

Weekend Blueprint

Tallinn

Medieval Masterpiece





Contents

Baltic Treasury A personal view of Tallinn, from Andrew B. Flint	04
Highlights & Weekend Blueprint A perfectly-planned weekend exploring cobbled streets, shady parks and fading echoes of a more sinister Soviet past...	07
Hotels Take your break in style, tranquillity and comfort	11
Eat & Drink Authentic atmosphere, local flavours, outright excellence	15
Practical details Planning, travel, maps etc.	17

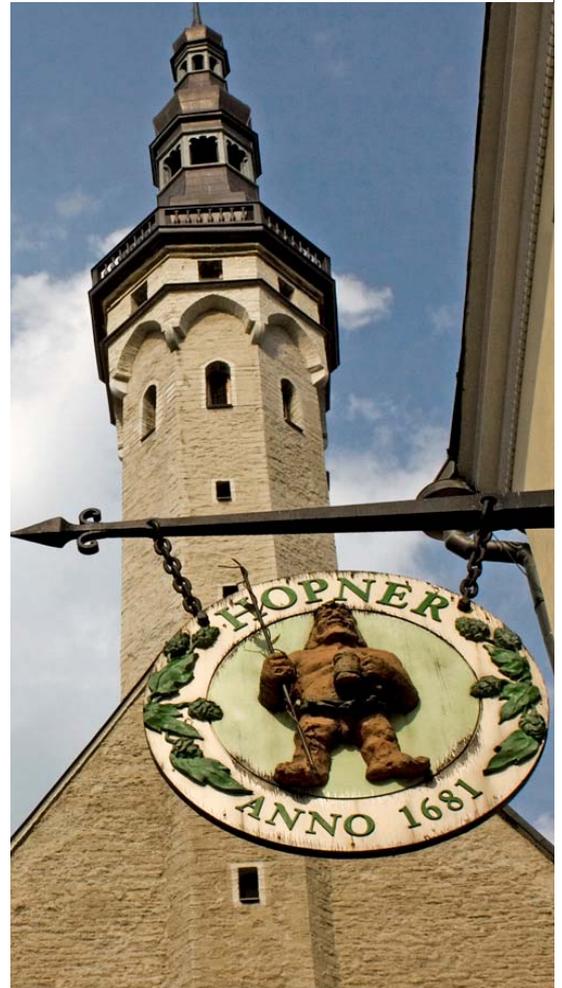
Location	Estonia
Style	Discovery
Setting	Urban
Energy	Gently Active
When to go	May-Sept, December



Front cover: Oleviste Church (Europe's tallest medieval building), Lower Town.
Top: Toom Church, Upper Town; **Rear cover:** Tallinn Old Town from tower of Oleviste Church



Clockwise from top:
'Wall of Sweaters', Soviet
troops march through
Tallinn (City Museum),
Olde Hansa waitress,
Town Hall, Keskturng
market, Alexander
Nevsky Cathedral





City walls from Upper Town

Baltic Treasury

...a personal view of Tallinn, from Andrew B. Flint

Superbly picturesque, the Medieval heart of Estonia's capital offers an all-enveloping window on life in one of the Baltic's great port cities hundreds of years ago. Beyond the walls, the history's more recent but no less fascinating.

On a corner of Town Hall Square, in the heart of Tallinn's Old Town, an unobtrusive chemist's shop plies its trade.

It's been on the same spot, quietly dispensing pills since 1421, ten years before the English burnt Joan of Arc at the stake. To the locals, that's no big deal. With medieval merchant dwellings by the streetload, and the spires of antique churches sprinkled across the skyline, history lies deeper here than anywhere else in Northern Europe.

