

CULTURAL FACTS

- Estonian language belongs to the Finno-Ugric language family, which also includes Finnish and Hungarian.
- The geographic location made Estonia an important land to control and made them susceptible to occupation. Since German invaders came to Estonia in the thirteenth century in the "Baltic Crusade", Estonia has been under nearly constant foreign control. Sweden controlled Estonia in the seventeenth century, followed by Russia (1710-1918), the Soviet Union (1940-41), Nazi Germany (1941-44) and again the Soviet Union (1944-1991). In August 1991, Estonia declared its independence during the fall of the Soviet empire.
- Estonia is super green! 50% of the country is forested – and 69% of the population believe that trees have a soul.
- Midsummer Day, also known as Jaanipäev, is one of the biggest celebrations in Estonia. Every year locals try to escape from the cities and get in touch with nature on the shortest night of the year. Some of the most common traditions are making a huge bonfire and jumping over it, looking for a blossomed fern which can make all your wishes come true, and simply enjoying nature by dancing, singing, and drinking.
- Estonians were so determined to keep their culture alive during the Soviet occupation, that they banded together to sing. They even used the power of song to demand their independence by gathering in a mass of 300,000 to sing patriotic songs. It would become known as the Singing Revolution, and was active for five years, until they gained their independence (again) in 1991.
- Estonians have one of the biggest collections of folk songs in the world, with written records of 133,000 folk songs.

<http://estonianfolksong.weebly.com/history-and-culture.html>

<http://www.arthistoryarchive.com/arthistory/european/Estonian-Artists.html>

<https://theculturetrip.com/europe/estonia/articles/customs-and-celebrations-that-are-unique-to-estonia/>

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- Estonia is one of Europe's most sparsely populated countries, having only around 1.3 million in 2017. It has a higher number of women than men, and Estonian women live ten years longer than men, on average.
- The first daily newspaper was published in Tallinn (capital city of Estonia) as early as in 1675.
- Since gaining independence in 1991, Estonia has rebuilt its government from scratch to achieve a modern information society where IT is used throughout its public sector and governance, 99 percent of public services are available online, and free Wi-Fi is accessible throughout most of the country.
- Legend has it that the first Christmas tree was planted in Tallinn's town center in 1441. This merry event signaled the first Christmas tree placed and decorated in a European town square.
- Estonia is egalitarian – 51% of engineers and scientists are women (European Union average being 29%).
- Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia have an indisputable reputation of being the most developed of former republics of USSR. These states have often been called “Baltic States” or “Baltic Tigers” – due to their economic reforms, foreign investments, and fast growth of GDP, especially between 2004 and 2007.
- Estonia has produced some well known chess players including Paul Keres and Jaan Ehlvest. One of the greatest Estonians of all was Paul Keres, a chess grandmaster from the 1930s until the mid-1960s. A staggering 100,000 mourners attended his funeral in 1975, almost 10 per cent of the population.

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www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/estonia.htm#History