could negatively impact acquiring new visitor markets. While it might require more effort time-wise hence the distance, traveling to Helsinki from abroad can be done with a variety of transportation methods either by air, land or water (MyHelsinki 2020).

Although Helsinki is surrounded by a sublime, easily reachable natural environment (Lonely Planet 2020), its downfall is its harsh climate. Helsinki is a coastal city – on the same latitude as Siberia and Canada – and quite close to the Arctic Ocean that brings the city cold however clear, bright and freezing winds during the wintertime. At the same time, snow may fall persistently, the temperature can drop down to minus 30 degrees Celsius and the roads can be hazardously slippery due to icy conditions. Since Finland is located in the very north, the daytime is short during the winter. There are only 6 hours of daylight in Helsinki in December that can, on the other hand, have its own exotic attraction. (Finland 2008.) Contrarily, Finland has much milder yearly temperatures than many other regions that lie as far north, and e.g. the hottest month, July, has the average temperature of 13 to 17 degrees Celsius (Weather Online 2020).

3 Youth budget travel

To fully understand the idea of the thesis and its final product, the concept of budget travel needs to be clear – at least the way it is defined for the purpose of this thesis. This chapter explains the concept in more detail than how it is already described above in the introduction. Additionally, in order to create a useful guide for young travelers looking for budget options, the traveler type in question must be defined and scrutinized. To do this, it is important to establish the main characteristics and ways young people travel, supported by learning what motivates them and what they value when it comes to traveling or going abroad. These topics are discussed in the following subchapters.

3.1 Defining budget travel

According to Dauntless Jaunter (2017), “Budget travel is travel that is budget-conscious. A budget traveler may stay in economy accommodations or hostels, eat cheap meals, and fly during off-peak seasons, among other things.”

Despite doing broad research on the topic, the word “budget”, in terms of traveling, is difficult to determine. We found that it is impossible to specify the exact numbers of spending that is considered budget or affordable. Affordability is subject to a person's income, life situation and the economy and society in which they live (Valdez 2011). A person who earns 10 000€ per month may consider their travels ‘budget’ if they spend a little less than usual during their extensive travels. Another person may come from a third world country and budget traveling for them is the absolute minimalistic way of spending, possibly the only way they can afford it. These comprehensions of affordability or budget are both valid, but do not meet. Therefore, in this thesis, budget traveling is introduced as to what is considered “budget” in the Finnish society among Finnish people, in proportion to the price levels in Finland. In addition to this, in terms of the thesis and product content, budget travelers are determined as domestic and international, both short-term and long-term travelers. The thesis focuses on studying budget traveling among the younger generation i.e. the phenomenon of youth budget travel.

Budget travelers aim to experience culture without sacrificing or compromising the enjoyment or pleasure of traveling, instead they strive to be inventive and flexible (Travel + Leisure 2019). Often budget travelers are considered stingy, when it is actually more about how one spends the money rather than how much they spend it. One way to see it is that budget traveling is about being smart and frugal — not cheap. For example, a budget traveler would not go to Bordeaux and just skip a wine tour. Instead, they would take time to

find a tour that provides the best value. (Argiolas 2019.) Consequently, budget conscious traveling could also be classified as value conscious traveling (Morris 2017).

3.2 Defining youth travel

As a result of increasing levels of international travel, young travelers are more globally minded than ever (Global Blue & Roland Berger 2018, 15). According to Cappel, the founder of For the Love of Travel, young people today are putting off big life changes like having children and working hard. This allows them to have extra money and spend time traveling a few times a year instead of a few times in their lives. (Fromm 2018.) Representing more than 23% of over a billion international travelers annually, youth travel is one of the fastest growing segments of international tourism (Rifai 2020).

The general age group of youth travelers includes people from both generation Y and Z, meaning people from ages 18 to 35 (WYSE Travel Confederation 2020). In this thesis, they are additionally referred to as millennials. These young travelers are commonly in the first phase of their travel careers which can have an impact on their travel behaviour in the future. This is one of the reasons why youth tourism is considered to be one of the most essential tourism markets. (Eusébio & Carneiro 2015.) Though young people generally have less money than their elders, they have more time – as surveyed by American Society of Travel Agents, millennials took 44% more trips and travel time in 2016 than an average baby boomer (Global Blue & Roland Berger 2018, 9; WYSE Travel Confederation 2020). As they spend more time on their travels and the travel frequency is higher, they ultimately end up spending more money. In fact, on average, young travelers invest over 1000€ more on their main trip than a regular international tourist and their annual trip spend is significantly higher. (Blue Swan Daily 2018; WYSE Travel Confederation 2020.)

As stated by Chapman, youth travelers are pioneers and trendsetters of travel as they attract others to new destinations and spots that are off the beaten track (WYSE Travel Confederation 2018). For example, visitors on a working holiday visa or studying in Australia were surveyed by Dr. Jeff Jarvis, and 47% of them said they have generated visits from friends and family coming to see them. Additionally, almost 80% said they would advise their friends to also come to Australia for a working holiday. (WYSE Travel Confederation 2020.)

The three main factors of youth travelers' happiness are destination, trip length and activities. A higher uptick in enjoyment was reported from trips lasting three to six months as well as when the trip was made to a different part of the world outside of one's home re-

gion. Furthermore, young travelers are becoming increasingly keen on one-of-a-kind experiences over products or traditional travel luxuries. According to a survey conducted by WYSE Travel Confederation, millennials are more likely to spend extra cash on i.e. food experiences and events rather than upgrading their seat on a flight. (Global Blue & Roland Berger 2018, 15; Mohn 2018.)

3.3 Budget accommodation

According to Bridge (2013), younger travelers choose budget accommodation in order to spend more money on the destination itself. As stated by OECD (2018), not only do they demand budget accommodation, they also want to socialize, hence spend less time in their room and more time in the common areas to connect with others (Ketter 2019). Millennials rely on sharing economy accommodation instead of booking a hotel for the possibility to connect with local communities, gain authentic local experiences and have value for money (Nielsen 2017, 4; Visit Scotland 2017, 3). These travel behaviors have led to the rise of Airbnb and other digital platforms for homestays, alternative hostels opposing traditional accommodation and new hotel sub-brands (Visit Scotland 2017, 7).

Taking a deeper look into the sharing economy, some of these accommodation types are introduced in the next subchapters. Hostels, Airbnb and Couchsurfing are popular sources of accommodation among millennials, which allow them to satisfy their needs and travel with respect to their values while staying on a budget.

3.3.1 Hostel accommodation

A hostel is a budget-oriented accommodation that provides dormitories, common areas and communal facilities for short-term stay. Dormitories are shared rooms where travelers book individual beds contrary to booking an entire room like in a guesthouse or a hotel. (Hostel Management 2020.) 9 out of 10 hostels also offer private rooms (Mohn 2016). Often the focus of many hostels is to provide shared social experiences in addition to the facilities for which one pays (Dutton 2020). For example, yoga classes, live music, rooftop bars, pool areas, pub crawls, cooking classes, neighborhood walks and other curated tours are no rarity at hostels nowadays, which can also be referred to as “social hotels” (Hostelworld Group 2019; Kaplan 2019). Other sorts of budget accommodation, like motels, differ from hostels by generally having a lower rate and fewer facilities, and they usually serve the sole purpose of a midway break (Zleep 2018).

As hostels used to have a reputation of being a cheap and grungy backup lodging option, it has now become the preferred type of accommodation for many youth travelers (Kwok

2015; Mohn 2016). Some of the reasons for the thriving popularity of hostels is greater spending by millennials, the growing overall interest for traveling, the appeal of online travel agencies and the increasing popularity of solo travel, among other things (Globe Newswire 2020). Of recent travelers who visited multiple destinations during trips of three weeks or more, over four in five (81%) chose to accommodate in hostels (Hostelworld Group 2019). Hostel travelers, of which more than 70% are millennials, spend more money on traveling annually compared to a general tourist (Hostelworld Group 2016).

The factors that attract travelers to choose a hostel over other forms of accommodation are low fares, good locations, value for experiences as well as a possibility to meet other travelers (Mohn 2016). These points support the claim that getting the best value for money outweighs cheapness (Argiolas 2019). Hostel travelers want unique opportunities, experiences and social connections over just lodging, which are conjointly some key preferences among millennial travelers (Hostelworld Group 2019; Mohn 2018), as mentioned earlier.

Hostel industry is booming all over Finland and the growth has been particularly high in Helsinki compared to the rest of the country (Pietiläinen 2019; Zitting 2018). There are currently 8 hostels in Helsinki, and approximately four out of five of their guests come from abroad (Booking.com 2020; Hostelworld 2020a; Pietiläinen 2019). Iceland and Norway are some of the most desired destinations to travel to among hostel goers of all ages (Hostelworld Group 2019), leading to a conclusion that hostels have plenty of potential in Nordic countries.

3.3.2 Airbnb

Originally founded in 2008 in San Francisco, USA, Airbnb is a marketplace for unique places to stay at and things to experience all over the world. Focusing on the accommodation opportunities for the purpose of this thesis, Airbnb offers rooms, apartments and even entire houses to stay at hosted by locals. Anyone can create a free verified account on Airbnb and sign up as a host to offer a bed and/or as a traveler to book the accommodation. There are more than 7 million listings in over 200 countries and regions. The company promotes people-to-people connection and has helped millions of hospitality entrepreneurs to make money by hosting altogether more than 750 million guests so far. (Airbnb s.a.a; Airbnb s.a.b.)

Though the company was set up during the Great Recession, i.e. the global financial crisis, it survived due to the efforts of people coveting to earn extra money and millennials

looking for unique travel experiences (Airbnb 2019; Chappelow 2020). The Y and Z generations make up a big part of the Airbnb hosts and guests, in fact, the measured number was 58% in 2018. Furthermore, the share is expected to rise up to 75% by the year 2022. Millennials have also helped other generations to find Airbnb. As an example, just under half a million senior citizens have listed their spaces for accommodation on Airbnb. (Airbnb 2019.)

The platform allows customers to book and pay for spaces per night instead of per person. This generally ends up being a much more affordable option, especially for groups, than having to book multiple rooms at a hotel. Similar to many hostels, Airbnb bookings often include a proper kitchen and even a living area, which give the guests more freedom to relax and cook for themselves. Another aspect that can work out cheaper is that there usually are not any additional amenities or services to drive up to cost other than the cleaning fee added on at the end of each stay. (Wilson 2018.)

Busbud analysed host listings in major cities in the United States, Europe and one in Australia, and compared their prices to average hotel rooms in the same cities. The results showed that in 16 out of the 22 urban destinations in review, it was more economical to book an Airbnb listing instead of a hotel room. In Europe, the results were even clearer with hotel accommodation being the more expensive option in 8 out of 9 cities. All things considered, in many locations, hotel bookings were almost double the cost of an Airbnb stay. (Busbud s.a.)

In addition to regular homes, Airbnb offers various other forms of accommodation as well, such as castles and tree houses giving their customers very unique and unforgettable experiences that cannot be found anywhere else in the world. Though the accommodations available are often cheaper than traditional hotels, low prices are not the sole reason for the popularity of Airbnb. (Airbnb 2019.) Even 86% of their customers say they book via Airbnb because they want to live like a local. It is important to gain experiences outside of the typical tourist scene and instead discover the local ways of life. (Esposito 2016.)

3.3.3 Couchsurfing

As sleeping costs often tend to be the biggest expense for budget travelers, Couchsurfing, an online hub and social site, provides a platform for strangers all over the world to connect and accommodate each other for free. "The idea behind couchsurfing is simple: "Couchsurfers" leverage the hospitality of friendly people around the world who open their homes to travelers — an act of kindness that dates back millennia." Unlike Airbnb, couchsurfers do not pay their hosts for accommodation. Instead, travelers reward their

hosts by, for example, potential friendship and fun interactions. It is also courteous to bring a thoughtful gift for the host. Despite the name, travelers are not necessarily made to sleep on couches, but many hosts have spare bedrooms or even guest cottages. Signing up is completely free, and the platform provides hangouts and meetups for travelers even if they are not interested in accommodation. (Rodgers 2019.)

The Couchsurfing website was established in 2004 and today, it has over 15 million registered travelers and 400 000 hosts. The charm of the platform lies in authentic interactions – the traveler gets to experience the everyday life of the local and connect with the destination more deeply with the company of the host, who is often an expat, former traveler or just interested in intercultural exchange. Both parts benefit from potentially getting to practice another language and even tying a lifelong friendship. (Martikainen 2017; Rodgers 2019.) The biggest motivators for the hosts to welcome strangers in their homes are meeting new people from different cultural backgrounds, feeling as if they are traveling from the safety of their own home while getting new perspectives. Additionally, the platform has made some hosts overcome loneliness without having to leave their house. (Martikainen 2017.)

Couchsurfers rely on the sharing economy. The possibility to have local company during travels and share the excitement of new, spontaneous encounters, especially if traveling alone, gets travelers to choose Couchsurfing instead of another type of accommodation. (Martikainen 2017; Zaki 2015.) As millennials are grown with internet and smartphones, the safety and trustworthiness of both the host and the traveler are easy to secure online through public reviews and a multi-level account verification that is done during registration to the platform (Global Blue & Roland Berger 2018, 15; Rodgers 2019). Couchsurfing, opposing “consumer society”, lets travelers earn social capital through new connections and encounters, and experience new things without having to buy or own something. As a result of the sharing economy, one gets to earn intangible experiences with their owned property, like in this case, the hosts welcoming strangers in their apartment shared on Couchsurfing. (Martikainen 2017.)

In addition to accommodating for free, travelers can often access the kitchen and thus save money by not having to eat out in restaurants, quite like with Airbnb and hostels. While Couchsurfing may be saving money, it often requires a lot of energy compared to other types of accommodation. As the traveler is expected to interact, communicate and be active with the host instead of using them for convenience, it can become draining in the long-term. (Rodgers 2019.)

There are currently over 19 000 registered Couchsurfing hosts in Helsinki and more than 190 000 in all of Finland, to be compared with around 80 000 registered hosts in all of Thailand, which is the most visited budget travel destination (Couchsurfing 2020; World Tourism Organization 2019). It is recommended to utilize Couchsurfing for accommodation in Finland as the fares of hotels can be shocking for travelers, whereas in Southern Asia the cost of travel accommodation is already widely affordable (Hostelworld Group 2019; Saarelainen 2015).

3.4 Youth budget travel destinations

The most desired destination for extended trips among youth travelers is Latin America with a 61% increase in travelers heading there today, whereas older generations continue to visit Europe. Despite the desire for Latin countries, Asia – especially the eastern parts – lead the charts with the most growth as a travel destination among millennials. (Hostelworld Group 2019.) Latin America, consisting of 26 countries and territories, lures travelers with a growing offering of flight connections, elimination of visas required between nations, adventure possibilities including unique sea and land environments as well as nature, history, culture and cuisine (Biz Latin Hub 2019; Sawe 2018). Ethnic tourism, centred around native and indigenous cultures, has been encouraged in certain areas of Latin America, which may indicate the demand for meaningful travel especially among millennials (Biz Latin Hub 2019; Thoesen 2018). Based on our speculation, Latin America is a noteworthy choice for the budget-conscious millennials as the cost of living is rather low by international standards. For example, the cost of living in Colombia is nearly 63% cheaper than in Finland and approximately 57% cheaper than in the United States. (Numbeo 2020.)

Eastern Asia has been a long-time favorite for budget travelers, mainly due to the affordability of the area that allows them to extend their travel period on a low budget (Betteridge 2016; Hostelworld Group 2019). For example, the price of a bed in a wonderfully rated hostel ranges from only 3€ per night (Hostelworld Group 2019). The main motivators for European price-sensitive travelers to choose Southeast Asia as their preferred travel destination are the unique history, hot weather and the diversity in nature and landscape, with a mention in the variety of food and beverages and the low cost of traveling. Travelers in Southeast Asia want to have an authentic experience and to be one with the locals. (Betteridge 2016). The most visited countries in the area are Thailand, Malaysia and Vietnam (World Tourism Organization 2019).

All in all, as Latin America and Asia are driving the millennials' tourism industry, it is not surprising that Thailand, Vietnam and Colombia are countries with the most operating

hostel properties. (Hostelworld Group 2019). Latin America is expected to receive 78.2 million tourists by 2027 and Southeast Asia's tourism industry is to generate 222.8\$ billion the same year (Mordor Intelligence 2020; The Asean Post 2019). However, the growth of Southeast Asia's tourism is under threat due to pollution, overtourism, environmental damage, social issues and natural disasters. As the travelers in the area much rely on the biodiversity, local landscapes, heritage and cultures, the sector's survival depends on the ability to preserve these resources while adapting to the changing conditions. (The Asean Post 2019.) Since experience-driven millennials seek for novelty and off-beaten paths, Latin America, an emerging tourism market, is expected to grow as it is extremely broad with endless opportunities (Corrano 2018; Global Blue & Roland Berger 2018, 7).

3.5 Motives and values of youth budget travelers

In the world of young adults today, traveling is not regarded as much a luxury as it used to be. It is considered as a great, and even necessary, way to develop life and work skills. Millennials portray different travel behaviours and expectations than their elders. Their preferences vary in destinations, activities, travel companions and spending habits. Unlike previous generations that have been focused on saving up for a house and a car, young travelers these days are not as interested in traditional accomplishments but strive for acquiring less material and more life-enriching moments through travel, for instance. Millennials consider experience to be the new social currency. (Global Blue & Roland Berger 2018, 9.)

Millennials are strategic travelers who track and do research for deals in order to get the best value for their money as they have yet to reach the peak of their earning period. (Global Blue & Roland Berger 2018, 10). Unlike older travelers who may have visited the same Spanish hotel every summer, millennials nowadays opt for travel involving new experiences instead of choosing to visit the same destinations over and over again. Thus millennials are generally less loyal to a certain place or brand than their elders. Youth travelers choose their travel options with money on their mind, leaving brand loyalty out of the equation. In fact, over 80% of French and of British millennials said they prioritize price over the airline when purchasing flights, as an example. (Adara 2017.)

As the thesis is about the phenomenon of youth budget travel, the following subchapters take a closer look at the wants and needs supporting the budget-oriented travel habits of millennials. Some of the main motives and values behind millennials' travel behavior are a need for uniqueness, pursuit of experience, savviness in shopping habits, quality, value for money, security and convenience through digital services. They look for sustainability, personal value and rarity of the experience. (Global Blue & Roland Berger 2018, 10,16.)

