

# In Our Village

Estonia Through the Eyes of Visitors

**By the grade 6 students of the International School of Estonia  
Tallinn, Estonia**

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Martin Besnier, Garance Ch eroux, Eden DeRousse, Anne-Sofie Geelan, Alexandra Kjellberg, Jennifer Niebel, Mathias Graae Pedersen, Emili Perkins, Salina Rydzynski, Jekabs Seglins, Siddharth Sharma, Josephine van der Zwan

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Special thanks to all the parents, teachers, and friends who helped us in this endeavor.

# Table of Contents

National Information	2
Independence	4
Estonian Language	7
Weather	8
Old Town	10
Visiting Estonia	12
Classical Music	14
Folk Dancing	16
National Costume	18
Pottery in Estonia	20
Food	22
Estonian Schooling	23
Religion	24
Russian Occupation	26
Bronze Soldier	28
Estonian Sports	30
Festivals	32
Cities and Islands	34
Town or Country	35
Estonian Literature	37
Estonian Myths	39
Castles	41
Environment	43



# Estonian National Information

Fien van der Zwan, Alexandra Kjellberg, Eden DeRousse, Siddharth Sharma

The Estonian flag is a rectangular piece of cloth equally divided into three rectangles of blue, black, and white. The exact colors for the flag are black, white, and cornflower blue. The colors of the flag were chosen in 1881, when some Estonian children adopted the colors blue, black, and white to represent their fraternity. *Riigikogu* adopted the national flag on the 21<sup>st</sup> of November 1918.

The national flower of Estonia is the blue cornflower. The flower was chosen by the Estonian wild life society. The wild life society had a contest to decide the national flower. Most of the people chose the blue cornflower because they thought it was pretty and a good national flower. The flower was very popular as it had a decorative design and was easy to grow.

The barn swallow is the national bird in Estonia. The barn swallow is a guest of Estonian homes. Especially near barns, there are a lot of them, so they are often heard there. The barn swallow builds a cup shaped nest at the ridge of a roof or under a broken window. The barn swallow became the national bird of Estonia because of a campaign conducted by ornithologists at the beginning of the sixties.

The national tree of Estonia is the oak tree. The oak tree is a sacred tree in Estonia, the northernmost country where oak trees grow. The reason the Estonians made the oak tree their national tree was because the oak tree grants the people of Estonia fertile and humus soil. Forests that contain oak trees are more fertile than forests without them.

The coat of arms in Estonia is a shield of three lions and a plant around the shield. It was selected after the war of independence in Estonia from 1918-1920. During this time Estonia was internationally recognized. All the symbols were already made. The Estonians chose it as their coat of arms after that day because they thought it reflected who they are.

The national anthem of Estonia is called "My Native Land." In Estonia it is called *Mu Isamaa*. This song is a choral-like melody by Fredrik Pacius, a Finnish composer of a German origin. This song had become the national anthem of Estonia after the First World War and the Estonian War of Independence. The song talks about the land and tells how the Estonians will finally be free. The Russians forbade this song when they occupied Estonia, and if the song was sung then the singer was sent to Siberia. The Estonians still sing the song and never forgot it because singing the song was a way of saying that the Estonians will be free one day. The song was also heard on the Finnish radio to comfort Estonia and tell them that they wanted them to be free.

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# Estonia's Hard Way to Independence

Alexandra Kjellberg

A strong need for national identity spread through Estonia around 1850-1860. The Estonians had a need to create their own institutions, organizations, newspapers, and political parties. Estonia fought long for their freedom. The Estonians were not willing to give up. This led to their first independence on the 24<sup>th</sup> of February 1918, at the same time as the Russian empire fell.

Estonia went through a period of growing economy and positive development during 1918-1941. World War II interrupted the joy. Estonia had to face the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, in which Hitler and Stalin decided to

divide Europe between them. Once again the Soviet Union occupied Estonia. After Germany's attack on the Soviet Union the Soviet Union forces were thrown out of Estonia and replaced by German forces.

In the beginning the Estonians greeted the Germans because they thought they would free their country. However, the terror continued, and the Germans denied Estonia independence. Again, the Estonians showed great national feelings, and when the German forces withdrew in September 1944, Estonia saw their chance to reclaim independence. To the Estonians' great disappointment the Soviet Union's army was already on their way to invade Estonia. An intensive guerrilla war followed for more than ten years.

Estonia lost almost 25% of their population during this period. On top of this more than 100 000 Estonians had to spend years in concentration camps. To replace these people the Soviet Union sent other people from different regions to live in Estonia. The Soviets wanted to make sure that Estonia became part of the Soviet Union and to make sure that the Estonians were in minority. The strong Estonians continued their fight for freedom and kept their language, culture, and national feelings. People who openly fought for Estonia's future were sent to prison or had to escape to other countries.

