

A guide to a green exchange in Finland

3AMK



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Introduction

Welcome to Finland!

Did you know that practically all bottles and cans in Finland can be recycled and you get money back for it? Or that Finnish libraries are not just for books, but you can also borrow sports gear and board games or use a 3D printer and musical instruments in the library for free?

In this guide you will find tips on how to live a more sustainable life during your exchange period in Finland. Finland is known for its innovative solutions and sustainability is an important part of it. This guide offers you help for getting your utilities and traveling in a sustainable way during your exchange period. It also gives you important information on sustainable eating and household recycling. Every theme also contains a short Finnish vocabulary to make your stay easier.

Get to know the guide and learn to live like a Finn during your exchange. Finland has a lot to offer - enjoy your time here and do it in a sustainable way!

Traveling to and moving around in Finland

Arriving in Finland

Finland can be reached not only by a plane, but also by ferries from Sweden and Estonia as well as by train from Russia. If you decide to travel by plane, try to minimize your carbon emissions by booking a direct route with the most energy efficient airline

Here are a few other things to consider if you decide to fly in:

Offset options: you can utilize the CO2 offset option that many airlines now use. This feature allows you to pay a little extra when getting on your flight, and in return the airline will 'offset' the CO2 emitted by the flight, for example by planting trees.

Measure your carbon footprint. If offset is not available you can measure your ecological footprint with this easy-to-use [Global Footprint Network calculator](#). Based on the results you can decide to for example donate to a nature foundation to compensate for your flight.

Pack light. The more luggage you bring, the more fuel it takes to fly your plane and the more emissions it generates. Instead, you can think about buying things second-hand upon arrival.

Public transport and city bikes for everyday use

Using public transport is an ecological and the cheapest way of traveling in any Finnish city. You can get a student discount for public transport in most bigger cities in Finland. See more information on the cities' websites.

For more info on public transport in the Greater Helsinki area, see the [HSL website](#). For public transportation in other cities check the corresponding city's website. For traveling between

cities see the [Matkahuolto website](#).

If you feel like biking around instead you can use the city bikes:

- [Helsinki and Espoo city bikes \(HSL\)](#)
- [Vantaa city bikes \(HSL\)](#)
- [Porvoo city bikes \(KaaKau\)](#)

Please note that the city bikes are not available in the wintertime (late October-March).



Traveling in Finland

By traveling locally, you will reduce your carbon footprint. Finland has a lot to offer for tourists from the beautifully snowy Lapland to the lake area in the east and the archipelago in the south west. You can visit old castles, beautiful nature parks and charming old cities. All nature is open for everyone in accordance with the Finnish every man's right. This means you can visit any forest you like to pick berries, or mushrooms or just stroll around and enjoy the peace. You can find more info about every man's right from [ymparisto.fi website](http://ymparisto.fi).

Transport when traveling in Finland

It is easy to travel in Finland by bus or train. To get a student discount for these you can join your exchange universities' student organization to receive a student card that entitles you to all the discounts.

If you want to travel by bus, have a look at the [Matkahuolto website](#). Bigger and medium sized cities also have train connections that you can check on the [VR website](#). If you decide to rent a car share the journey with friends and choose an electric or hybrid car. If you go driving be aware of wild animals like moose and deer as well as reindeer in the north. They might cross the roads especially at dusk and dawn. If you are not used to driving in winter conditions, be extra careful.

Vocabulary

Linja-auto / bussi - bus

Juna - train

Metro - subway

Raitiovaunu - tram

Polkupyörä - bicycle

Lippu - ticket

Turisti - tourism

Asema - station



Choose sustainable destinations in Finland

Visit Finland has a good check list on how to travel sustainably in Finland and also offers a list of activities that are sustainable. You can find more info about this on [Visit Finland's website](#).

Here are a few tips on traveling in Finland:

- [Visit Finland's tips on places to go](#)
- [Visit Finland's Things to do](#)
- [Visit Finland's list of Practical Things to know when traveling in Finland](#)
- [National parks to visit](#)

Visit neighboring countries:

If you feel that you want to explore Finland's neighboring countries as well, they are easy to reach. Sweden and the Baltic countries can be reached by ferry while Russia can be reached by bus or train. There are also bus rides up north to Sweden and Norway or you can combine a train and bus/ferry trip

Food, drink and housing

Drinking water

Tap water in Finland is of excellent quality and it's among the cleanest water in the world. There is no need to buy bottled water - fill your reusable water bottle at home from the tap! You can also fill your water bottle on the campus, or really any other location you go to.

