

## Erasmus 2013 – Helsinki



### 1. Vorbereitung

Moikka! Zum ersten Mal hab ich von Erasmus in der Oberstufe gehört. Unsere Französischlehrerin zeigte uns einen Film namens *L'auberge espagnol*. Dieser Film (unbedingt vorher anschauen!) gibt die Erasmuserfahrung ziemlich perfekt wieder. Viele Jahre später an der Uni erzählte meine Freundin mir dann eines Tages, dass sie ein Erasmussemester in Wales machen wolle. Wales? Im Winter? Meine erste Reaktion war genauso wie die meisten Bemerkungen auf meine Ankündigung, nach Finnland zu gehen. Finnland? Im Winter? Ob ich verrückt sei?

Im Wintersemester vor Ende der Bewerbungsfrist kamen zwei Studentinnen in unsere Vorlesungen und informierten uns über das Erasmusprogramm. Die Reaktionen der Studenten waren nicht all zu enthusiastisch. Im Nachhinein kann man das überhaupt nicht nachvollziehen. Auch kann ich mir immer noch nicht erklären, warum ich als einziger meiner Clique ins Ausland gegangen bin. Da meine Eltern sich wiederholt weigerten, ins teure Nordeuropa zu verreisen, fasste ich schließlich den Entschluss, es dann eben mit Erasmus zu tun. Nachdem wir in Deutschland in den letzten

Jahren mit schneereichen Wintern nicht wirklich gesegnet waren, wollte ich dieses Mal ganz sicher gehen. Also suchte ich nach möglichst nördlich gelegenen Unis mit Unterrichtssprache Englisch. So fiel meine Wahl auf Helsinki: Hauptstadt eines EU-Mitgliedsstaates, Mitglied im Euroraum, Fähren in drei Nachbarländer, riesige Wälder und tausende Seen, Lappland und ganz sicher viel Schnee ... Vor dem Flug Ende August traf ich mich mit Malte, der wie ich für ein Semester nach Helsinki ging. Es ist wirklich von Vorteil, jemanden von der gleichen Fakultät mit dabeizuhaben. Wenn es irgendwelche (organisatorischen) Probleme gibt, kann man sich einfach an den anderen wenden, ohne wieder ewig Mails schreiben zu müssen.

Frau Rademacher, ihre Mitarbeiter und das International Office informierten mich alle rechtzeitig und umfassend, genau wie auch die Zuständigen von der Uni Helsinki. Fast alle Formulare und Bewerbungsschreiben können online eingereicht werden und stellen keinen großen Aufwand dar. Hab mir einen Finnland-Reiseführer und ein Wörterbuch besorgt, ein Notizbuch bekommt man bei den Willkommenstagen.

Noch bevor ich meine Bestätigungsmail erhielt, bewarb ich mich Anfang April um eine Wohnung bei HOAS, das unserem Studentenwerk entspricht. Den Rat, dies möglichst früh zu tun, sollte man wirklich beherzigen. Denn u.a. der Anmeldezeitpunkt entscheidet darüber, wo man wohnen wird und oft reichen die Schlafplätze (anfangs) nicht für alle. So mussten manche zunächst auf Sofas



oder in Jugendherbergen nächtigen.

## 2. Unterkunft

Es gibt mindestens vier verschiedene Wohnheime in Helsinki. Zum einen das zentral gelegene Domus Academica, wo ein Großteil der Erasmusstudenten wohnt und wo konsequenterweise die meisten Treffen und Feiern sind, das aber nur Einzelappartments und keine WGs hat. Eine Station nördlich des Hauptbahnhofs liegt Pasila. Dort gibt es hauptsächlich (enge) 6er-WGs, einen schönen Gemeinschaftsraum, viel Beton, aber auch einen See mit guten Laufstrecken in der Nähe. Drei weitere Zugstationen weiter nördlich gibt es ähnliche Wohnungen mit 3er- oder 4er-WGs.