The Soviet Union's defeat in the Cold War (the conflict and tension between the United States and the Soviet Union and their respective allies from mid-1940s until early 1990s) opened opportunities for freedom, and on 23rd August 1989 the Baltic countries staged a huge and impressive demonstration. Two million people from Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania joined hands along a 600 km stretch of road between Tallinn, Riga, and Vilnius. This powerful and public statement against the Soviet Union timed the 50th anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact.

Under  
Russian  
Empire  
Oppression  
1710-1918

Under Nazi  
Germany  
1941-1944

Under Soviet  
Union  
Oppression  
1944-1991

The years from 1987 to 1991 were filled with numerous public demonstrations. The sum of these is known as the Singing Revolution. On 20th August 1991 Estonian politicians stated the nation's independence even though Soviet tanks were still rolling through the countryside to crush the movement. Estonia has since 1991 to today's date made fantastic progress. The country became a member of the EU and NATO in May 2004.

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# Estonian Language

Jekabs Seglins

The Estonian language belongs to the Finno- group. It is one of the smallest languages in the world and it is similar to the Finnish language. There are 1,100,000 people in the world who speak the Estonian language but only 950,000 speakers live in Estonia. The Estonian language is very interesting; for example, one word can have several meanings. Also pronunciation of words is different what you read or write. In Estonian vocabulary there are native words and also a lot of words that are loaned. The ratio of Estonia's own words and the loan stems is about 50:50.

In addition to Estonian many people speak Russian. There are lots of Russians living in Estonia. The Russians want to communicate to Estonians in Russian while Estonians prefer Estonian as the national language. It is helpful, when looking for work to speak both Estonian and Russian, and sometimes English.

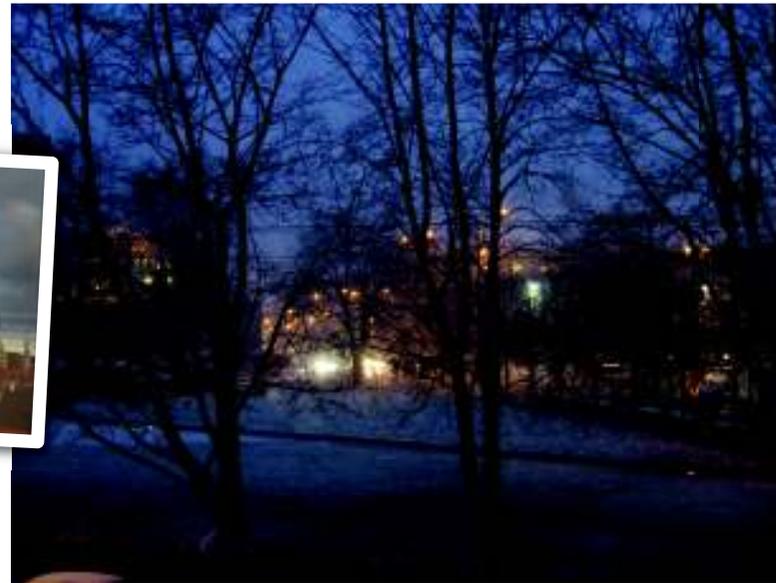
If you want to learn a few words in Estonian look below.

aitäh	thank you		neli	four
palun	please		viis	five
tere	hello		kuus	six
nägemist	good-bye		seitse	seven
üks	one		kaheksa	eight
kaks	two		üheksa	nine
kolm	three		kümme	ten

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# Weather

Jennifer Niebel, Jekabs Seglins, Fien van der Zwan

Weather is a good part of Estonia and also very interesting. In summer, the longest day is around nineteen hours. The usual temperature in the summer (June-September) is +15 to +18 degrees Celsius. For Ms. Helen, the summer weather is nice, “It is not too warm or too sunny. When it’s warm but a little cloudy it is just perfect for me”. For many, summer offers a wonderful transition from the dark days of winter. As Mr. Randy says, the best part of summer is the sunshine. Some of the grade 6 students who spent the summer in Estonia enjoyed the nice weather by swimming in the Baltic Sea. During the summer Estonians enjoy activities such as lying on the beach and relaxing in the sun. They also participate in summer sports like rollerblading and biking.

Winter in Estonia, most of the time, is very cold. The shortest day in winter is up to about six hours of daylight. The usual temperature is -4 to -5 degrees Celsius. Even though it is cold, winter provides the beauty of seeing the snow and sun together. But as Ms. Reelika says, “I love the winter, but I hate that it lasts for so long”. The activities that some people participate in the winter are sledding, skiing,

snowboarding, making snowmen, and having snowball fights. People also like making warm meals and going to the town square to enjoy the Christmas tree, ginger bread cookies, and Christmas market.