Vegetarian food and restaurants

Vegetarian food is served in almost every restaurant in Finland. Also, other restrictions related to food are taken into consideration in Finland - you can easily find gluten-free and lactose-free food. Restaurants are also starting to offer more and more

vegan options.

Many restaurants also use apps like ResQ where they sell food that has been left over at a decent discount. You can look for these types of apps in your phone's app store, just remember to change the location to Finland.





Vocabulary

Ruoka - food

Kasvisruoka - vegetarian food

Vegaaninen ruoka - vegan food

Luomu - organic

Kotimainen - domestic (produced in Finland)

Gluteeniton - gluten-free

Laktoositon - lactose-free

Vähälaktoosinen - low in lactose

Buying groceries

Supermarkets (such as S-Market, K-Market and Lidl) are selling food that is nearing expiration, at a cheaper price. You will recognize these products from red tags that say, for example, -30% or -60%. Discounted products are easiest to find in the evenings or early in the morning. By buying discounted products you are not only saving money, but also reducing food waste.

If you live in shared apartments - cook together! It's a fun way to spend time together and reduce food waste.

Expiration dates

When it comes to expiration date markings on food, two different ways are used:

- Best before (in Finnish: parasta ennen)

The product is usually edible also after the marked date. Look, smell and taste - if the food still looks, smells and tastes good, it can be eaten.

Products that have this marking are for example, most milk products, bread and dry products, such as pasta, rice and granola.

- Expiration date (in Finnish: viimeinen käyttöpäivä)

The food that has this marking should not be used after the expiration date.

Products that have this marking are for example, meat products and fish.

Vocabulary

Parasta ennen - best before

Viimeinen käyttöpäivä - expiration date / use by

Ale - sale

Valmistettu - produced

Buy locally produced and eco-friendly products

When buying food or other products look for locally produced items. For example, a key with a Finnish flag or similar labels with a Finnish flag mean that the product has been produced in Finland. You can also check for products that have [labels that defines them as eco-friendly](#).



Pictures: Hyvaasuomesta.fi

Bring your own bag

You will have to pay for buying a bag in the store in Finland, so it is both cost efficient and good for the environment to bring your own. In the fruit and vegetable area of the stores there are always biodegradable bags as well.

Heating and water consumption

In Finland houses have very good insulation for the cold winter weather. Heating is usually turned off for the summer months and put on again in the autumn. When heating is put on with the first colder days, it can take a bit of time until the heating in your apartment is running at full power.

Water management in Finland is excellent and it's usually not possible to run out of hot water. Heating the water is taking a lot of energy though, so keep your showers at a reasonable length.

Buying and borrowing necessities

Get your utilities as second-hand products

You might need utilities, clothes etc. when you are settling in. To get these things, a more sustainable and affordable option is to check out the second-hand stores.

Here are some examples of second-hand stores in the Helsinki region:

- [Kierrätyskeskus](#)
- [Fida](#)
- [UFF](#)
- [Red Cross Kontti](#)

You can also google for more local stores close to where you live.

If you prefer online shopping there are a lot of online second-hand stores available in Finland. You can use the same platforms for selling things you no longer need.

Examples of online second-hand stores:

- [Tori.fi](#) (in Finnish)
- [Facebook marketplace](#) (in English)
- [Emmy](#) and [Vähänkäytetty](#) for clothes and accessories (in English)

Vocabulary

Kirppis/Kirpputori - Flea market

Käytetty - Used or second hand

Vähän käytetty - Only used a little

Borrowing from your local library

The Finnish libraries do not only lend books in several languages, but it is also possible to borrow everything from sports gear, boardgames, tools etc. The [Oodi Library](#) in Helsinki city center even offers sewing machines, 3D printers and gaming computers. [Have look at what your local library has to offer](#) and get yourself a library card. It is possible to get a library card when you have an address in Finland.

Libraries in Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa are using a [HELMET library card](#). If you are not staying in Helsinki, ask about the library card directly from your local library.