Schließlich gibt es noch das berühmt-berüchtigte Kontula im Nordosten, wo ich gewohnt habe. Zwanzig Minuten mit der Metro und zehn Minuten zu Fuß von der Uni entfernt klingt es zunächst nach tiefster Provinz. Für die Einheimischen ist Kontula die zweitschlimmste Gegend von ganz Helsinki. Das sollte man aber nicht ernst nehmen. Ich habe selbst nachts nie Probleme bekommen, und auch sonst nie von irgendwelchen Vorfällen gehört. Die architektonisch angenehmen Wohngebäude sind im Gegensatz zu den anderen Wohnheimen alle maximal dreistöckig, bestehen aus 3er- oder 4er-WGs, haben eine tolle Gemeinschaftssauna, einen (ungenutzten) Gemeinschaftsraum und einen Waschraum. Ein Supermarkt ist in der Nähe. Eingerahmt ist der Block von einem kleinen Wäldchen mit tollen Laufstrecken. Der einzige Wermutstropfen ist der letzte Bus unter der Woche um halb eins und am Wochenende um zwei Uhr. Aber einerseits reicht das meistens zum Feiern und andererseits kann man auch bei Freunden in Domus oder Pasila schlafen. Oder den ersten Bus früh um halb 5 nehmen.

Hätte ich die Wahl, würde ich mich wieder für Kontula entscheiden, weil es wie gesagt in Domus keine WGs gibt und die Zeit mit meinen zwei Mitbewohnern nicht missen möchte: Gemeinsames Kochen und Einkaufen, Heimfahrt in Bus und Metro, Saunagänge (mit Bier und Birkenzweigen), Seriengucken, täglicher Tratsch ...

## 3. Studium an der Gasthochschule

Wie in Würzburg liegt die juristische Fakultät sehr zentral. Sie befindet sich direkt neben den Hauptverwaltungsgebäuden sowie der der National- und der Unibibliothek. Außerdem befinden sich dort auch alle Unterrichtsräume. Über die Kurse kann man sich schon vorab online über die Website der Fakultät und Weboodi (das finnische SB@home) informieren, oder auch im online verfügbaren Orientation Handbook. Zu empfehlen sind Jurisprudence of the Court of Human Rights von Julen Etxabe Lasa (es gibt sehr viele spanische Dozenten) und International Law in Colonial Context von Manuel Jimenez Fonseca. Die finnischen Dozenten sind (Klischee!) eher ruhige

Gemüter. Trotzdem fand ich jeden von mir belegten Kurs interessant. Die Bibliothek hat eine geniale Architektur, viele Ruhe- und Arbeitsräume und Sessel sowie Cafés, aber leider nur eine magere Ausstattung an EU-Recht-Literatur. Wenn man auch am Wochenende dort lernen will, kann man einen 24-Stunden-Schlüssel erwerben.

Es gibt unzählige Mensen in der Nähe von Porthania, dem Hauptgebäude gleich an der Metrostation Kaisaniemi. Zu empfehlen sind besonders die Mensa im schicken alten Verwaltungsgebäude schräg gegenüber von Porthania und die Mensa der Lehrämter ein paar Straßen nördlich mit tollem Blick über die Stadt. Die beste Mensa ist aber die in Musiikitalo, der Musikhalle in der Nähe des Hauptbahnhofs, hinter dem Kiasma (Museum für moderne Kunst: unbedingt reingehn! Eine Tour dauert eine Stunde und widerlegt alle Klischees über moderne Kunst). Leider hab ich sie erst nach zwei Monaten entdeckt. Sie ist die kleinste von allen, hat die schickeste Einrichtung und das beste Essen. In allen Mensen bekommt man Hauptgang, Beilage Salat, Brot mit Butter, Wasser und Limo für € 2,60. Das ist fast schon surreal günstig für Helsinki.