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# Old Town

Salina Rydzynski, Emili Perkins, Fien Van Der Zwan

The crusading knights of the Teutonic order built old town in the 13th century. The Teutonic order is mostly a German Roman Catholic religious order from Austria. It was also a military order during the middle ages and most of the modern era.

Lower town is known for its Town Square, alleyways, and old buildings, which have survived for many years because they were not built from wood. These building have been turned into shops and houses in an effort to preserve the history of Old Town. It is a great tourist attraction; people can visit castles, look at views of Old Town, or visit museums.

*Toompea* is a place from which most people view the sea and the rest of the Lower Town, as it offers a beautiful overview of the city. *Toompea* used to be its own



separate town called Dom Zu Reval, causing the Old Town to just be downtown Tallinn. The major attractions of *Toompea* are the medieval walls and the Russian Orthodox Cathedral.

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# Visiting in Estonia

Salina Rydzynski

Tourism in Estonia plays a very crucial part of life in Estonia. The more tourists that visit mean more money for many of the people living in Estonia. This makes for a better life for the people who live here because they have enough money for their basic needs, travel and other expenses. Estonia is the most northern of the Baltic States and it is the closest one to Finland; the majority of tourists come from Finland. While many people visit for just a day, around 3.4 million people visit each year. All though Estonia is such a tourist attraction, the number of people visiting each year changes. Anna from Germany says “I was seeking a country about which I didn’t have too much knowledge at the time I made my decision. A country where I haven’t been on holiday yet and which differs in culture and environment from my own... within Europe, Estonia sounded most exciting”. This shows that most people, when they choose



Estonia, look for somewhere that is unique in many ways and that will be a new experience. My mom says, “When I heard we were moving to Estonia I was ready for a new experience”. Many people, whether having to move to Estonia or just wanting to visit, are ready for a new experience.

Generally the most popular way of coming to Estonia is by boat. Each year the amount changes; the reason might be that something bad happened the previous year scaring off people or that less people were interested in traveling abroad. The more tourists who visit affect Tallinn in many ways. The positive thing is that it means more shops, hotels, restaurants, and ships need to be built creating jobs. It



also means that the Estonian government gets more money to improve the roads and renovate buildings that need it. The negative thing is that prices in food and other things that people need to survive go up causing an increase in the cost of living.

Many people from many places come to Estonia either because they have to or they want to experience something new. Anyone who comes to visit Tallinn or anywhere else in Estonia, usually stay for around two nights. Even though Old Town is a big tourist attraction, Tallinn is a small city and does not take many days to explore. Estonia has changed over the years moving from turmoil and riots to more peaceful and prosperous days. Estonia is now a very beautiful and mostly peaceful country for everyone who lives and visits there.

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# Estonian Music

Siddharth Sharma

Classical music is an important part of the Estonian culture. Playing and listening to music is an activity that is known and done by most Estonians. The people of Estonia learn how to play music in music schools. There are many music schools in Estonia, such as the Tallinn Music School, and the Tartu Music School. The students in these schools learn how to play instruments: the piano, percussion, wind, or string instruments. They also learn the notation, the dynamics, and the techniques on how to play specific pieces. Students of music learn about the different types of music like classical and folk.

Classical music and folk music are two different types of Estonian music. Classical music is written while folk music is not. Classical music may also be influenced from the folk. All composers write music that reflects their feelings or themselves. Estonia has many composers. Some internationally known Estonian composers are Arvo Pärt and Veljo Tormis.

Arvo Pärt, a very talented student when he was young, was taught at the Rakvere School. In this school, Pärt excelled at playing the piano. He wanted to learn more about music; therefore, he went to the Tallinn Music School with two other famous composers: Veljo Tormis, and Harri Otsa. After graduation, Pärt started composing more famous pieces, since he had more time. Most of his compositions are for pianos and orchestras. Now his music is known all over the world. He is one of Estonia's most famous composers because of his different style of composing called the Tintinnabuli.

Veljo Tormis began his studies as an organ student at the Tallinn music school. He graduated the Tallinn conservatory in 1947. After he graduated, he went to the same school again to study a new subject, choral conducting. After Tormis' second graduation he went back to school to study composition. After his third graduation he worked as a teacher of music theory and composition and taught Arvo Pärt. Veljo Tormis began his career in the middle of the 1950s. His music was known in many different countries. During that time his choral compositions was like a monument for the Estonians. Veljo Tormis has become one of the most famous composers that ever lived in Estonia because of the way he mixed his folk roots with classical music to create a new and more poetic type of music.

There are many music festivals in Estonia: the Song and Dance Festival, the folk music festival, the jazz music festival etc. The Song and Dance Festival originated in 1869 when Johann Voldemar Jannsen organized choirs and brass bands from all over Estonia. This tradition continues still today, with celebrations every two years. People attend from all over Estonia and abroad to listen to the singers and musicians, who number around 24,000. The festivals originally took their example from the German choir singing tradition. Today the festivals, a major tradition, celebrate Estonia's culture and have created Estonia's international reputation as the singing nation.

