

# Countries Around the World™

## Estonia

### Program Summary

Meet Marie. She and her family live in Tallinn, the capital of Estonia. Join Marie as she hunts for a birthday present for her mother. While she strolls around the city, students will learn about Estonia's government, the ethnic and religious makeup of the population and traditional Estonian crafts, like amber jewelry and juniper-wood trinkets, in addition to visiting a pastry shop to gaze at the figurines made from marzipan. Once she rejoins her family, Marie heads out to the countryside to have a picnic and explore replicas of old farmhouses before walking along the beach at the Baltic Sea. Experience the importance of language to the Estonian national identity when Marie sings as part of a choir at a ceremony celebrating the release of a book about the Estonian alphabet. Finally, Marie and her family dine at an authentic Estonian restaurant before attending the ballet at one of Tallinn's many theaters.

### Country Information

- **location:** Eastern Europe, bordering the Baltic Sea and Gulf of Finland; bordered by Latvia and Russia
- **capital:** Tallinn
- **official language:** Estonian
- **type of government:** parliamentary republic
- **total area:** approximately 45,226 sq km
- **climate:** maritime and wet, with moderate winters and cool summers
- **terrain:** marshy with lowlands; flat in the North, hilly in the South
- **natural resources:** includes oil shale, peat, phosphorite, clay, limestone, sand, dolomite, arable land and sea mud
- **industries:** includes engineering, electronics, wood and wood products, textile, information technology and telecommunications
- **agricultural products:** includes potatoes, vegetables, livestock, dairy products and fish

### Vocabulary

**Cyrillic** — An alphabet used for certain Slavic languages, such as Russian, which is spoken in Estonia.

**juniper** — Any of various evergreen trees or shrubs that have needlelike, often pointed leaves and aromatic, bluish-gray, berrylike, seed-bearing cones.

**amber** — A yellowish-brown fossil made from tree sap that has hardened over millions of years.

**resin** — A viscous substance that comes from plants.

**Baltic** — Referring to the countries of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Also refers to the Baltic Sea.

**annex** — To incorporate into a country the territory of another.

**marzipan** — A candy made from almond paste and sugar that is often molded into various forms, such as figurines.

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**kroon** — The currency of Estonia.

**thatch** — A mix of straw, leaves and grass that is used to make a roof.

**larder** — A place where food is stored; usually a pantry or cellar.

### Pre-viewing Discussion

- Discuss the importance of forests and how they relate to the lives of students. Lead a discussion by asking questions such as: What are some different kinds of forests? How many products come from plants and trees? What do you use in your daily life that comes from plants or trees? What do you think would happen if there were no more forests? Have students be on the lookout for references to forests and how they relate to Estonia in the program.
- Provide students with an outline map of northeastern Europe. Have students label Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, also known as the Baltic States, and the surrounding countries. Students can answer questions like: Which countries border the Baltic States? Which major bodies of water touch Estonia and the other Baltic States? What do you think the climate of Estonia is like, based on its location?
- Over the centuries, Estonia has been occupied and had to fight for its independence. Discuss the concept of freedom and independence as it relates to both nations and people. What does it mean to be free? What are some freedoms that you enjoy? What are some examples of people fighting for freedom in the United States? In other countries? What do you think your life would be like if you weren't free?

### Follow-up Activities

- Estonia's flag is a field of three differently colored bars with each color representing an aspect of Estonian culture. Have students design flags using the same pattern as the Estonian one but with colors of their own choosing. Students can write captions explaining why they chose the colors they did, and what they represent.
- Marie visits a confectioner and peruses the elaborate candies made from marzipan. In groups, students can determine the ingredients they would add to marzipan, (chocolate, powdered sugar, etc.), to make the perfect candy. Using clay in place of almond paste, and craft items in place of the special ingredients, students can sculpt their own "marzipan" candy figurines for display in the classroom.
- Amber is a common component of jewelry found in Estonia. Students will have fun designing and creating their own pieces of amber jewelry utilizing colored beads in place of amber.
- Make a "word code" using the Cyrillic alphabet and its corresponding letter in the Roman alphabet. Students can write messages to each other and decode them. Not all letters in the Cyrillic alphabet directly coordinate to the Roman letters, so encourage students to be creative! To find a transliteration from the Cyrillic alphabet to the Roman one, visit the following site: [www.du.edu/langlit/russian/alpha.htm](http://www.du.edu/langlit/russian/alpha.htm).
- In the show, Marie tells us that it's a major event when a book is released about the Estonian alphabet. Students can work together to make a class "alphabet book" on what they learned about Estonia. Assign each student a letter and the task to come up with an illustration and informational caption that corresponds with his or her letter.
- Students can learn basic words and phrases in Estonian, the official language of Estonia. As a resource, visit: [www.speakestonian.co.uk/](http://www.speakestonian.co.uk/). This site has sections on how to talk about the weather and telling time and what to say in an emergency, among other things, and each section has a general questions and subsequent possible responses related to the topic. Have students pick a topic and practice asking and answering questions in Estonian.

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- Estonia is part of the Baltic States along with Latvia and Lithuania. Have students find facts about the culture, customs, food, dress, population and languages of Latvia and Lithuania. Students can create a Venn diagrams that compare and contrast Estonia with Lithuania. Students can share their findings with the class.

## Suggested Internet Resources

- [www.estonica.org/](http://www.estonica.org/)  
Created by the Estonian Institute, this site presents information about Estonia's history, culture, geography and economy.
- [www.vm.ee/estonia/](http://www.vm.ee/estonia/)  
This site, by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia, includes comprehensive information about Estonia's history, culture, people and traditions.
- [www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov)  
The CIA World Factbook web site presents detailed and up-to-date information on Estonia and many other countries. Topics include geography, people, government, economy, transportation and communication. On the main page of the CIA site, click on the "World Factbook" link.

## Suggested Print Resources

- Hiiepuu, Ene and Piret Hiisjarv. *Looking at Estonia*. The Oliver Press, Minneapolis, MN; 2006.
- Keding, Dan. *Stories of Hope and Spirit: Folktales from Eastern Europe*. August House, Atlanta, GA; 2004.

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