

## **Welcome to Tallinn!**

The first traces of human settlement found in Tallinn's city center by archeologists are about 5000 years old.

As an important port for trade between Russia and Scandinavia, it became a target for the expansion of the Teutonic Knights and the Kingdom of Denmark during the period of Northern Crusades in the beginning of the 13th century when Christianity was forcibly imposed on the local population. Danish rule of Tallinn and Northern Estonia started in 1219.

In 1285 the city became the northernmost member of the Hanseatic League – a mercantile and military alliance of German-dominated cities in Northern Europe. The Danes sold Tallinn to the Teutonic Knights in 1346. Medieval Tallinn enjoyed a strategic position at the crossroads of trade between Western and Northern Europe and Russia.

With the start of the Protestant Reformation the German influence became even stronger as the city was converted to Lutheranism. In 1561 Tallinn politically became a dominion of Sweden.

During the Great Northern War, plague stricken Tallinn along with Swedish Estonia and Livonia capitulated to Imperial Russia in 1710, but the local self-government institutions (Magistracy of Reval and Chivalry of Estonia) retained their cultural and economical autonomy within Imperial Russia as the Duchy of Estonia. The 19th century brought industrialization of the city and the port kept its importance. During the last decades of the century Russification measures became stronger.

On 24 February 1918, the Independence Manifesto was proclaimed in Tallinn, followed by Imperial German occupation and a war of independence with Russia. On 2 February 1920, the Tartu Peace Treaty was signed with Soviet Russia, wherein Russia acknowledged the independence of the Estonian Republic. Tallinn became the capital of an independent Estonia. After World War II started, Estonia was annexed by the Soviet Union (USSR) in 1940, and later occupied by Nazi Germany from 1941 to 1944. After the Nazi retreat in 1944, it was again annexed by the USSR. After annexation into the Soviet Union, Tallinn became the capital of the Estonian SSR.

In August 1991 an independent democratic Estonian state was re-established and a period of quick development to a modern European capital ensued. Tallinn became the capital of a de facto independent country once again on 20 August 1991.

Below is a short description of places of interest we will see during our excursion.



Ever since the German Knights of the Sword first built a stone fortress in Tallinn in 1227-29, every foreign empire that ruled Estonia used the **Toompea castle** as its base. Today, appropriately, it's home to Estonia's Parliament.

The spectacular, onion-domed **St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral** perched atop Toompea Hill is Estonia's main Russian Orthodox cathedral. It's also by far the grandest, most opulent Orthodox church in Tallinn.



The gleaming, Medieval **Cathedral of St. Mary the Virgin** that stands at the centre of Toompea hill is best known by locals as the Toomkirik (Dome Church), and it's the main Lutheran church in Estonia.

The Kohtu street **viewing platform** gives a sweeping view of Old Town's rooftops, towers and beyond.





Interesting **Pikk Jalg** (Long Leg) and **Lühike Jalg** (Short Leg) streets dating back to the Middle Ages are connecting the Upper town with the Lower town and were until the end of the 19th century the only connections between these boroughs.



The **House of the Great Guild** was a home for the most powerful of the city's guilds, uniting the city's German-speaking mercantile elite into an organization that effectively controlled commerce in the city. The Great Guild's doors were closed to Tallinn's petty merchants and artisans.

The Great Guild's gloomy exterior now fronts the Estonian History Museum, where the history of Estonia from the Stone Age to the eighteenth century is traced via an uninspiring and predictable array of weapons, domestic objects and jewellery.

The beautiful, Renaissance-style guild hall with its bright red, green and gold door was the historic home of the **Brotherhood of Black Heads**, a Medieval guild made up of young, single merchants and foreigners. The Brotherhood itself, which arose sometime around 1399, was active only in Estonia and Latvia, and never took hold in the rest of Europe.



A radiant, white church with an octagonal tower is the 14th-century **Holy Spirit Church**, a spectacular structure both inside and out.

The elaborate painted clock on its façade is Tallinn's oldest public timepiece. The carved wood interior includes such treasures as a unique 15th century altar by the famous Lübeck artist Bernt Notke, and one of the oldest pulpits in Estonia.

Historically the **Town Hall Square** served as a market and meeting place, and was the site of at least one execution (resulting from a dispute over a bad omelette).

Today, the square remains the social heart of the city, a venue for open-air concerts, handicraft fairs and Medieval markets.



The impressive **Town Hall** dominates Medieval Tallinn's main square. Nowadays it is the only intact Gothic town hall in Northern Europe and is mainly used for concerts or for entertaining visiting kings or presidents. The structure's interior is truly impressive.

At the top of the spire is the Old Thomas weather vane, a symbol of Tallinn who has been standing at attention here since 1530.

The **Town Hall Pharmacy** is in fact the oldest continuously running pharmacy in Europe. In Medieval times Marzipan was one of the pharmacy's best sellers, one that local legend insists was actually invented as a curative here in the 15th century.

Today the historic site still operates as a pharmacy.





**St. Catherine's Monastery** is Tallinn's oldest intact building. Nowadays it operates as a museum. Its beautiful courtyard is one of the most captivating spots in all of the Baltics. While here, you'll see some surrounding stonelined halls where Dominican monks once walked. These ancient passages now display fascinating examples of medieval stonemasonry.

**St. Catherine's Passage** is the most picturesque of Old Town's lanes. It is home to the St. Catherine's Guild, a collection of craft workshops where artists use traditional methods to create and sell glassware, hats, quilts, ceramics, jewellery, hand-painted silk and other wares. The workshops are housed in the small, 15th- to 17th-century rooms on the south side of the lane.



With 1.9km of its original **town wall** still standing, Tallinn boasts one of Europe's best preserved Medieval fortifications together with 20 defensive towers. In fact, a large part of what gives Old Town its fairytale charm is the system of walls and towers that surrounds it.

More information for tourists about Tartu can be found at <http://www.tourism.tallinn.ee/eng>