Another top motivation for youth travelers is that they want to see and experience everyday life in different places as well as increase their knowledge of various cultures (WYSE Travel Confederation 2018).

3.5.1 Unique and authentic experiences

Airbnb's campaign "Live There" taps right into the concept that millennials crave. The campaign urges travelers to experience a place as if they live there instead of simply going there or touring the destination. Staying in a local home, doing ordinary things like making a bed or cooking helps one to feel like they are actually living in that destination, even if it is for only one night. (Airbnb 2016.)

Millennials seek unusual destinations with extraordinary activities that can provide them with an authentic feeling of the city or the country in addition to exploring the top sights and attractions of the area (Global Blue & Roland Berger 2018, 7, 9). A survey conducted by Skift asked young travelers from the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, China and India about their travel habits. According to the results, over 85% of respondents all around the world said they prefer traveling to a new destination rather than going somewhere they have already been before. For the Chinese, the result was as high as 99%. (Carty 2019.)

As youth travelers do not wish to be recognized as proper tourists anymore, they look for authentic and local experiences (Esposito 2016). According to research conducted by The New Horizons Survey, exploring cultures, increasing one's knowledge and experiencing everyday life in destinations have been found to consistently be the top travel motivations for young travelers. In 2017, more than half of survey respondents chose the concept of 'living like a local' to be a desired activity. (WYSE Travel Confederation 2018.) Millennials' need for experiencing the undiscovered, fascinating reality gravitates them towards getting to know the local people, customs and activities more than taking part in a pre-planned holiday tour. While still checking out top sights of a destination, millennials also want to get to know the places they visit by chatting with locals in bars and restaurants. They have realized that local insights add to deeper, more unique experiences. Traveling has become more about who they have met instead of what they saw. (Global Blue & Roland Berger 2018, 9, 25.)

3.5.2 Sustainability

Sustainable tourism is a positive phenomenon that includes conservation and enhancement of the destination's environment, cultural heritage and economy. In other words,

“The aim of sustainable tourism is to increase the benefits and to reduce the negative impacts caused by tourism for destinations.” (The Travel Foundation 2016.) Sustainable travel, including e.g. ecotourism, voluntourism and pro-poor tourism, is led by youth travelers. Compared to any other travel demographics, millennials are far more likely to be interested in giving back to the areas where they travel. As youth travelers see traveling as embracing life rather than just getting away from it, contributing to helping the less fortunate or making a difference in an area of the world eventually adds to the quality of the traveler’s life. (Travel Technology & Solutions 2016.)

Ecotourism, one of the booming types of youth travel, means traveling to remote locations to enjoy nature in its natural, unaffected condition through e.g. jungle trekking, waterfall hiking or visiting desolate caves. Voluntourism, like teaching a foreign language or doing ecological work at the destination, generated over two billion dollars to the travel and tourism industry due to its characteristics of meaningfulness and social cohesion with the local community, which are some of the millennial’s key travel desires. Pro-poor tourism, another outgrowth of sustainable tourism, is when travelers go to poverty-stricken areas where people live in deprivation of food, medicine or other necessities as part of a culturally enriching travel experience. (Travel Technology & Solutions 2016.) The aim of this practice is to include the poor areas and people in tourism and make sure they benefit from it (Burke 2018, 1). Sustainability is one of the key elements in fulfilling the need for transformational travel for millennials – truly feeling like they are making a difference in the world – which they believe has a long-term positive impact in their life (Travel Technology & Solutions 2016).

Due to the importance of meaningful connections and experiences in their travels, sustainable tourism has the potential to become one of the single hottest trends for millennials (Travel Technology & Solutions 2016). Millennials are the generation most concerned about environmental sustainability and social issues, having grown during a time where climate change has been a part of their daily international dialogue. 87% of millennials think companies should take action on urgent environmental and social issues, which has led to them being willing to pay more for more conscious and considerate products and boycotting harmful brands. (Sumas 2019). Consistently, 86% of millennials consider it important for a company to offer sustainable travel options when booking a trip (Travel Agent Central 2018). The accommodation industry is changing on the side of this trend, some of them offering sustainable local products, enabling energy efficient solutions and donating part of the revenues to a local community (Global Blue & Roland Berger 2018, 26).

On the contrary to youth travelers, an average tourist does not prioritize local traditions, natural resources and residents. Mass tourism, including cruises, hotel tour packages and excessive beach parties, is a multi-trillion dollar industry centred around generating income – most of the money not even remaining in the area of visit, but leaking to large transnational companies. (Lacanilao 2019.)

3.5.3 Personal safety

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (figure 2) as presented by McLeod (2020), is a motivational theory in psychology consisting of five stages of human needs, each of which must be fulfilled from the bottom up before the next tier's needs can be attended. The needs from the bottom of the hierarchy upwards are physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem and self-actualization. Safety and security, including the want to experience order, predictability and control in life, is one of the basic needs together with physiological needs like air, food, drink and sleep. (McLeod 2020.) The concern of personal safety varies between markets, however, is universally highest among millennials (Expedia s.a., 14). That is why this basic need should be addressed when targeting budget travel destinations specifically to youth travelers.

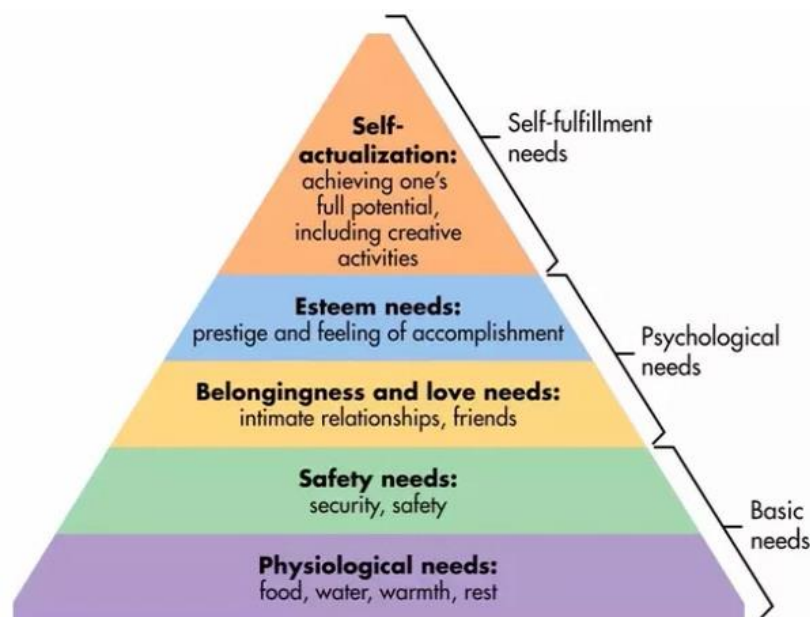


Figure 2. Hierarchy of Needs (adapted from McLeod 2020)

Millennials are more likely to perceive all types of travel issues as threats, which is one of the driving attitudes for the increase of travel insurance purchases – the younger the traveler, the more likely they are to get insurance. Travelers of all ages perceive terrorism and destination safety as major concerns in addition to younger travelers' worry of global politics. (BHTP 2019, 9, 13.) Such concerns, like current geopolitical unrest, affect millennials' travel destination choices and habits. They are highly sensitised to security threats and

are the most likely generation to cancel their trip due to security reasons. (Global Blue & Roland Berger 2018, 10.) In spite of all, youth travelers do not pass adventure for the sake of safety when traveling, since 53% of millennials feel safe as they travel despite sometimes doing dangerous activities (Mueller 2019). Australia is considered to be the safest travel destination by youth travelers (BHTP 2019, 37).

While traveling, risks are not limited to highly unlikely events, but instead range from terrorist attacks and natural disasters to everyday incidents like road accidents and muggings (TravelPerk 2020). Every risk factor perceived by a traveler is a reason for replacing the destination. On the contrary, millennials may overlook potential risks if the activity or destination is seen to give value and experiential opportunities. In the event of a risk turning into a crisis, youth travelers are resilient and will not quit traveling, but instead just shift the travel or spending target. (Morris 2017.) Out of all travelers, millennials take the most risks, partly for being the generation looking to engage in ambitious adventure travel (BHTP 2019, 15, 33).

3.5.4 Digitality

As a result of the rise of digital services, it has never been easier or cheaper to go abroad. For the Y and Z generations, who were the first to grow up using the internet and smartphones, it is normal to go online to look for inspiration on how and where to travel. Millennials have advanced their online tracking skills to serve their need for quality and value. Additionally, the desire for convenience drives the need for digital solutions. In fact, the highest driver for booking through an online travel agency is convenience, with price only being of second importance according to Expedia. (Global Blue & Roland Berger 2018, 6, 9-10,15.)

According to a study conducted by Signature Travel Network and The Center for Generational Kinetics, travelers of all ages are worried about having to spend more money if they use a traditional travel agent for their trip planning instead of going online. This concern is more present among Gen X, i.e. people born in 1964-1976, while millennials also worry about being sold a trip that is too touristy and not unique or tailored to them. (Edensor 2018.) With various options easily before them online, young travelers can customize a trip that suits their individual identities instead of booking a ready-made, old school travel package (Esposito 2016). Differing from their predecessors, travelers now are spoilt with options and have more information at their fingertips to plan their next adventure, as a result of the increased popularity of online reviews and digital destination guides (Hostelworld Group 2019).

Young travelers do not want to be pushed into buying or feel like they are being sold to, which makes it difficult for travel agencies to connect with them. They want to be inspired with useful information from social media, blogs, online reviews, etc. (Baldwin 2019). In fact, social media channels are becoming key influencers in the travel planning process. Traditional information sources are less useful as many millennials are now basing their decisions on how “Instagrammable” a destination may be. (Global Blue & Roland Berger 2018, 9.) Generic pictures of the Statue of Liberty will not cut it anymore as millennials not only wish to have authentic experiences, but they also crave authenticity and personalization in marketing. (Baldwin 2019.) Sharing honest and real stories about destinations works much better for millennials than using highly edited photos (Global Blue & Roland Berger 2018, 11).

For the always-online generation of youth travelers, social media is important as a sharing platform as well as a source for travel inspiration. They want to share travel moments in particular as soon as they happen in real time. (Esposito 2016.) Research conducted by WeSwap surveyed more than 2000 millennials about their travel booking behaviour. More than half of them said that they want to share pictures and experiences from their travels online. 37% even stated that being able to post beautiful photos and videos while on holiday affects where they want to travel to. Additionally, all of 31% of the respondents even said that posting content to social media is just as important as the trip itself. (Haines 2018.) Sharing experiences and memories with friends and family makes for a happy and meaningful life for millennials (Baldwin 2019).

4 Establishing a guide

The final product of the thesis is a travel guide with the main objective on youth travelers willing to explore Helsinki on a budget. Youth travelers make up the majority of our commissioning company CheapSleep Hostel Helsinki's customers (Pripachkin 2020), however, the guide provides options for any budget savvy traveler or one that wants to experience Helsinki in an alternative, authentic and local way in addition to the popular sights and attractions. The thesis travel guide is published on CheapSleep Hostel's web page if they so decide. The final version is in PDF format but can easily be printed for physical use.

To create the guide as accurate, clear and appealing as possible for our target group, the psychology and theory behind successful content and design are properly studied in the next subchapters. Researching up-to-date activities, sights, events, restaurants, cafes, bars and other places to see and things to do for the travel guide is equally as important. This is executed by using internet sources as that is where the most recent and updated information is often found, as well as exploring the attractions ourselves.

4.1 Content

What a traveler is looking for in a guide is benefit, help, knowledge, advantage, tools and skills (Auvinen 2020). The content should be fresh and topical with reliable information sources. (Auvinen 2020; Ivanova, Polyakova & Skrobotova 2015).

The language should be rich but understandable and serve the reader group, for example whether it includes professional slang, dialects, literary language or spoken phrases. The perspective from which the text is written – being a colleague, authority, fellow traveler or observer – have an influence on the effectiveness of the text. (Auvinen 2020.) As the target group is mostly youth travelers just like the authors, the travel guide is written from the perspective of a fellow traveler. The language used in the guide is mostly casual spoken English with some topical youth slang.

It is impossible to cover all details of the events and attractions included in a travel guide, as it would be overwhelming for the reader and turn the travel guide into a massive and dimensionless encyclopedia of attractions. Therefore, it is important to consider the reader's interest and demand of the travel destination. (Ivanova et al. 2015.) In the guide, only bits and pieces that are found essential for youth budget travelers are included, reflecting on the trends of the generation, survey results and the authors' own travel experi-

ences. Some determinants for the attractions chosen for the guide are e.g. price, authenticity, uniqueness, meaningfulness and accessibility, as addressed in previous chapters. These spots are introduced with basic information, such as a brief description. Additionally, fun facts or remarks of the attractions are added along with the authors' personal touches and original photos. The intended length for the thesis travel guide is approximately 25 pages excluding references.

The content plan should answer questions of what subjects and topics the guide includes and what kind of knowledge is required from the reader to understand the guide (Auvinen 2020). Brief summary of the authors and the commissioning company, general knowledge of Helsinki and Finland, how to get around, spending tips, cultural elements and information about Finnish cuisine are covered in the guide created for this thesis. For full benefit and comprehension, the reader should already be somewhat aware of the local cost of living in order to understand what budget means in the Finnish context. However, price examples are introduced for guidance. Having some preconception of Finnish history, traditions and lifestyle is useful, but not necessary.

The biggest difficulty in the context of the travel guide is perishability of information. Prices, locations and other relevant data vary over time, so the material provided in the guide will eventually have faulty information that is not up-to-date and requires constant updating. Thus, only places to see and things to do that show stable continuity for the upcoming years are included. This judgement is made excluding the uncertainty regarding the ongoing year of 2020 due to COVID-19, which is mentioned in the beginning of the guide.

The copyrights of the travel guide will remain with the authors; however the commissioning company may request to make necessary changes and updates if they decide to include the guide on their website.

4.2 Design

Since 74% of millennials use their smartphones to research their trip (Condor Ferries 2020), the travel guide should be accessed quickly and easily on a mobile platform in addition to a desktop format. The guide must be user-friendly in terms of search speed and page navigation (Ivanova et al. 2015).

Electronic travel guides have overtaken traditional printable guides, even though they remain one of the most important ways of advertising a tourist area (Ivanova et al. 2015). The thesis travel guide is in PDF format, thus convenient to utilize both as an electronic

version as well as a printed paper version, should the traveler wish to do so. A modern guide should have information in an interactive and easily perceived form for the reader's convenience, including internet links and hyperlinks (Ivanova et al. 2015).

The guide should be easy to use and a pleasure to hold in one's hands – bright, light, convenient and compact, with emotional colors, eye-catching design and an adequate letter size that does not impede reading. Infographics, such as maps, photos, graphs and charts, are a trendy and familiar way to present information. They not only give a visual and artistic presentation of the guide, but also simplify the delivery of the information and reduce the overall volume of the guide. Arguably the most important component of a travel guide are photos, which are often the main reason for a traveler to choose the tourist attraction, accommodation or other tourism related resources. Therefore, there should be a sufficient amount of colorful, vivid, high-quality photos presented in the guide at the best camera angle. They must be original, i.e. not previously used in other publications, to exclude plagiarism. (Ivanova et al. 2015.)

5 Process description

In this chapter, we open up the details and the development of the final product, thesis travel guide. The following sub-chapters explain the process step by step, opening up each phase in creating the product. The project plan (figure 3) introduces our initial schedule and ideas for the guide, while the rest of the sub-chapters describe how they will eventually unfold by the end of the process.

5.1 Project plan

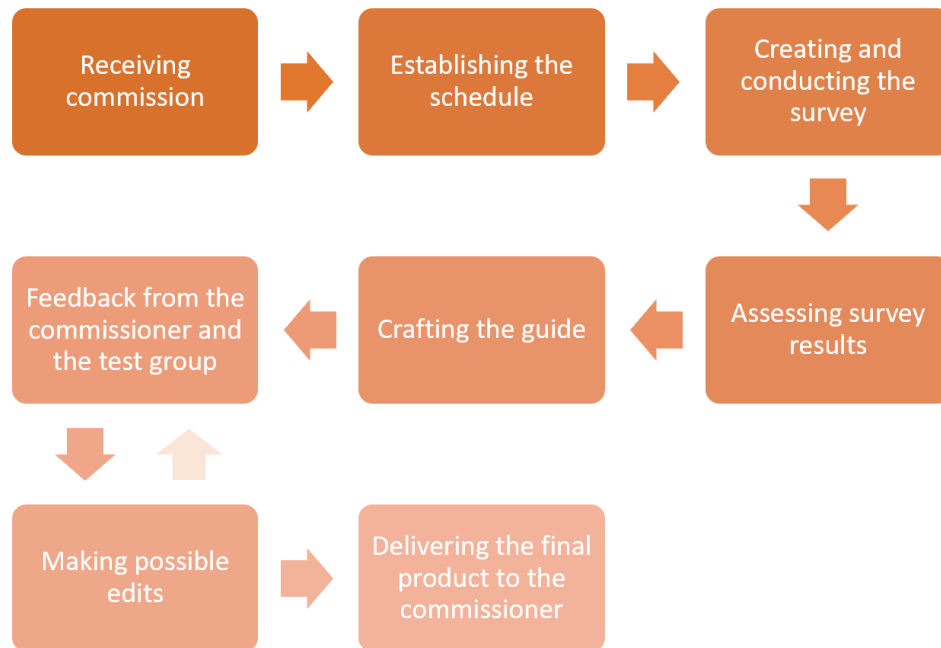


Figure 3. Gradual progression of the project

First, we explain how we received the commissioning agreement after which the research of the thesis topic was made. Theoretical background was gathered to get a foundation for a survey, which is then conducted in order to get a clearer idea what our potential target group wants from the guide. Considering the results, the content and design of the travel guide are then assembled into its first form. In addition to our commissioning company, this version is then sent to a test group for feedback and improvement suggestions.

