

Tallinn Grand Tour: This exciting overview of the fascinating capital of Estonia will begin with meeting your guide outside the port gates. You will board your vehicle and enjoy a fascinating city highlights drive tour including: Kadriorg Park, Estonian Song Festival Grounds, the Piritä district with the Olympic Yachting Complex, the 600 year old ruins of St Brigget convent, the scenic road along Tallinn Bay and the Old Town walls, City Hall and Square of Towers. You will pass by: Concert Hall, Cultural Center, Viry Square, Soco Hotel Viry, Liberty Square and the Cross of Liberty. At the conclusion of your drive tour you will begin the walking tour of Old Town Tallinn - you will alight your vehicle at Tall Herman Tower and enter the magical gateway into the birthplace of Tallinn, Toompea Hill.



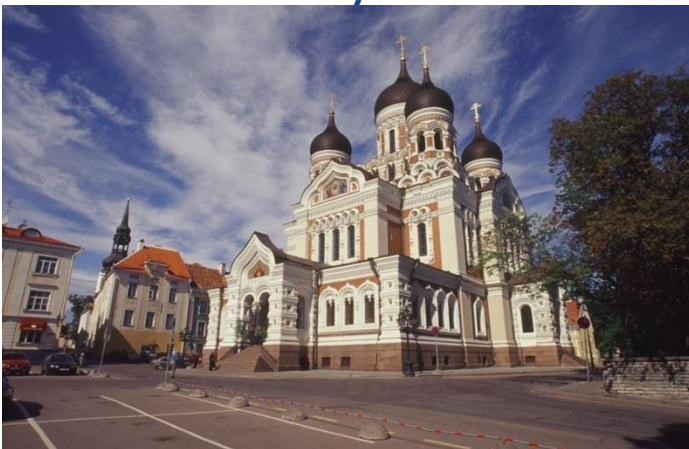
Medieval Old Town Tallinn

The charming, UNESCO World Heritage-listed, medieval Old Town is a pedestrianized area and vehicles are not permitted inside the city walls. You will set out on foot to discover the fascinating history of Upper and Lower Old Town's exquisite, winding, cobble-stoned streets and lanes. The views are simply exquisite in this amazing medieval wonderland.

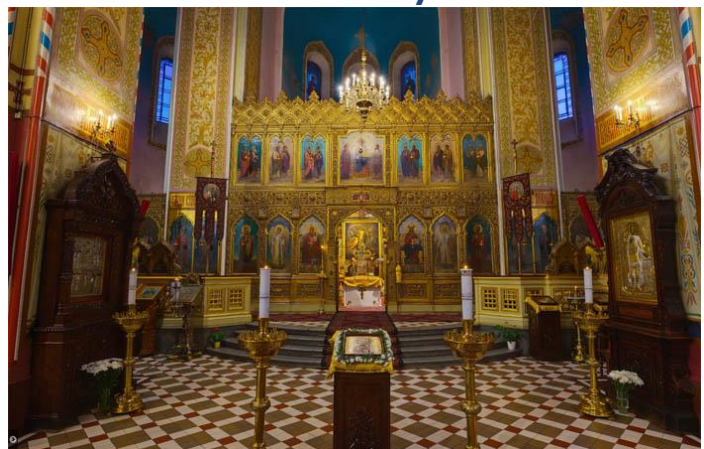
During your 5.5 hour guided tour, you will enjoy stepping back in time and learning about the fascinating and unique history of Tallinn. You will enjoy a relaxing stop for coffee at one of Tallinn's many charming restaurants. At the conclusion of your tour, you will be transported in comfort back to your ship.

Below is a brief introduction to just some of the amazing sights you will see during your Tallinn Grand Tour:

Alexander Nevsky Cathedral



Alexander Nevsky Interior



By far the grandest, most opulent Orthodox church in Tallinn, the spectacular, onion-domed Alexander Nevsky cathedral, perched atop Toompea Hill, is Estonia's main Russian Orthodox cathedral. Built in 1900, when Estonia was part of the tsarist Russian empire, the cathedral was originally intended as a symbol of the empire's dominance – both religious and political – over this increasingly unruly Baltic territory. The cathedral, dedicated to the Prince of Novgorod, Alexander Yaroslavich Nevsky, was deliberately placed in this prominent location right in front of Toompea Castle. Designed by Mikhail Preobrazhenski, this architectural masterpiece is richly decorated in a mixed style and contains Tallinn's most powerful church bell ensemble which you can hear playing prior to each service. The interior, filled with stunning mosaics and icons, is well worth a visit.



Town Hall Square

Town Hall Square (Raekoja plats) has been a marketplace and the center of this old Hanseatic town since the Middle Ages. It became the center of the Lower Town at the turn of the 13th and 14th centuries. As a square it plays an important role today as well - in summer it is filled with outdoor cafes, plays host to the Old Town Days and other medieval festivals, is a venue for open air concerts and fairs, and regularly hosts a market with many stalls selling traditional Estonian items and souvenirs. Additionally, several nice bars and restaurants are located in the vicinity.

Tallinn Town Hall



Tallinn Town Hall is the only Gothic town hall still standing in Northern Europe. It was home to the city's authorities for more than 700 years, from 1248 to 1970. Its current appearance dates back to 1404. Its oldest and rarest works of medieval art are its wooden benches in Gothic style, which were made in the second half of the 13th century. They represent one of the most beautiful examples of art from the Middle Ages in Estonia. Today the Town Hall serves a representative function. Its public rooms hold formal receptions and concerts, while its attic is open to the public in July and August. In the Cellar Hall you will find an exhibition dedicated to Tallinn's fortifications and the figure of Old Thomas, who has stood as the protector of the city on the Town Hall's tower for 400 years.