#### 4. Alltag und Freizeit

Mein Erasmusalltag bestand aus einem schnellen Frühstück, einer Fahrt mit der Metro vorbei an Schrebergärten und über den großen See in Helsinkis Osten, einem Kurs am Morgen, Mittagessen



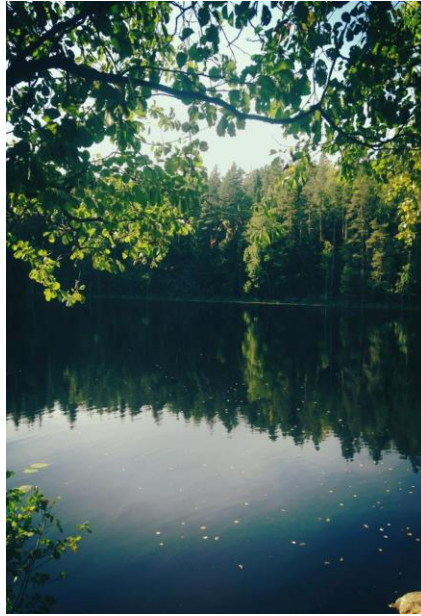
in der Mensa, einem Trip durch die Stadt oder ein Museum, oder einem spannenden Nachmittag in der Bibliothek, einem Abendessen daheim (meistens etwas mit Eiern) oder bei Hesburger, einem Gang in die Sauna (Nepalesen, Russen, viele Deutsche und auch mal Finnen) und schließlich abends Treffen mit Freunden am Bahnhof oder in Domus. Dann ging's gerade anfangs oft in den legendären Tiger, auch weil irgendwie jede Afterparty unserer Fakultät (Pykälä) dort stattfand. Hehe, viel Spaß da. Achtet mal auf die Musik um halb eins. Generell sind alle Veranstaltungen von Pykälä unbedingt zu empfehlen: Spielenachmittag, Ruderwettkampf, Karibischer Abend und vor allem das unvergleichliche Sitsit. Wahnsinn, was die alles auf die Beine stellen.

Am schönsten aber waren die Ausflüge. Zu Beginn vor allem mit der Fähre nach Tallinn, wo alles viel billiger ist als in Helsinki. Tagestrips nach Naach Hämeenlinna (großartige Burg und Dutzende freistehende Geschütze) und Tampere (Spionage- und weltweit einziges Leninmuseum) im Norden. Dann gibt es auch viele von Timetravels und ESN angebotene Aktivitäten und Reisen. So waren wir im noch warmen September wandern und Kanufahren. Unser erster Ausflug war nach St. Petersburg, der zweite die heftigst gehypte Pirates of the Baltic Sea Cruise nach Stockholm inklusive Kostümparty, und schließlich Anfang Dezember das unvergleichliche Lappland. Gab aber auch Spanier, die nach Budapest geflogen sind.

Das einzige, was ein bisschen auf der Strecke blieb zwischen Lernen, Feiern und Reisen war der Sport. Ich war zwar ab und zu bei uns im Wald laufen, aber weder bin ich ins beliebte Fitnessstudio noch hab ich Futsal oder Floorball ausprobiert. Aber durch die Sauna und das gesunde (Mensa-) Essen bleibt man schon fit genug. Außerdem gibt's die tolle Yrjonkatu-Schwimmhalle in der Nähe des Hauptbahnhofs.

Schließlich sollte man sich klar machen, ob man die totale Erasmuserfahrung erleben will. Es herrscht eine entspannte und glückliche Grundstimmung, die Paarungsverhalten sehr locker sieht. Wer vergeben ist, sollte sich dessen bewusst sein. Leider gab es viele, die trotz Beziehung Erasmus in vollen Zügen genossen. Macht das vorher mit euch klar und redet mit eurem Partner, so kann es schnell sehr unschön und traurig werden.

Auch wenn jeder, der länger als drei Monate bleibt, theoretisch verpflichtet ist, sich als Einwohner zu registrieren, müsst ihr euch nicht bei der Polizei melden (wie schon in anderen Erfahrungsberichten geschrieben). Welche Auswirkungen es bei zwei Semestern gibt, kann ich euch nicht sagen.



## 5. Fazit (beste und schlechteste Erfahrung)

Meine schönste Erfahrung war neben Lappland das Sitsit von Pykälä. Die finnischen Studenten kochen ein Drei-Gänge-Menü und bedienen, es gibt ausreichend Getränke und lustige Lieder in einer tollen Atmosphäre mit vielen Erasmusstudenten und Finnen. Die schlechteste Erfahrung war, dass alles so schnell wieder vorbei war. Es gibt keinen Grund, nicht Erasmus zu machen. Viel Spaß in Helsinki, moi moi!