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# Folk Dancing in Estonia

Garance Cheroux

Folk dancing was and remains an important part of Estonian culture. Dancers use it to introduce their culture to foreigners. The Estonians feel really good about sharing their culture: “They feel well because they want to share their culture because their culture is so small”. Folk dancing is a manner of sharing Estonian culture with others. People first presented folk dancing in 1947. During that time period the government named the show: “An evening of national art”. Today folk dancing is mostly pair dancing; the old folk dancing tradition was a line or group dance. Some schools hold folk dancing classes to pass the tradition to the next generation. For many people folk dancing is their hobby.

In the past, children's games were based on folk dancing. Folk dancing is an ancient tradition and it changed through time. The dancing changed by becoming a much faster dance and by the addition of repetitive movements. Estonians continue practicing the tradition: "They want to keep the tradition of folk dancing and also again they want to entertain people". People who perform folk dancing usually wear the national dress of the Estonian county they are from. Girls wear dresses and boys wear a shirt and jacket with pants. They wear special clothes because the clothes represent their culture.

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# National Costumes

By Anne-Sofie Geelan

There are different kinds of national costumes worn in the various parts of Estonia - Southern, Western, Northern, and the Islands of Estonia. Estonians like their many different and beautiful national costumes. They wear them to many of the lovely festivals and celebrations in Estonia. Estonians are very proud of their national costumes because they are creatively made and have interesting colors. The costumes also have interesting details sew on them, which are made in Estonia and by Estonians.

In Western Estonia the people have been eager to get a new hat style. The tradition hat is not modern in how it looks. In the Western region of Estonia, the traditional costume includes shirts and headdresses decorated with embroideries that make the clothes look more beautiful. In Southern Estonia the national costume is mostly made out of linen and red yarn, characterized by the old types of Estonian garments.

In Northern Estonia pot-caps, a sort of hat, are worn by women. Short loose long-sleeved midriff blouses over a sleeveless shirt are also very modern to wear in this region. On the islands in Estonia women wear striped skirts of many colors. There are three types of clothes; festive clothes which are worn on festive occasions, working clothes which are worn by people that work, and visiting clothes that are worn when visiting other people.

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# Pottery in Estonia

Fien van der Zwan

Traditional pottery and its use dates back to 5000 B.C. The most known pottery from that time is the ‘Narva- type’, which was found near the Narva River. Estonians used this type of pottery mostly for home equipment.

If it was such a good thing to have in the house then why did it become obsolete? Though stone pottery was a very good thing to have in the house, people looked for something new. From the 14<sup>th</sup> century on, Estonians began to use more wooden equipment in their homes. Pottery became real art because people started looking at it from a different perspective due to the designs and its attractiveness.

Nowadays, people enjoy learning, looking at, and making pottery in many different styles throughout Estonia. Museums, like the KUMU and *Liinaamuuseum*, provide a place for people to enjoy looking at the beautiful pottery-art form. The museums also include glimpses of the older types used in the past. Pottery connects to Estonian culture; it includes everyday items, like bowls and plates.

Estonians also like to give other people pottery as a gift, but of course from an Estonian artist. Sharing Estonian pottery helps to continue the tradition.

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# Food

Martin Besnier and Anne-Sofie Geelan

Estonian food plays an important part in the Estonian culture. Most of the bread consumed is made in Estonia. The garlic bread, *küüslauguleib*, is a very common bread in Estonia. Cheese is sometimes added to the bread to give it more taste. *Kringel* is a favorite sweet bread.

Estonians eat potatoes, called *kartulid*, with meat sauce (*lihakaste*). The potatoes were introduced in the 1700's. Now, like this dish, many different meals are prepared with potatoes. The Estonian's national food is *kama*, and people also enjoy eating pea soup (*hernesupp*), and blood sausage (*verivorst*). Other food commonly found is: *kotlett* (a hamburger patty), *sült* (meat in a clear jelly), *kohupiim* (cheese curd used in pastries and cake), and cabbage soup (*kapsasupp*). Some restaurants like *Olde Hansa*, in the center of Tallinn, prepare middle-aged food. There are no potatoes in that restaurant because they were not found during the middle age period; so then they are not used in the restaurant. Estonians are very keen on their food and always make sure that it tastes delicious.