Time capsule

Like many of the most fascinating destinations, Old Tallinn is a place where the clocks stopped ticking centuries ago: in its case, three - that's when St. Petersburg, Tallinn's Johnny-come-lately neighbour just up the coast, usurped its

trade and plunged the old Hanseatic port into suspended animation. Later Tallinn, along with the rest of Estonia, slipped into virtual invisibility when the country was folded involuntarily into the not-so-tender bosom of the Soviet Union. Hap-

“an extraordinary assemblage of cobbled thoroughfares and gabled houses”

pily, despite a 1950s 'near-miss' when the central planners were uncharacteristically overruled in their scheme to level the historic centre and erect dozens of grim Stalinist office blocks in its place, little much else happened until the 1990s. By

then the Estonians were back in charge, über-proud of their national heritage, and alert to the need to conserve their history. Tightly-controlled redevelopment has since restored most of the Old Town's formerly run-down buildings to new life as museums, boutique hotels, restaurants and chic apartments.

Old Town panorama

My favourite view comes as reward for the steep, sweaty toil up the tower of St. Olav's Church (at completion the tallest building in Medieval Europe). From the narrow catwalk at the base of the steeple the whole of the Old Town lies spread below you as an extraordinary assemblage of cobbled thoroughfares and gabled houses still surrounded by walls, battlements and over two dozen turreted towers. Directly beneath your feet Lai Street - for my money the handsomest in the city - stretches south to café-filled Raekoja

“Upper Town signified nobility: Lower Town meant filthy rich”

Plats (aka Town Hall Square). The former marketplace, this is the largest open space in the Old Town and the best spot for people-watching. Back atop St. Olav’s a glance half-right and ahead reveals Toompea Hill, rising almost to eye level, encircled by steep escarpments and yet more walls. Toompea’s flat hilltop holds Tallinn’s Upper Town where, since the city’s foundation, the ruling elite have lived and been buried and since 1991, Estonia’s parliament has sat once again. Wandering its few narrow streets the museum-like hush that comes with power and privilege remains readily felt.

Dropping your gaze from Toompea’s craggy outcropping, the wide ambit of the main city walls can be traced from the foot of the hill as a line of red-tiled pepper-pot towers swinging round to left and right. Their circuit marks out the Lower Town. Around one kilometre from end to end, this was the beating heart of Medieval Tallinn’s money-making machine. If an Upper Town residence signified nobility, an address on one of the Lower Town’s prime streets meant filthy rich.

Hansa superstar

To see where the cash for the fancy houses came from, walk round the steeple catwalk 180°. Off to the north Tallinn’s port sprawls along the shores of the choppy Baltic. Today the wharves and piers are a good half mile away, but in the Middle Ages the waves washed right up against the Old Town’s walls. In its glory days Tallinn was one of the wealthiest members of the mercantile Hanseatic League. Perfectly positioned, it grew fat as an entrepôt channelling furs, wax and honey from the vast Russian interior to the growing cities of Germany, Holland and England. Logically enough, the leading merchants – all Germans in accordance with Hansa rules - built their grand homes along key streets such as Lai, Pikk and Pühavaimu that linked the port to the Raekoja Plats market. Built to a common design, the houses contained lower floor chambers for the storage of goods, with the families living above so that the merchants could keep an eye (and ear) on their wares at all times.

In from the cold

Several years ago, when I first discovered Tallinn’s Old Town, my trip still had a whiff of the frontier. Tallinn was off the travel radar and Estonia was just one more obscure ex-Soviet bloc country few could place on a map. Now, of course, it’s one of the hottest hotspots of Eastern

Europe and travel is comfortable and thoroughly mainstream. Where once a smattering of hard-core backpackers chowed down at dreary Soviet-style canteens, today beautiful people sip their *lattes* beneath branded parasols, young couples cruise by in cycle rickshaws, and guidebooks run to editions in Japanese.