P.S.: Die Erfahrungsberichte, die online stehen, sind sehr informativ, umfassend und immer noch aktuell. Deswegen gibt's jetzt noch eine Liste mit Nützlichem in Englisch (von meiner Tutorin). Danke, da ist alles dabei. Ihr werdet sowieso viel zu viel Deutsch sprechen und damit euren nichtdeutschen(gerade holländischen) Freunden oft auf den Keks gehen. Außerdem sollte euer Englisch ja auch nicht von deutschem Dialekt gefärbt sein. Eure nichtdeutschen Freunde werden es euch danken. Ole hyvä!



by Laura Kuusela with help from Mira Karppanen :)

## PRACTICAL INFORMATION ABOUT UH & HELSINKI & FINLAND

See also the **Orientation Handbook** by UH – lots of useful information!

### ACCOMMODATION

- **HOAS**: Foundation for Student Housing in the Helsinki Region (also on Facebook) Here you can see a **list of the furniture** that will be in your HOAS room/flat. Note that the rent does *not* include things such as pillows, blankets, bed linen, towels, dishes or cutlery. You will have to bring your own or buy those things in Finland.\* I would recommend going to an **Ikea** (either the one in Espoo or Vantaa) – there are free Ikea buses from the city centre to both stores and back so you won't get lost, they sell everything you'll need, the stuff is cheap and you can buy as many forks or towels or glasses as you want instead of one huge set. For prices: check here for the bed stuff, here for towels and here for dishes and cutlery. Unfortunately the Ikea site is in Finnish only. If you dislike the idea of buying new things just for your (relatively short) stay, you could try looking for used stuff, especially cheap plates and cutlery, at the **Reuse Centre**. Close to the shop in Hietalahti you will also find a **flea market** in a square called Hietalahdentori (open Mon-Fri 8-18, Sat 8-16, Sun 10-16) – it could be worth looking at in search of cheap stuff. \* With the exception of Domus Academica where you can rent a pillow and blanket etc. Also it may happen that the previous tenant has left stuff such as dishes and cutlery in the room.

- **Electricity**: Most European electrical plugs will work fine in Finland. If you're from the UK, you will need to bring an adapter. More info here.

- **Drinking water**: Tap water in Finland is very clean and pure. No need to buy bottled water – tap water actually tastes better!

- **Warm water** never runs out. Good news for those of you who like to take long showers.

- You can throw **toilet paper** in the toilet in Finland. But please, don't throw *anything* else in there.

- Registering your **right of residence**: All EU citizens staying in Finland for longer than three months will need to do this at the local police station. First you will have to make an appointment online. When you go to the police station, bring a valid ID and other documents (see page 55 of the Orientation Handbook) with you. I will show you how to make an appointment and how to go to the station.

– Houses in Finland can get **cold** in winter. I have no experience of any of the HOAS buildings, but if you get cold easily you might want to consider buying an extra blanket.

### ACTIVITIES

- **UniSport**: The cheapest **gym membership** you'll ever find in Helsinki. There are gyms and group training in all campuses, also in English! Some locations even have a sauna – an experience you shouldn't miss in Finland. Bring your own padlock for the lockers in the changing rooms.

- **Finnkino**: the biggest **cinema** chain in Finland Going to the movies is not especially cheap in Finland. However, about once a month there is an event called "Superday" in all Finnkino cinemas when you can get movie tickets for 6,50€ each. They'll announce it on the website beforehand. In Finland no foreign movies get dubbed (except for ones for kids, but there is always an original version too) because we're such a small nation, so it's easy to find movies in English, or even in some other foreign languages.

- **HelMet**: the site for city **libraries** in the Helsinki area You will need a Finnish personal identity code to get a library card. Anyone can go to any library to read books and magazines (they have a wide selection), though.

- **Visithelsinki.fi** is a good source of information for all kinds of activities in and around Helsinki: sports, nature, shopping, sights...