5.1.1 Receiving commission

To discover a topic for the thesis, we searched for ideas online and contemplated our personal interests for about a month. Living on a student budget but being passionate about (budget) travel, the thesis topic fitted our wants and needs instantly. As we realized the lack of theses and other academic material on the topic, the decision became clear. After processing the structure and possible sub-chapters in the outline, we found the original

topic, budget travel in Helsinki, to be too vague. With the help of our thesis advisor, supported by some research online, we narrowed it down to youth budget travel in Helsinki in the beginning of April 2020. Project-type thesis with a travel guide as a final product felt like a natural way to proceed, as explained in the introduction.

Initially, we contacted Helsinki Marketing via email for a commissioning agreement as we thought it would give the greatest value and visibility for our thesis, as it is the official marketing company run by the City of Helsinki. However, they had no interest in the matter. Thus, we contacted CheapSleep Hostel Helsinki, where Lauramaija Luoto was doing her internship at the time. The hostel seemed to be an excellent commissioning company as we assumed that the access to company information would work easily and that our topic would apply to many of their customers, which later on turned out to be true. Luckily, they were happy to cooperate with us. The commissioning agreement was signed at the end of March 2020.

5.1.2 Estimating the schedule

A rough schedule (figure 4) was formed in March before embarking on the thesis project, and we both agreed that we wanted the final version of the thesis to be completed by the end of September.

March	April	May	June
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coming up with thesis topic • Signing commissioning agreement • Making of thesis outline • Establishing rough schedule 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specifying thesis topic • Starting to write thesis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing of theoretical framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating the survey • Deadline for theoretical framework and process description • Assessing survey results
July	August	September	October
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holiday month 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crafting the guide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receiving feedback and making possible edits • Writing of discussion chapter • Deadline for final version of thesis • Publishing of thesis • Handing over thesis to commissioner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation and maturity test • Receiving grade

Figure 4. Estimated schedule for the thesis project

We aimed for the first phase, thesis outline, to be written by the end of March. The theoretical framework and process description were planned to be finished by the end of June, in addition to the survey being conducted and the results analyzed by that time. July was decided to be a month-long break from the thesis process. The project would then carry on in August with the creation of the travel guide. The remaining weeks would be dedicated to testing and receiving feedback on the guide as well as editing and polishing the

entire thesis. Once satisfied with the final version, the thesis would be submitted, given out to the commissioner and published, ideally by the end of September. Ultimately, we would give the presentation and take part in the thesis maturity test in October, after which we would receive the grade and graduate.

5.1.3 Creating and conducting the survey

Our aim for the survey (appendix 1) was to find out the travel preferences, values, habits and interests of youth budget travelers. With the help of the survey results, we choose the content, i.e. the selection and variety of the attractions in the guide. The survey was targeted at the traveler group of our thesis topic – 18-35 year-old people, domestic or international, who consider themselves budget travelers. The definition of budget travel, as well as the suitability for participation, were stated in the introduction of the survey to exclude travelers who do not fit into this category. It is irrelevant whether the respondents had visited Helsinki or Finland since the questions were general towards budget traveling and could be applied to any destination. In addition, defining the surveyee's gender, nationality and purpose of budget travel (whether it was visiting family or friends, business, leisure etc.) was insignificant as the attractions are not tied to these factors. However, we enquired about the origin of our respondents just to get an overall view of the diversity of the participants, which can benefit us later on in understanding the differences and similarities in budget travel universally.

The questionnaire was created through Webropol, after which the survey link was shared on social media to reach our target, gathering a minimum of 200 responses. These platforms were e.g. our own social media accounts (Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook) and some international travel groups on Facebook. The link was to open for a maximum of two weeks from the 29th of June to the 13th of July, unless we were to get a sufficient amount of responses earlier. The survey had 17 questions for it to be comprehensive enough for our research purposes but not too heavy on the respondents, which we estimated to take 5-10 minutes to complete. After thoroughly processing the theoretical framework, we formed the survey questions for the most accurate results concerning a travel guide specifically for youth budget travelers. The question types were multiple choice, true or false, choosing the most fitting answer and ranking in order of preference. Some questions had free writing space for the participant to express a possible option we have not included in the survey choices.

With the results received from the survey, we filter which attractions to involve in the guide, and rule out the ones unsupported by our respondents. The factors that are chosen to justify these decisions were based on the surveyees' interest on sustainability, location,

accessibility, atmosphere, uniqueness, popularity, feeling of locality, reviews, diversity in choice and adventurousness of the destination. We also examined reasons behind budget traveling, preferred spending targets and areas as well as valued experiences of the budget travelers. In addition, there was a direct question regarding travel guides, in which we surveyed what kind of qualities are the most desired and useful to implement in our product.

5.1.4 Assessing survey results

The target of the survey was to gather a minimum of 200 responses from a diverse selection of nationalities. This goal was reached before the deadline of 13th of July, so we closed the link three days earlier on July 10th to go ahead with the project. The total number of participants was 251, however, 11 of which were irrelevant as they fell outside of our target age group. 74.9% (188) of surveyees were of Finnish origin, with the rest being from around the world, such as the USA, Malaysia, Italy and Australia. We received responses from each continent, and thus feel like we have succeeded in getting a broad excerpt of participants.

The biggest reason for budget traveling among our respondents was to be able to prolong their travelers or to travel more frequently, which supports the fact previously discussed, that millennials tend to travel often and for longer as they have more time than their predecessors (Global Blue & Roland Berger 2018, 9; WYSE Travel Confederation 2020). Judging by the results, youth budget travelers prefer to travel with other people as only 36% said they travel solo.

When it comes to choosing a destination (figure 5), nature and outdoors were highly valued. In fact, over 80% chose it to be in their top three pull factors for deciding where to travel, whereas health, wellness and shopping possibilities were the least popular matters. This bodes well for us, justifying our topic of choice, as Helsinki is accredited for its diverse nature which is accessible throughout the city (Huttunen 2017). Logically, with nature being highly valued, it was also the top choice in addition to the coast and archipelago, when asked about the usual areas of interest when visiting a new destination. After nature and outdoors, food and beverage culture was a close second in destination pull factors, however, it was the first choice when it came to spending preferences at the travel destination. These rankings are heavily regarded when gathering content for the guide.

5. Which of these do you value the most when choosing a destination for your budget travels? (Choose 1-3 options)

Number of respondents: 240, selected answers: 643

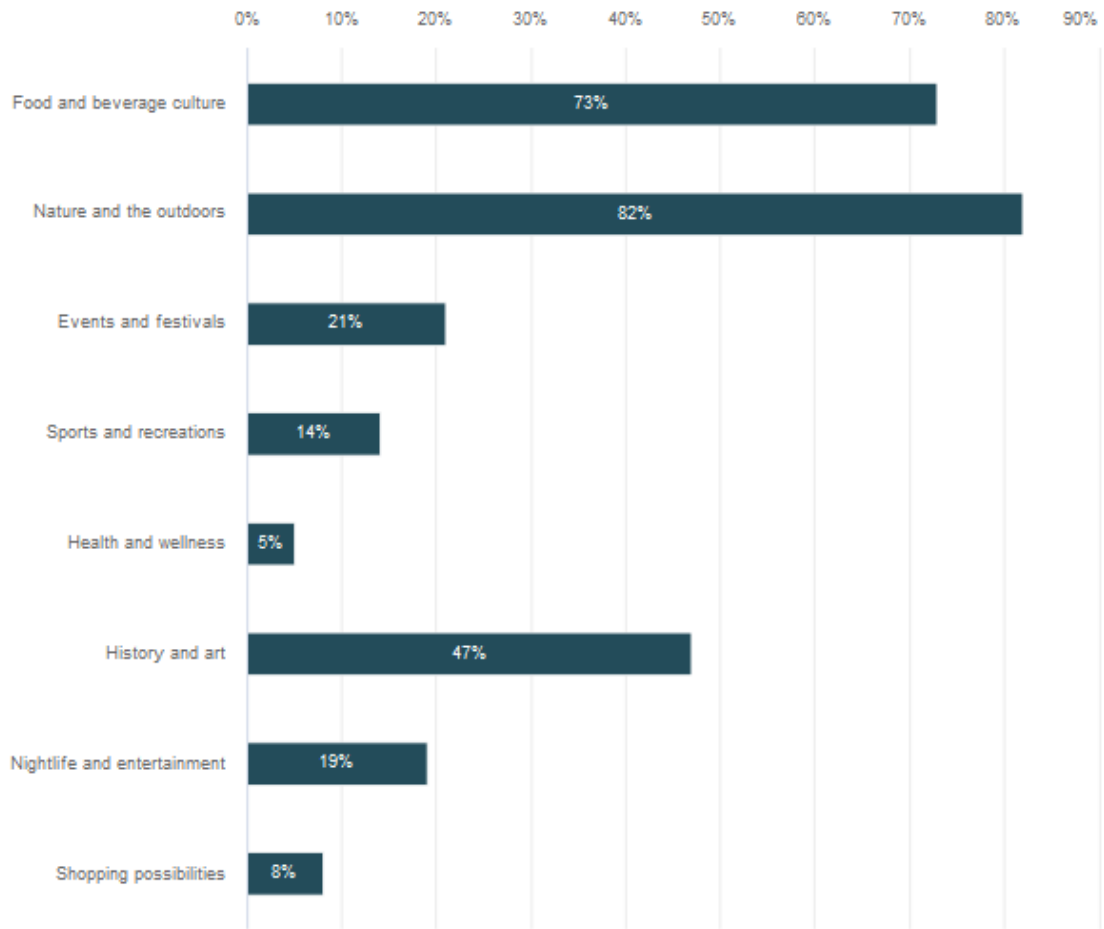


Figure 5. Most valued aspects at a budget travel destination n=240

Overall, the surveyees were fairly consistent in choosing uniqueness and feeling like a local as some of the most significant reasons to experience the destination and its attractions, which goes in line with youth travelers not wanting to be seen as typical tourists (Esposito 2016). 61% of surveyees were even willing to pay more for an experience where they can feel like a local. Places that are too touristy or crowded were the biggest annoyances among our respondents, which indicates that millennials strive for traveling off the beaten track to experience the undiscovered, fascinating reality of the destination. In addition, as elaborated previously, millennials want to travel with a balance on authenticity and extraordinary activities as well as exploring top sights and attractions. (Global Blue & Roland Berger 2018, 7, 9, 25; WYSE Travel Confederation 2018). These claims are supported by the surveyees preference for meeting local people over other travelers or expats

while traveling. Also, over 70% of participants desire to have unusual and unique experiences at the destination with the rest favoring traditional sights and attractions. Therefore, the guide will have a fair mixture of both kinds of things to do and places to see.

Apart from uniqueness and feeling like a local, atmosphere was emphasized when considering food and beverage establishments. A sense of adventure was also highly regarded when deciding on things to do at the destination. In terms of the attractions, sustainability scraped the bottom of the value rankings, even though it showed great significance in the following question. A whopping 84% of respondents said they would be willing to pay extra for an experience which was sustainable. This suggests that though sustainability might not be the most important factor youth travelers value, it is still regarded as an essential matter.

As youth travelers prefer to spend on experiences over tangible goods (Global Blue & Roland Berger 2018, 9), it is not surprising that shopping was the least favorite option when it came to spending money at the travel destination. Transportation was chosen as the second least favorite spending target during budget travels. When the respondents were asked to choose between saving money but spending more time traveling by public transportation, or saving time but paying more, the majority of youth budget travelers supported the first part of the statement. This means that 66% would rather take a longer, cheaper public transportation trip than a shorter, however more expensive one. It has to be acknowledged that the motives behind these actions cannot be directly derived, as some of the surveyees might feel that, for example, longer-taking public transportation supports the local way of traveling, or that the shorter way of public transportation supports sustainable choices, which outweighs the money-time value ratio we aimed to solve.

To conclude the survey, participants were asked to choose their top three of the most valued features in a destination travel guide (figure 6). The results were surprisingly even among all options, such as maps and visual guidance, many photos of the destination and variety in attractions. Yet, insider tips and local advice stood out with 84% of surveyees choosing it in their top three. The second most popular option, at 48%, was clear and informational text. The results of this kind of a straightforward question can be directly implemented in our travel guide.

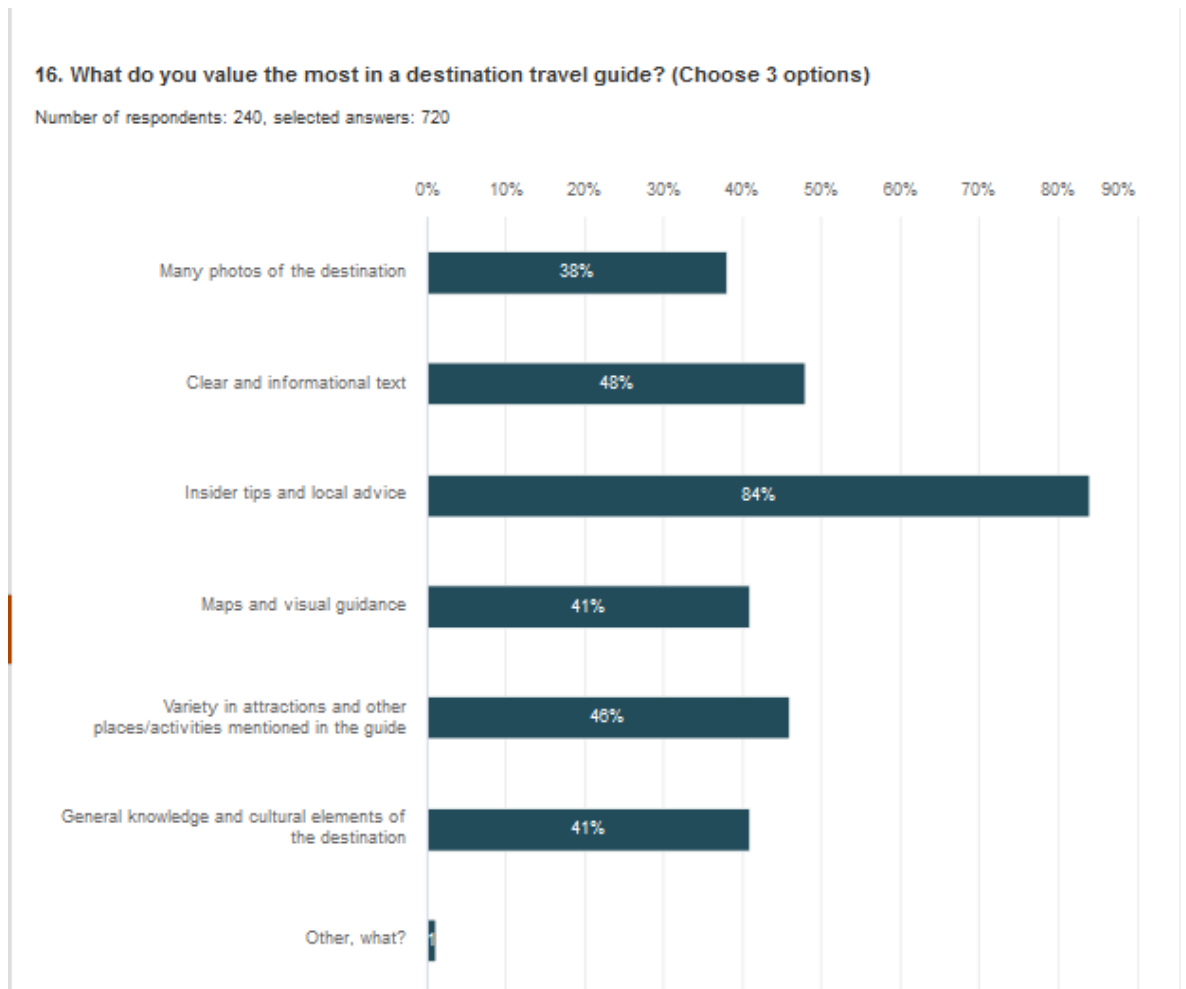


Figure 6. The most valued aspects of a travel guide n=240

In several questions we offered an option for a free-word answer in order to gather as much insights as possible, and to prevent us from missing essential aspects from our target audience. However, these responses were unfortunately unhelpful as they often seemed to be a result of not understanding or reading the question or the answer choices carefully enough. For example, “I can’t decide” or “depends on the situation” were frequent replies that gave us no useful information we could utilize. Additionally, some of the respondents’ free-word answers matched with the answer options provided, that were thus left unchosen, rendering the data incorrect. The difficulty of choosing only one option as the best one is understandable, as often destination choices are not solely made by one determinant, but a combination of many factors. This is why some questions had the option to choose 1-3 answers, as well as key words like ‘the most/the least/usually’ to ease the intensity.

When creating the survey, we tried to be very mindful of the importance of clarity in the delivery, in order to receive results as accurate as possible. However, given the poor an-

swers from the free-word responses, it seems as though we still need to work on that. Another improvement we could have made was to include a feedback box at the end of the questionnaire to get improvement suggestions from others, not just relying on our own reflections.

5.1.5 Crafting the guide

The travel guide was created through Canva graphic design platform. We found it to be the most fitting option as it is free to use and we were already somewhat familiar with the site. Additionally, the platform allows users to upload their own photos as well as use Canva's pre-existing material, such as photo frames, design templates and stickers. Being downloadable in PDF format, the guide is convenient to open and read both on desktop and mobile platforms (figure 7) with a possibility for printing.

