

Fascinating Finland

Finland is a country located in the **Nordic** part of Europe. It shares borders with Sweden (to the West), Russia (to the East) and Norway (to the North). Its capital is **Helsinki**, which is the second most northern capital city in the world.



Finland is home to **5 ½ million people**. Compare this to 66 ½ million in the United Kingdom, 328 million in the United States and close to 1 ½ billion in China!

Finland is **338,424 km²** (130,666 sq miles) in size. This is 8 times bigger than Denmark, but 23 times smaller than Australia.

It is almost 1 ½ times bigger than the United Kingdom, but it has a population almost 13 times less! This shows how **sparsely populated** Finland is. A lot of the country is covered in forest and lakes with very few people living there.



Lovely Lapland

Lapland, in northern Finland, is home to elves, reindeer and **Father Christmas** (Santa Claus).

Did you know? The number of reindeer in Lapland is almost the same as the number of people!



Father Christmas

Lapland makes up about one third of Finland's total area and it also covers northern Sweden, Norway and part of Russia's Kola Peninsula.

It is as big as Belgium, The Netherlands (Holland) and Switzerland all put together!

*Fun Fact: There are hidden symbols around Lapland if you look carefully. When viewed from above, the streets of **Rovaniemi**, Lapland's capital, appear to be shaped like reindeer antlers!*

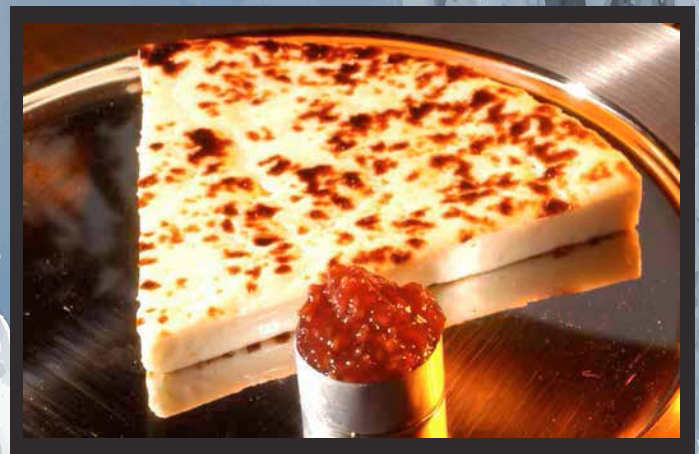


Reindeer



Rovaniemi

Tiikat loves Lapland's famous '**squeaky cheese**', Leipäjuusto. It makes a squeaky sound when you chew it and is usually served hot with cloudberry jam. Yum!



Lakes and Islands

Finland is widely known as the **Land of a Thousand Lakes**. In fact it has much much more than a thousand, it has 188,000!

Most of Finland's lakes **freeze** over in winter. In Lapland a lake may be frozen for 230 days a year! Don't worry, fish can still swim below the ice, they just swim more slowly than normal.

Did you know?

*Finland's largest lake, **Saimaa**, is the fourth largest in Europe. It is home to the special Saimaa ringed **seal**, which has distinctive rings on its coat. There are only 400 of these seals left in the world!*



Finland has **179,000 islands** and most of them are not lived on. 76,000 of these islands are in the middle of lakes, but the largest concentration of them is in the Archipelago Sea. If you take the boat from Finland to Sweden you pass by many of them. The main island is **Åland**.



Moomin

Did you know?

Tove Jansson, who wrote the **Moomin** books, lived on an island called Klovharu in the Gulf of Finland.

Fabulous Forests

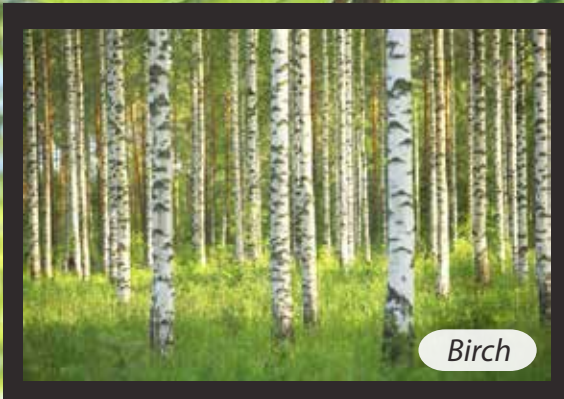
Finland has huge amounts of natural forest. Around 75% or $\frac{3}{4}$ of the country is covered in forest! It has more than anywhere else in Europe.

The most common trees in Finnish forests are **Scots pine**, **Norway spruce** and different **birch** trees.

There are around 22 billion trees in Finland!

Did you know?

Finland has a 'freedom to roam' law which means that you can walk freely across all the forest in the country and collect forest produce such as berries and mushrooms, no matter who might own the land.