Tallinn’s surge in popularity is with good reason: the timeless beauty of its streetscapes is undiminished, while its characterful new hotels and smart modern restaurants make visiting both easy and comfortable. But regeneration has inevitably also brought a dilution of its specifically Estonian identity. The Old Town, in particular, has to some extent been internationalized and discerning a distinctively local resonance can be a challenge at times. Of course a true Estonian experience is still possible, even here. A recent highlight for me was dinner at Vanaaeme Juures restaurant, buried in a medieval vaulted cellar. Not only were the dishes dyed-in-the-wool Estonian (blood, guts and gore), but, despite past patronage by international celebrities, service and ambience remained cosily retro-provincial (not to say homely) in the classic quiet, understated Estonian way.

Beyond the walls

Nevertheless, for a real flavour of the country you should venture beyond the city walls. The easiest and best excursion





“mounds of cast-off clothing being rifled by diminutive pensioners”

an increasingly meddlesome and resurgent Moscow.

Perhaps the biggest eye-opener on my latest trip was a short walk I took starting at Raekoja Plats. In just 20 minutes I skipped through the glitzy malls and mirror-glass offices fringing the Old Town walls to reach a parallel universe of dreary Soviet-era apartment blocks daubed with Cyrillic graffiti. At their heart lay busy Keskurg market – and a world of sights and sounds that wouldn’t have been out of place east of the Urals. Under a ragged iron roof headscarf-swathed *babushka* market-traders gossiped vigorously in thickly-spoken Russian. Along with the expected fruit and veg (and ubiquitous buckets of home-made pickles) were mounds of old shoes and heaps of shoddy cast-off clothing being rifled by diminutive pensioners and toddler-toting mothers. Other stalls specialising in cannibalised washing-machine parts and packaging-free car radios – doubtless ‘liberated’ from their previous owners – were receiving equally rapt attention.

For the moment, both Estonias are hanging together, held out as the shining success amongst post-Soviet republics. But from a vantage point amongst the scrap piles of Keskurg this is obviously an unequal marriage. Admittedly it’s not for everyone, but if you are interested in Estonia’s more recent past (or that of Eastern Europe generally) I recommend making the effort to take a look under the tourist bonnet. Keskurg is great and handy, as is the seafront Soviet War Memorial – for a more melancholy experience. However, for a full-on confrontation with the region’s Cold War demons, a day-trip out to the former Soviet nuclear submarine base at Paldiski can’t be beaten. Make the trip soon as the authorities are working hard to erase all visible reminders of the town’s shocking past. But while it lasts, raw and immediate, the history is every bit as compelling as in the Old Town – if not quite as pretty.

© A.B. Flint.

Top Café society, Kadriorg Park
Bottom Paldiski—derelict Soviet barracks

is the short tram ride to genteel Kadriorg and its glorious, leafy park. Fanning out from traffic-laden Narva mnt, Weizenbergi and a handful of other tree-lined boulevards showcase to great effect the confidence of Estonia’s first period of independence back in the early 20th century. Grand wooden villas with proud porticos and rooflines bristling with gable windows stand behind rows of neatly painted railings. Long forlorn, most have now been fully restored as the homes of Estonia’s newly rich entrepreneurs and senior business leaders. Venturing a little further you come to Kadriorg Park itself. Originally the pleasure grounds of Tsar Peter the Great’s pocket palace, its shaded paths have long since been turned over to baby-strolling, lovers’ trysts, and

coffee and cakes in front of the fountains. Very European, very well cared for; this is Estonia at ease with itself. In the park’s far corner, the blade-sharp tower of the new KUMU modern art gallery couldn’t say it more clearly: “We’ve made it. We’re hip. We’re cool. We’re fully paid-up members of the West”.

Tale of two cities

And yet this is only half the story. Fifty per cent of Tallinners are ethnic Russians – grandsons and daughters of workers shipped in by Stalin. These are the losers in the new Estonia, barred by language and prejudice from good jobs or education. As they watch the salaries and aspirations of the native Estonians rise, tempers are beginning to fray – egged on by





Lower Town

Highlights

& Weekend Blueprint

Explore the cobblestone streets and centuries-old monuments of Tallinn's vibrant Hanseatic Old Town. For a different perspective, discover the leafy delights of Kadriorg and its Tsarist palace—or maybe move on to uncover darker echoes of the Soviet occupation.

