

Dear All,

The Estonian installment of the IPPA Advanced Courses is just a week away so this is the last minute letter to give you all some (hopefully) useful tips for visiting this remote but mysterious country of the former 'Eastern Block'.

As Estonia has become one of the most successful e-countries and Estonians are very keen Internet surfers please have fun surfing all the websites given below to find answers to your burning questions about Estonia. How about www.visitestonia.com for a start? Or www.tourism.tallinn.ee?

And now: the practical things...

THE VENUE

Our course, as you know by now, takes place in the capital of Estonia, Tallinn. We have found a wonderful hotel at the edge of the Old Town, almost in the city centre, called Hotel Domina Inn Ilmarine, the details of which you can find on the website www.dominahotels.com/eng/tallinn_hotel_estonia_domina_inn_ilmarine/

How to get there?

The best transportation from Tallinn International Airport to the hotel (~6 km) is by taxi with an approximate fare of 6 Euros (80-90 Estonian Kroons). Take a close look at the yellow price list, which is posted on the right side rear door. Ask the taxi driver for a receipt from the meter's printer. If the meter or printer is out of order, you have the right to refuse to pay the fare.

You can also come by Bus No 2 or by Tram No 2 if you want to mix with the locals but the taxi is really the most convenient way to get to the hotel. However, bus / tram tickets from the driver can be purchased for 20 EEK (have an exact fare ready before boarding) and the stop closest to the hotel is 'Linnahalli'.

Those coming from Helsinki by a ferry will find the hotel to be within walking distance (0.7 km) from the ferry port terminal. For purchasing ferry tickets check out www.directferries.co.uk/helsinki_tallinn_ferry.htm. The sea trip can last from 1h 40min to 2h 30min, depending on the ferry operator and our unpredictable weather.

WEATHER & CLOTHING

The climate in Estonia is temperate. The weather is usually breezy and humid due to the proximity of the Baltic Sea. In September we often experience severe stormy winds and showery rains but an 'Indian summer' is not unusual either. Please check the website www.ilm.ee for weather forecast of our IPPA week. But bring your umbrella and a light raincoat along. Better be prepared for the worst! And it would be sensible to pack your walking shoes along then the cobble-stone streets of the Old Town or the jeep tour to Paldiski won't take you by surprise.

MONEY

It is cheap here – it really is! If we can all agree that the currency of international night life is one beer, then even in Tallinn's most refined night establishments, one beer is at least twice as cheap as anywhere else in the northern hemisphere. But you'll have to pay either by our local currency, Kroons (EEK), or by a credit card (the most common ones accepted). 1 EUR = 15.6466 EEK. (Yes, you've guessed it:) visit www.banknotes.com/ee.htm to see what our money looks like.

FOOD

Although Estonian cuisine cannot boast great variety, and the country has no enormous food markets or history of gourmet cooking, one can find some rather unusual culinary experiences here. But we can safely say that Estonian cuisine is whatever Estonians cook up and eat: spiced sprats, blood

sausages, black bread, raw herring, sauerkraut soup, sauer milk... Should I continue? But do keep your taste buds open and you may get pleasantly surprised. Vegetarians, please, don't feel neglected; we have a good selection of fruits and vegetables for you as well.

SAFETY WARNINGS

Tallinn is a small enticing city, and all the tourist areas are easily explored on foot. Although Tallinn is considered as 'relatively safe' there are small types of crimes such as pick-pocketing and purse snatchings that seem to increase during the summer months when lots of tourists are visiting the capital. But other than that being a tourist in Tallinn should not be dangerous. Nevertheless, it would be a good idea to use common sense and not wander around alone on dark side streets or in remote parks at night as local criminals may take advantage of it. For your own sake and for the peace of mind of the organisers, please take a taxi back to the hotel when Tallinn's night life has not let you go in time. Just in case some emergency numbers: police 110, ambulance & fire department 112.

OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION

We speak Estonian here but won't be offended by English, Russian, Finnish or German. But here's is a quick language course for you:

Tere – Hello

Tere tulemast - Welcome

Head aega – Good bye (but Ciao! will also do)

Tanan – Thank you

Palun – Please / Here you are

We are on Eastern European time (GMT +02:00).

Our telephone country code: +372

The electricity supply in Estonia is 220 volts AC, 50 Hz. European-style 2-pin plugs are in use.

If you have more time at hand and you are a keen traveller you might want to know the following:
Distance from Tallinn to Helsinki: 85 km; Riga: 307 km; St. Petersburg: 395 km; and Stockholm: 405 km

Welcome to Estonia, to a cool country with a warm heart!

TERE TULEMAST!

Liina Kiho, September 2008.

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