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# Estonian Schooling

Martin Besnier, Mathias Graae Pedersen, Alexandra Kjellberg

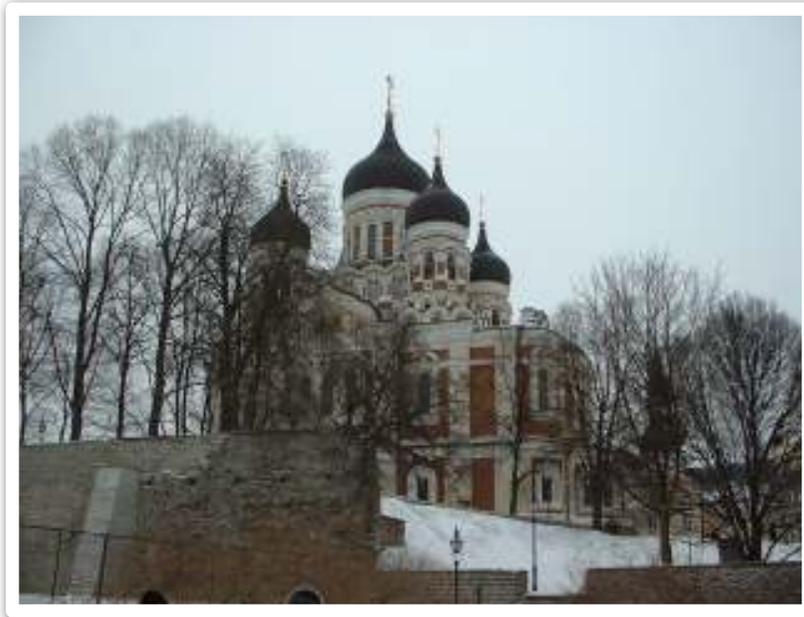
Students attend different types of schools in Estonia; most are public but some of them, about six or seven, are private. The most popular schools in Estonia are the Estonian Business School, the English College, the French school, and the Theoretical Biology School of Estonia. In the town of Tartu is a well known university. Russian schools remain popular in Estonia because of the large Russian population. According to Ms Reelika, the parent of a grade 8 student, “It’s tough for students in Estonian schools. There is too much in the curriculum. They can’t go too deep into the different topics. They learn a little of everything. It needs a little modifying, but in general it is good. The students work hard and learn a range of information”.

The Estonian schools are considered rigorous. School starts at 8:00 am and finishes at 3:00 p.m.. Students have a ten-minute break after each class where they can talk with their friends or just relax. In the afternoon, they have fifteen to twenty minutes to eat lunch. The different grade levels have different free time; first grade finishes earlier than eight grade. When students have finished all their classes for the day they can go home. Students are not usually driven to school; they mostly arrive by bike or bus regardless of the weather.

In Estonian schools students study math, English, Estonian, geography, art, chemistry, physics, history, music, and biology. Fifteen years ago students had to study Russian, now they have the choice if they want or not. The Estonian students have lots of homework each night, often between two to three hours a day. Estonian students have also three to four lessons of sport every week where they play soccer, basketball, gymnastics, and other sports. In the winter they go cross-country skiing during sport. Estonians tend to be very good at sports. Regardless of the school, the expectations of the students are to learn and to have fun.

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# Religion

Emili Perkins

Religion does not play a very important role in Estonia today. This is due to German rule in the 19th century. They enforced some religions and banned others. They made Estonians do things they did not want to do.

Presently, the main religion in Estonia is Evangelical Lutheranism. In 1943, seventy-eight percent of the total population in Estonia was Lutheran. The first Lutheran Church in Estonia was created after the Soviet Union invasion in 1940. The Soviet Union changed religion all over the country. They took away or confiscated church property and they banned religious education programs. Rarely was anyone allowed to practice his/her religion when the Soviets ruled. The Soviets forced people to do what the Soviets told them to, whether they liked it or not. Unlike before, there are currently no major religious conflicts in Estonia. If you go back in history though, you will definitely find conflicts.

Estonia has many religious and holy places. It has over nine places of worship including a Buddhist temple for





the Buddhist population of about 800 and a synagogue for the small Jewish population of 260. A small Muslim population also resides in Estonia. They have tried to build a mosque, but were unable due to political problems tied to religion. The government was not willing to sell land for a mosque. Estonia also has an Estonian Council of Churches, where one representative from each church is selected to participate; some churches are not in the council. Different churches have to be selected to be in the council, they cannot join of their own free will. Those who are not in the council are called independent churches. Some of the independent churches in Estonia try to 'be selected' into the council. One of the independent groups in Estonia is Jehovah's Witnesses. They have not been selected into the council.

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# Russian Occupation

Jennifer Niebel

Russian occupation of Estonia began during World War II, making 1940-1991 an important time in Estonian history. During this time there was a concentration camp (a place where people are forced to work). The Germans controlled this camp until it was closed by the Russians. The camp located in Klooga and called the Klooga camp, was a tragic place in World War II. The reason people were sent to camps was because they were Jewish or Gypsies and Hitler did not like these kinds of people. People were mostly put there for their religion and even sometimes how they looked. People were also locked in this camp because they disagreed with the leader's rules. Approximately 2,200 people were killed in the camp, causing a decrease in the population of Estonia. The Estonian people killed in

Klooga were innocent people who did not deserve to be killed. Most of these people didn't receive a proper burial. Some people did manage to escape.

