

Best of Helsinki and Seurasaari tour: This fascinating introduction to Helsinki will begin with your pick-up at port in a comfortable A/C vehicle. There will be photo stops along your route, so have your camera at the ready. You can sit back and relax as you enjoy your city highlights driving tour that will give you an excellent overview of this dynamic capital of Finland. At the conclusion of your highlights tour, you will visit the charming Seurasaari open-air museum.



Helsinki Harbor

Helsinki, the capital of Finland, is a vibrant seaside city of beautiful islands and great green parks. The city's rhythm is laid back yet at the same time refreshingly active in terms of both the number and quality of restaurants and nightclubs.

Founded in 1550 by King Gustav Vasa of Sweden as a trading post to compete with Tallinn, Helsinki's growth was slow until the establishment of Sveaborg (Suomenlinna) Maritime Fortress in the middle of 18th century. In 1809, Finland was annexed by Russia and the capital of Finland moved from Turku to Helsinki in 1812. The Czar felt the Grand Duchy of Finland needed a capital of grand proportions. The architects Johan Ehrenström, a native Finn, and Carl Ludwig Engel, from Germany, were given the task of rebuilding the city in the Empire style. This can be seen today around the Lutheran Cathedral, which was completed in 1852. Finland became independent in 1917, and Helsinki assumed the role of capital of the young republic. Recovering from the hardships of WWII, Helsinki hosted the Summer Olympics in 1952 and became an EU Member State in 1995. Though thoroughly a Nordic capital, Helsinki today reflects the influences gained from the Western and Eastern cultures.

Helsinki – although Helsinki can seem like a younger sibling to other Scandinavian capitals, it is a sea-town par excellence and an exciting, dynamic place to visit. Half the city seems to be water, and the tortured geography of the coastline includes any number of bays, inlets and a speckling of islands. The harbor is the heart of the city, and watching the giant ferries glide into port is a defining memory.

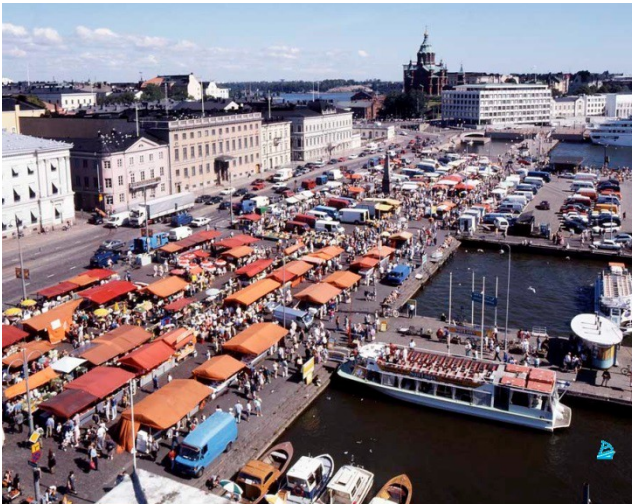
Below is a brief introduction to just some of the sights you will see during your Helsinki Highlights driving tour.



Harbor and Market Square area



Outdoor café's



Market Square



Market Square fresh seafood



Market Square fresh fruit & vegetables



Souvenir dolls

Market Square (Kauppatori):

Located near the center of Helsinki (at the eastern end of Esplanadi and bordering the Baltic sea to the south and Katajanokka to the east), the Market Square is Helsinki's most international and famous market and one of the biggest tourist attractions in the city. The booths here sell traditional market foods and treats, as well as handicrafts and souvenirs. There is also a heated café tent where you can comfortably sip steaming hot coffee even on the coldest days in winter. From spring to autumn, the Market Square is bustling with activity with vendors selling fresh Finnish foods and souvenirs. There are also many outdoor café's at the square. Some café's also provide meat pastries ("lihapiirakka" in Finnish), and they advertize their pastries as being "the best in the Market Square... in Helsinki... in Finland!" The height of the square's popularity is in early October when the annual Helsinki herring market ("silakkamarkkinat" in Finnish) begins.

From Market Square, you can catch the ferry out to Suomenlinna and nearby islands (Helsinki City Transport maintains an all-year-round ferry link from the Market Square to the sea fortress and in the summer there are also private companies providing ferry cruises).



Esplanade aerial view



Esplanade

Esplanade Park:

Located in the heart of Helsinki adjacent to Market Square, the Esplanade serves as a promenade for tourists and a place to relax for city residents. The park and the Espa Stage host many popular events, including the Marimekko Fashion Show and raising of the midsummer pole accompanied by folk dancing in June and the Jazz-Espa concert series on weekdays throughout July. There are many cafés and shops lining both sides of the Esplanade. The Helsinki Tourist Information office is also found on the northeast side of the Esplanade (Pohjoisesplanadi 19 – close to Market Square) where you can collect free maps, get directions, and purchase tram tickets and such.

Senate Square:

The Senate Square and its surroundings form a unique and cohesive example of neoclassical architecture. The square is dominated by four buildings designed by Carl Ludvig Engel between 1822 and 1852: Helsinki Cathedral, the Government Palace, the main building of the University of Helsinki and the National Library of Finland. Helsinki Cathedral is arguably Finland's most famous and photographed building; it celebrated its 150th anniversary in 2002. The oldest stone building in Helsinki is the Sederholm House located on the southeast corner of the square. The main building of the City Museum can be found on the Sofiakatu museum street.