Birch



Scots pine



Norway spruce

Summer Cottage Comfort

Summer cottages, similar to Tiikat's home, are part of Finnish life. There are more than half a million summer cottages in Finland with only 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ million people!

A traditional summer cottage is a simple building made of wood. They are normally situated within, or near, forest and also next to a lake for swimming. Would you like to visit one?

Fun Fact: The classic cottage has no electricity or running water, but has a **sauna**!

Who needs electricity when it stays light almost all night in summer and you can barbeque outside for dinner? You can use the sauna to heat up lake water to wash too!



Saunas Everywhere!

The most commonly used Finnish word in the English language is **sauna**, which has also been loaned to many other languages.

A sauna is a special room or building that is heated to temperatures between 65°C to 100°C (150°F and 212°F). Traditional saunas are made of wood and are heated by burning wood in a special stove.

A sauna increases sweating and therefore helps the body cleanse itself.

Something similar to the Finnish sauna exists in many countries, but in Finland they take it to another level as there are **3.3 million** saunas and only 5.5 million people!

Some people were even born in saunas as it is a clean place with plenty of hot water!



Fun Fact: There are saunas in all sorts of strange places across Finland, including in a Burger King restaurant, in Helsinki Central Library, inside a phone and on a bus!

Did you know? The world's largest wood burning sauna is situated in the Finnish Naval Academy on **Suomenlinna** island, just outside Helsinki. It can fit 180 people in it!

Historically Finns would sauna daily, but now it is more common to do it around twice a week. Normally people use the sauna naked, as it is better for you and for the sauna.

Fun Fact: Finnish traditional culture is full of mythical beings that live in all sorts of places. The sauna is said to be home to the sauna elf (**Saunatonttu**) and the steam spirit (**löylyhenkki**)! The sauna elf protects the sauna and gets upset if people don't obey the rules of the sauna.

Did you know? People sometimes use a bunch of leafy silver birch branches, called a **vihta**, to gently beat themselves in the sauna! This doesn't hurt, but is good for blood circulation, has a relaxing effect on the muscles, helps soothe mosquito bites and also smells wonderful!



Forever Night



During winter, the sun does not rise properly over Northern Finland! Finnish people call this long night **kaamos**. The length of the kaamos depends on how far north you are. In the very north of the country, kaamos lasts for 51 days! **Could you wait that long for sunrise?**

Winter is a time of rest for Finns and many enjoy the soothing powers of the night. There is also a lot of snow for them to enjoy!

Forever Day

While winter can be very dark in Finland, summer is the complete opposite. The further north you travel the longer the days become. The sun doesn't even set over the whole of summer in northern Finland! For **73 days** each year the sun can be seen in the sky all through the night. **Can you imagine nights without darkness?**



Skies on Fire

The **aurora borealis**, or **Northern Lights** is an incredible natural light show that is best viewed from Lapland. Sometimes it can also be seen as far south as Finland.

You see the light show is seen at night and looks best when the sky is clear.



Did you know? The aurora borealis are called foxfires in Finnish! They are like a shower of sparks coming from the tail of an arctic fox.



Fun Fact: There are lots of superstitions associated with the lights. Some people say you shouldn't whistle when you see them as it brings bad luck. Other people believe that if you disrespect them you may turn into stone!

Animals of Finland

As well as animals such as squirrels, foxes and hedgehogs, Finland also has many reindeer, moose, wolverines and brown bears. It even has arctic foxes! The national animals of Finland are the **whooper swan**, which you can find in waters throughout the country, and the **brown bear**.



Whooper Swan



Brown bear

Super Squirrels

Finland not only has many **red squirrels**, like Nagano, but it also has **flying squirrels**! Flying squirrels are rare in Europe and Finland is its most westerly **habitat**. Unlike red squirrels, which are active in the day, flying squirrels come out at night.

Did you know? Horribly, the skins of red squirrels were used as money in Finland hundreds of years ago in the Middle Ages, but today thankfully that does not happen.



Flying squirrel



Red squirrel

The King of the Forest

Brown bears lord over the Finnish forests, but you will hardly ever see one!

The brown bear is the national animal of Finland and there are around 1,400 living in the country.

***Fun Fact:** Bears play apart in folk tradition and myths in Finland! In ancient times people didn't dare to speak its name and so there are many nicknames in the Finnish language, for example **metsän kulttaomena** which means "the golden apple of the forest".*



Wonderful Wolves

Majestic **wolves** can be found around most of Finland but they are extremely **endangered**. You are very unlikely to encounter one in the wild. A wolf can range over as much as 900 square kilometres of **territory**!