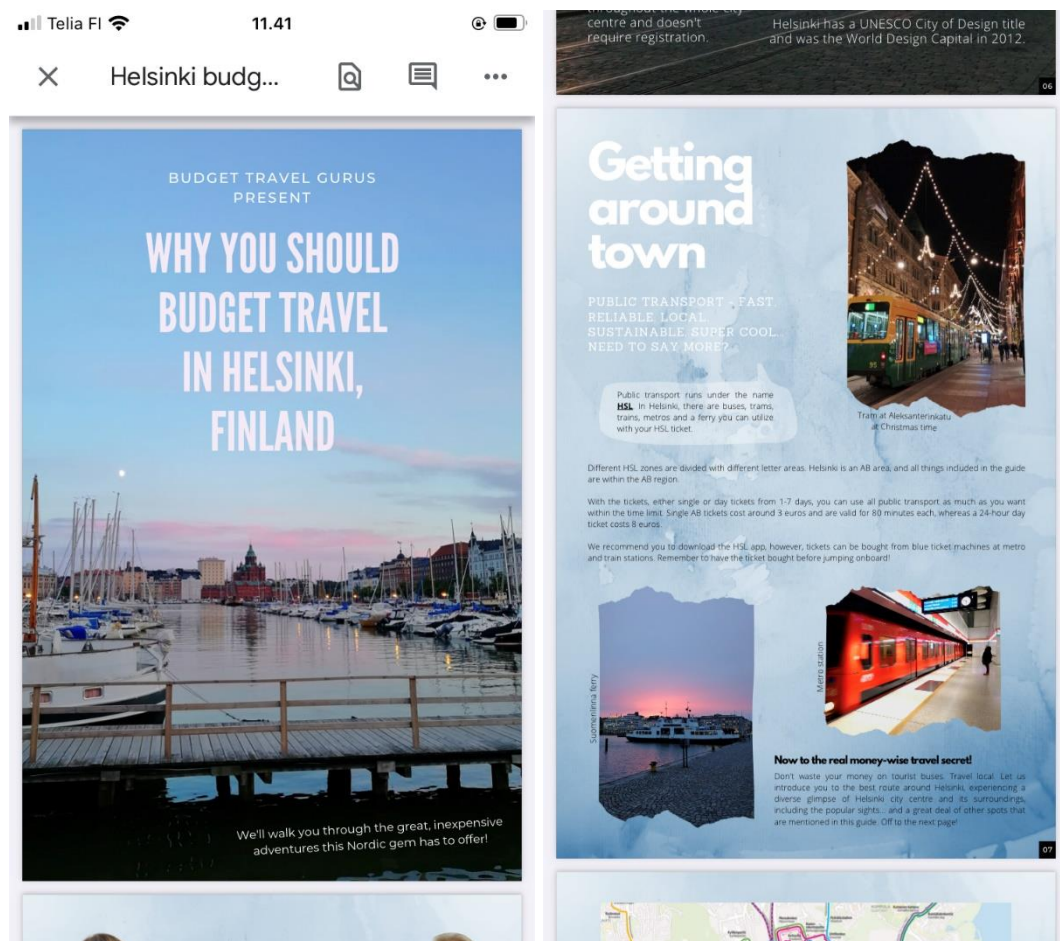


Figure 7. Screenshots of the opening and scrolling views on a mobile platform

The overall outlook of the guide is based on theory behind a visually well-constructed guide elaborated previously, and on our experience of how travel guides often look like. This is combined with our personal touch and preferences showing through. Keeping in

mind what our survey respondents said they value in a destination travel guide, we decided to input plenty of original photos, playful yet straightforward language and local tips. These were also the main ways used to stand out from a standard travel guide. In addition to a wide selection of photos, maps were added to clarify the information provided in the guide. For the same reason, we embedded some links in the text to direct readers to more comprehensive sources, which can be recognized by the underlined words in bold. Having blue as the main color seemed obvious, since we felt like it fits well with the Finnish image, as well as it is a rather neutral and calm tone for the eyes. Light pink, white and black were chosen as secondary colors as they go well with blue and visually pleased us the most. Opting for the same fonts, shades and styles on most pages was a strategic move to keep the design of the guide coherent and allow the content to speak for itself, making reading effortless. However, some of the pages were intentionally made to pop out from the layout to hold the readers' interest and create a fun twist.

In line with our surveyees' interest, we emphasised nature and outdoor attractions as well as food and beverage establishments, which are diversely displayed in the guide. As shopping and wellness were the least valued, we decided to rule them out almost completely to make more space for the higher preferences. Having lived in Helsinki for a few years, we were already familiar with most of the attractions that were chosen. However, in order to be sure of our recommendations, we revisited some of the places and researched a bunch of new ones as well. Having a great variety of attractions, including more popular must-see spots (e.g. Helsinki Cathedral) as well as local ways to spend time in Helsinki (e.g. sausage grilling), was necessary judging by the respondents' desire to experience both. By introducing local life, we also brought uniqueness into the choice of attractions, which was one of the most significant values in a travel destination according to the survey results. Therefore, the majority of the businesses are local rather than international or chain companies, and activities which are often targeted towards Finnish people, but have strong potential to interest travelers as well. Examples of these are Sompasauna, karaoke and community gardens. Our own opinions and interests were often the final decider when choosing between similar or equal attractions to be included in the guide. Consequently, we got to utilize dozens of already existing photos we had taken of the chosen attractions over the years, thus saving us time and effort.

Creating the guide ended up taking about three months, which was longer than we had presumed. The content was finished first, however, the details of the visual appearance e.g. margins and the placement of the content, photo editing and coordinating the color scheme needed to be carefully perfected. This was very time consuming. All in all, we

reached our target of 25 pages with only slight excess, finishing at 32 including references. We feel like that is a suitable size for our guide as it is not too heavy on information yet offers versatile content.

5.2 Gathering feedback

Once the guide was finished, we sent it to our commissioning company together with a test group in order to try it out and hear what they think about our product. The aim of this was to receive feedback for possible changes or improvements, and to receive overall thoughts on the readability and usefulness of the guide. We wanted to be certain that the guide would be as convenient, clear, entertaining and visually pleasing as possible, consequently serving its initial purpose – providing an apt range of inexpensive and free-of-charge options in Helsinki in addition to insider tips that many travelers do not yet know. In order to help our test group review the guide more thoroughly, we presented them with the objective of our travel guide and created a list of questions (appendix 2) that were sent to them via email along with the travel guide. The questions focused on the appearance, readability and usefulness of the product as well as the amount of information in the guide and whether the guide met the objective of the entire project. The reviewers were also asked to give any additional, miscellaneous comments of their choice.

The test group was chosen based on who we thought would give the most useful and valuable feedback regarding the travel guide. This led to us choosing fellow students, both Finnish and international, who identify as budget travelers and therefore are part of our target group. In addition, we wanted a different perspective to the implementation of the topic and managed to get in contact with a former marketing manager of Helsinki Marketing. We asked the same questions from our commissioning contact at CheapSleep Hostel Helsinki.

Receiving a sufficient number of responses took around a week. We were happy to notice that most of the feedback was positive, such as comments that boosted the existing content of the guide. This only reassured the vision we had for the product instead of taking it to the opposite direction. The language that was used in the travel guide was described as entertaining and funny, yet easy to read and informative. It was said to have felt suitable for the target group in question. One reader also appreciated the storytelling style narrative. What is more, our own experiences and personal notes, i.e. “local tips” and “did you know” remarks were especially appreciated, giving the guide a personal approach. The amount of information was deemed appropriate, though, many thought there could have been even more of it and gave examples of such improvement suggestions. These concerned, for example tipping, religion, English language skills and the sauna, which we

agreed on and consequently added in the guide. All in all, by popular opinion it seemed that the most liked aspect of the guide was the visual outlook. This includes e.g. the color scheme, layout and photos, which make the appearance aesthetically pleasing and modern, as praised by our commissioning contact. Some also felt that the guide was unique and one of a kind by both content and the visual side, presenting new tips and things to do even for Helsinki locals in a fun way.

5.2.1 Making edits

In conclusion, judging by the responses, we succeeded with utilizing the theoretical part and background research into the implementation of the travel guide. This means that it serves its target group well, has potential in the Helsinki travel market and reaches the desired outcome for our thesis project. However, as mentioned previously, we did receive some ideas for improvement concerning the content of the product. We found many of these suggestions useful and valid, and so decided to make those additions in order to create a more functioning and an overall better version of the guide. With the help of the responses, we also came up with some of our own improvements. All of these can be categorized into two sections – outlook and content.

The changes concerning the outlook appeared as such:

- adding text coherency by adjusting font sizes to match on all pages
- changing some font colors in order for them to be easier to read

The modifications made to the content were:

- mentioning average range of drink prices at bars and restaurants
- adding page letters on content page photos for clarification reasons
- specifying the religion status in Finland
- adding the final editing date of the guide
- including information about English being a widely spoken language in Helsinki
- notifying readers about nudity at Sompasauna

Other edits were also requested. For example, one reviewer suggested including activities and things to do for families traveling on a budget, which we declined as they are not a part of our target group in the thesis project. Another one wanted to see more photos with local people in them, but we thought that was hard to execute for privacy reasons and because we wanted to use our original photos. We were also asked to include a budget for 2, 3 or 7 days in Helsinki for reference, which was found difficult to measure. The budget can vary drastically depending on the accommodation type, time of year, eating preferences, etc. We did not want to take responsibility for giving misleading information in any way, so this suggestion was left out. The guide gives a broad range of price examples,

which we feel gives enough indication for readers to figure out their travel budget for a potential visit to Helsinki. Additionally, we got a request for more information on partying in Helsinki, especially regarding clubbing. We decided to skip this suggestion as the respondents of our survey did not rate nightlife as a valued activity while budget traveling.

6 Discussion

Youth travel is one of the fastest growing international travel segments in the world. Favoring inexpensive options during their travels in order to spend more time at the destination, millennial travelers end up spending more money. (Subchapter 3.2.) Helsinki, being the capital of a country more expensive than 80% of the countries in the world (subchapter 2.4), should consider promoting its affordable offerings in the 333 billion dollar youth travel market (Rifai 2020). We feel that there are plenty of opportunities in the field for the budget-conscious, though quite hidden from the general traveler. Because of this and the potential we see in Helsinki being a budget travel destination, we decided to gather all information needed for a successful travel guide, supported with research-based theory and our own experiences. Even though the need for a budget travel guide of Helsinki is justified by earlier mentions, we need to assess the value of the thesis for our commissioning company based on their feedback. Additionally, we reflect this entire process on both the success measurement criteria and the sub-goals mentioned above in the introduction. This helps us analyze what targets we hit and what could have been done better in the making of the thesis. To conclude, we discuss our academic and personal learning outcomes of creating this project.

6.1 Commissioner feedback and satisfaction

As the thesis is commissioned, feedback from CheapSleep Hostel Helsinki is one of the most valuable measurements of success. We received written comments from our contact person, the general manager of the hostel, Gleb Pripachkin. To our delight, he had very appreciative and humbling things to say about our work.

The comments explained that our research for the thesis was detailed and well-planned, and that the effort we had put into the process really showed. Additionally, the writing of the thesis was said to be both academic and easy to read, and the references included were sufficient and well-suited for the topic. In the words of Pripachkin (2020), "Thesis itself is definitely useful for a company such as ours. As mentioned above, it is factual and data based. The final product, which is the guide for youth travelers, is superb and unique for Helsinki travel scene. It has without a doubt exceeded all our expectations --."

Our commissioning company regards the thesis as a base for future research and projects concerning youth travel, both in Finland and internationally. Given that tourism returns back to its normal rates, the hostel would like to include the guide on their web page, possibly have printed versions of it available for guests, and with the help of the guide, give their own staff a better understanding of what can be recommended to their guests.

Whether the final product brings measurable value or benefit for the company can only be judged after the guide is available to their customers. For now, however, based on all that has been said above, we think it is safe to say that customer satisfaction of this project is fulfilled, and the needs of CheapSleep Hostel Helsinki are met.

6.2 Project success

As part of finalizing the thesis, we evaluate whether the project has been successful, i.e. whether the thesis has met the aim and objectives set at the beginning. This way we can determine the necessity of the thesis, in addition to seeing if all parts of the project proceeded as planned. These parts are the general thesis phases like outlining the thesis topic and writing the theoretical framework as well as the sub-goals regarding the travel guide, such as conducting the survey and forming the layout and design.

The absolute objective for the thesis was to create a travel guide that allows people to view Helsinki in a more affordable way. After assessing commissioner satisfaction, this objective is scrutinized with the help of our success measurement criteria: scope, schedule, team satisfaction and quality, also defined in the introduction.

6.2.1 Scope

To evaluate how well we scoped the project as a whole, we examine whether the thesis fulfills its original purpose of creating a budget travel guide of Helsinki. Additionally, assessing the starting conditions and mirroring their effect on the thesis process is essential. Our travel guide was sparked by the realization of not finding a similar one, at least in the form of a proper guide. Being a widely trending topic internationally and an interesting subject for us personally, we saw the potential in bringing budget travel tips together in one place.

We think that the sub-topics scoped for the thesis, such as gathering research about Helsinki and Finland's tourism in both domestic and the international context as well as the motives and values of youth budget travelers were all picked accurately as they support the final product. We feel like we found and included most, if not all, subjects and phenomena that are beneficial or even crucial for the thesis topic. However, some of the sub-topics we researched, e.g. different accommodation types and travel destinations among youth budget travelers, were not directly utilized in the travel guide. This is because the product is only about Helsinki and primarily aimed at the main customer group of CheapSleep Hostel Helsinki.

At this stage, we can only measure the necessity of the entire project based on the research results presented in the theoretical framework, in addition to the perception of the test group, commissioner and our own. This is because we cannot know whether the thesis and its final product will have an impact on travelers' idea of Helsinki once the travel guide is shared with the public. That being said, in the given starting conditions – being tourism students with no experience on proper photographing, graphic design or commercial writing – we feel that we succeeded with the final product. Having reached the sub-goals and our own expectations, we can conclude that the initial purpose of the thesis process was fulfilled, and the scope was well mapped out.

6.2.2 Schedule

The topic for the thesis was decided in the beginning of March, after which we completed the pre-assignment, formed an agreement with the commissioning company and planned a schedule for the process. According to the original plan, the thesis was to be finished in October. We had also planned to take a one-month break in July, which we did not end up doing as we were left unemployed already before the summer. Given the circumstances of balancing our lives and peace of mind in the middle of a pandemic, the project proceeded in small steps, slower than planned, yet steadily and on a weekly basis. Now that we think of it, if July was to be a holiday month, the schedule was created unrealistically over the summer. The workload for June would have been too ambitious as we could not consider the time and effort it would take to finish the theoretical framework, process description as well as conduct and analyze a survey. However, we managed to finish the theoretical framework and process description on time, and the target number of survey results was collected even prior to the deadline, after which we could move on to assessing them.

Initially we thought that crafting the travel guide would take about a month. The guide took off according to the schedule, however, lasted approximately three months. As we were working on the product, we got immersed in it and came up with more and more creative ideas, designs and other implementations along the way that kept us busy perfecting the guide. We did not really mind as we are satisfied with what we eventually created. Accordingly, the rest of the parts of the thesis process were pushed back with a month or two.

Our personal intention was to create a timetable that leaves room for wellbeing and is not too crammed. We succeeded with this by having enough motivation to keep us pushing, yet without feeling too rushed or stressed at any time. All things considered, even though it did not fully go according to the original plan, we are happy with our schedule as we will graduate on time.

6.2.3 Team satisfaction

Between the two of us, we agree that working together has been surprisingly easy, functional and even fun, taking into account that a thesis process can often be quite overwhelming. Having two fairly strong-willed individuals on the same lengthy project could have been tough, but we always managed to compromise and make decisions in mutual agreement. One of the reasons the thesis proceeded so smoothly is that our standards and expectations for the thesis are equal, i.e. we are aiming for the same grade with ambition – not to mention the shared interest in the whole thesis topic. Creating the theoretical framework was the biggest and most time-consuming challenge of the thesis, so sharing it with a friend and always getting a second opinion and viewpoint was extremely helpful throughout the process. Working simultaneously on different sub-topics and afterwards complementing each other's writing made both the process and the end result well-functioning and comprehensive. However, collecting information for the framework turned out to be much more difficult than expected as the topic of budget travel is not yet widely researched, meaning there is very little or outdated academic material on the subject. With that being said, we feel that we succeeded in gathering a sufficient amount of theory given the poor starting point. The same applies to theory about creating a guide.

The assigned schedule fit both of our lifestyles well. Since we had a rather loose timetable allowing for wiggle room, we had enough time to return to the theoretical framework whenever needed for additions, edits etc. Thus, we were left satisfied with the theory section in the end. However, as mentioned in the schedule evaluation, we are especially proud of the final product we created, both academically and personally. It represents the effort we made for the thesis visually and content-wise, which makes us pleased to share the final product for distribution under our names.

6.2.4 Quality

For us, measuring quality is about examining the content, text and references, not only from our perspective, but also based on Haaga-Helia reporting guidelines. Backed up by the feedback from our commissioning company, we feel that the thesis content is quite consistent as the sub-topics support the main topic, the transitioning between them is smooth and the topics discuss well with each other. To ensure the quality of the content, some adjustments were made to bring out the best possible outcome mentioned in the introduction, and to target the main customer group of our commissioning company more precisely. For example, we narrowed down the topic from budget travel in Helsinki to youth budget travel in Helsinki, as it was too vague initially. Accordingly, we adjusted the

positions and subjects of some original sub-topics in order to gather more relevant and detailed content for the thesis and for it to flow effortlessly.

We made an effort to keep the writing professional, yet simple and informative for good readability. Another aspect we specifically focused on was keeping the written language coherent as there are two of us authors. We find it to be done successfully, since our voices cannot be separated throughout the text, despite having worked on different sub-topics. Additionally, we think that the language is proper for a thesis and in line with Haaga-Helia reporting guidelines, as are the references. The vast majority of our sources are fresh, recent and utilized in a correct manner. Unfortunately, however, we did not include as many academic references as we would have liked mainly due to the scarcity of them online. As mentioned earlier, it seems that the topic is quite new as there is not much research done concerning it, at least that which is available and free to use. Also, for the most part of writing the theoretical framework, libraries were shut down for COVID-19 pandemic. This made it more challenging for us to find proper literary sources. By the time the libraries reopened, the theory was almost finished, so we did not find it necessary to return to the subjects already addressed.

Even though there was a minor inconvenience along the way, we are satisfied and even surprised how persistently we worked on the thesis and all its details. The progress was rather slow mainly because we kept refining both the thesis and its final product. The more we wrote, the more we became invested in it and wanted to pursue the best possible, high-quality end result. Now, as the quality meets our own standards and Haaga-Helia guidelines, we are eager to see whether the thesis will bear fruit in the future.

6.3 Learning outcome

Contemplating our learning outcome helps us recognize our own abilities and strengths better and to get an overall picture of what the thesis process has taught us. To make it simpler to understand, we separate these realizations into two categories – academic and personal. The first explains our growth and development as students and future professionals in the field of our studies, the second as individuals.

6.3.1 Academic learning

To start off, one of the most notable academic learning outcomes is our increased use of the English language, especially in professional written form. While doing the thesis we also familiarized ourselves with a huge amount of new vocabulary and phrases, which will most likely help us in our future careers in the international hospitality industry. Another

that gets our attention is learning the correct way of referencing and citing. Being able to do it in a proper manner is crucial in order to avoid plagiarizing and to give credit to the respective authors. Addedly, this is an improvement in our overall writing skills and the way of interpreting and judging what we read. Searching for suitable and credible sources for our theoretical part was definitely something that improved our media literacy. This means that we have learned to be more critical towards different online sources, articles and reports, and know better how to identify valid platforms and origins of information. As anyone can write anything on the internet, it is important to upkeep this skill in a world that is increasingly digitalized.