Weekend Blueprint—London departures

- Thursday** Morning flight to Tallinn, arriving early afternoon. Short taxi transfer to the Old Town and hotel. After settling in, make for central Raekoja Plats for a first taste of the historic surroundings, and for a spot of people-watching over coffee—or perhaps a late lunch—at one of the open-air cafés. When ready, head off on foot up Toompea Hill to follow the walking tour of the Upper Town. Begin with a look round Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, also take in the scenic viewpoints (the best light is at start and end of day) and Toom Church.
- Friday** Spend the day getting to grips with the Lower Town. In the morning follow the Lower Town walking route for a good overview. If you're energetic the climb up the tower of Oleviste Church is very worthwhile for its 360° panorama of the city. In any case, stop at Maiaismokk Kohvik for a retro coffee and pastry. Following lunch, visit the City Museum for a dose of history. Afterwards, explore more fully any hidden nooks that took your fancy earlier or (window-)shop amongst the craft stalls and galleries. Either way, allow plenty of time to watch the world go by from a suitable café or two. Tonight is a good night for candlelit dinner (at, say, Bonaparte or Stenhus), or some dissipated revelry at Old Hansa (for all these get your hotel to make a reservation at latest on arrival).
- Saturday** Leave the Old Town behind. If you're intrigued by modern history visit the Occupation Museum in the morning then walk—or take a taxi—through the inner suburbs to earthy Keskurg market to bring the story bang up to date. Taxi back to the Old Town for lunch and then on to Rocca al Mare for an afternoon of fresh air. Alternatively, make a day trip outside Tallinn. One hour west and linked by frequent train, Paldiski is a fascinating town in transition still raw from the Cold War. Slightly further to the east, Lahemaa National Park offers exquisite Baltic German manor houses in a lushly pastoral setting (hire a car, charter a taxi or book a daylong-tour).
- Sunday** Sunday's great for a walk in the park. Take the tram from the stop beyond the Viru Gate—lines 1 or 3—and ask to be dropped at the start of Weizenbergi Avenue (or go by cab). From there stroll through the exclusive Kadriorg neighbourhood to reach Kadriorg Park. After enjoying the gardens and greenery visit Kadriorg Palace for its fabulous Great Hall and the recently-opened KUMU (nice terrace café). Fans of Soviet history should take a seafront walk beyond the park to reach the Soviet War Memorial, passing the National Songbowl en route. Return to the Old Town for a lazy lunch and final wander around before heading to the airport and early evening flight home.

Regional
& Irish

Tailor the London blueprint to suit your specific requirements.

Highlights

THURSDAY PM

1 Upper Town

A citadel within a citadel, Tallinn's Upper Town on flat-topped Toompea Hill has always been the preserve of the country's elite. Pride of place goes to the Russian Orthodox **Alexander Nevsky Cathedral** built by Estonia's Tsarist overlords, which even now glowers down over the sugar-pink **Parliament**. Further on, streetscapes straight out of Dr. Zhivago lead past patrician **Toom Church** to elevated **viewpoints** over the medieval rooftops of the Lower Town and on to the sea beyond. See *Tallinn Old Town Map* for suggested walking route.