- **Spotted by Locals** has "insider tips" written by Helsinki locals.

- Looking for **events** in Helsinki? Check these sites to see what's happening in the city: [visithelsinki.fi](http://visithelsinki.fi) (in English) [stadissa.fi](http://stadissa.fi) (in Finnish) [metro.fi](http://metro.fi) (in Finnish) [meteli.net](http://meteli.net) for all kinds of music (in Finnish) [yelp.fi](http://yelp.fi) (in Finnish)
- **Bars and nightlife**: [yossa.fi](http://yossa.fi) – see bars on the map and recommended events [yelp.fi](http://yelp.fi) (in Finnish)

## CULTURE, SOCIETY AND HABITS

- **Yle: news** from Finland in English
- **Safety**: Finland in general is a very safe place. Even I as a small-sized girl find myself walking alone in the town centre in the middle of night quite often, feeling perfectly safe 95% of the time. Of course it's smart to be cautious when you're alone, avoid trouble with people and never get too drunk to make it back home. I spend most of my time in central Helsinki where streets are well-lit and there are usually people around, but it might get a bit sketchier as you go farther from the town centre. One place I would absolutely avoid during night-time is the Kaisaniemi park (*Kaisaniemen puisto*) just east of the main railway station. It's totally safe during daytime but poorly lit at night with some bushes you can conveniently drag someone into.
- **Pickpockets** haven't been an issue in Helsinki but there have been more of them during the past few years. Take care of your bag/wallet/phone etc. in crowded trams and buses, bars and nightclubs – and don't leave your laptop alone while you go get coffee at the university library, even though everyone seems to be doing just that. Other than those places, it's quite unlikely anyone will take your stuff. The exception to the rule is bike theft, which is pretty common, although traditionally Finland has been the kind of country where you can leave a bike unlocked in the street and it'll still be there when you come back.
- Finnish conception of **time**: Finns are generally fans of punctuality. It is frowned upon to be late for meetings – even among friends. At the university, '9:00' in a schedule means nine o'clock sharp, whereas '9' means the lecture/class/meeting etc. begins at roughly 9:15.
- **Drinking** alcohol in public is forbidden (except for parks etc. if you don't cause trouble for others). People still do it, but the police might ask you to stop.

## FINNISH

- **Finnish language courses** for exchange students at UH: There are 4 ECTS beginner courses for exchange students both in autumn and in spring. Registration is on September 2-4.
- **Sanakirja.org**: a Finnish **web dictionary** that supports many languages
- **Verbix**: This site will conjugate Finnish verbs for you.

## FOOD AND DRINKS

- **UniCafe**: These **student cafeterias** operated by the Student Union of the University of Helsinki are an easy option for a cheap (but not always super tasty) lunch. At least one of them (called Ylioppilasaukio, in the city centre) is open on Saturdays, too, once the term begins. There are several different choices of food every day, also vegetarian. Note: *maukkaasti* ("tastily") on the menu means it's a more expensive meal (4,10€ for students with the student card), *edullisesti* ("inexpensively") that it's the standard price (2,50€ for students with the student card).
- **Rafla**, the student cafeteria at the Aalto University School of Economics and **Hanken**, the student cafeteria at the Swedish-speaking Hanken School of Economics: These two are located right next to each other in the Kamppi area very close to the city center. With the student card you can get lunch for the same price as at the UniCafe cafeterias, but the food in these places is noticeably better (in my opinion) – plus you get to admire well-dressed business students while you eat. Definitely worth checking out, especially if you like pizza, because Hanken serves that every Friday.
- **Musiikkitalo**: There is also a similarly priced student lunch every weekday at the new Music Centre. The venue is a lot fancier than any UniCafe you'll find and the bread is better. The



location is very central, right opposite the Parliament House.

- **eat.fi** puts the restaurants in Helsinki on a map where you can easily see which places are currently open. You can search by type of food/rating/price etc. and read reviews by other users.