***Did you know?** Wolves howl to call their pack together or to show that they are setting off in search of **prey**.*



Moose on the Loose

Finland's biggest animal is the **moose** (also known as the Eurasian elk). A large male moose can weigh as much as 700 kilograms (1543 pounds)! Finnish forests are home to around 100,000 moose.

***Fun Fact:** In Finland you can see warning signs for drivers to watch out for moose. They can jump out into the road suddenly and because they are so heavy, if a car hits one it will probably be in worse trouble than the moose!*



Running Reindeer

Father Christmas's favourite transporters, **reindeer**, are semi-wild in Finland, living in the northern parts of the country. They live the lives of wild animals but are also **herded** for their meat. Reindeer herding is the traditional job of Finland's **indigenous** people, the **Sami**.

Drivers in northern Finland need to be careful because reindeer can suddenly leap from deep snow into the road!

***Did you know?** Both male and female reindeer have **antlers**.*

***Fun Fact:** Reindeer have been found to eat as many as 350 kinds of plant!*



Forest Cat

Tiikat is not the only special cat that lives in the forest in Finland. It is home to the **lynx**! Lynx have a spotted coat, tufted ears and a **bobtail**. Like all cats, lynx move gracefully and are skillful **predators**.

Fun Fact: Lynx can mew or wail like a housecat, but with a deeper voice. If a male lynx sees a female it growls.



Frosty Fox



The northernmost part of Finland, in the Arctic Circle is home to the stunning **Arctic fox**. This animal has the warmest coat of any animal in the Arctic and can withstand temperatures of up to **-70°C**. Brr!

The Arctic Foxes living in Sweden, Norway and Finland are **endangered**. Sadly, only 160 foxes are believed to inhabit this region.

Did you know?

The arctic fox does not **hibernate** and their fur changes colour with the seasons! In summer they have a brown or grey coat with a lighter belly and this turns into a thick white coat in winter. This allows it to **camouflage** with the snow and ice in winter, or the rocks and plants in the summer.

Bountiful Berries

Finland is a country full of berries, enjoyed by wild animals as well as people. There are **strawberries, wild strawberries, raspberries, cranberries** and of course Tiikat's favourite: **blueberries**. On top of these more commonly known berries there are more unusual ones such as **cloudberries, lingonberries** and **sea buckthorn** berries. Would you like to try them all?



Blueberries



Cloudberries



Lingonberries



Sea Buckthorn berries

Did you know?

As many as 50 kinds of natural berry grow in Finland, though not all of them are **edible**.

Learn the Language!

The majority of people in Finland speak **Finnish**, but there are also many people living there who speak **Swedish**, so everyone is taught Swedish in schools.

Finnish is an unusual language, unrelated to the languages in neighbouring countries, Swedish or Russian. Finnish belongs to the **Finno-Ugric** language family, which also includes Estonian, Sámi and Hungarian.

Finnish is tricky to learn, but why not have a try?

Here are some words translated from English to Finnish. I am sure Tiikat will share some more with you in the future too!

Tip: Finnish is pronounced how it is written. Why not give it a go?

Words Tiikat really wants to share:

Adventure - seikkailu

Bear - Karhu

Boat - Vene

Book - Kirja

Cat - Kissa

Cheese - Juusto

Father Christmas - Joulupukki

(which actually translates to Yule Goat!)

Finland - Suomi

Fish - Kala

Food - Ruoka

Forest - Metsä

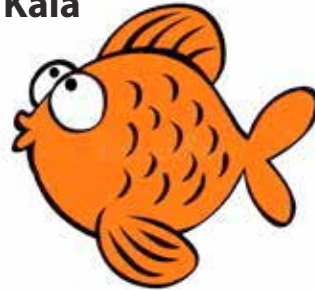
Home - Koti

House - Talo

Lake - Järvi

Ship - Laiva

Kala



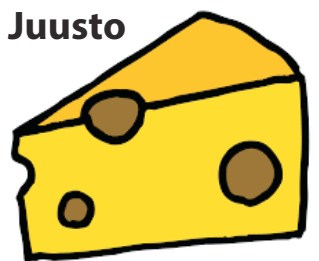
Kissa



Vene



Juusto



Very Useful Words:

Hello - Hei

Goodbye - Näkemiin

Yes - Kyllä

No - Ei

Thank you - Kiitos

Sorry - Anteeksi

My name is ... - Nimeni on ...

What other words or phrases would you like to learn? Message Tiikat to let him know.

Fun Fact: The longest **palindromic** word in the world comes from the Finnish language! A palindrome is a phrase or word that reads the same forwards or backward.

The longest known palindromic word is the 19-lettered **saippuakivikauppias**, which in Finnish means a caustic soda (a chemical used in soap) seller.

Tii-Hee-Hee

Why will you never win a race against a runner from Finland?