Immerse yourself in the charm of Enchanting Old Town



Tall Hermann Tower



Toompea Castle



Situated next to Toompea Castle is the 150-foot tall **Tall Hermann (Pikk Hermann) Tower**, built in 1360-70 as part of the defensive wall. A staircase with 215 steps leads to the top of the tower. The tower consists of ten internal floors and a viewing platform at the top. Tall Hermann tower is situated next to the Estonian Parliament building. Legend says that whosoever's flag flies from Pikk Hermann rules Estonia and in 1989, the Estonian independence movement was given a boost when the Soviet flag was removed and the Estonian National flag flown in its place, where it has remained since.

Toompea Castle, an ancient stronghold site in use since at least the 9th century, was erected on the foundations of the crumbling eastern wing of the fortress built on the site in the 13th and 14th centuries. Eye catching for its late baroque facade, the castle was built between 1767 and 1773.

The history of Toompea is the story of the rulers and conquerors of Tallinn, each of whom molded and reinforced Toompea for their own needs and according to their own taste. Today the castle is home to the Estonian parliament. The blue, black and white of the national flag can be seen flying on top of the 45-metre Tall Hermann tower as the symbol of Estonia's independence.

Tallinn's photogenic walls and towers



Fat Margaret tower





The medieval defensive walls and towers constructed around the medieval town are truly a photographers dream come true. The first wall around Tallinn was ordered to be constructed by Margaret Sambiria in 1265 and for that reason, it was known as the Margaret Wall. This wall was originally less than 16 feet tall and about 4.9 feet thick at its base. Since that time it has been enlarged and strengthened. The walls and the many gates are still largely extant today. This is one of the reasons that Tallinn's old town became a World Heritage Site. The walls were enlarged in the fourteenth century, and citizens of Tallinn were required to turn out for guard duty, which meant to wear their armor and demonstrate their readiness to face off invaders.



Kadriorg Gardens



Kadriorg Palace

Kadriorg is one of the more lovely areas of the city and one of the best loved residential regions of Tallinn. The Estonian president's residence and many foreign embassies are located here. The park is one of the favorite spots for walking of Tallinners young and old. But Kadriorg is famed mostly for its baroque palace and park ensemble, begun in 1718 as the summer palace for the family of Russian Tsar Peter I. In February 2006 the Estonian Art Museum opened in Kadriorg.

In 1718, a summer palace was planned on this site, named in honor of Peter's wife, Catherine I (in Estonian Kadriorg translates as Catherine's Valley). To fulfill his vision of a seaside park and palace modeled after Peterhof in Saint Petersburg, Peter hired Italian Architect Niccolo Michetti and apprentice Gaetano Chiaveri. The original gardens included a series of formal walkways, an oak grove, meadows and groupings of trees. Chestnut trees, imported from Holland, were planted before being transported to Saint Petersburg. As a setting for the Palace, three tiers of garden spaces were developed.

Russia ceded its assets in Tallinn to the Estonian Republic in 1920 "including moveables and immoveables, among them Kadriorg Palace and its land and park." Valuing the park as a representation of Estonian culture was seen as nationally important and "essential for expressing independence, dignity and awakening, all crucial at that time." A plan to restore and redesign the park as a beautifully landscaped "People's Park" suitable for hosting entertainment and political events was developed and this is what we see today.



Pirita Yacht Harbor



Estonian Song Festival Grounds

Have you ever heard 18,000 voices singing at once? This emotional experience can be felt during Estonia's Song Festival, which occurs once every five years in Tallinn. Once in five years, tens of thousands of Estonians gather in Tallinn in the summertime to take part in the Song and Dance Festival.



In the 19th century, Estonia was a province of the Russian Empire, where German upper class landlords ruled the Estonian lower class - the peasants. The 1860s marked the beginning of the period of National Awakening. The Song Festival tradition began with the first Song Festival organised by Johann Voldemar Jannsen and the "Vanemuise" Society in Tartu in June 1869.

The Song Festivals have taken place regardless of the political situation. The foreign authorities have tried to use the Song Festivals in their own interests. The Soviet regime always tied the Song Festivals to the "red holidays". Foreign and propagandist songs had to be sung in order to preserve the chance to sing Estonian songs. A good example of an Estonian song was "Land of my Fathers, Land That I Love" ("Mu isamaa on minu arm"), which during the occupation years became an unofficial anthem for the Estonians,

and which, performed by the joined choirs to the standing audience, ended every Song Festival.

The first stage on its current location between Narva Road and Pirita Road in Kadrioru, was built in 1928 for the 9th Estonian Song Festival. During the occupation of Estonia by the Soviet Union, there was a need for a larger stage. The new and current arched stage was built in 1959 to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Estonian SSR. The 15th Estonian Song Festival in 1960 was celebrated on the new stage. The stage was meant to hold over 15,000 singers but the reverse also became possible, with the performance taking place in front of the stage and audience sitting on the stage. On the northern side of the song stage is the 42m high fire tower, which is used during the Estonian Song Festivals. It is open for the public all year long.

In 1988, Estonians gathered at the Tallinn Song Festival Grounds, to sing patriotic hymns in what became known as the Singing Revolution that led to the overthrow of Soviet rule. Today, Tallinn's Song Festival Grounds are also used for hosting international acts.