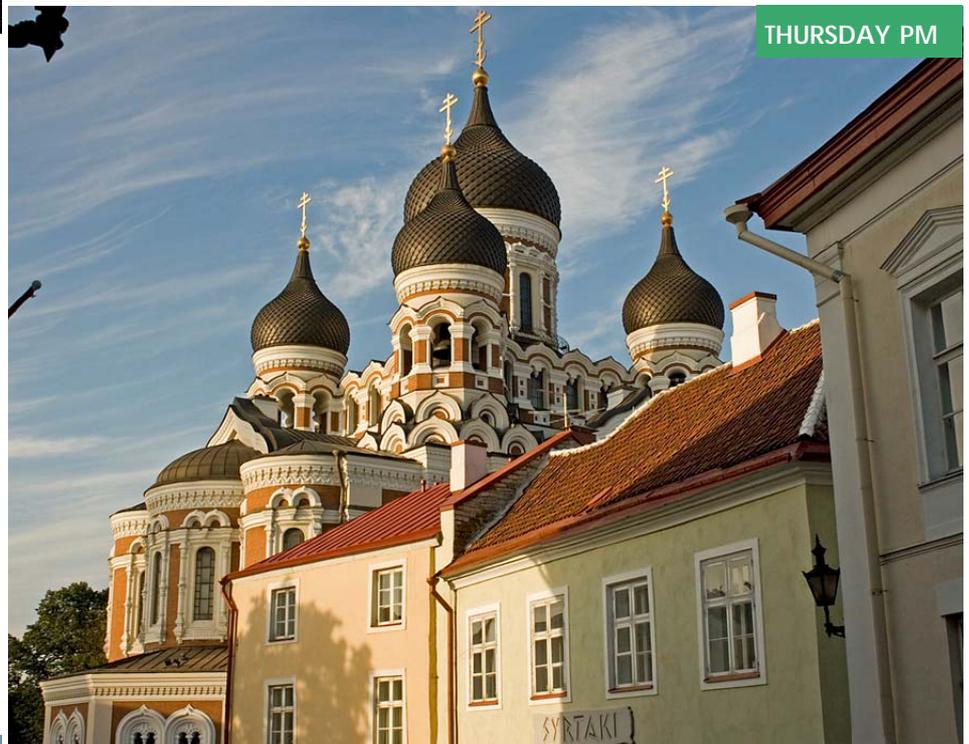
Upper Town viewpoint

2 Nevsky Cathedral

Tallinn's grand Russian Orthodox **Alexander Nevsky Cathedral** is unmistakable. Visiting is a powerful experience. Outside, the onion domes shimmer exotically in the sun. Enter, and you're enfolded deep within the bosom of Mother Russia—Estonia might as well be a foreign country.

Mysterious and atavistic, the sweet smell of incense comes at you like a wall. In the filtered light, bearded monks intone in continuous prayer, while every surface glints with gilt mosaic and serene majesty stares from the eyes of icons. Built as recently as 1900, the church remains palpably a living, breathing centre of religion.

THURSDAY PM



FRIDAY AM

3 Lower Town

Mighty walls and battlemented bastions enclose the cobbled streets of Tallinn's Lower Town. No mere museum, over the last decade the historic centre has regained its position as the vibrant hub of the city's sparkling social life. **Raekoja Plats** is the natural focus. Heading north, the key streets of **Lai**, **Pikk**, **Pühavaimu** and **Vene** hold the grandest Hanseatic **merchant houses** as well as **Oleviste** and **Pühavaimu Churches**. Off Vene, **Katariina Käik** and **Meistrite Hoov** are both atmospheric spots for shopping and eating. The finest lengths of wall can be seen between the **Great Sea Gate** and Toompea, and along **Müürivahe** (the 'Wall of Sweaters'). See *Tallinn Old Town Map* for suggested walking route.



Highlights

4 Raekoja Plats

The well-shone cobbles of Raekoja Plats (‘Town Hall Square’) have been trod by many feet. Tallinn’s market was held here for centuries; the square has also long been used for civic celebrations—including in 1441 as the site of the world’s first public Christmas tree. More recently, much of the space has filled with bustling **café terraces**.

On the square’s southern side stands the **Raekoda**, Tallinn’s steep-gabled Gothic town hall. Visit also the **pharmacy** in the north-east corner. Open since 1422, it’s quite possibly the world’s oldest, and worth a glance inside for the vintage displays.