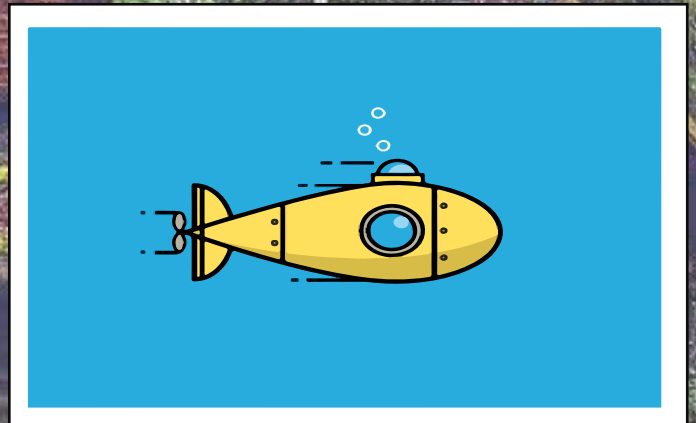
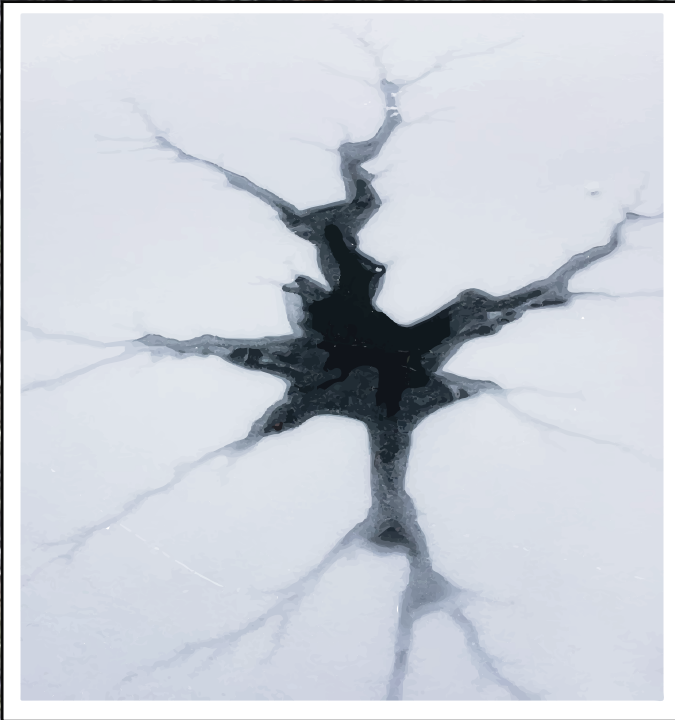
Before you even start, they are already Finnish.

Why should you be careful around a Finnish submarine captain?

He'll sink ye (*pronounce like Helsinki*)

Why shouldn't you tell jokes on a frozen lake?

It might crack up.



Why did the elephants jump in the lake?

They had their trunks with them.

What can you study in Forest school?

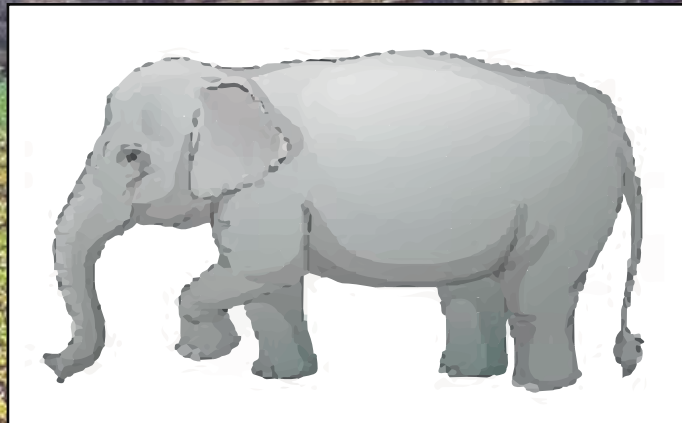
Chemistree

Where do sharks go on holiday?

Finland!

How do you get into a reindeer's house?

Ring the deer-bell





Impawtant Words



Bobtail - A very short tail.

Camouflage - A way of hiding something by covering or coloring it so that it looks like its surroundings. Many animals have a coat that creates a natural camouflage.

Edible - Fit or safe to eat.

Endangered - A species of plant or animal that is in danger of becoming extinct.

Habitat - The natural environment of an animal or plant.

Herd - To drive or lead a herd (group) of animals.

Hibernate - To sleep through the winter in a den or burrow to save energy.

Indigenous - Native to a country, originating there.

Predators - An animal who kills and eats other animals (its prey).

Prey - An animal hunted and eaten by another animal (the predator).

Sparsely populated - Lived in by very spread out people or animals.

Territory - A region that is marked and defended by a particular type of animal.



Hibernating bear