Open your mind. LUT.
Lappeenranta University of Technology
Finnish People and Culture, Local Customs
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Stereotypes of Finns

- Finns are fair and have blond hair.
- Finns are shy and quiet.
- Finns are not used to small talk, and they seldom smile.
- Finns don’t want to stand out from the crowd.
- Finns want to conform in their manner of dress.
- Finns are very punctual in terms of time and schedules.

Stereotypes are needful in human interaction, and they help to explain the behavior of others when encountering a foreign culture...

*but people in Finland come in all shapes and sizes, like the rest of humanity.*
Moving to Finland...

“to a distant, cold and mystical country where the people are of a fair complexion and remain silent fluently in two languages.”

What a Culture Shock!
- Sauna, Nudity
- Hostile Weather
- Language
- Low Population Density
- Opening Hours, Holidays
- Magnetic Key University Open 24/7
- Punctual
First impressions of Finland by Roman Schatz

“When you first arrive, Finland looks like a normal, pretty, expensive little country. Well, the light and the colors are different, at least in summer. In winter there is not really any light.

But something else is different here too. It takes you a little while to really notice – it’s the people.

They don’t look you in the eyes. They never greet strangers. They hate small talk. They never interrupt you; it’s as if they’re not listening. Say something nice about their clothes and they’ll tell you how cheap those rags really were. Smile at passers-by and they think you’re a religious fanatic, on drugs, gay, about to sell them an oriental carpet – or all of the above.

You don’t believe me? See for yourself; go to a department store and spend some time in elevator. Smile, look right into people’s faces and start chatting away. You’ll see their heart beat rise and sweat appear on their brows.

Then again, they just might invite you to their summer cottage for a sauna, which really means getting naked and royally drunk with them and their friends. With Finns it’s sometimes hard to know, whether they hate you or love you.

The secret is simple. The Finnish concept of politeness works differently than in most other countries. In most cultures it is considered polite to communicate. In Finland it is polite to leave people alone.”
After the First Impressions of Finland

Roman Schatz, German-born TV producer and writer, lived in Helsinki since 1986:

"I wouldn’t go so far as to call Finland a paradise. It’s too damn expensive and too damn cold. But to be brutally honest again: As much as I love to complain – I have never really really regretted coming here."

References: From Finland with Love
First impressions of Finland

- Peace, Silence, Conformity
  *Finns – Masters of Silence.*

- The Land of Law and Order
  *Of all the European Union rules Finns obey 120 per cent of them.*

- Mobile Phones
  *How do you get a Finn to talk? Put a mobile phone in his hand.*

- Cleanliness
  *Finns like their homes clean and will most likely have sterilized their parquet floors for your visit.*

- Technology
  *In Finland we had this hi-tech company called Nokia, which made pretty good “hammers”!*
First impressions of Finland

− Communication and Interaction (or lack of it)

How can you tell the difference between a Finnish introvert and a Finnish extrovert? When talking, a Finnish introvert looks at his feet and a Finnish extrovert looks at your feet.

− Landscape: Finland is the Land of Thousands Lakes - almost 188 000 altogether!

− Climate: Finnish summer is short, but at least it doesn't snow too much.

How to dress in Finnish winter: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sIEfOu7IzK4

− Daylight Hours: Finland is the Land of the Midnight Sun.

− Language: When you see written Finnish, you think that somebody has been sitting on the computer keyboard.


− Lack of people: Even on national holidays streets seem to be empty.
List of Iconic Cultural Aspects

Below are listed some of the characteristics of Finnishness. The term "Finnishness" is often referred to as the national identity of the Finnish people and its culture.

**Finnish Maiden** - a figure of national personification symbolizing Finland  
**Kalevala** - the national epic of Finland and Finnish mythology in general  
**Kantele** - traditional musical instrument  
**Joulupukki** - Father Christmas/Santa Claus  
**Jean Sibelius** - one of the most popular national figures, composer of the symphonic poem Finlandia  
**Sauna** - a Finnish national institution  
**Sisu** - will, determination, mental fortitude  
**Perkele** – THE Finnish swear word  
**Ice swimming** - swimming in a body of water with a frozen crust of ice  
**Nordic walking** - a recreational sport first popularized in Finland  
**http://www.visitfinland.com/article/iconic-finnish-foods-of-all-time/**  
**Mämmi** - traditional Easter food  
**Kalakukko** - traditional food from the region of Savo  
**Mustamakkara** - traditional blood sausage from the city of Tampere  
**Karelian pastries** - traditional pasties from the region of Karelia  
**Salmiakki** - salty black liquorice  
**Koskenkorva i.e Kossu** - Finnish vodka  

Meanwhile in Finland

Bicycle Helmets  Nordic Walking  Santa Claus

Sports heroes

Angry Birds  Sisu  Moomin

Sauna
TatuPatu-test Part 1: Sauna

from a book Tatu and Patu: This is Finland
The Finns and Finnish Culture

• The Finns respect hard-work and achievements, but that does not give anyone to believe they are superior. There are no hierarchies in institutions or organizations – everyone can talk to the boss.

• The Finns believe in total equality, with everyone having the right to voice their opinion.

• Finnish culture is quite individualistic compared to many other nations.

• The Finns are not very tactile.

• Gender roles are not very strictly defined in Finland.

• People in Finland are punctual in terms of time and schedules.
• Being humble is regarded as a plus.

• The Finns, to foreigners coming from emotive cultures, seem closed and often withdrawn. The Finns are suspicious of melodrama, melodrama confuses the Finns.

• Personal space in Finland is a right, not a privilege, and a handshake is always appropriate, but a hug and kissing is not.

• The Finns are not very generous in dispensing compliments.

• On the whole, Finnish society is conservative and gentle.

• The younger Finns are more informal and tolerant than their parents.
The expression “when in Rome...” does not entail that you imitate Finns when you are staying in Finland. Nevertheless, being aware of what is considered socially acceptable and polite is useful in any country, Finland included.
You know you’ve been in Finland too long, when...

− Silence is fun. Silence is golden.

− When you hear loud-talking passengers on the train, you immediately assume: they are drunk, they are Russian-speaking inhabitants (or Swedish-speaking in Western Finland), or they are foreign students.

− 80 degrees Celsius in a sauna is chilly, but 20 degrees Celsius outside is freaking hot.

− Your coffee consumption exceeds 6 cups a day.

− You enjoy salmiakki (Finnish salty black liquorice).

− You associate pea soup with Thursday.

− Your old habit of being "fashionably late" is no longer acceptable. You are always on time.
You know you’ve been in Finland too long, when...

- You think it's acceptable to eat lunch at 11.00 – even at 10.30.
- It doesn't surprise you to see over 200 bikes parked in a row.
- You know that "men’s public bathroom" is another phrase for sidewalk.
- You no longer see any problem wearing white socks with loafers.
- You no longer look at sports pants as casual wear, but recognise it as semi-formal wear.
- YOU CAN'T UNDERSTAND WHY PEOPLE WOULD LIVE ANYWHERE ELSE BUT IN FINLAND!
“It’s not right or wrong, it is just different!”
Literature


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Finnishness Bingo

1. Who has visited Finland before?
2. Who speaks Finnish?
3. Who speaks Swedish?
4. Who has Finnish friends?
5. Who likes Finnish food?
6. Who likes ice hockey?
7. Who plays ice hockey?
8. Who hates small talk?
9. Who likes sauna?
10. Who listens to some Finnish music?
11. Who drinks a lot of coffee?
12. Who is punctual?
13. Who likes to ride bicycle?