Once the Russians began occupying Estonia, they arrested many people sometime around 1941. Around 62,000 artists, writers, managers, scientists, etc. from the Baltics were arrested and/or executed or transported to Siberia. The Russians took these people because they wanted to eliminate any resistance to the Russian rules. During this period, around 8,000 politicians were arrested and about 2,200 of these people were executed. The rest were put in prison camps in Russia. Few people came out of the camp alive.

Even today there is a statue (the bronze statue/soldier) that represents how the soldiers fought in World War II. The older Russians can relate to the bronze soldier; however, the Estonians do not like the statue because for them it represents Russian occupation. World War II had a dramatic impact on Estonian history. Estonians will never forget it.

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# Bronze Soldier

Jennifer Niebel, Salina Rydzinski, Eden DeRousse, Anne-Sofie Geelan

It became two bloody and expensive nights in 2007 on April 27<sup>th</sup>& 28<sup>th</sup> when the Estonian government decided to move the bronze soldier. A long time after Estonia acquired their independence they decided not to keep the monument in the same spot anymore; it was in the center of town and it reminded them of the years of occupation. The problem was the Russians viewed the statue as a symbol of Soviet victory over Nazi Germany; they felt the location in the center of town was a beautiful spot for the memorial to the soldiers. Tamara, a resident of Estonia, explains, “The Estonians moved it and now the place where it is, people don’t go there often. It looked much nicer in the older place, so that’s why the Russians protested. It was very special to the Russians and it was something they didn’t want to have it taken away from them”.

Originally the World War 2 memorial monument was for those who freed Tallinn. Sometimes the statue was called the tonismae or alyosha. The monument was originally located in a small park near the national library. In the spring a flower garden grew surrounding the statue, allowing people to sit and look at all of the flowers. The statue stood in peace for about sixty years, until the government

decided to move it to a military cemetery. Most Russians see the statue as a tribute to their fathers' sacrifice during World War II. For many Estonians the statue serves as a reminder of Russia occupation, when many Estonians were sent to Siberia and killed.

The rioting began in the evening of the 27<sup>th</sup>. People were injured during the rioting, one man lost his life, and a few hundred people were injured. The damage caused by the riots cost Estonia around 20 million eek (\$2 million and 1 million euros). The rioters damaged bus stops, embassies, small shops, and cars. After a few days the rioting stopped and Estonia began to clear away the broken and destroyed parts of the city.

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# Estonian Sports

Mathias Graae Pedersen, Jekabs Seglins, Salina Rydzynski, Alexandra Kjellberg

Although football is Estonia's national sport, Estonians play basketball as well. Girls are most interested in football, dancing, basketball, and track and field. Boys focus more on football, basketball, martial arts (karate, judo, etc.), and track and field. Girls and boys both enjoy football and basketball. The reason why Estonians do not play much tennis is because it is very expensive to rent/play on a tennis court. Estonian people often participate in many sports, and it is part of their daily life. Some sport members even have a private teacher. Usually the private sport teachers have a lot of experience.

In the summer time, people play sports outside because of the nice weather and the fresh air. Estonia has a lot of basketball courts allowing the children to go outside in the summer to play. The winter here is usually filled with snow, but the latest winters have had

limited snow. Estonian people are well known for their cross-country skiing talent, but because the snow is disappearing people has less opportunity to ski. A lot of Estonian people think that it is very sad that the snow is fading away during the winters due to the global warming. As one person said, “For me it is very sad that we do not have so much snow anymore.” Regardless of the season, Estonians enjoy the outdoors and sports.

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# Festivals

Anne-Sofie Geelan, Garance Cheroux, Eden DeRousse, and Mathias Graae Pedersen

Festivals play a big role in Estonia. One of the biggest festivals is the Song and Dance Festival. It is important because Estonians believe it is the birthday of song and dance. It is held every few years in the song festival grounds in July. The next celebration will be in 2009. This festival was first held in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The tradition was born along with Estonia's national awakening. The first celebration was held in Tartu, during the summer of 1869. The festivals have not changed since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Many youth choirs and folk dance groups participate.

The Estonian youth and dance festival was last held in 2004. There was 34 000 performers and 200 000 people in audience. The first festival was held in 1962. The number of performers increases each year. Only the best choirs get to go on stage. Their goal is to develop the Estonian culture.

Summer Solstice, also known as *Jaanipäev*, is the longest day of the year and is celebrated on the 23rd of June. It first started in B.C. People make a fire and jump over it to make the bad spirits go away. The bigger the fire is, the further the spirits go away. Part of the celebrations include singing and dancing.

