

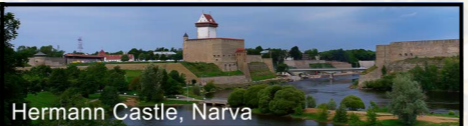
e-Estonia Smart Card



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TERRITORY

Estonia is the smallest of the three Baltic states located on the southern shore of the Baltic Sea only about 50 miles across Helsinki, Finland. Its flat landscape is shaped by the glaciers of the Continental Ice Belt and the Baltic Sea. Historically, the Baltic Sea has served as a trade route and a source of wealth for the coastal people. Estonia has 1,520 islands scattered along its shores. Its main islands are **Saaremaa**, **Hiiumaa**, **Muhu** and **Vormsi**. The largest lakes are **Peipus** and **Võrtsjärv**. The longest river is **Pärnu**. Estonia's main cities are **Tallinn**, **Tartu**, **Narva**, **Pärnu**, **Viljandi** and **Rakvere**. Due to its long, shallow coastline and the warm waters along the Baltic Sea, Estonia has some of the finest harbor facilities in the region with Tallinn's **Muuga** port being one of the best in Europe.



HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Estonians have lived in what is today's Estonian lands for 11,000 years. The common belief is they migrated westward from the Volga region near the Ural Mountains. Unlike other branches of Finno-Ugric people who migrated south to what today is Hungary, the ancestors of Estonians settled in the northern part of Europe in today's Estonia and Finland. Squeezed between the Slavic nations in the east and Germanic ones in the south and west, Estonia has been invaded, occupied and ruled for 700 years by most of its hostile neighbors. The first ruler of Estonia was the German Order of Sword Brethren in the 12th Century, who brought with them Lutheranism and forced the serfdom system upon Estonians. Under the Swedish rule that followed, from 16th to 17th C, Estonian urban areas became part of the Hanseatic League, a commercial and defensive confederation of city merchants. After the Treaty of Nystad in 1721, Estonia became unified in what today are its present borders.



Old Town, Tallinn



Town Hall, Tartu

INDEPENDENCE

Under Russian rule, a cultural Russification was imposed upon Estonians until 24 February 1918 when Estonia proclaimed independence. This lasted until 21 July 1940 when the Soviet Union illegally incorporated Estonia into the Union of Soviet Republics through the infamous Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939. Russification and Sovietization of cultural, economic, and political life consisted of forced collectivization, expropriation of private property, and central planning accompanied by mass deportations to Siberia, mass executions, out-migration and low-birth rates. The outcome was a change in demographics among ethnic Estonians, Russians and Russian-speaking people. Estonia reclaimed independence on 20 August 1991. The peaceful and democratic transition to multi-partism and free market influenced its membership in NATO and the EU. Estonia's policy of "security through integration" has created conditions for stable government and effective institutions that follow democratic values such as low levels of corruption (below the EU average). Yet, Estonia faces physical and energy security issues, ecological pollution and issues of integration of Russian-speakers in Estonian society.



Occupation Museum

FACTS AND FIGURES

Name: Estonia (Eesti Vabariik)
Capital: Tallinn
Population: 1,265,420 (2015 est.)
Ethnicity: Estonian majority (68.7%)
Languages: Estonian 68.5% (official), Russian 29.6%
Age structure: 41.83% are 25-54 years old
Currency: Euro €

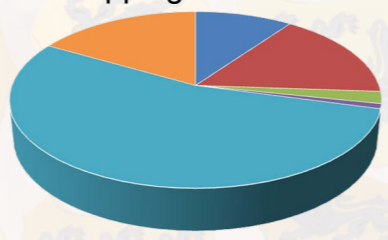


The Parliament (Riigikogu)

RELIGION

Christianization of Estonia took place during the 13th Century by the German Teutonic Knights. The Evangelical Lutheran Church has been the dominant church among Estonians since the Protestant Reformation in 1524. Religion does not play an important part in Estonian lives because it represents the collective traumas associated with foreign ruling classes, German serfdom, linguistic inability to understand foreign missionaries, and Soviet atheist policies. Hence, a better description of Estonia's religious context is "believing without belonging." Therefore, in Estonia, national and religious identities do not overlap. Orthodox Christianity is the 2nd largest faith of Estonia. The Orthodox community, who is more religious, is divided between the Patriarchate of Tallinn and Moscow. Estonians claim to be the least religious people in Europe and 54% of them believe in some sort of spirit or life force. They practice folk and pagan traditions, such as lighting bonfires during the summer solstice and worshipping nature.