THURS-SUN

FRI PM / SAT AM

5 City Museums

Occupying an impressive medieval merchant’s house, Tallinn’s **City Museum** gets better the higher you go. After a frankly dull start, highlights include material from the Hanseatic period; contrasting views of early 20th century life (comfortably bourgeois in the city; deeply threadbare in the country) and grainy amateur snaps from the 1991 push for independence showing desperately improvised defences against Soviet tanks.

The privately-funded **Museum of Occupation** is much smaller. Focusing on the Nazi and Soviet eras, it’s strongest in presenting dignified, moving testimony recorded by survivors and those who lost dear ones.

Museum of Occupation:
Suitcases symbolise the thousands sent to Siberia

6 Rocca al Mare Open-Air Museum

Around 100 traditional buildings—mainly wooden cottages and farm buildings, but also chapels, windmills from the western islands, and characteristic communal ‘village’ swings—have been gathered from across Estonia and re-erected on a sprawling stretch of tranquil forested shoreline 4 km west of central Tallinn. Attractive and instructive, it’s a breath of fresh air and a chance to stretch your legs. Costumed actors inject extra life in summer. In winter, the done thing is to take a horse-drawn sleigh-ride through the snow. Hearty Estonian food is served at the reconstructed Kolu Tavern. Easily reached by taxi—about 15 mins from the Old Town.



SATURDAY PM

Highlights



SATURDAY OPTION

7 Paldiski

Just two years ago this former closed **Soviet garrison town** offered an appalling insight into the bleakness and disregard for the human spirit that was life in the USSR. Since then huge sums have been spent shifting nuclear debris, renovating collapsed apartments and bulldozing barracks. Paldiski retains a raw Russian ambience, but today the historic **station** sparkles and the forest walk to the cliff-top **lighthouse** is alive with birdsong.

8 Lahemaa NP

Exceptional in having been protected for decades, Lahemaa's landscape is a quietly delightful slice of **rural Estonia**: hay meadows, open pine forests, rustic hamlets, reed-fringed bays and deep untrammelled nature. Locally they're proud of their waterfalls and erratics (huge mossy boulders left behind after the Ice Age). But the picture-perfect 18th century **Sagadi** and **Palmse** mansions, built by Baltic German landed families, are a bigger—and thoroughly charming—draw. See *Travel Choices* for how to get there.



SATURDAY OPTION



SUNDAY AM

9 Kadriorg

Greatly-loved by Tallinners, **Kadriorg Park** offers wide open space and natural greenery just a short hop from the city centre. Its trees bring blossom in spring, shade in summer and calm year-round. The rectangular **Swan Pond** at the western end is an elegant spot and particular favourite for wedding photographs. Further uphill, Peter the Great's **Kadriorg Palace** has been aptly described as a mini-Versailles. Its interior is open as a gallery but the art is eclipsed by the wonderful Rococo **Great Hall**. More recent art is displayed in the new **KUMU** gallery, in a cutting edge (literally) building below a steep escarpment. Adjoining the park, **Kadriorg** suburb boasts some of Tallinn's finest **homes**.

10 Need to know

Tallinn Old Town is by now thoroughly international in flavour—the Baltic Dubrovnik might be a fair description. This in

no way diminishes its beauty, but it seems a pity to venture so far without getting a proper taste of Estonia beyond the city walls. Of the options I've suggested Kadriorg, Lahemaa, Rocca al Mare and perhaps the Soviet War Memorial fit comfortably within conventional sightseeing. Keskurg market and Paldiski do not, but are possibly all the more rewarding for that.

Hotels

...where to stay in style and comfort

Hotel Telegraaf



Hotel Telegraaf

A.B. Flint Choice

Hotel Telegraaf (*Expensive; 82 rms; 4 suites*). A recent addition to Tallinn Old Town's top-end options providing a truly classy combination of old and new. Throw in the widest range of amenities to be found within the Old Town, solicitous staff, manageable scale, and pricing that leaves more established alternatives looking decidedly expensive and you've found a very enticing proposition. More to the point, it's a really enjoyable stay—especially in one of the recommended superior rooms within the historic part of the building.