- **Grocery stores** are often open late in the evening and some even 24/7 because the opening hours of small stores aren't regulated by law. Small stores are also usually open during public holidays (although they might have unusual opening hours) whereas bigger

ones are closed. Some of the most popular chains are: **Alepa** – small shops, some of which are open 24 hours a day (Eliel, Hämeentie and Mannerheimintie 102 in central Helsinki), the rest usually 7-23 Mon-Sat and 10-23 on Sundays

**Siwa** – even tinier in size than Alepa, similar opening hours **Valintatalo** – a lot like the first two

**S-market** – these are usually a bit bigger with wider selection and have shorter opening hours (such as 7-21 during the week, 7-18 on Saturdays and 12-18 on Sundays)

**K-kaupat** ('K-shops') vary in size and concept from smaller K-extra and K-market (similar to Siwa/Alepa) to bigger K-supermarket. They

are generally a tad more expensive than Alepa/S-market. **Prisma** is equivalent to big K-supermarkets, though a bit cheaper, I

suppose. There is a huge one in Kannelmäki and smaller ones in Itäkeskus, Malmi and Viikki.

**Lidl** is obviously one of the cheapest options. See a list of locations here.

- **Alko** is the state-owned **liquor store** in Finland. Regular stores are only allowed to sell mild alcoholic drinks (beer, cider), so for anything else (wine, spirits) Alko is your only option. The opening hours are quite limited (9-20 on

weekdays, 9-18 on Saturdays and closed on Sundays), so remember to shop beforehand if you want to drink champagne in bed on a Sunday morning. The staff are usually very helpful and can recommend (cheap but good) wines etc.

## MONEY

- **Bank account:** I have been told that some exchange students don't open a Finnish bank account and still manage just fine. My guess is, though, that getting a bank account will make your life here a bit easier. Some of the largest banks are called Nordea, Osuuspankki, Danske Bank, Aktia and LähiTapiola. To open a bank account you will need to bring several documents – see more information about this on page 80 of the Orientation Handbook and the New Students webpage.

- The general **price level** in Finland is high. Most everything is expensive compared to other countries, especially alcohol.

- The 1 cent and 2 cent euro **coins** aren't in use in Finland. The final price is rounded to the closest 5 cents when paying in cash.

- It is possible to pay with **card** (debit or credit) almost everywhere. One exception is buying tickets in buses and trams (though you can pay with card using a ticket machine, but only a few stations have those).

- **Tipping** is not customary. Everything is included in the prices listed at cafés and restaurants and no one will expect you to tip.

## STUDENT LIFE

- **Pykälä** for exchange students: the **Finnish law students' association** in Helsinki Here you will find a brief explanation on what Pykälä is and does, and instructions on how to subscribe to the **Pykälä-English mailing list** for exchange students. At the end of the page you can see the contact details of the international executive of Pykälä – he's a nice guy so don't hesitate to

ask him if you have any questions. Unfortunately the rest of the site is in Finnish only, but do check the photo gallery if you want to find pictures of yourself partying. Sometimes that's the last thing you want to do, though.

- **ELSA** Helsinki: the European Law Students' Association in Helsinki The English site is very poor but you can subscribe to their **mailing list**.

- **ESN**: the Erasmus Student Network in Helsinki See instructions on how to join their **mailing lists**.

- **HYY**: the Student Union of the University of Helsinki You can read HYY's **Freshman Guide** here. It's a good way of finding out what HYY is about.

– Finland has its own **student culture** with traditional events, activities and even clothing. You won't be able to avoid seeing people wear ugly **overalls** with badges sewn on them – they are the party uniform of an academic student.

– Different student associations have their own traditional events, but some things are popular in many places: **sitsit** is a dinner party where students sit down to eat, drink and sing. **Pub crawl** type of events are also popular and the biggest ones attract people from universities around the country. The biggest student event of the year is **vappu**, May 1<sup>st</sup> (although the celebrations begin on the previous day). In Finland it has traditionally been a day of labourers and academic people. You will see lots of people wearing their white high school graduation caps.