Cathedral

The beautiful and historically significant Helsinki Cathedral is an Evangelic Lutheran church, and for many it is the symbol of Helsinki. The church was designed by architect Carl Ludvig Engel in the 19th century as part of the Empire-style-downtown Helsinki area. The cathedral was completed in 1852.

Rock Church: The Temppeliaukio Kirkko (Rock Church) is a thrilling work of modern architecture. Completed in 1969, it is built entirely underground and has a ceiling made of copper wire. The Temppeliaukio Kirkko was designed by architect brothers Timo and Tuomo Suomalainen. Construction began in 1968 and was finished a year later. The architects chose a rocky outcrop rising about 40 feet above street level, and blasted out the walls from the inside. The Temppeliaukio is now most commonly known by its English name, the Rock Church or Church in the Rock. It is one of the most popular tourist attractions in Helsinki and frequently full of visitors.

Helsinki



Rock Church



Sibelius Park



Sibelius Monument

Visit Sibelius park and view the famous composer Jean Sibelius' (1865-1957) monument by Eila Hiltunen, completed in 1967. The Sibelius Monument, resembling organ pipes, is made of welded steel with the bust of the composer on one side. The monument is one of Helsinki's most popular statues and one of the most well-known tourist attractions. The monument is 8.5m high, 10.5m wide and 6.5m deep. It is built of over 600 pipes and weighs 24 tons.



Uspenski Cathedral

Uspenski Cathedral

Completed in 1868, the Uspenski Cathedral is the largest orthodox church in Western Europe. It was designed by architect Aleksei M. Gornostajev. The red brick church has eastern and western influences. Its facade is an example of the old Slavic tradition in the Byzantine style and shows influences of Italian art.

Seurasaari Open-Air Museum:

The open-air museum of Seurasaari is located on a beautiful green island just a few kilometers from the heart of Helsinki. The island is a tranquil oasis in the midst of the city and at the museum the traditional Finnish way of life is displayed in the cottages, farmsteads and manors of the past four centuries that have been relocated from all around Finland.

The buildings and interiors transferred to the Museum from the Finnish provinces reflect the life of crofters, peasants and gentry from the 18th to the 20th century. You will enjoy craft demonstrations, concerts, Midsummer festivities, and natives dressed in traditional costumes.

Despite the visitors, the island has a variety of wildlife, especially birds, but also red squirrels and hares.



We have arranged this tour to introduce you to the best of "both worlds" by combining the "must see" highlights of Helsinki and the grandeur of the spectacular green island that is home to the Seurasaari Open-Air Museum.

After meeting your expert guide and driver at your ship, you will be on your way to discovering the captivating Nordic capital of Finland, Helsinki. Your panoramic city tour will begin with a drive to the vibrant heart of Helsinki's historical center, where you will have the opportunity to see a number of amazing sights, including the vibrant, bustling **Market Square** (free time for shopping), **Senate Square, City Hall, the Parliament building, Finlandia Hall** (designed by the famous Finnish architect Alvar Aalto) and the **Presidential Palace** (rebuilt by the famous German architect Carl Ludvig Engel, the creator of neoclassical Helsinki), the **Presidential Palace, Uspenski Cathedral**, and the Olympic Stadium (built to host the 1952 Olympic games).

Your tour will continue on to the spectacular open-air museum of Seurasaari, a beautiful, tranquil, green oasis located a few kilometers from the center of Helsinki. The Seurasaari open-air museum displays the traditional Finnish way of life. It is comprised of 87 buildings which include well preserved 18th and 19th century traditional cottages, farmsteads, manors and outbuildings relocated from around Finland. You will be delighted by guides dressed in traditional costumes demonstrating crafts such as spinning, embroidery and troll-making. You will find old fashioned treats for sale in the shops and folk-dancing is frequently performed for the amusement of spectators.

We will return to Helsinki with a photo stop at the impressive, wave-like **Sibelius Monument** (an artistic formation of 600 hollow steel pipes constructed in honor of the famous Finnish composer, Jean Sibelius), and then continue on to the amazing **Tempeliahkio Church** (a stunning church that was built into a natural rock wall). At the conclusion of your tour, you will have the option to remain in the city for shopping/dinner or return to your ship in our comfortable van.

Best of Helsinki and Seurasaari

NOTE: The itinerary below is a sample. The *actual* start and end times of our tours are adjusted to coordinate with your ship's arrival and departure. Please contact us for the exact itinerary of your ship.

10:00 Meet on the pier

10:00-11:30 City tour with the views of: Presidential Palace, Swedish Embassy, historic Kappeli restaurant, the Gronqvist House, The State Banqueting Hall, Swedish theater, the National museum, Opera House, Finlandia Concert Hall and Parliament building

11:30-12:00 Travel from Helsinki to Seurasaari open-air museum

12:00-13:30 Seurasaari open-air museum tour

13:30-14:00 Travel to Helsinki

14:00-14:40 City tour with picture stops at Sibelius Monument and Tempeliahkio Church/Rock church (inside visit if available)

14:40 Return drive to the ship or remain in the city (optional)

Onboard