Estonia

Location
The nation of Estonia is located at 59 degrees North latitude and 26 degrees east longitude. It is situated in Northern Europe on the border of Russia to the East and Latvia to the South. Estonia is bordered by the Gulf of Finland and the Baltic Sea.

Geography
Estonia has an area of roughly 45,000 square kilometers. It is 350 kilometers from East to West and 240 kilometers from North to South. This means that Estonia is roughly the size of New Hampshire and Massachusetts put together. Estonia is made up of fifteen subunits. There are 1400 lakes that make up roughly 5 percent of Estonia’s total geography. The countryside is pretty flat and sits at 50 miles above sea level. The lowest point in Estonia is the Baltic Sea with an elevation of 0 mi above sea level and its highest point is Suur Munamagi at 318 miles above sea level. It has a coastline of around 3.700 miles. Around the coastline lies about 1500 islands, all of which belong to the country of Estonia. Around half of Estonia is covered with forests. In these forests, there is a large population of elk. The wildlife of Estonia has been preserved better than any of the countries in the European Union. Most of its wildlife has thrived and remained untouched since prehistoric times.

Climate
The climate in Estonia varies throughout the region. The longest day of the summer has an average of 19 hours of sunlight. The shortest day of the year has an average of only 6 hours of sunlight. Something interesting to consider is that from the
beginning of May to the end of July, it is not completely dark during the night. Estonia experiences 750 millimeters of rain each year. It is a particularly wet climate.

**History**

The country of Estonia has been under the control of many different countries since its first colonization. The earliest civilization in Estonia was on the Parnu River and was settled after the last ice age ended. The first conquerors were the Germans and Danish in 1227. They conquered the region to bring Christianity to the people of Estonia. After the first conquering, the land was fought over by several countries including Denmark, Sweden, Poland and Russia. Russia took full control over the country in 1710. However, even under Russian control, the higher classes of Estonia were still primarily loyal to their Germanic rulers. This took place until 1918 when the Germans were forced out of Estonia by Joseph Stalin. After the October Revolution and the collapse of Imperial Russia in 1918, Estonia declared itself an independent country on February 24, 1918. This declaration instigated a war with the Russians and led to the Estonian War of Independence. By February of 1919 the Estonian Army had drove the Russian Army completely out of Estonia. On February 2, 1920, the Treaty of Tartu was signed by Bolshevist Russia and the Estonians. This treaty meant that Russia gave up all claims on Estonia and in 1921 Estonia became a member of the League of Nations. This was the first period of Independence for Estonia. During this time the first constitution was adopted in 1920. This independence lasted only 22 years until Soviet Russia invaded and demanded that Estonia become apart of the new Communist government. On July 24, 1940, Estonia was forcibly accepted into the USSR. On August 6th, Estonia was renamed Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic. During the first year of occupation, over 2,200 people were arrested as government
criminals and sent to prison camps. On June 14, 1941, over 10,000 Estonians were sent to Siberia where half of them later died. The Germans invaded the USSR on June 22, 1941 and took control of Estonia. During this time they sent Estonian Jews to concentration camps in Siberia and established 22 concentration camps in Estonia for foreign Jews to be tortured. After WW2, control of Estonia went back to USSR. Things were not good for the Estonians during this time where everyone was forced to assimilate into Russian culture with Russian being taught to school children as the dominate language instead of the native Estonian. Estonians pursued their desire for independence until they got what they wanted on August 19, 1991. During this time, the United States opened up trade relations with Estonia and their economy continued to thrive. On August 31, 1994, Russian troops finally withdrew completely from Estonia. After this happened, Estonia petitioned to join the European Union in 1998 and completely joined in 2004.

**Important Dates**


**Population**

The population of Estonia currently is 1,332,893 as of July 2005. This makes it one of the smallest populations in the world. The population growth rate currently is at -
0.65%. The average life expectancy for men is 66.28 years, and the average life expectancy for women is 77.6 years. The fertility rate is currently 1.39 children per woman. The infant mortality rate is currently 7.76 for every 1,000 live births. The death rate is currently at 13.21 per 1,000 people. The migration rate is currently -3.18 migrants per 1,000 people.

**Currency**

The currency of Estonia is the Estonian kroon. The conversion rate currently (2006) is 15 kroon for every one U.S. dollar. One kroon is equal to 100 cent. The plural for kroon is krooni.

**Education**

In Estonia, all children must be in school by the age of 7. They must also be in school until they are at least 17 years of age. This covers basic education which is grades 1-9. After that Secondary education is voluntary. Currently 95% of students who completed basic education went on to secondary education. The adult literacy rate in Estonia is 100%.

**Language**

The official language of Estonia is Estonian. It is spoken by 1.1 million people in the world. Estonian is taught in all forms of education, is used by the military and government dealings. The second most popular language spoken in Estonia is Russian.

**Religion**

There is no official religion in Estonia. The most dominant religion in Estonia, however, is Evangelical Lutheranism. All religions are welcome to be practiced as long as you do not interfere with the happiness of others around you.

**Agriculture**
Thirty percent of the land of Estonia is used for agriculture. The principle agricultural products are milk and milk products, barley, potatoes and wheat. There are around 20,000 family owned farms and 900 publicly owned farms. The climate and soil quality of Estonia are ideal for the growth of rye, oats, wheat and potatoes.

**Trade**
Fish and fish products are the number one exported items from Estonia. The second most popular export is milk and milk products. One third of all Estonia’s milk products are exported.

Estonia imports mostly machinery and household appliances. This is because none of these things are made in the country. Most of these imports come from the European Union, more specifically Finland. Lithuania provides the country with fuel, tobacco products and chemicals.

**Food**
The staple foods in the Estonian diet are pork, potatoes, cheese, and various garden vegetables. The national dish is a blood sausage. The food is influenced by the peasant culture being based on meaty easy to prepare dishes. The deserts are not very sweet but involve cakes and brownie like items.

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