

Countries Around the World™

Finland

Program Summary

Meet Aliisa. She and her family live near Helsinki, the capital of Finland. Join Aliisa as she and her mother prepare for a trip to their *mokki*, a type of cabin, in the countryside. But before Aliisa goes, she heads to Helsinki to look for a present for her father's birthday. Along the way, students will catch a glimpse of two of Finland's prominent geographic features: forests and lakes. Once in Helsinki, Aliisa and her mother introduce students to aspects of Finland's religious heritage and history with a visit to the Cathedral of Helsinki and a stroll past the Presidential Palace. Next, Aliisa and her mother browse the various outdoor shops found in Market Square, where they buy some fish, a Finnish staple, before checking out a stand that sells items representative of the Sami people, an indigenous people who live in the North. Finally, Aliisa and her mother travel to the countryside where they reunite with the rest of their family and partake of a favorite Finnish pastime — relaxing in a steamy, hot sauna!

Country Information

- **location:** Northern Europe, bordering the Baltic Sea, Gulf of Bothnia, and Gulf of Finland; bordered by Norway, Sweden and Russia
- **capital:** Helsinki
- **official languages:** Finnish and Swedish
- **type of government:** republic
- **total area:** approximately 338,145 sq km
- **climate:** cold temperate; potentially sub-arctic, but comparatively mild because of the moderating influence of the North Atlantic current, Baltic Sea, and more than 60,000 lakes
- **terrain:** mostly low, flat to rolling plains, interspersed with lakes and low hills
- **natural resources:** includes timber, iron ore, copper, lead, zinc, chromite, nickel, gold, silver and limestone
- **industries:** includes metals and metal products, electronics, machinery and scientific instruments, shipbuilding, pulp and paper, foodstuffs, chemicals, textiles and clothing
- **agricultural products:** includes barley, wheat, sugar beets, potatoes, dairy cattle and fish

Vocabulary

mokki — A wooden cabin traditionally used for recreational purposes by Finns.

roe — Fish eggs.

Sami — Also known as “Lapp.” A member of an indigenous, nomadic people of a herding tradition, living in northern Scandinavia. Also refers to the language spoken by these people.

Eduskunta — The parliament of Finland.

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European Union (EU) — A family of democratic European countries that are committed to working together for peace and prosperity. Finland is a member of the European Union.

euro — The currency of Finland and several other member countries of the European Union.

sauna — A Finnish steam bath in which the steam is produced by pouring water over heated rocks.

Pre-viewing Discussion

- Provide students with an outline map of the countries of Scandinavia. Have students find and label Finland and its capital along with the other countries of Scandinavia and their capitals. Have students answer questions, like: Which countries border Finland? How much of Finland is above the Arctic Circle? What kind of landforms make up Scandinavia? Which Scandinavian country, or countries, is not a part of a peninsula? Do you think the people of Finland have anything in common with people in the other countries? If so, what?
- Lead a discussion about what constitutes a “place of interest.” What makes a particular place worth seeing? What are some places that you would consider fun to visit? As a class, have students compile a list of criteria for designating something a “place of interest.” As students watch this program, invite them to consider how the tour of Finland meets the list of student-created criteria.
- Discuss what makes places different from each other. Begin by having students brainstorm a list of things that they think make places unique. Follow up with questions, such as: How is climate a factor in defining an area? How are land formations or bodies of water factors? Are people a part of making a place unique? How? How would you characterize the place where you live? What makes it unique? As they prepare to watch the program, ask students to predict how Finland is different from their communities. After the program, follow up by asking students to compare their predictions about Finland with what was shown. What are some of the things that were different? Was there anything that was similar to where you live?