Housed in Tallinn's former telegraph office—its proud neoclassical lines now gleaming once again after a fastidious restoration—the Telegraaf enjoys an excellent position in the centre of the Old Town, just a couple of minutes' walk from Raekoja Plats. With the interface left dramatically stark, a second, thoroughly modern wing runs back from

Vene street, flanked by a welcome grassy courtyard.

In the angle between the two wings, the urbane glass-roofed Tchaikovsky restaurant serves immaculate Russian food to armchair-seated diners under the gaze of haloed icons. Across the lobby, a large secluded lounge offers space to read the papers in front of a traditional open fire. In the basement, the Elemis spa



Hotel Telegraaf

Need to know

- Tallinn's rapid growth in popularity has put a lot of pressure on hotel space, particularly in the Old Town. Although a wave of new openings has eased the situation a little, you should aim to book as far as possible in advance, especially for summer weekends.
- Room prices have soared with demand and are now approaching those in Western Europe—and at the Schlössle and Three Sisters are arguably higher. (Deep discounts are sometimes available, however.)
- Facilities and upkeep at 3 and 4 star hotels is often slightly below UK equivalents.

provides a range of treatments as well as access to a small indoor swimming pool.

Rooms are either 'executive' or 'superior'. The old wing's superior rooms feature double-height shuttered windows, corniced ceilings, super-comfy king-size beds, deep upholstered chairs, pre-war ornaments (and phone), and a cleanly masculine colour scheme of black, white, cream and taupe. Bathrooms are state of the art, most with generous bath. Executive rooms in the new wing are smaller, but smart and boldly patterned with plenty of light.

The Telegraaf is a member of the Small Luxury Hotels group and service is particularly impressive, with a genuine eagerness to please and many staff having worked previously in London or Paris.

A generous wide-ranging buffet breakfast, with further hot dishes to order, is included in the room price.

Facilities: restaurant, bar, room service, lounge, Elemis spa, sauna, steam bath, indoor pool, babysitting, safe, wifi (free), underground valet parking (charge).

Hotels

Room recommendation: Choose a superior room in the old wing for space and character. Ask for an upper floor street-facing room for views with minimum noise.

Hotel Telegraaf, Vene 9, 10123 Tallinn, Estonia.

Booking—see www.WeekendBlueprint.com



Value Choice

Merchant's House Hotel (*Mid Price; 32 rms, 5 suites*). Just a few steps from café-lined Raekoja Plats and the heart of the Old Town, Merchant's House is in fact an appealing muddle of several medieval buildings linked by twisting passages and spiral stairwells. One of the hotel's oldest features, a 14th century painted wooden ceiling, caps an otherwise ultra-modern, minimalist ice bar (excellent flavoured vodkas served in blocks of ice, as well as conventional cocktails).

Following a now well-worn path, Merchant's House is a boutique renovation. But rather than aiming for the summit of the market, the hotel has chosen to make its pricing more accessible. Of course, this has resulted in trade-offs: the furnishing is a little less sumptuous, there are fewer antiques, and amenities are little more limited. But this doesn't stop Merchant's House being a very comfortable hotel. Beds are soft, and the restrained neutral and earth tone styling is easy on the eye—accentuating the many original medieval details. The vaulted cellar contains an intimate, accomplished restaurant (excellent hot buffet breakfast included in room price). In summer, there's a busy terrace and quiet open-air inner courtyard, and year-round a relaxation room and sauna. The hotel can also be proud of its staff, who are notably helpful and friendly in a city where that can't be

taken for granted.