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# Cities and Islands

Jekabs Seglins, Garance Cheroux

Estonia has two main islands, Hiiumaa and Saaremaa. Half of Estonia is covered in natural places showing the importance of nature to Estonians. Estonians enjoy spending time in nature, as do the many tourists. Saaremaa is bigger than Hiiumaa. On both islands many people farm and work in the fields. Both of the islands are quite old. They have many castles and old monuments. All around Estonia there are 1,500 islands. In summer and winter, Estonians, as well as tourists, visit the islands and go on nature discoveries.

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# Town or Country

Mathias Graae Pedersen

From various interviews with Estonian teachers, I learned that in town most people work a lot and are often very stressed. Some live a luxurious life with big cars and expensive houses, but many also work hard without earning a lot of money. Men participate in different sport like tennis, badminton, bowling, or fitness. Women shop and also play sports. Men also like to look at cars whereas women like to go to cafés with friends. In towns there are various ways to spend free time: theaters, cinemas, shops, concert halls, and other things. Finding a job is easier in town as there are more opportunities. Towns are disadvantaged by the air pollution from the cars and factories. Open space is limited to a few parks. People have a lot to do and everything is busy. Sixty-nine percent of the Estonian population choose to live in the major towns: Tallinn, Tartu, Pärnu, and Narva.

In the country life is more difficult. Many farmers struggle to earn enough for their families. The salary is lower in the country; most people minimize costs by growing their own food like potatoes, carrots, tomatoes, and cucumber and by raising pigs and cows for milk. Food is not the challenge. It is more furniture and clothing they can't afford. In the country, farmers usually do not have big expensive machines. Most work is done by hand. People living in the country have more time to be with their families and do their hobbies. Men like to go fishing and hunting or play cards. Women do a lot of handicraft. They make cloth for the whole family. Some of the advantages of living in the country are that there is fresh air, lots of open space, and fresh water. The number of shops, theaters or cinemas is limited though.

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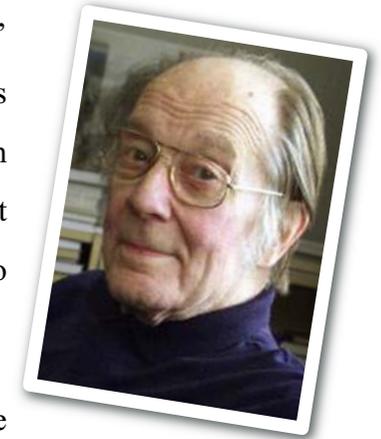


# Estonian Literature

Martin Besnier

The development of writing really began during the National Awakening in the mid 1800s. With the National Awakening came poetry, plays, short stories, novels, folklore, and journalism, all written in Estonian. During this time, J V Jannsen (1819-1890) founded the first newsletter in Estonian and Jannsen's daughter, Lydia Koidula(1843-1886), was a poet. The national epic, *Kalevipoeg* , written by F R Kreutzwald (1803-1882), tells a mythic story on the founding of the Estonian nation. F R Kreutzwald also recorded Estonian folklore. The first book published in Estonian was not the Bible (which was the second in 1739) but the Lutheran catechism in 1525. The best-translated authors are: Mati Unt, Karl Ristikivi, and Jaan Kross (1920-2007). His books *Between Three Plagues* and *The Czar's Madman* are known in many countries.

Estonian literature is not well known throughout Europe as few authors have been translated. Jaan Kross' works have begun to change this. Translations of his books have become more readily available. Estonians take their literature very seriously. The flow of Estonian literature has increased in recent years, which provides people access to the ideas reflected in the writing. Estonian literature reveals a great deal about Estonians' preoccupations and view of life. During periods of occupation, it also served as a means to express the difficulties and struggles Estonians faced.



Poetry was very important during Russian Occupation because it shared many of the negative aspects of the occupation and provided a means to express political messages through metaphor. Some authors, like Jaan Kaplinsky, are translated throughout Europe. He won the May Stranger Job Price in France with his poem "The Will of the Dust". His poems are essentially about nature and daily life.

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# Tales in Estonia

Eden DeRousse

There are a lot of myths in Estonia, but I think these are the four most fascinating ones. The first one is “Midsummer Madness”, the night for lovers. Mythical *Koit* (dawn) and *Hämarik* (dusk) meet once a year, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June. During Midsummer Madness, Estonians plant a mythical fern flower that is special because the dew will cure wrinkles. One way to use it is to bathe your face in the dew and instantly you will look beautiful and young. Beware though because the witch of Jaanipäev also known as Jani and Jonine uses it for less enchanting things.

The next myth, “the White Lady”, is celebrated in Haapsalu, and is one of their biggest annual events. The event takes place when a full moon in August and February forms the right angle, but the festival can only be held in August. February is too cold for the people to be out at night for that long and clouds give the White Lady stage fright. Once a year in August, people come out and stay late to watch a play about the history of the castle grounds. Once the play finishes, they gather around that castle to see the shadow. The festival’s climax is when a ghostly shadow appears across the cathedral window. For the shadow to appear, the moon must be at an exact angle.