- None
- Unspecified
- Orthodox-Christian
- Lutheran-Christian
- Christian Other
- Other



CULTURE AND FOLKLORE

The evolution of Estonian culture cannot be properly understood without recognizing the role and position of Estonian peasantry under the rule of foreign elites, especially the German political, economic and cultural elite, who sought to define Estonian identity. Estonian identity is founded on its Finno-Ugric language, the pagan-folk culture, and Lutheranism reflected in today's Estonian urbanization, westward-orientation, and democratic traditions. The oral tradition of Estonian peasantry embodies the values and beliefs through which Estonians understand themselves and the world. The folksongs and folktales that mostly represent the rural culture of ethnic Estonians are observable through song festivals (**Laulupidu**) and epic poems like **Kalevipoeg** written with the purpose of creating a unified-national Estonian mythology. Being a symbol of Estonian national cultural identity, the belief is that **Kalevipoeg** will one day "return to bring his children happiness and build Estonia's life anew."



Kalevipoeg, "Kadrioru Park" Tallinn

VALUES



Seto Kingdom Day

Estonian VBBN is influenced by the size of the land, its history and the language. Having been fenced in by hostile powers, and belonging to lower social status in their own land, Estonian pride today manifests itself in the country's collective and individual achievements. Speaking Estonian is considered a rite of passage to full Estonian identity which is highly valued. Estonians prefer to lead rather than be led, and behave impatiently towards those who try to tell them what to do and how to do things. Estonians exhibit a deep sense of individual capabilities. Their understanding of success and status is closely related to education, money and material possessions. They view stubbornness as a virtue entrenched in their centuries-long endurance and resiliency to foreign influences and survival. Estonian language uses a specific word **Jonn**, understood as willfulness to tenacity and endurance, to explain stubbornness.

IDENTITY

National identity in Estonia is a very complex concept because the nation has been identified with the state only twice in its history--during the 20 years of independence between the interwar period and post-Soviet independence. Defining Estonian national identity using primordial methods (blood-related/genetic) could prove to be erroneous and dangerous. Therefore, Estonian national identity could be better understood in reference to land and language. Traditionally, the language spoken, the place/land of origin, and attachment to the land are the main principles of Estonian self-identification.



Peasant Woman, Kose parish

The social status of 19th Century Estonia, determined by the landholding structure, was the cornerstone of Estonian national identity. According to the landholding structure, German nobility (barons) were at the top of the hierarchy with the peasantry/serfs at the bottom. Peasants' close attachment to the land functioned as a core value for self-identification. The nation was collectively self-defined in terms of the 'people of the land' (**Maarahvas**) or 'man of the land' (**Maamees**) instead of Estonians.

The national identity of contemporary Estonia is closely related to the concept of **Undeutsche** (non-German). Historically, those who did not speak German were considered *Undeutsche*/Estonian by the German-nobility. Originally, the term Estonian was used by German-baron rulers to identify "the other" as not being ethnic Estonians, but rather as *Undeutsche* regardless of their ethnicity. When speaking of Estonian national identity it is important to observe the way the language and place/land intersect with each other very closely. Today, Estonian attachment to the land is echoed in the famous poem **My Fatherland is My Love**.

NEGOTIATION



Seto Women in National Costume
Photo by: Jaak Nilson

Conducting business and negotiations go better with some understanding of the role of culture. For Estonians, caution and tenacity are important in negotiation, but understand that once deals are concluded, they will fulfill their commitments as scheduled. Estonians begin meetings by greeting everyone with a handshake. Soldiers should allow their counterparts to present their views without interruption.

Recognizing the uniqueness of Estonian folklore, their ancient customs and their capability for survival will gain you admiration, and help establish reliable personal connections. The majority of Estonians tend to be punctual, direct and decisive. Sometimes, their decisiveness makes them look tenacious, yet unemotional in their arguments. Estonians are very limited in their non-verbal communication such as body and hand gestures, and facial expressions. Others, ethnic Russians and Russian-speaking Estonians in the East of the country, are of a higher context and more impulsive. Note that although these tendencies reflect generalized business habits, they might not specifically apply to the Estonian military which is a hierarchical organization adapting to NATO culture.