Vocabulary

Kirjasto – a library

Kortti – a card

Lainata – to lend

Kirja – a book

Peli – a game

Recycling

Waste management

Household waste

Every household in Finland has to take care of waste management. All waste should not be collected in one trash bag, but different kinds of waste are collected into separate waste containers. Types of waste collected in Finland are: plastic, carton, biowaste, glass, metal and mixed waste. Below you can find instructions on how to sort waste correctly.

Sorting instructions

Your responsibility is to take care of your own waste and sort it according to the rules! If you are unsure how to recycle something, you can always check it online in the [HSY Waste Guide](#), or have a look at [this student housing video](#) on how to sort your waste. On the next page you can find instructions for sorting household waste.



Biowaste

- Fruit and vegetable peels
- Leftover food
- Fish bones, bones
- Coffee and tea grounds, tea bags and filter papers
- Soft paper, such as kitchen towels, napkins and tissues
- Plant parts and wilted flowers
- Pack biowaste into a paper bag or biodegradable plastic bags!

Carton and cardboard

- Liquid packaging made of carton (milk and juice cartons, also with aluminum lining)
- Carton packages, such as cereal and cookie packages
- Paper bags, such as bags for bread and flour
- Egg cartons
- Kitchen paper and toilet paper cores

Mixed waste

- Hygiene products, such as menstrual products, cotton swabs
- Dirty food packaging
- Worn-out clothing and shoes
- Non-recyclable plastic products (polystyrene, PVC, foam plastic)

Metal

- Food and beverage cans (rinse with water before recycling)
- Aluminium foil and tins
- Metal lids and caps
- Empty aerosol cans
- Small metal objects

Glass

- Coloured and clear glass bottles and jars
- Rinse dirty glass packages with a bit of water and remove caps and lids before recycling!

Plastic

- Empty plastic food packaging, such as yoghurt containers, butter tubs
- Plastic sales packaging, such as plastic bags and containers
- Plastic bags and wrappings
- Empty plastic detergent, shampoo and soap bottles

Paper

- Newspapers and magazines
- Adverts, brochures and other similar prints
- Envelopes
- Copy paper and printouts



Bottles and cans

Please note that recycling of bottles and cans is separate from normal waste management. In Finland practically all bottles (made of plastic or glass) and cans have a deposit. This means that all bottles and cans should be brought back to a store to reverse vending machines. When you return the bottles, you get some money back. The amount is something between 0,10 - 0,40 Euro per bottle or can.



Picture: Palpa.fi

Batteries

All grocery stores have a collection point for used batteries, do not throw them in metal or mixed waste.

Small electronics

Can be brought for recycling to any store that sells electronics. More recycling places can be found on Kierratys.info website.

Medicine

Can be brought to the pharmacy for proper disposal.

Hazardous waste

In addition to the normal waste containers, there are separate places for recycling hazardous waste, such as paint and energy saving lamps. These should never be put into mixed waste! If you have hazardous waste, please bring them to the correct recycling place. You can easily find the nearest one to you through Kierratys.info online service.

Vocabulary

Keräyspaperi - paper waste

Keräyslasi - glass waste

Muovi, muovijäte - plastic, plastic waste

Biojäte - biowaste

Keräyskartonki/Keräyspahvi - carton,
cardboard waste

Metalli - metal waste

Sekajäte - mixed waste

Pullo – a bottle

Tölkki - a can

Pantti - a deposit

Pullonpalautuskone - bottle recycling machine (also for cans)

Checklist for a green exchange in Finland

Before arrival

- If you travel by plane, remember to climate compensate or choose an airline that offers offset.
- Book a direct flight.
- Pack light.

Upon arrival

- Visit second hand store for utilities and other necessities.
- Check how the garbage recycle works in your apartment.
- Get local transportation card or/and a bike.

During your exchange

- Shop for local products.
- Minimize food waste.
- Remember to recycle.
- Travel locally. Finland and the neighboring countries have a lot to offer.
- If you arrange a gathering of friends or parties, ask to borrow more utilities from a friend instead of using one-time-use products

Before you go home

- If you have things that you do not want to take home with you that are still in good shape, donate them to the second-hand stores or sell them online.
- If you travel home by plane remember to compensate or choose an airline that offers offset.
- Book a direct flight.
- Pack light.



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