While working with the thesis and researching relevant subjects around the topic, we got to scrutinize it thoroughly from various perspectives. This has made us broaden our mind-set to take different viewpoints and possibilities into account when trying to see the bigger picture. In addition, by the comprehensive analysis of the topic, we have naturally increased our overall knowledge of youth budget travel as an international phenomenon and gotten a greater understanding of how different concepts are tied and affect each other.

It is evident that we have been in close cooperation with our commissioning company, CheapSleep Hostel Helsinki. Creating a professional relationship with the company has been useful and educational as it has given us experience in business communication. Maintaining the relationship is important to us as we hope to keep the cooperation going even after the thesis process is finished to make sure the travel guide is utilized and stays up to date. Then again, one of the most concrete skills we acquired was the use of Canva graphic design platform. Starting from only being able to adjust fonts and add photos, to creating an entire travel guide, we will definitely benefit from this in any situation that requires a visual eye or designing skills.

6.3.2 Personal learning

While the academic learning was quite extensive throughout the whole thesis process, we also feel that we have strengthened many of our personal skills. Not surprisingly, teamwork has been a massive part of doing a thesis with two authors. It is essential to listen and take the other person's opinions into account when working together on a lengthy project such as this. Though we already had prior experience in pair and group projects, this has been more intense in terms of working together than anything we have previously done. We learned to really rely on each other and to share responsibility in order for both of us to succeed with the thesis. Less concrete but a very important part of the process was having the ability to be flexible. This showed well as working together required both of

us to be adaptive at times, as obviously we did not always agree on every detail. Months of juggling our schedules together called for not only flexibility, but also time management skills more than any other aspect of the process. We learned how to compromise, find alternative solutions and keep the project going while still maintaining our personal lives.

Considering time management, we feel that it is an area on which we can especially improve. While we got a lot more valuable practice of it, having a project as lengthy as this, that was still our weakness, as also assessed in project success. Despite our project taking longer than expected and the difficulties in our lives caused by the ongoing pandemic, we are specifically proud of our perseverance. Slowly but steadily, we moved forward with the thesis during the last six months, keeping our objective in mind. As the whole process is about two people, we had to stick to our fixed study schedule, prioritize the thesis for the both of us and stay disciplined.

All in all, we learned how to make the most out of a challenging situation and even acquired some new skills while at it. We have come to the conclusion that doing the thesis together was one of the best decisions we made during our Haaga-Helia journey, both academically for always having two perspectives and inputs, and personally for having someone to lean on. We believe that our ambition for the topic gave us a strong start, whereas perseverance, discipline and our willingness to be flexible and work together brought us far and resulted in a thesis outcome which hopefully will take us even further.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Survey questions

Youth budget travel survey

This survey is part of a bachelor's thesis about youth budget travel. With the help of the results, we examine the preferences, values, habits and interests of budget travelers all over the world. As the final product of the thesis, we create a budget travel guide about Helsinki, Finland. The survey is commissioned by CheapSleep Hostel Helsinki.

According to Dauntless Jaunter (2017), "Budget travel is travel that is budget-conscious. A budget traveler may stay in economy accommodations or hostels, eat cheap meals, and fly during off-peak seasons, among other things."

In order for the results to be as useful as possible, we hope that only people who fit in our target group answer this survey.

Please, only fill in this survey if you are between the ages of 18-35 and consider yourself a budget traveler. Both Finnish and foreign people are welcome to participate!

This survey takes approximately 5 minutes to complete. All answers are anonymous.

A warm thank you for your effort!

Best regards,

Lauramajja Luoto & Maria Sahlakari
Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences

1. How old are you? *

- ☐ 18-35 years old
☐ Other

2. Which country are you from? *

[Next](#)

25% Completed

3. What is the main reason for your budget traveling? *

- ☐ It's the only way I can afford to travel
- ☐ So that I have money left to spend on other things in my life outside of traveling
- ☐ So that I have money left to spend on special/more expensive experiences during my travels
- ☐ I feel like I can experience the destination more like the locals do
- ☐ That way I can travel for longer/spend more time at the destination
- ☐ I simply don't want to put more money on traveling than necessary
- ☐ Other, what?

4. How do you usually budget travel? *

- ☐ Solo
- ☐ With one other person
- ☐ With more than one other person

**5. Which of these do you value the most when choosing a destination for your budget travels?
(Choose 1-3 options) ***

- ☐ Food and beverage culture
- ☐ Nature and the outdoors
- ☐ Events and festivals
- ☐ Sports and recreations
- ☐ Health and wellness
- ☐ History and art
- ☐ Nightlife and entertainment
- ☐ Shopping possibilities

You can select from 1 up to 3 options

Selected options: 0

6. Other than price, which of these do you value the most when choosing a food and/or beverage establishment at the destination during your budget travels? (Choose 1-3 options)
For example, a restaurant/bar/cafe. *

- ☐ Atmosphere
- ☐ Variety in product selection
- ☐ Location
- ☐ Uniqueness, experiencing something new
- ☐ Feeling like a local
- ☐ Sustainability
- ☐ Good reviews
- ☐ Other, what?

You can select from 1 up to 3 options

Selected options: 0

7. Other than price, which of these do you value the most when choosing activities, sights, attractions or things to do at the destination during your budget travels? (Choose 1-3 options) *

- ☐ Adventure
- ☐ Location
- ☐ Uniqueness, experiencing something new
- ☐ Feeling like a local
- ☐ Sustainability
- ☐ Good reviews
- ☐ Other, what?

You can select from 1 up to 3 options

Selected options: 0

**8. Do you prefer unusual or unique experiences to traditional sights and attractions?
For example, community event vs. national landmark ***

- ☐ I prefer unusual or unique experiences
- ☐ I prefer traditional sights and attractions

9. Which of these things annoy you the most at the attractions or experiences during your budget travels? (Choose 1-2 options) *

- ☐ Too touristic/commercial
- ☐ Too crowded/too many people
- ☐ Bad location
- ☐ Inconvenient opening hours
- ☐ Feeling unwelcome (lack of accessibility, disrespect, inconsideration etc.)
- ☐ Other, what?

You can select from 1 up to 2 options
Selected options: 0

10. Who would you most prefer to meet during your budget travels? (Rank in order from 1= most preferred 3= least preferred) *

Other travelers	<input type="text" value="Select"/>
Local people	<input type="text" value="Select"/>
Foreigners living in the destination	<input type="text" value="Select"/>

[Previous](#)

[Next](#)

50% Completed

11. On which of these options do you most like to spend your money at the destination during your budget travels? *

- ☐ Food and beverage (e.g. restaurants, bars)
- ☐ Sights and attractions (e.g. entrance fee for a museum/theme park)
- ☐ Activities and events (e.g. ziplining, concert tickets)
- ☐ Transportation (e.g. bus, taxi)
- ☐ Shopping (e.g. souvenirs, clothes)

12. On which of these options do you least like to spend money at the destination during your budget travels? *

- ☐ Food and beverage (e.g. restaurants, bars)
- ☐ Sights and attractions (e.g. entrance fee for a museum/theme park)
- ☐ Activities and events (e.g. ziplining, concert tickets)
- ☐ Transportation (e.g. bus, taxi)
- ☐ Shopping (e.g. souvenirs, clothes)

13. If it saves me money, I would rather travel by local buses for 5 hours than take a more expensive 3-hour train ride to get somewhere. *

- ☐ True
- ☐ False

14. I would be willing to pay more for an experience where I can feel like a local. *

- ☐ True
- ☐ False

15. I would be willing to pay more for a sustainable experience - either environmentally, socio-culturally or economically conscious. *

- ☐ True
- ☐ False

[Previous](#)

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75% Completed

16. What do you value the most in a destination travel guide? (Choose 3 options) *

- ☐ Many photos of the destination
- ☐ Clear and informational text
- ☐ Insider tips and local advice
- ☐ Maps and visual guidance
- ☐ Variety in attractions and other places/activities mentioned in the guide
- ☐ General knowledge and cultural elements of the destination
- ☐ Other, what?

You can select from 3 up to 3 options

Selected options: 0

17. When visiting a new destination, which of these areas are you usually most interested to explore? *

- ☐ Coast and archipelago
- ☐ City centre
- ☐ Neighbourhoods and local living areas
- ☐ Nature - forests, parks etc.
- ☐ Other, what?

Previous

Submit

100% Completed

Appendix 2. Review questions and answers

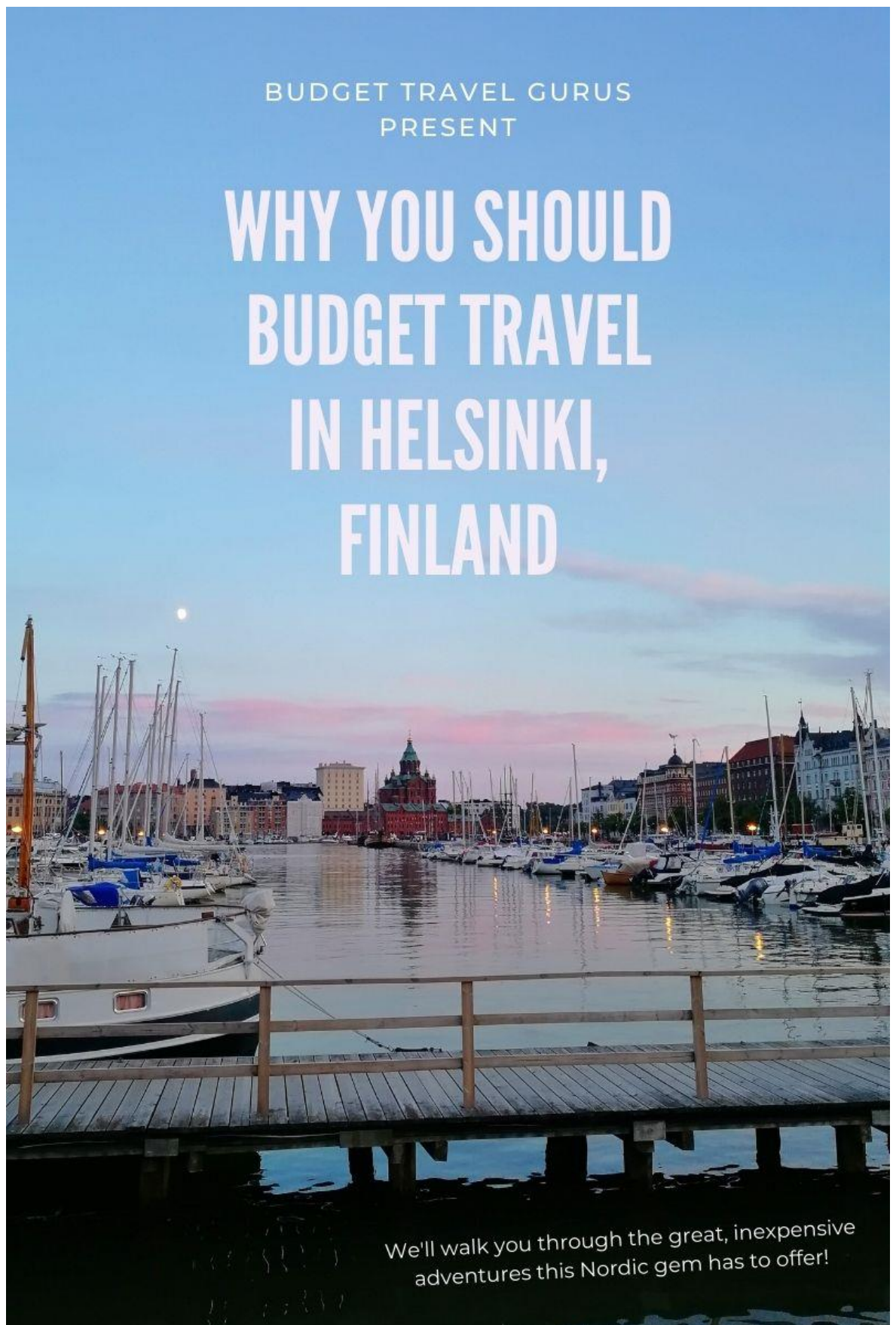
The aim of the guide is to provide inexpensive and free-of-charge options and insider tips that many travelers do not yet know, or which are not yet widely promoted in Helsinki tourism market. We strive to stand out through a fun and engaging approach, using playful language and our own, colorful photos that give the guide a personal touch. The reader should truly feel like they are going through the guide with a local friend.

The following are excerpts of the responses we received via email or Whatsapp.

1. How did you find the appearance of the guide? Did the visual side please your eye? (Photos, colors, fonts, layout...)
 - Lovely visuals, loved the layout and the images, but it would be better to stick to maybe just 3 different kinds of fonts.
 - I would like to see more photos with local people in them.
 - Looks amazing, beautiful color scheme. I have nothing bad to say.
2. How did you find the readability? Was the information and the language clear and easy to follow?
 - Readability was good, the text was easy to follow and I loved the jokes you'd put in.
 - The way you present Helsinki in a storytelling style is delightful.
 - It was fun to read.
3. Was the amount of information satisfactory? Was any information missing or was there too much of it?
 - Very good amount of info! I would mention that you need to prepare to see naked people at Sompasauna.
 - It's really good that you have captions for the photos, so people know where they've been taken. Some more price examples would be handy. You could also mention example budgets for people visiting for 2, 3 or 7 days.
 - Nice work, but if I were a tourist, I would like to know more about the nightlife and drink prices in Helsinki.
4. Do you think the guide is useful and serves its purpose, i.e. meets the aim mentioned above?
 - Very useful, even as a Helsinki citizen I learnt a bunch of new things and tips about my hometown.
 - Yes!
 - You've done a good job, an interesting topic that will definitely help people find things to do in Helsinki even with a small budget.

5. Any other comments, ideas, improvements or praises? Free word!

- It's fun and unique, it really stands out.
- I especially liked the page with karaoke.
- The list of notable achievements in the last 5 years was great.





Sissi

30/10/2020

Hey, it's us!

*Aka the people behind
this masterpiece*



Iia

Hello, stranger. So glad you're digging deep into the budget secrets of Helsinki. It's Sissi Luoto and Iia Sahlakari here. We're a lot of different things, like in our 20's and having a quarter-life crisis, but above all, we are devoted budget travelers and broke students.

This guide is the result of an exhausting, draining, long (yet rewarding and bittersweet) journey towards graduation from Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences in Helsinki, Finland. As part of our thesis, we wanted to provide something not yet highly promoted on the travel market, something for frugal young travelers like us. And you rockstar are holding the treasure - a shamelessly honest budget travel guide of Helsinki.

What separates us from the rest of the travel guides?

We are going to tell you all about the local treats and treasures; things to do and see, insider tips and ways to really pinch the penny without compromising on the travel experience. No paid marketing crap or advertising attractions that are supposedly "cool and local" but actually *bs* tourist traps. Everything based on our own experience and personal recommendations, as Helsinki is what we know best. We have hustled and researched the trends and habits of youth budget travelers while you were having your beauty sleep. We have gotten our hands dirty studying all about you, what you want and need from your travels. We got you, homie. All this, with a side of trivia about Finnish culture and our people.

Oh, one collaboration thingy we have for you. This thesis is commissioned by CheapSleep Hostel Helsinki. You probably already know the place though, as it's the cheapest accommodation provider in Helsinki. Sleep cheap, stay rich, right? In case you somehow missed it, [check out their website](#) and book a bed ASAP!

The photos are our own and maps are adapted from online sources. We reserve all kinds of rights for the guide. Treat it well.

That's it. Sit tight and get ready for the extravaganza you're about to experience!

*Yours truly,
Sissi & Iia*

The guide is based on time before COVID-19. We apologize if the information and content become outdated or invalid.

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FINLAND

OR "SUOMI" IN FINNISH

Land of a Thousand Lakes

PERSONAL SUMMARY

I became independent in 1917 growing out of the guardianship of Russia and Sweden. You may know me from creating Nokia, inventing the sauna, being home to Santa Claus or having magical Northern Lights, but I'm so much more!

STATS

Capital: Helsinki

Population: 5,5 million, with 650 000 living in Helsinki

Currency: Euro

Religion: 70% are Evangelic-Lutheran Christians, although generally not openly or visibly religious

Government: Republic, with president Sauli Niinistö (love his dog Lennu)

Time zone: GMT +3 during the summer, GMT +2 during the winter



My favorite song called "Mämmä" (Our Land)



ABOUT ME

Location

Northern Europe

- Around the Arctic Circle
- By the Baltic Sea
- Bordering neighbors are Russia, Sweden and Norway
- Capital *Helsinki* located on the southern coast of Finland

Climate

Marine and continental climate

- Four visible seasons with dark and cold winters, but mild and light summers
- Average temperature in Helsinki in the winter time -5 degrees Celsius, in the summer time +21 degrees Celsius

Language

Finnish and Swedish

- 88% speak Finnish as their native language
- Standard Roman alphabet, with "ä", "å" and "ö" in addition
- Hello = "Moi" or "Hei"
- Goodbye = "Moi moi" or "Hei hei"
- Thank you = "Kiitos"
- Sorry = "Anteeksi"
- One of the most difficult languages to learn... apart from what you just learned



NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS FROM THE PAST 5 YEARS

- Happiest country in the world
- Safest country in the world
- Least organized crime in the world
- Freest country in the world together with Sweden and Norway
- Best country in the world in protecting fundamental human rights
- Most forests in Europe
- Cleanest air in the world
- Biggest coffee and milk consumer in the world
- Most literate country in the world



Getting to know a Finn

101

GREETING

- Shake hands. Hug, if you're friendly with the person.
- As we are not the most outwardly jolly, bubbly, "have a nice day" people, we may seem a bit reserved at first. It doesn't mean that we aren't content or happy, though. Once you get past the phase, you can be sure to have a trustworthy friend!
- Personal space is a big thing. As Finland is a sparsely populated country, we are used to having our own space around us. For us, it is a way to respect the other person without them feeling disturbed - so maybe consider chatting to us two steps further than you'd normally do.