– Although partying and drinking is very popular, there are also many **clubs** at both Pykälä and HYY you can join – you are likely to find like-minded people whether you're interested in bicycles, films, skiing, wine-tasting, golf, singing... At Pykälä many of the activities are open for anyone to attend without having to belong to a club.

– A relatively new but well-established tradition in several faculties is producing a student made musical called **spex**. Pykälä's 17<sup>th</sup> spex will be performed this year, and even if you don't speak Finnish you are welcome to participate – in addition to actors and dancers, people are needed to play in the band, put together stage props etc. I'm one of the people in charge of the makeup and costumes team this year, so feel free to ask me more about spex if you're interested in joining the crew!

## STUDYING

- The **orientation course**: your schedule for the first week at UH!

- There is free **wireless internet** at the university. You can log in with your ID and password once you get them and use your own laptop/tablet/phone. The most common use for this is Facebook, obviously.

- For **practical questions**, contact me or the International Exchange Services at [erasmus@helsinki.fi](mailto:erasmus@helsinki.fi)

- For **questions about law courses**, contact the study secretary Mervi Muru at [law-incomingstudents@helsinki.fi](mailto:law-incomingstudents@helsinki.fi)

- **Student services** is located in the Main Building at Fabianinkatu 33. See the link for opening hours and the services they offer. You can also email them at [studentinfo@helsinki.fi](mailto:studentinfo@helsinki.fi)

- **WebOodi**: This is where you sign up for courses and exams and keep track of your studies. It is extremely important to sign up before the deadlines!

- **Moodle**: the "virtual learning environment" of UH Sometimes used for giving and returning assignments or distributing course material.

- **Helka**: the university library database Here you can search for books at the university libraries (as well as online books), make reservations etc. You can also pay your fee online when you've "forgotten" to return books in time.

- **Nelli**: a website through which you can access several databases

- **VPN portal**: Use this to access your files stored in the university network when you're not

connected to it (e.g. when you're at home).

- **Uni Webmail:** Use this to read the messages you get to your @helsinki.fi address.
- **Flamma:** Here you can log in to several sites listed above, such as WebOodi and Webmail, all at once. Also works with UniSport.
- **Helsinki University library:** opening hours, rules, online reservations for group facilities (great for when you need a quiet space to work on a group project) etc. You can get a library card by presenting an official ID at the library.
- **The Open University** in Helsinki

## TRANSPORT

- **Helsinki Region Transport** (aka HRT, or HSL as Finnish speaking people know it) Here you can find information on the public transport in Helsinki and the surrounding areas – timetables, tickets, prices etc. I strongly recommend that everyone buys a **Travel Card** and loads a **season ticket**, no matter where in Helsinki you live. As a student you will get a 50% discount, and a season ticket is cheaper than paying for each journey separately if you take the bus/metro/tram more than four times a week – and believe me, you probably will, because the public transport in Helsinki is very convenient to use, and you *will* be tempted to take a tram when it's -20 degrees outside, even if it's only two stops. With a season ticket you can travel as much as you want for about 20 euros per month. See the price calculator for more exact info. You will need some documents from the university to obtain the student discount, so we will go get those together during the Welcome Fair and I will show you where you can buy the Travel Card. I advise against travelling without a valid ticket, because if you get caught, you will have to pay a penalty fare of 80 euros.

- **Journey Planner:** Insert date, time, your starting point and where you want to go and the site will tell you which bus, tram, metro or boat you should take. Try searching with "Helsinki-Vantaa airport" and your address in Helsinki! Note that especially buses often run late, and sometimes the public transport in the Helsinki area just gets stuck – expect this to happen when the first real snowfall occurs in winter. It's such a surprise every year, of course it results in chaos!

- There are smartphone apps that work similarly to the Journey Planner. For Windows Phone users I'd recommend Reitti – it doesn't cost anything and has worked well for me. For iPhones there seems to be a free app called ReittiGPS Lite, but I have no personal experience of this one.