Laulupidu, Singing Festival

When negotiating with Estonians:

- Respect their flag and history
- Share their passion for folklore, rock-music, choir-singing (*Laulupidu*) and dancing festivals
- Acknowledge their work ethic and individuality
- **Don't** be overly sentimental
- **Don't** identify them with the other Baltic people
- **Don't** view them as pure Finns

LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

Estonian is closely linked to Finnish and, to a lesser extent, Hungarian. Russian is the second most widely spoken language in the northeast where the majority of the people are ethnic Russians.



Language Phrases

Estonians are unwilling to speak Russian and the younger generation mostly prefers to speak English. Language division is most noticeable in Estonian and Russian cafés, kindergartens and schools. There are three noticeable dialects of Estonian spoken in the north, south and northeast. Estonian language has no articles nor any gender pronouns for 'he/she'. Instead, the word **Tema** for 'one' or 'it' is used for both. The Estonian communication style is slow and quiet. Estonians are direct, critical and tend not to volunteer extra information when engaged in small talk since this would require in-depth conversation. They tend to be reserved and do not interrupt although long speeches are considered boring. It is important that Soldiers don't get frustrated with the lack of feedback and responsiveness. Non-verbal communication in Estonia follows the pattern of low-context cultures where messages are very specific and a great deal of focus is put on what is said.

RAPPORT BUILDING

Rapport building in Estonia requires an understanding of its historical legacies, and a positive attitude towards Estonians as being equals. Practice humility, empathy, and respect ahead of your technical expertise, at least initially. Allow Estonian counterparts to be the experts in their areas of responsibility to influence the process. The best places to form rapport with Estonians are public spaces, such as sporting events and pubs, in particular the Russian ones since Russian-speaking Estonians are less reserved compared to ethnic Estonians. Among men, drinking is considered a form of bonding. It is customary to toast and say **Terviseks** or **Proosit** when drinking. Estonians tend not to extend invitations to their homes because of the small size of their apartments. They are very reserved in their private spaces due to mistrust and paranoia associated with the Soviet-era secret police. They might invite you for a sauna, which is very popular and for most non-Estonians is a cultural shock because nudity is the norm in the sauna. When talking to them, speak slowly and use proper English. Not all Estonians speak English; slang is not recommended.



MILITARY CULTURE

National Defense Policy Main Goals:

- Develop & maintain a credible force
- Interoperability with NATO

Overview:

- Compulsory Service Age (18-27)
- Conscript Service (8-11 months)
- Active Personnel 6,000

Influenced by many foreign cultures and nations, each of the past legacies help define the cultural space, as well as the political and economic limits of the Estonian Defense Forces (EDF). Soldiers may expect that Estonian counterparts will likely behave in ways based on their own culture: a tendency to be direct, unemotional, and task focused. Yet, Soldiers should be cognizant that their counterparts might follow a sharper division between enlisted, NCOs, and officers. Anticipate that national pride, deeply held traditions and practices, and perspectives along with capabilities and experience shape Estonian military culture. Experience within regions will also influence their actions and beliefs. Soldiers should note that any of these issues can impact interoperability and how well team members are able to work together and reach consensus.



Chief of Defense
LTG Riho Terras

RANK AND INSIGNIA

Corporal	Junior Sergeant	Sergeant	Staff Sergeant	Sergeant First Class
Master Sergeant	First Sergeant	Sergeant Major	Sergeant Major of Army	Ensign
Second Lieutenant	Lieutenant	Captain	Major	Lieutenant Colonel
Colonel	Brigadier General	Major General	Lieutenant General	General

MILITARY TERMS

English	Estonian
Artillery	Suurtükivägi
Cavalry	Ratsavägi
Conscript	Sõjaväe kohuslane
Infantry	Jalavägi
Machine gun	Kuulipilduja
Map	Kaart
Medic	Meedik
NCO	Allohvitser
Patrol	Patrull
Platoon	Rühm
Rank	Auaste
Reconnaissance	Maastikuluure
Rifle	Üksus
Squad	Eskadron
Tent	Telk
Vehicle	Sõiduk
Weapon	Relv

*For more information on Estonian culture and sources used in this smart card, contact us: 520-538-5502