CHATTING

- Small talk - not our cup of tea. Asking "how are you" is no formality, but a question we ask with honest interest and an expectation of an honest answer.
- Pauses or a little bit of silence during a conversation is fine, as it's the flow here.
- We're proud of our culture! Being interested and asking questions about the country, language or culture is simply flattering. Us likey.
- Avoid comparing us to other countries, though. Especially Sweden, our biggest neighborly rival! Also, money talk is kind of a no no.
- Interrupting is considered rude. We patiently wait for our turn to speak, and wish this from others, too.

OTHER CHARACTERISTICS AND HABITS

- We are direct, outspoken and you can trust what Finns say, especially if it's a compliment... as those don't exactly just fly out of our mouths.
- If agreed to meet at 8 PM, the Finn will be there at 8 PM or slightly before. It's polite to inform even if you're a couple minutes late - that's just how punctual we are.
- We take things literally. If you suggest a Finn that "we should definitely have a beer sometime next week", you can be sure to receive a notification later on about the specific time and date.
- Modesty comes naturally to us. Finns tend to downplay their accomplishments and are hesitant to accept praise, especially in front of other people. We don't want to trouble people with our needs. Even if it doesn't look like it, we still appreciate kindness and effort, just like anybody else.



HELSINKI

1ST (AND PROBABLY THE LAST) EDITION 2020

A COMPACT CITY

Distances are short and there's a great variety in landscapes - being deep in the forest or in total peace by the seaside takes only 20 minutes from the city centre.

STRONG ENGLISH SKILLS

It's easy to get by in the capital no matter what your language background, as most Helsinki locals speak a good command of English.

SUSTAINABLE PIONEER

The city is to be fully carbon neutral by the year 2035.

HIGH SPEED WIFI

It is free and unrestricted throughout the whole city centre and doesn't require registration.

RENOWNED IN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE

Helsinki has a UNESCO City of Design title and was the World Design Capital in 2012.

06

Getting around town

PUBLIC TRANSPORT - FAST, RELIABLE, LOCAL, SUSTAINABLE, SUPER COOL... NEED TO SAY MORE?

Public transport runs under the name **HSL**. In Helsinki, there are buses, trams, trains, metros and a ferry you can utilize with your HSL ticket.



Tram at Aleksanterinkatu at Christmas time

Different HSL zones are divided with different letter areas. Helsinki is an AB area, and all things included in the guide are within the AB region.

With the tickets, either single or day tickets from 1-7 days, you can use all public transport as much as you want within the time limit. Single AB tickets cost around 3 euros and are valid for 80 minutes each, whereas a 24-hour day ticket costs 8 euros.

We recommend you to download the HSL app, however, tickets can be bought from blue ticket machines at metro and train stations. Remember to have the ticket bought before jumping onboard!



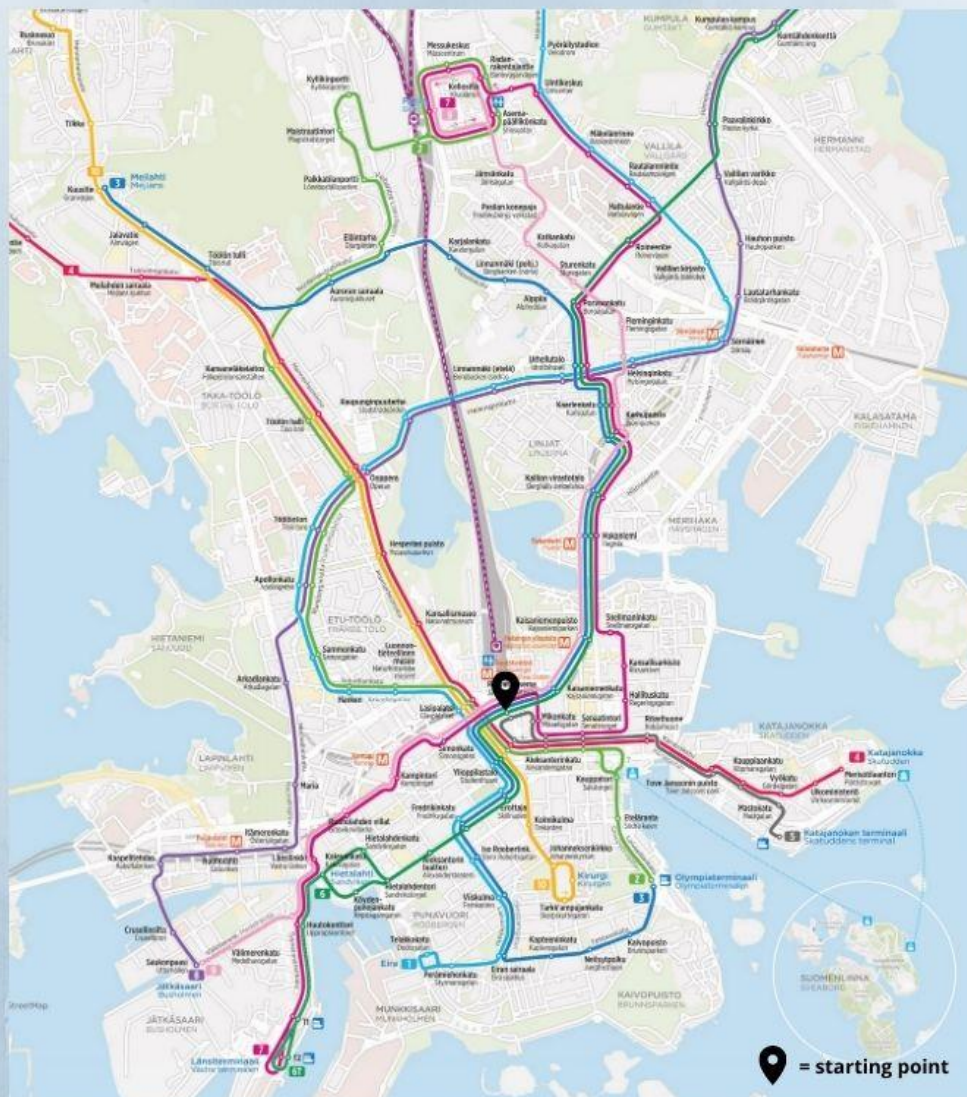
Suomenlinna ferry



Metro station

Now to the real money-wise travel secret!

Don't waste your money on tourist buses. Travel local. Let us introduce you to the best route around Helsinki, experiencing a diverse glimpse of Helsinki city centre and its surroundings, including the popular sights... and a great deal of other spots that are mentioned in this guide. Off to the next page!



Hop-on hop-off local style

1. Start at **Rautatieasema** (Central Railway Station)
2. Buy an AB (1 day) ticket
3. Get on **tram 7 towards Pasilan asema**
4. At Pasilan asema, change to **tram 2 towards Olympiaterminaali**
5. At the end of the route, tram 2 will automatically switch itself to **tram 3** and take you back to **Rautatieasema** (Central Railway Station)

Hey! Click the picture to get a more zoomed view of the maps.

This fun ride (including the tram switch) will take you approx. 1 h 40 mins. By all means, buy a day ticket so you don't have to worry about your ticket expiring. Then you can hop on and off the trams as much as you want to get the feel of different neighborhoods (Kallio, Töölö, Punavuori) around Helsinki city centre. They all have their own kind of architecture and vibe, and the most popular Helsinki highlights are at a short distance from the tram stops, too. These are e.g. Helsinki Cathedral (Senaatintori stop), Sibelius Monument (Töölöntori stop) and Market Square and Uspenski Cathedral (Kauppatori stop). Rainy day? At Pasilan asema, you can let loose by shopping, eating out or even indoor surfing and playing beach volleyball at Tripla shopping centre.

Yellow city bikes are a common sight around the city - and no wonder why. The city bikes are also under HSL and are super budget-friendly.

Day ticket costs 5€, weekly ticket 10€ and the whole "snowless" season 30€. Registration goes through **HSL web pages** or the HSL app, just like with other public transport.



Assigned bike lane on the main street of Helsinki, *Mannerheimintie*

Rather cycle than sit and observe?

HELSINKI HAS GOT YOUR BACK.

Hope you know...

We drive and ride on the right side of the road!

Where to find a city bike then?

There are 3500 bikes around the city at 350 different yellow stations. Once you're through with registration, unlock a bike and it's yours for 30 minutes at a time. If you want to keep it for longer, surcharges apply. Or, when the time is up, just lock your bike at any bike station, unlock another and continue your journey.

Helsinki is safe for bikers and there are plenty of bike lanes in the city centre. However, if there's no assigned bike lane, it is mandatory to ride on the street among cars and not on the sidewalk. We're friendly drivers and make room for bikers, promise!



City bike station at Isoisänsilta (= Grandpa's Bridge)

This is where everyone goes when visiting Helsinki

AND MAYBE YOU, FOR A GOOD REASON. THERE'S NO SHAME.

Helsinki Cathedral



The icon of Helsinki. Located in Senate Square.

Oodi

Helsinki central library, a striking building with Finnish architecture and design.

Market Square



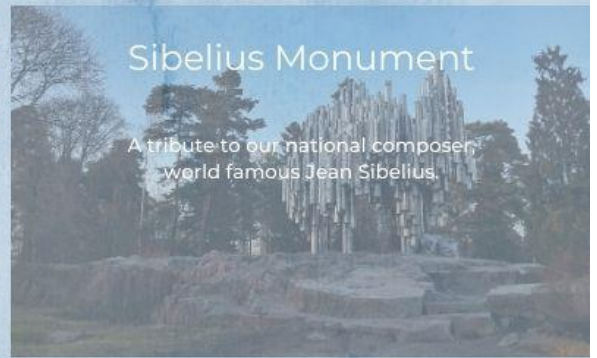
Local food stalls, fresh produce, souvenirs and all other things possible.

Suomenlinna



Historically significant fortress island and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Sibelius Monument



A tribute to our national composer, world famous Jean Sibelius.

The National Library of Finland

Not just a library, but a renowned landmark representing 19th century architecture. Located in Senate Square.

Esplanade Park



The most famous park in Finland and the green heart of Helsinki.

Uspenski Cathedral

The main cathedral for the Orthodox Church of Finland and the biggest one of the kind in Northern and Western Europe.

Psssst!

Some museums, like **Helsinki City Museum** and **Tram Museum** are always free, while others only on selected days. This could be the 1st or last Friday or Wednesday of the month. You'd better double check it on each museum's web page.



Psssst! Again!

Helsinki has free walking tours that cover many of these sights and share stories about Finnish history, culture and the everyday life in Helsinki. Though free, tipping is highly suggested. Check Google for these tour options!

Just another day in the park

SWITCH UP THE SCENERY FROM CONCRETE TO GRASS.

Helsinki has an awfully broad selection of parks. Some of the most popular ones are:

Esplanade Park, the green heart and the "posh park" of Helsinki.



Old Church Park, or as we call it, "The Plague Park". Don't ask.

Kaivopuisto Park, the biggest one in the city centre.

Sinebrychoff Park, on a steep hill, perfect for evening sun.

...and the list goes on. Greenery is everywhere.

What's up with that, what do Finns do with those parks then? Have picnics, enjoy a couple of drinks, sunbathe, play mölkky (a Finnish outdoor game), listen to music, read a book, chill with friends. Because nature is never but a short walk away. Geez, we're doing cheesy commercial punchlines now? Anyway...

There's a  **DANGER**  when you step your foot in the park. Helsinki has the most aggressive seagulls in the world. AND THEY'RE HUGE, TOO. Not a fact, but our truest observation. They lurk behind every corner. They watch every step you take. And right when you turn your head to the wrong side, they will go cowabunga on your ice cream in 0.3 seconds and leave you with a feeling of anger and emptiness. (Okay we might exaggerate a *tiny* bit, but at Esplanade Park, Market Square and Central Railway Station you may need to protect your delicacies with your life. Just saying.)



Esplanade Park



Rhododendron Park (aka Alpine Rose Park) is the place to visit during early June. It feels like a flower wonderland, if you happen to get there during the couple of weeks the alpine roses are blooming. Wheelchair accessible, too.

Community gardens around the city are an oasis for Helsinki locals who don't have their own yards. Stroll around these cute little slots that people pour their heart and soul into to have a tomato or a sunflower of their own. Cute, eh?



Marjaniemi community garden

Did you know?

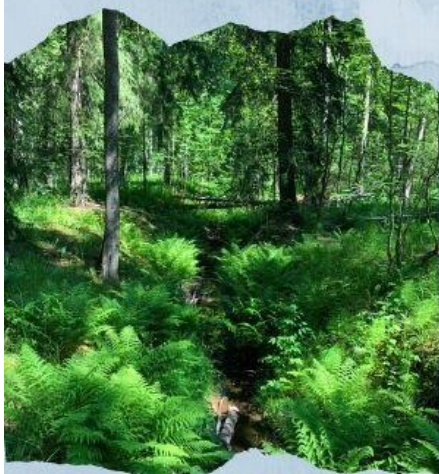
70% of Finland is covered by trees, which makes it the most forested country in Europe. And there's plenty for you in Helsinki as well!

Get lost in the woods

OR JUST FOLLOW THE PATH!

Helsinki Central Park is a forest area that runs the length of Helsinki for 10 km. Huge! There are amazing walking and cycling routes. Surrounded by such pure nature, you wouldn't believe you're taking a stroll 20 mins outside the city centre.

Keep an eye out for delicious wild blueberries, raspberries, lingonberries and strawberries that you're more than welcome to pick and enjoy! Same goes for mushrooms, just remember to be careful to avoid munching the poisonous ones.



Central Park

Local tip!

In Finland we have this law called "the right to roam". Anyone living in or visiting Finland is free to pick mushrooms and berries, fish with a line and rod, and enjoy the recreational use of natural areas.

Kivinokka not only has two beaches, a nature trail, ancient woodlands and a summer café, it's great for birdwatching and spotting cute summer huts around the area. Wheelchair accessible.



Uutela, next to Aurinkolahti beach, should be on your list, too. It offers another opportunity for wandering in the forest by the sea as well as cooking shelters, if you want to step up your picnic game.

A beach destination?

YOU BET.

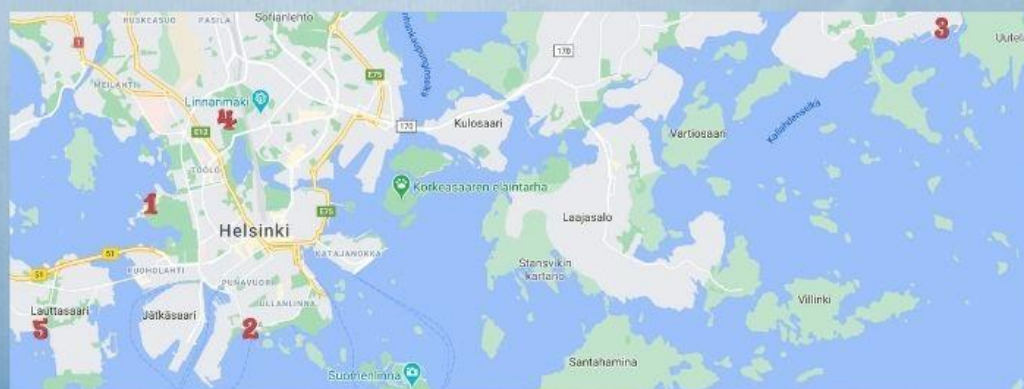
It can get quite hot during the summer, believe it or not! You might want to consider taking a dip in the Baltic Sea at one of our cool beach spots. Helsinki has more than 20 beaches, and here are some of our favorites we chose for you to try:



Hietaranta beach

- 1 Hietaranta beach.** The busiest and biggest one.
- 2 Eira beach.** Quite small, but on a stylish marina area.
- 3 Aurinkolahti beach.** About 30 mins outside of the city centre, but this huge beach is worth it!
- 4 Stadikka.** Actually not a beach, but an outdoor swimming and hanging out area. There's a diving tower, a sauna and a slide, too. 5€ entrance for adults.
- 5 Lauttasaari beach.** View makes you feel like you're deep in the Finnish archipelago. Possibility for beach chairs.

WC	accessible	cafe/ restaurant	changing rooms	beach volley & basketball	free outdoor gym
✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
✗		✗			
✗		✗	✗		✗
✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
✗		✗	✗	✗	



Escape to an island

OR TO 315 OF THEM THAT ARE PART OF HELSINKI.

Suomenlinna

The best of the sorts, Finnish national treasure, UNESCO World Heritage Site, fortress island - it's one of the most valued attractions in all Finland and used to serve as a maritime fortress and a base for the Archipelago Fleet from the 18th century onwards.

Not a fan of old war stuff? Knock it off, you're still gonna enjoy it, it's *the bee's knees*.



You can get to Suomenlinna in 15 minutes by ferry leaving from Market Square. The ferry is part of the public transport system, and HSL tickets (AB region) are valid for this trip, too. There's no entrance fee, so you can freely walk around the fortress as much as your feet can take.

There are several museums, restaurants, cafes and galleries on the island, but the best stuff are the old gloomy tunnels and other military equipment like a submarine and 100 cannons. Suomenlinna has beautiful parks, greenery and a tiny beach. For us Finns, it's a popular spot to go to with our picnic baskets and make a day of it!

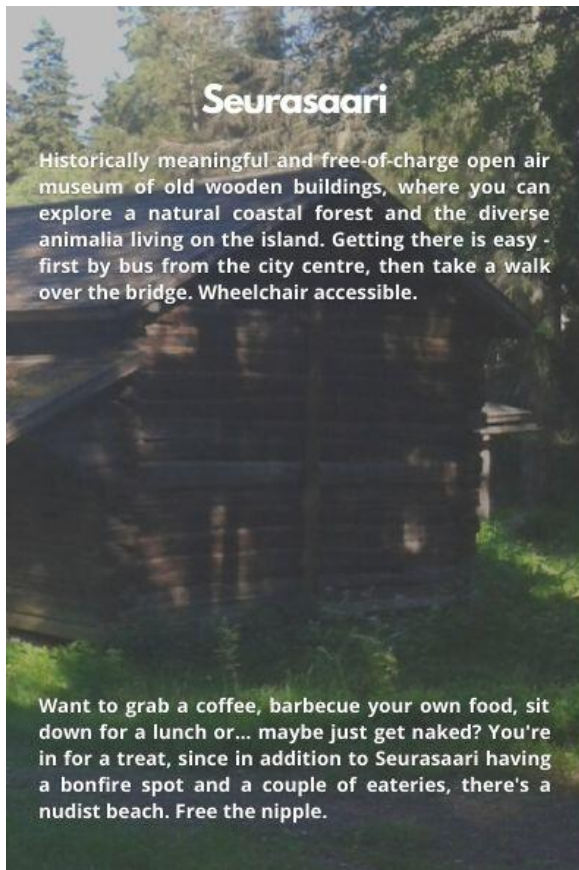
Did you know?