- **Cycling** is the fastest way to get around in central Helsinki. The downside is that the cycling season only really lasts until October or so – although there are people who keep cycling to work throughout the winter, but that's not something I'd recommend for you. Seeing as it's already almost September, it might not be worth it getting a bike of your own, unless you can find a cheap one. It's of course possible to rent a bike for a couple of hours or a day (just google "Helsinki bike rental"). The Journey Planner has a separate version for cycling and walking - picking "Helsinki Scenic Routes" on the left hand side menu could help you plan a **cycling or walking tour**.

- **Taxis** in Helsinki are trustworthy but expensive. In Helsinki, call 0100 0700 (or +3581000700 if you don't have a Finnish phone operator) for a taxi, or alternatively 01007777 (+3581007777), which will connect you directly to the closest free taxi.

- **VR** – Finnish state railways Taking the **train** is an easy option if you want to travel outside the metropolitan area. Check the website for timetables etc. You can also purchase tickets online. If you have the student card, you will get a student discount of 45-55% depending on the route and time of departure. There are also special offers every now and then.

- Check out Matkahuolto and Onnibus for **long distance buses**. Matkahuolto tends to be more expensive than the train while Onnibus has very cheap fares but a smaller selection of routes.

- **Flying** is often the most expensive way of travelling from one Finnish town to another.

However, if you want to go to Lapland (the northern part of Finland), flying can actually be cheaper than taking the train, and it might be worth it paying a bit more for the quick journey in any case. This is a good site for finding the cheapest plane tickets, although it is in Finnish only. Feel free to ask me for help if needed.

– **Travelling outside of Finland** – these are some of the closest destinations from Helsinki:

**Tallinn, Estonia:** Only some two hours by ferry from Helsinki, Tallinn is a good option for a day trip (although the hotels aren't expensive either if you want to spend the night there). It's a pretty medieval town, quite different from Helsinki and definitely cheaper. That's why it's common for Finnish people to come back from Tallinn with a car full of liquor. You can get tickets to Tallinn and back for less than 40 euros. Compare prices of Tallink, Eckerö Line, Viking Line and Linda Line to get the best deal for you.

**Stockholm, Sweden:** Another popular destination of Finnish travellers. The ferry will you take you there overnight, either from Helsinki or Turku. You can book a cruise (two nights on the ship, one day in Stockholm) or individual journeys there and back if you want to spend the night in Stockholm. Viking Line and Silja Line both operate daily. A cruise can cost as little as 20 euros per person when you book for several people in the same (4 person) cabin, so it might be worth it asking your friends to come along!

**St. Petersburg, Russia:** You will need a visa if you want to travel to Russia. Information on getting a visa here. VR offers a train service to St. Petersburg and there are also cruises, some of which don't require a visa because you won't be staying overnight – or so I have heard, I have not verified this!

## UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI

- **New students** at UH: lots of useful information (also on Facebook)
- The **main website** of UH, and on Facebook
- The **faculty of law** at UH
- **Campus maps:** Check what the city campus looks like and where you can find all the different buildings.

## + MISCELLANEOUS

- **Phone: The emergency number in Finland is 112.** The easiest way to use your own phone in Finland is to buy a **prepaid phone card**. You can get these at kiosks called **R-kioski** – they are *everywhere* and you'll easily recognise them from the blue and yellow logo. You will have to buy some kind of starter package that includes a SIM card and X euros worth of calling time / text messages. You can go to an R-kioski later to buy more. Using your phone is relatively cheap in Finland but you might still want to ask about the differences between the several telecom companies and compare the prices. Sometimes they have special offers you can take advantage of.

Things to ask when you're buying your card:

- What is the cost of the starter package and what is included in it?
- What are the costs of calling and text messages?
- What is the cost of mobile data?
- What is the cost of calling abroad from Finland?
- Does the prepaid card work when you are abroad? Good to know if you plan to visit Sweden, Estonia, Russia or somewhere else during your stay.
- Can you buy more calling time etc. online or will you have to visit R-kioski every time?

- The Finnish **postal service:** for prices, post office locations etc. The letter boxes in Finland are tall and orange.

- For **weather information**, check Foreca or the Finnish Meteorological Institute. This map could also be useful.

- **Finnish Student Health Service**: Free\* healthcare for the members of the Student Union. \* Only the dentist costs something, see this page for more information.