The legend says that the ghost is a lady buried in the wall for revenge. The punishment is a result of the lady entering a place where only men were allowed.

The third legend is called “Devil’s Run.” Along the Latvian border south of a village called Krabi is *Paganamaa* (devil’s land). Devil’s land is a scenic area with four lakes along the Estonian side of the border is Piiriorg Valley. The legend is that this was home to *Vanapagan* (Old Heathen), a devil who decided to build a bridge in order to visit his friends in Latvia. Old Heathen went out to collect boulders for his bridge; a thunderstorm scared him because thunder was the God of Heavens to ancient Estonians. He ran scared, creating craters and valleys. Old Heathen dropped a boulder as he was running, which now believed to be *Kikkajärv* (a lake). Nowadays



there is an observation tower and bathing area, *Liivajärv*, and a lake that is half in Estonia and half in Latvia.

The last myth is a short but very well known legend. The myth takes place in *Ülemiste* Lake. The myth explains how Linda, when carrying rocks in her apron on her way to her husband Kalev’s grave, dropped one. She sat down on the rock she dropped and cried, mourning her husband’s death. Her tears of sadness formed the whole river.

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# Castles

Emili Perkins, Jennifer Niebel, Siddharth Sharma

Haapsalu Castle was first built in the 13th century and was enlarged in the 16th century. The Russian Czar Peter turned it to ruins in the 18th century. The church on the side of Haapsalu castle was built in the 14th to 15th century. This church is the location of the famous legend of the white lady, the woman who looks out the window in the night. Some people, who do not believe the legend, say it is just the moon's rays passing through leaves with a human shaped gap.

Glehn Castle was named after the owner and builder; Nikolai Von Glehn. This man was the one who founded Nõmme, which soon became part of the capital city, Tallinn. Nõmme is currently near the edge of Tallinn. Glehn Castle was completed in 1886. This castle was built to be a Medieval Swiss Castle.

Toompea Castle was built 1000 years ago to protect Estonia from the invaders. In 1219, the Danes conquered the castle calling it the city stronghold 'Tallinn', which means the Danish castle.

Narva Castle was built sometime in the early 13th century. The castle was made to protect a river crossing point in Estonia. Narva Castle has bare logs in it and if you look out one of the windows, from a certain point, you can see a small part of Russia. You can also see the River that divides the two countries. This river is called the Narva River.

Kuresaare Castle is located in the center of the island of Saaremaa. It is the only intact medieval fortress in all of the Baltic countries. The main part of the building was started around 1338 and lasted for about 40 years. The Danes changed the castle in some ways, such as building a moat. Later on, the Swedes and the Russians took over the castle.

The Laitse Manor connected first to another manor called the Ruila manor, but they were separated in 1637. Woldemar Von Uexküll owned this manor around 1883. This manor is a type of Gothic manor. In fact, it is one of the most neogothic castles in all of Estonia. Now the manor is mainly used for parties and other similar things.

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# Environment

Emili Perkins, Garance Cheroux

Environmental issues are very important in Estonia because people want Estonia to maintain its natural beauty. The plains take up sixty percent of the entire country and forty percent of it is forested areas. It is a very low and flat country and is located directly next to the Baltic Sea.

There are many protected areas in Estonia. For example, in 2003, about ten percent of dry land area in Estonia was under protection. When the Pan-European Nature Conservation Network Natura 2000 was created, the amount of dry land under protection increased to a total of sixteen percent so the people of Estonia could have a pollution free environment. The Natura 2000 includes a total of 66 bird areas and 509 nature reserves.

The worst polluter in Estonia was the Soviet Army. The army dropped hundreds of thousands of tons of jet fuel into the earth. They also improperly disposed of many toxic chemicals and threw outdated weapons and explosives into the coastal and inland waters. This is important because it is now becoming unsafe to swim in and eat fish from the Baltic Sea.

Pollution is a very important issue in Estonia. Many people are trying to prevent it from getting any worse than it is now. There are some volunteers who sometimes get together on Saturdays or Sundays and go around cleaning up Estonia. One of them told us what it was like. She said, "There was a place behind the American Embassy and there were several areas where there was trash. The trash was not fruit and vegetable trash, it was coats and buttons. There were even needles for medical purposes". This girl was just one of the many people who helped clean up Estonia. Another thing that has helped with pollution is something the government has done. They have made it very clear that the residents of Estonia should recycle their paper and plastic bottles. They have made it so that if there is someone with things that could be recycled in their trash, they pay more fees than normal. Another thing the government of Estonia has done is they have created another bus line. This bus line will make it so that there will be more buses, limiting the need to drive separately in cars. People will be able to save gas and they will limit the amount of pollution added to the environment.

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