About 800 people actually live in Suomenlinna! There's a school, kindergarten, library, grocery store, naval academy and even a prison on the island.



Island hopping

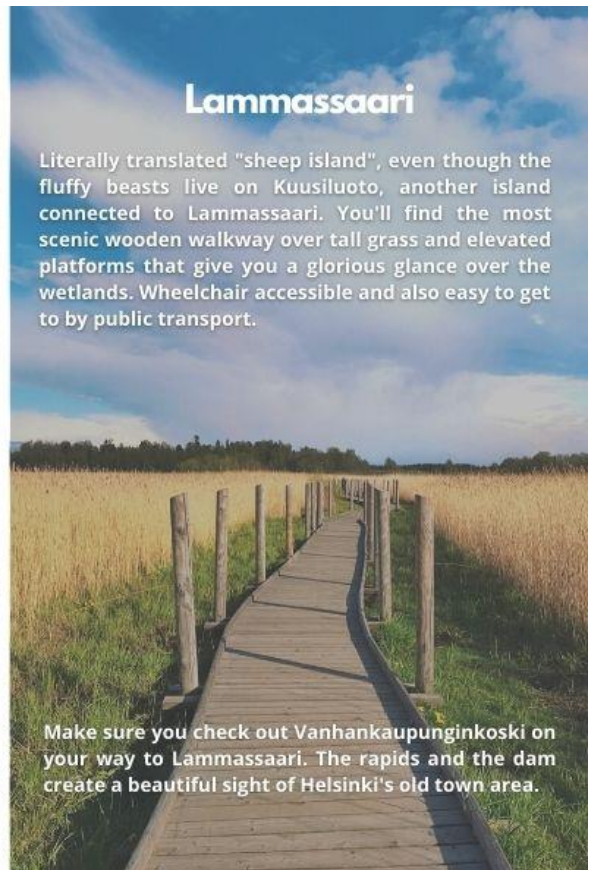
Probably expensive, right? Wrong again, our friend! Hop on a **JT-Line boat**, and with 12€, you can spend the whole day visiting three islands, one of them being **Suomenlinna**, and the others **Lonna** and **Vallisaari**. All islands are great for exploring the Finnish nature and archipelago and getting familiar with war-time stuff. In proportion to the surface area, Vallisaari possesses the richest biodiversity in Helsinki. Lonna is quite a small island with a restaurant/bar/sauna complex - if you're up for splurging, it's a great stop to experience.



Seurasaari

Historically meaningful and free-of-charge open air museum of old wooden buildings, where you can explore a natural coastal forest and the diverse animalia living on the island. Getting there is easy - first by bus from the city centre, then take a walk over the bridge. Wheelchair accessible.

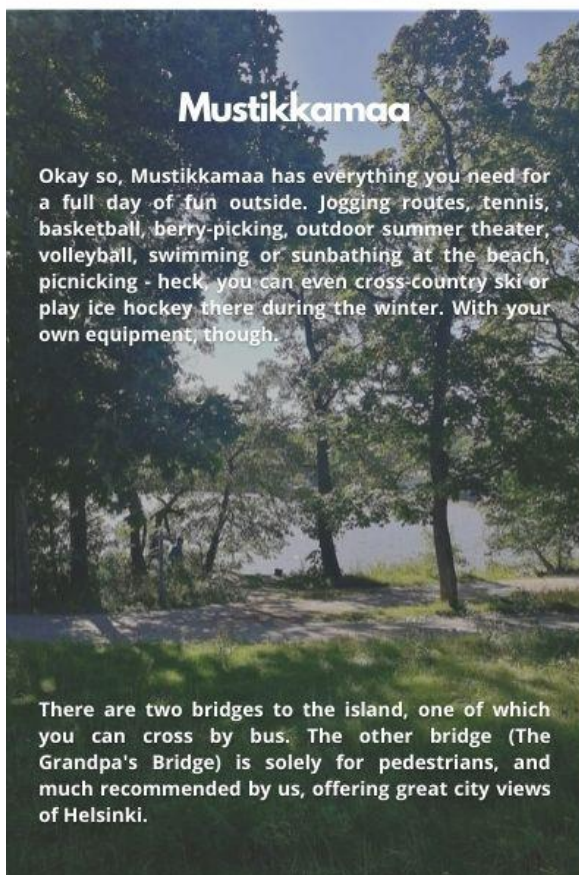
Want to grab a coffee, barbecue your own food, sit down for a lunch or... maybe just get naked? You're in for a treat, since in addition to Seurasaari having a bonfire spot and a couple of eateries, there's a nudist beach. Free the nipple.



Lammassaari

Literally translated "sheep island", even though the fluffy beasts live on Kuusiluoto, another island connected to Lammassaari. You'll find the most scenic wooden walkway over tall grass and elevated platforms that give you a glorious glance over the wetlands. Wheelchair accessible and also easy to get to by public transport.

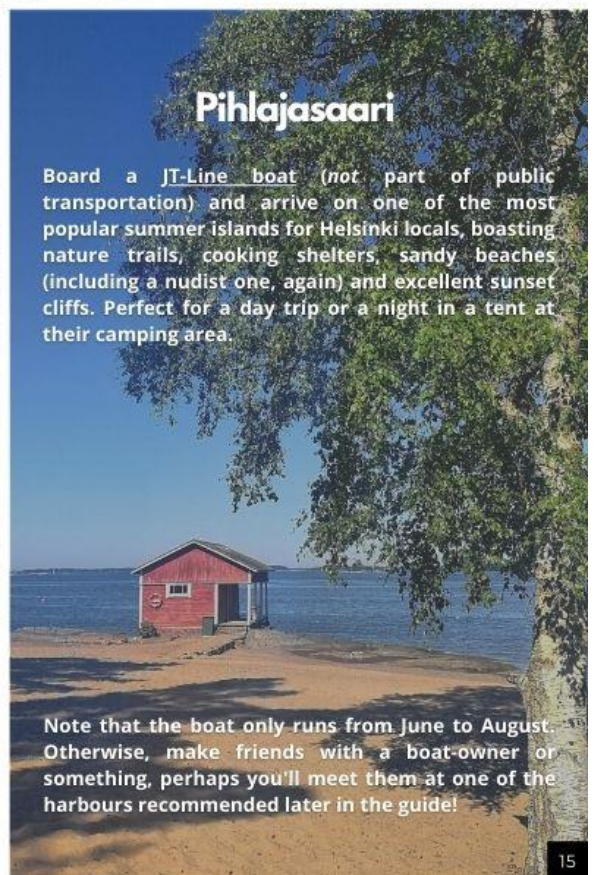
Make sure you check out Vanhankaupunginkoski on your way to Lammassaari. The rapids and the dam create a beautiful sight of Helsinki's old town area.



Mustikkamaa

Okay so, Mustikkamaa has everything you need for a full day of fun outside. Jogging routes, tennis, basketball, berry-picking, outdoor summer theater, volleyball, swimming or sunbathing at the beach, picnicking - heck, you can even cross-country ski or play ice hockey there during the winter. With your own equipment, though.

There are two bridges to the island, one of which you can cross by bus. The other bridge (The Grandpa's Bridge) is solely for pedestrians, and much recommended by us, offering great city views of Helsinki.



Pihlajasaari

Board a JT-Line boat (not part of public transportation) and arrive on one of the most popular summer islands for Helsinki locals, boasting nature trails, cooking shelters, sandy beaches (including a nudist one, again) and excellent sunset cliffs. Perfect for a day trip or a night in a tent at their camping area.

Note that the boat only runs from June to August. Otherwise, make friends with a boat-owner or something, perhaps you'll meet them at one of the harbours recommended later in the guide!



SAUNA

What's up with these people hitting each other with birch branches, naked and sweaty in a 100 celsius degree heat, and enjoying all that madness?

THAT RIGHT THERE IS FINNISH SAUNA CULTURE AS ITS PUREST.

Sauna - the only Finnish word that is utilized in other languages all over the world. Sauna is related to almost all Finnish festivities in some way and is probably our biggest national flex. You may have heard this one before, but there are more saunas than cars in Finland, which well describes the significance and value we have for our little invention.

The traditional saunas are wood-burning, which now are often replaced by electric ones. Finnish saunas are no steam rooms - we actually throw water on the stove of hot rocks every couple of minutes to crank up the heat, which is called *löyly*.

On the next page, we're going to introduce you to a couple of ways you can have a proper Finnish sauna experience in Helsinki. Before that, here are some fast facts you might want to know to be comfortable in our strangely sweaty yet satisfying setting:

Nudity is totally cool and non-sexual. We're used to it, there's nothing obscure about it. Generally, it's up to you whether to get toasty in your birthday suit or not. The rule of thumb is that usually, if the sauna is for people of the same gender, you're naked, if it's mixed, everyone wears a swimsuit.

Always shower or swim before entering the sauna, just to keep things nice and hygienic.

You need two towels - a regular one for drying off and a small one to park your bum on. As opposed to what you've seen in movies, no one wears a towel in the Finnish sauna, we repeat, *no one wears a towel in the Finnish sauna!*

Have a good löyly!

It's quite common to have a beer or another refreshment while enjoying the sauna, *saunajuoma* as we call it. Take note that generally in public saunas, it's prohibited to bring your own drinks due to the alcohol law. However, **Sompasauna**, for example, is a lovely exception.

About the hitting-each-other-with-birch-branches part, you're asking? It's called *vihtominen*, and it's a thing Finns do specifically at Midsummer or other special occasions. There's no translation for the word, but the meaning of it is to tie a young bunch of birch branches together and smack the heck out of your friend with it in the heat of the sauna. For health and fun, why else?

Rowdiness or loud behavior don't belong in the sauna. Talking is totally ok, although, Finns often like to make the most of the relaxing environment in the comfort of silence.

And remember to always stop the fun if you're feeling woozy! It's okay to be a rookie 😊

Sauna

Even though there are more modern and pricier sauna spots like **Löyly** and **Allas Sea Pool** in Helsinki city centre, there are several ways to enjoy an authentic Finnish sauna experience at a bargain.

If you haven't stumbled upon a Finnish friend to invite you for a sweaty gathering at their place or their summer cottage, trust these other options:

Sompasauna is a volunteer-driven, 24/7 open wooden sauna by the sea - free, of course. It's located on Sompasaari close to public transport. There are no showers, changing rooms, toilets or staff, so bring your own everything. The self-service experience might sound a bit odd, but there are usually always other people to help you out to enjoy Sompasauna to the max (beware that many people will be fully nude). During the weekends you might find yourself in a party there, as well!

Yrjönkatu swimming hall is the oldest public swimming hall in Finland. The beautiful atmosphere makes it feel like you're taking a swim in ancient Rome. Right in the heart of the city, it costs 5,5€ for entrance and has different kinds of saunas. Make sure to check out the website before you go, as there are separate swimming sessions for men and women, with bathers having the choice of whether to wear a swimming costume or not.

Public swimming halls are popular spots for all Finns to enjoy the water and the heat. They're generally 5,5€ for entrance with a standard selection of saunas, pools (cold and neutral), jacuzzis, some of them even have waterslides and diving platforms. Woo!



There are plenty of free outdoor bbq places all around Helsinki. It is highly suggested to bring your own coal and a source of fire. Coal can be brought from general grocery stores. Ketchup and/or mustard are a must, too.

- 1 **Teurastamo.** Not only is this place a foodie and city culture hotspot with plenty of free events, it has a communal backyard with coal grills.
- 2 Don't forget the islands mentioned previously, **Pihlajasaari** and **Seurasaari**, the latter of which has firewood already provided by the city.
- 3 **Cafe Regatta.** Makes it easy for you lazy-bones. Simply buy the sausage from the cafe, after which barbeque it by their fire. Vegan options also provided, not to forget condiments like mustard and ketchup!

Doing what Finns do, the Finnish way

THIS IS WHAT, WHERE, WHEN AND HOW TO DO IT.



Barbequing

Finns are sausage grilling folk. One of the most authentic (and easy) Finnish culinary experiences you can have is to grab a packet of sausages from the grocery store and find a spot to get your inner barbequer going. And there's no lack of variety in veggie sausages either!

Karaoke

This Japanese greatness is strongly affiliated with the Finnish culture. Karaoke bars can be spotted even in the most god forsaken towns, and Finland even started the world championship of karaoke! The way you get to be the popstar of your own life here is to sing in front of a crowd - generally, there are no private rooms and the singing is done on a karaoke stage in some corner of the bar. It's free fun, just sign up early at the bar to avoid waiting for an eternity. Pick a popular song and you definitely won't be the only one singing! Some legendary karaoke spots in Helsinki are **Erottaja nightclub**, **Pataässä**, **Anna K** and **Wallis**.

2 screenshots, 2 stories



Sissi rocking Bohemian Rhapsody with a friend on a booze cruise from Helsinki to Stockholm. All factors considered - it was a true delight for ears.

lia giving her all to a Britney Spears banger at **Erottaja nightclub** along with her signature moves: a fierce hair flip and a passionate whatever-that-left-arm-is-doing-in-the-photo.



Music

We have our own folk music and such, but that's not really what gets us going. Apart from *Sandstorm* by our very own Darude, basically our national music could be heavy metal - in fact, we have (excessively) more heavy metal bands per capita than any other country in the world. You've heard of Children of Bodom, HIM, Nightwish or Apocalyptica? That's Finnish finesse right there. Want to listen to the music of our people, head to some bar or club for some good ol' hard rock. Which bar or club again? The best bet is to get info about those events from **PRKL Army Finland** Facebook page.

Other than that, bars like **Tenho Restobar**, **Molly Malone's**, **Jackie**, **Storyville**, **Leblon**, **Merikerho**, **Lepakkomies**, **Bar Loose**, **Tanner** and **Bites Backyard** have live music quite often, even for free. And as always - check their FB!

Ice hockey

There's no greater power than the power ice hockey has to unite this nation - no matter who you are, what you do, where you come from... you know the drill. Ice hockey isn't the national sport here (it's Finnish version of baseball btw, who would've known), but it's definitely the most popular one. Not all Finns know much about ice hockey itself, but when the time is right for the world championships, suddenly, we all come together as one and it becomes the focus of everyone's life for a hot minute. And why not yours too?

At the time of big games, like Finnish or world championships, this hockey mania can be experienced at some of Helsinki's most popular sports bars. These are e.g. **Sports bar Töölö**, **All Star Sports Bar & Grill** and **Sports Academy**. Or just simply go see a game live at the rink if you're feeling boujee about it.

Frankly though, we think that the popularity comes from the fact that we're usually really good at it. *Torille!*

Local ice hockey game at Helsinki Ice Hall





Want to shake off your lazy pants and stay active?

GO GET 'EM!!!

Malminkartanonhuippu

is the highest point of Helsinki. It might not be on a headspinningly high altitude, however, the hill offers a cool view of overall Helsinki. And the best part are the stairs to the top. Malminkartanonhuippu is usually busy with people working out top to bottom, and no wonder, as it's surrounded by lush nature. You might even spot some cute city bunnies!

Geocaching

is a way to see nature and sights you otherwise wouldn't stumble upon. Often a geocache has info about the area you found it at, so you'll get much more out of the experience. How does geocaching actually work then? Erm... We haven't actually tried it, but it sounds recommendable! Dig deeper into the topic online, if it tickles your fancy.

Outdoor gyms

are spread around the city, completely free to use. Step up your sports game and unleash the beast mode. For example, there are two spots by **Töölölahti** and one at **Mustikkamaa**.

Jogging

Put on those yoga pants and run through Helsinki like the winter is coming. Quite honestly, it ain't a lie. Here are our favorites:

The southern coastline of Helsinki boasts sweet routes and boulevards. Just follow the edge of the sea along the way.

Töölölahti. You can go around the bay and enjoy watching stand up paddlers and kayakers. Or, hop on one yourself!

Puistojumppa

literally meaning "park exercise", is popular during the summer time. Basically, it's any type of group exercise class outdoors with an instructor and music, and they're often organized by gyms, clubs or the city. Most of them are free, suitable for any levels and there are several organized weekly as long as it ain't raining cats and dogs. Fun, right? You can find these events on Facebook with the search word *puistojumppa*.

Local tip!

Get lost on purpose! Helsinki is safe wherever you go. Forget the map and start running, you'll be sure to find yourself in areas you otherwise wouldn't get to experience.

Linnanmäki amusement park



Random fun things to do

THAT WE COULDN'T FIT INTO ANY OTHER CATEGORY. ヽ(ツ)ノ

Linnanmäki amusement park

This most visited attraction in Helsinki is in fact free to enter. Without the wristband (which is more or less 40€), you can still release your inner child and enjoy the atmosphere, treat yourself to cotton candy, get rid of your spare coins by playing a couple of carnival games, or, buy a single ride ticket (9€) for your daily adrenaline rush.

Minigolf

There are minigolf courts all around Helsinki, many of which are quite inexpensive, especially if you go before 4 PM. For example **Taivallahti minigolf** is 6€ per person.

Flea markets

Shopping is much more fun when you go out of the common, fast-fashion way and explore hidden gems you can't find anywhere else. At flea markets you get a glimpse of Finnish fashion and households, as there are not only clothes for sale but whatever bits and bobs for which people want to find a new home. During the summer, there are even outdoor flea market events, pretty much every weekend.

Eläintarha Skate Park

Do you know how to skateboard? Us neither, but that's not the point! During the summer, at Eläintarha Skate Park, you can borrow skateboards and pads for free in exchange for a deposit. The staff also helps you out if you have anything to ask regarding skateboarding. How amazing is that.

Cafe Boardgame

Though a cafe, the main idea is to play all sorts of board games - from easy-to-follow party games to more challenging strategy games and everything in between. The staff is super helpful too, so you don't need to struggle with the instructions all alone! Just remember to book a time slot before going.

Helsinki in a different light

TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT WHAT'S AROUND YOU.