Follow-up Activities

- Finland is sometimes referred to as “the Land of a Thousand Lakes” or “the Land of the Midnight Sun,” nicknames that reflect Finnish geography. Based on the information from the program and other sources, ask students what nicknames they would give Finland. Next, students can have fun investigating the nicknames of the 50 states and discovering their origins. Then, have students come up with new nicknames for the states based on their geographic features. As an extension, students can design and make license plates that feature their new state nicknames and images representing those states’ geographies.
- The *mokki* is a fixture in the Finnish countryside, and many Finns love to spend time relaxing in these cozy, wooden cabins. Have students investigate different types of *mokki* and compare them with the places where they live. Students can draw floor plans and even build models of their own *mokki*.
- Outdoor markets in Finland are lively places where people go to shop and socialize. Students can pretend that they are entrepreneurs looking to open a stand at an outdoor market in Finland. Divide the class into small groups and have students come up with a list of things that would be sold at a Finnish market, using information from the show and other sources. Students can give their business a Finnish name and come up with a price list for their items that features prices in both euros and U.S. dollars. Then, using various props, have students set up their stands and role play as both merchants and vendors in a Finnish market.

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- Forests cover much of Finland, with coniferous trees, like pines and spruce, as well as deciduous trees, such as birch, aspen, maple, alder and linden. Have students compare and contrast coniferous and deciduous trees. Students can sketch examples of each type of tree and label key parts. Students can also investigate what kinds of animals live in the forests, and look for differences in the populations of coniferous and deciduous forests.
- In 2002, Finland switched from the Finnish markka to the euro, the currency of many countries that are a part of the European Union. But while many countries use the euro as their currency, each nation personalizes its money with pictures and symbols representative of its heritage and culture. Have students investigate the symbols on the Finnish euro coins to discover their significance by visiting www.ibiblio.org/theeuro/files/files.nat/finland.s02.htm. Students can then pretend that they have been tasked by the U.S. Treasury Department with redesigning American coins. Have students design and create their own coin sets that use pictures and symbols representative of the United States.
- Finland is considered a part of Scandinavia. Have students investigate the similarities and differences among the Scandinavian countries. Students can present their findings in the form of a Venn diagram. Consider watching the shows on Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Iceland in this series.
- The Sami are an indigenous people who live in the northern regions of Finland and have their own language, customs and culture. Invite students to discover more about the Sami people by visiting virtual.finland.fi/netcomm/news/showarticle.asp?intNWSAID=25786. As a class, have students collect facts and images and create a display about the Sami.
- Read Aaron Shepard's retelling of an old Finnish folktale, *The Maiden of Northland: A Hero Tale of Finland* (Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, 1996), to the class. Then, have students recreate this story in the classroom by acting it out. This can be done as a puppet show, a mime skit, a student play, etc. Divide the students into small groups and have each one prepare its own production by choosing a format and thinking about the story's elements of character, setting and plot. After each group performs, conduct a question and answer session in which the students talk about why they chose to retell *The Maiden of Northland* in the ways that they did. As an extension, discuss how *The Maiden of Northland* compares to other folktales and stories about heroes that the students have read.

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- Saunas in Finland use heated stones to create steam, but are there things that might be better at absorbing heat? Conduct an experiment to find out how well different materials conduct and hold heat. Visit www.juliantrubin.com/encyclopedia/physics/heat_absorption.html for an experiment testing heat absorption. As a class, students can generate a list of materials to test for their heat absorption, including stones, and have them bring those materials to class. During the experiment, students can record the data, and afterwards, make charts that compare how well the different materials held heat. Discuss the results and determine if using stones for a sauna is the best option.

Suggested Internet Resources

- virtual.finland.fi/
Discover Finland and what it is like to live there! This web site by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs showcases the geography, politics, history, economy, people and art of Finland.
- www.projectfinland.org/
This site, developed by the Embassy of Finland, allows children to experience Finland's society, culture and environment firsthand. Please note: this site requires that students register and log in using a nickname. It is important to remind students never to give out personal information online.
- www.cia.gov
The CIA World Factbook web site presents detailed and up-to-date information on Finland 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

- Hutchison, Linda. *Modern Nations of the World: Finland*. Lucent Books, Farmington Hills, MI; 2004.
- Lemke, Donald B. *Finland: A Question and Answer Book*. Capstone Press, Mankato, MN; 2005.
- Tan, Chung Lee. *Finland*. Marshall Cavendish, Tarrytown, NY; 2007.

Teacher's Guide written by Brian Wales, Curriculum Specialist, Schlessinger Media

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