View from Ateljee Bar

The rooftop of Hotel Torni

Sounds expensive, but guess what, buying a cup of tea from **Ateljee Bar** is enough for you to enjoy a 360 view of Helsinki right in the heart of the city. Do your duty in probably the most scenic toilet in Finland.

Sunset views

Helsinki is actually the rockiest capital in Europe. That's a fact you didn't know you needed. Combined with a stunning view, spots like **Humallahti rock** and the unnamed rock between Linnanmäki Amusement Park and the train track are some of the best we can recommend.

Graffiti and street art

It's all around you. Without further ado, if you'd like to see some of that urban activism, check out the best spots from [Helsinki Urban Art's website](#).

Architecture spots

Wander around these old, dreamy, beautiful pastel-colored buildings in **Eira**, **Punavuori**, **Ullanlinna**, **Kruunuhaka** and **Katajanokka**. You may even find yourself wanting to move to Helsinki.

For more rustic vibes, head over to **Puu-Käpylä** and **Puu-Vallila** to admire quaint and colorful wooden houses with cute backyards.

Harbours

It ain't Monaco, but a reeeal close second. Many Helsinki people are proud owners of boats of all sorts, which, most of the time, happen to be sitting around at harbours for you to admire. **Pohjoisranta** and **Merisatamanranta** marinas, for example, are some of the biggest in the area.

Huvilakatu in Ullanlinna



In the mood for food?

HAVE A TASTE OF FINNISH FOOD CULTURE.

Finnish food may not (yet) be on the gastronomic world map, but it doesn't mean we can't cook up a really good feast! The cuisine is perceived as healthy and simple with pure Nordic flavors. Not only are we the world's biggest coffee and milk drinkers, we're also huge fans of rye bread, which is our beloved national food.

Generally, the flavors of Finnish food come from the ingredients themselves rather than spices and seasonings. That's just how naturally flavorful it can be - no need coat it with spoonfuls of cumin, chili and whatnot. As we are a coastal country with plenty of lakes, too, we eat a lot of fish. Other staple ingredients are red meat, root vegetables, mushrooms, berries, milk and wholegrain products like rye, barley and oats.

Even though these are the classic elements of Finnish cuisine, nowadays, internationalization and current trends influence the food culture. For example, traditional, meaty dishes make room for veggie substitutes and organic options are more often favored. All in all, it's quite effortless to follow special diets here, especially in Helsinki. For instance, vegan and gluten-free options are plentiful in supermarkets and also available at the majority of restaurants and cafes.

But wait, there's more! We do have our own, internationally famous milk chocolate from a brand named *Fazer*, as well as squeaky cheese called *leipäjuusto*. Take that, Switzerland!



Pullakohvit, a term for having a cup of coffee with a bun



Karelian pies with egg-butter spread

Finnish foods you may want to try:

Snacks 'n' desserts:

- korvapuusti (cinnamon bun)
- salmiakki (salty licorice candy, also used as a flavor for other products like ice cream and gum)
- mämmi (specialty during Easter time, don't be fooled by its suspicious brown looks)
- Finnish oven pancake
- piimä (sour milk, enjoyed as it is)
- viili (yoghurt made of sour milk)

Something more filling:

- rye bread (with your average bread toppings)
- karjalanpiirakka (Karelian pie, traditionally eaten with egg-butter spread)
- pea soup
- salmon soup
- macaroni casserole (a piece of home cooked heaven)
- sautéed reindeer (eaten with mashed potatoes and lingonberry jam)
- spinach pancakes (also topped with lingonberry jam)

Time to go eat!

All our recommendations provide e.g. vegan options. If something your diet requires is not mentioned on the menu, it's usually going to be organized for you.

WHEN THE TUMMY IS GROWLING. MAKE YOUR WAY TO ONE OF OUR RECOMMENDATIONS.

Eating can potentially be your biggest expense during your travels in Helsinki, there's no denying that, and cooking in the communal kitchen of the hostel isn't always what you want to do on your free time. Fear not, we present you with our selection of budget-friendly eateries! And by budget-friendly, we mean meals under 15 euros. We're still in Finland, you know.



Avocado pasta @ Green Hippo Café

Restaurants

Woolshed

Australian-style pub food (with extensive happy hours for drinks)

Cafe Bar No 9

Cozy hangout restaurant with cheap meals all day from pastas to stir fries

Green Hippo Cafe

Nutritious and very much instagrammable food from breakfast til dinner

Levant

Mediterranean and Middle Eastern goodness, many locations

Fafa's

A Finnish fast food company with the fattest falafel in town, many locations

Soup+More

Finnish soups with inspiration from around the globe, many locations

Unicafe

A student lunch restaurant with home-cooked style dishes that change daily, many locations. The restaurants are filled with Finnish students enjoying the cheapest meals they're ever gonna get. However, everyone's more than welcome to eat there.

Not forgetting that...

- Sushi buffets, local pizzerias as well as Chinese and Nepalese restaurants generally have a lower price level on their menus. In addition, many shopping centre food markets have casual, more inexpensive eateries.
- During lunch hours (more or less from 11 AM to 2 PM), most restaurants around the city have deals for cheaper!

Street food

Market Halls

There are three market halls in Helsinki, which are unique hotspots for flavors and hand-made stuff, not just from Finland but all around the world. It's a must-do to at least stroll around in one of them!

Market Square

As mentioned in the most popular attractions of Helsinki, this is the main market area with fresh produce, souvenirs and such, but also with food stalls that serve traditional Finnish meals for little money. This is what we'd call Finnish street food.

Hakaniemi Market Square

Similar as above, but not as touristy, thus not much souvenir options. Focusing on the food, shall we?

Three times a year, two weeks at a time, there's this concept "**Syö Helsinki**" where dozens of restaurants offer their chosen dishes for 10 euros each. Check by googling whether you're lucky enough to be around then!

Local tips x3

Tap water is yum. Carrying around your own reusable bottle is a baller move, as you can fill it up under any tap. No need to buy bottled water from the store - save your money and save the world.



Hietalahti Market Hall

"**Restaurant day**" is a day when an Average Joe can put up their cooked, baked or however-made goods for sale without a restaurant license. It's the most fun day to go hunt for fun and usually inexpensive food wherever you go.

You can get hot coffee for your slow mornings even from grocery stores or kiosks, which are always the cheapest option.

Tipping? No sir! There is no need for tipping in Finland, unless the service has been absolutely exceptionally amazing or if you really just want to be awesome. No shame in saving the tip money for dessert, tho!

Cafes

There's not much of a price difference between cafes in Helsinki, and a cup of that luscious filter coffee costs around 2,5 to 3,5 euros. These are just some of our favorite places to go. TREAT YO' SELF!

Cafe Regatta

A little red cottage by the sea, the best cinnamon rolls (*korvapuusti*) and sugar coated donuts (*munkki*) in Helsinki. Also has the sausage barbecuing opportunity.

Kahvila Sävy

Freshly roasted and ground coffee from small producers that are officially evaluated in to best 5% in the world. Affordable all-day breakfast sets!

Ipi Kulmakuppila

Bright cafe with Finnish goods (and the best cappuccinos) that does good by supporting the employment of disabled people.

Tin Tin Tango

Classic, yet personal spot with all-day breakfast, and definitely busy with local people! When the night arises, it turns into a bar with a wide selection of beers and wines.

Ihana Kahvila Baari

Translates to *lovely cafe bar*, which quite honestly serves its name. Intimate ambiance right in the heart of the city.



Cafe Regatta

Thirsty?

YKSI OLUT, KIITOS.

= One beer,
please.

First off, let's start this juicy topic with some basic information about Finland, Helsinki and the practicalities of alcohol. This chapter is not for you, our underaged friend. By underaged, we mean under 18, as it is the adult age here for drinking. And voting. And driving. And smoking.

So you're here. You want to buy the sinful drink. Here's some advice:

Where to buy and when?

Mild alcohol like beers, ciders and RTDs can be bought from any grocery store or kiosk. Then we have this place called **Alko** - it's a government-owned, monopoly company for strong alcohol, which is wines, liquors, spirits, etc. You know, the good stuff. Stores can sell alcohol from 9 AM to 9 PM *sharp*, however, Alkos are open for an even shorter time than that, and are always closed on Sundays. Buying drinks from the store is always a way cheaper option than hitting the bar. Depending on the area you're at, a local draft beer, for example, can cost you from 3 to 8 euros while a glass of house wine can cost between 5 and 12 euros. In general, the city centre is the most expensive area to drink while the neighborhoods, like Kallio, are more affordable. Speaking of which...

Where to drink?

1

The most money-efficient way, if the weather is banging, is to grab a sixpack and go to your nearest park, cliff, seashore, whatever, just like we Finns like to do in the summer. Technically, it's illegal to drink in public spaces, however, the police will not interfere with *"sophisticated picnic drinking that doesn't require too much alcohol or doesn't cause any trouble for others"*. You can conclude the meaning of that yourself. Just, you know, behave.

2

But, if you're more like a sitting-in-a-chair, not-wanting-ants-in-your-pants, drinking-from-a-glass type of person, there's a way to enjoy that frugally year round. Happy hour and after work times are a budget travelers best friend, which generally are between the hours of 3 PM to 8 PM.

3

Even without taking full benefit of these merry minutes, there is an affordable cure for your thirst at any given time. The whole area of **Kallio** is the joy of all students and penny pinchers of Helsinki. It's the area with rough pubs and chic bars, and also with plenty of second-hand stores and other hipster coolness, but that's another story. Just make your way to the streets of **Helsinginkatu** and **Vaasankatu** and organize yourself a lil pub crawl.



Some good ol' Finnish draft beer

But I want to party!

Ah, yes. To your misfortune, there are no cheap clubs in Helsinki. However, some places offer free entry before a certain time (like 10 PM or 11 PM), and in a club called **Baarikärpänen**, you even get a wristband with which you get drinks with a -50% for the rest of the night. From our own experience, **Milliklubi** and **VilliWäinö** are on the more affordable side on the Helsinki nightclub scale.

Drunk Finnish dictionary



Our thesis advisor can truly be proud about the content of this guide.
Oh, the devotion, the resourcefulness.

You know how there are many ways to say that you're hammered, smashed, buzzed? We also have multiple ways to do so in our elegant language. Study some of these directly translated terms of "being drunk" and impress your new party buddies.

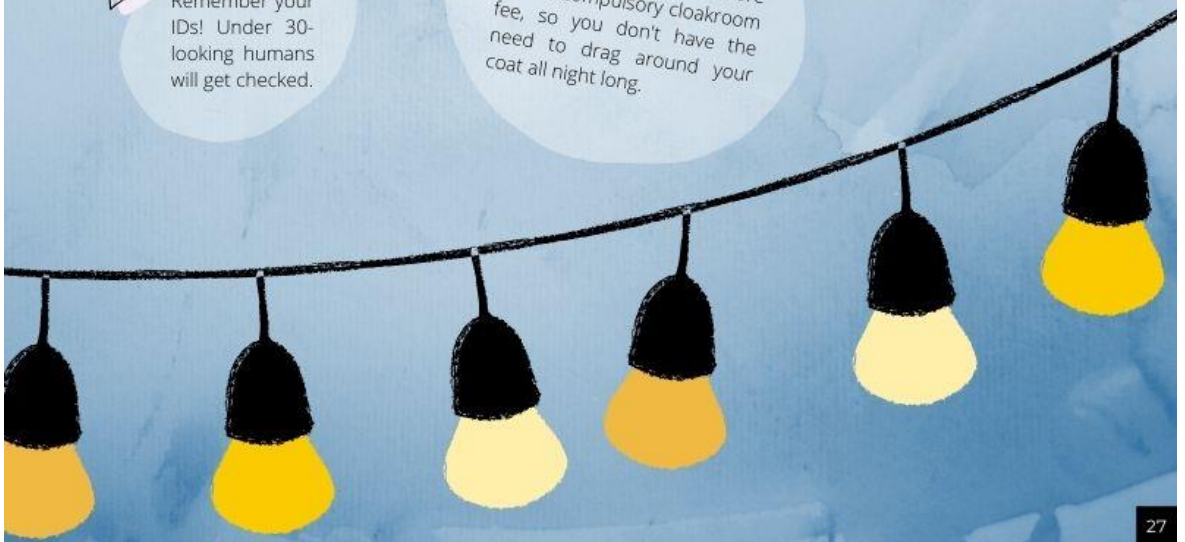
- tuubassa - in a tuba
- nakit silmillä - weiners on eyes
- sooseissa - in sauces
- nauttinut muutakin kuin kansalaisluottamusta - enjoyed something other than civic confidence
- perseet olalla - asses on shoulders
- vetänyt muutakin kuin pulkkaa - pulled something other than a sled

Local tip #1

Remember your IDs! Under 30-looking humans will get checked.

Local tip #2

Almost all clubs have a more or less compulsory cloakroom fee, so you don't have the need to drag around your coat all night long.



Here during the winter?

YOU BADASS.

Winter weather facts of Helsinki

When? December to February

Really though? Alright, the first snow *might* fall already in October and the last one usually in April, or sometimes June. Screw summer anyway, right?

How cold? Average temperature is around -5 Celsius, but from time to time, as low as -20 Celsius. It's a surprise.

Snow? Comes and goes, but the best places in Finland to enjoy that white gold are way further up north in Lapland.

Winter Garden

Although open all year round, it's a welcomed escape especially when the cold wind is piercing through your body. This heated greenhouse is home to plants from around the world, and the best part, it's free! You can even bring your own coffee while taking in all the greenery.



Allas Sea Pool

Ice skating

These artificial ice rinks don't give you the adrenaline rush you might get from skating over a frozen lake... But don't think frost bites are out of the question as these rinks are outside during winter time. Bundle up buttercup!

Ice Park (Central Railway Station) / 6€ entry + 6€ skate rental

Brahe ice rink / 3,5€ entry + rentals

Christmas Market

Christmas comes to town already in the beginning of December, and the Senate Square lights up with cute decorations, little kiosks, market stalls, a carousel and all things winter. And Santa Claus, you ask us? Lucky you if you happen to see him around!

The market offers a sweet opportunity to try out some Finnish Christmas treats, such as:

- hot juice (usually made of berries)
- glögi (or Finnish-style mulled wine, with or without alcohol)
- gingerbread (best when dunked into hot juice or glögi)
- joulutorttu (star-shaped puff pastry with plum jam)
- rice porridge (must enjoy with cinnamon and sugar on top)
- aaand Finnish chocolate, no less!

Ice swimming

Who wouldn't want to freeze their toes off dipping into a hole in the frozen sea? That hole is called *avanto*. And it's great for your circulation. Try it at...

Sompasauna - Check page 17, this place is open all year round!

Other than that, you can go to an *avanto* for a fee at **Löyly** and **Allas Sea Pool**, also mentioned on the same page. But be careful! Bring a friend, don't dive or put your head underwater. Dip yourself for a few seconds, go to the sauna afterwards and enjoy the sweet tingling feeling all over your body!



Your Helsinki Calendar

for free events and important dates

national holidays marked with ♥

Lux Helsinki early Jan Annual light art event brightening up the dark winter	Helsinki Sauna Day early March Saunas that are usually private are now open for public free of charge	Vappu ♥ 1st of May Huge day of celebration where parks fill up with people wearing their graduation caps	Hanami mid-May Beautiful Japanese festival for celebrating cherry trees blossoming
Arabia Street Festival mid-May Community event with food stalls, street art and all kinds of performances	World Village Festival late May International event where food and art from different cultures come together	Helsinki Day mid-June Bday of Helsinki! Special activities all around the city, such as a free outdoor concert	Midsummer late June ♥ Celebration of the nightless night when the sun doesn't go down below the horizon
Bassline Festival late June 2-day festival and outdoor party with live music, art market and other coolness	Pride Week late June Celebration of equality, packed with rainbow-colored events throughout the whole week	Beer Floating late July/early Aug Floating along Vantaa river with whatever object keeping the participant above water while enjoying some drinks	Kallio Block Party early Aug Streets of Kallio neighborhood are closed for this widespread music and food festival
Helsinki Festival mid-Aug to late Aug Biggest art festival in Finland with classical and urban music, theatre, dance, circus and visual art events	Night of The Arts late Aug Art, music and food happenings around the city with museums, galleries etc. are free and open till later	Herttoniemi Block Party late Aug Same idea as Kallio Block Party, but this time in Herttoniemi neighborhood	Venetian Night late Aug Carnival for saying farewell to summer, with fireworks and lanterns that are sent to the sea
Viaporin Kekri late Oct/early Nov Spine-tingling event in Suomenlinna island celebrating the beginning of the dark winter	Helsinki Design Week early Sep to mid Sep Largest design festival in the Nordic countries	Independence Day ♥ 6th December The city quiets down as Finns traditionally spend time at home with their families	Psst! Facebook event calendar is your ride-or-die for free events, every day of the week. Also, keep your eyes open for posters on the street!

The dates of some events sometimes change. Sorry about that.



Hey friend,

You leaving!

Aww, man, hope you had a great time at least, with us by your side. Even better if you actually got some use out of this guide.

Special thanks to the graphic designers, photographers, researchers, proofreaders and editors of this guide... Aka Sissi Luoto and Iia Sahlakari. Yeah, we had to put on our big girl pants and work this out on our own. Rough at times, but for the most part doing this was just pure LOLs and YOLOs. Even we learned a bunch of new stuff to see and do in Helsinki while at it, but more importantly, we learned how hilarious we are.

No but on a serious note, thank you for our thesis advisor Mia for accepting our wild ideas and guiding us through the process.

If you want to give yays or nays about this guide, flood our inbox with collaboration proposals or just stay friends 4ever, you can hit up @sissiluoto on Instagram (Iia is not gonna accept your follow requests anyway, likes to keep it private). We love that you decided to pick this guide for your travels, unless you're one of Haaga-Helia's test group members forced to go through this. Then we're sorry. But hey, that makes three of us.

We're joking. We appreciate you. This is so worth it because of you. Thank you ♥

It's a wrap for this thesis project, topping off our uni journey. Now off to work life we sprint!

Moi moi.

*Still yours,
Sissi & Iia*

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This guide is dedicated to that one person who took part in our thesis' youth budget travel survey and answered "funny people" when asked "what do you value most in a travel guide". This is for you. Hope you enjoyed, cause we tried. We really tried.

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