Just about squeezing into the top of budget-chic category, the hotel has proved a major success since opening in 2005, attracting an overwhelmingly international clientele of thirtysomething couples through to active oldies. To make just one criticism, some areas could already do with a bit of extra care and maintenance attention and perhaps a pot of touch-up paint, but this is really only a quibble.

Facilities: Lobby lounge, ice bar, restaurant, terrace, courtyard café, library, relaxation room, sauna, babysitting on request, free internet, room service (limited hours), room safe, no parking.

Room recommendation: The 5 suites offer considerable, stylish luxury at a relatively bargain price. The street outside remains busy until late: for quiet ask for a courtyard-facing room.

Merchant's House Hotel, Dunkri 4/6, Tallinn, Estonia.

Booking—see www.WeekendBlueprint.com

Further hotels of interest

Meriton Old Town (*Modest; 41 rms*). Filling a niche for budget but non-backpacker accommodation within the Old Town, this modest hotel in a fine-looking town house set within the city walls does a decent job.

The classy reception area and ground floor café—all bare stone, curved walls and mood lighting—wouldn't be out of place in a chic boutique. However, that's as far as the frills go. Venturing further, rooms are very small (go for one of the largest 'Bella Vita' rooms), but are clean and otherwise unremarkable. Included breakfasts are perfunctory (but then no surprise at the price), and there are few other facilities.

Despite its limitations, The Meriton Old Town delivers value for money and the location, at the far northern end of the Old Town, is ideal if you're looking to escape the crowds but still want to be surrounded by history. While others have complained of distant staff, I found them perfectly pleasant.

Facilities: Café.

Meriton Old Town, Lai 49, Tallinn, Estonia.

Booking—see www.WeekendBlueprint.com

Radisson SAS Tallinn (*Mid Price; 266 rms., 14 suites*). Best of the biggies if smaller places are full. A gleaming mirror-glass tower of a 4 star forming the city's tallest building (the views from the rooftop bar are naturally superb). Unapologetically international in style and operation, the hotel offers the Radisson chain's standard 4 'themes' of room (Scandinavian, Oriental, Italian and Maritime), as well as business class rooms with extra perks. As well as one of the city's biggest ranges of facilities, the hotel comes with a guarantee of efficient service and well-managed upkeep. On the downside, it's a 10-15 minute walk to the Old Town and you could be staying in any European capital.

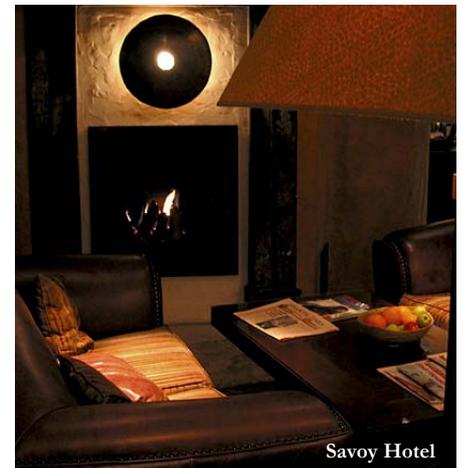
In the same bracket are the **Viru** (but even huger, more mid-market and a little tired) and, when open, the new **Swissôtel**.

Facilities: Restaurant, grill, lobby bar, panoramic rooftop bar, fitness centre, sauna, wifi (free), room service, express laundry, valet parking.

Radisson SAS Hotel Tallin, Råvala pst 3, Tallinn, Estonia.

Booking—see www.WeekendBlueprint.com

Savoy Boutique (*Expensive; 40 rms, 3*



suites). With design-led hotels 'all style and no substance' is an all-too-common complaint, but this cracking example delivers both with ease.

Good-looking from the outside—if not as photogenic as a medieval townhouse, the interior of an early 20th century bank building (used in the Soviet era as the Estonian Ministry of Culture) has been renovated in a boldly art deco style that still feels warmly contemporary.



Savoy Hotel

In the lounge, a flickering log fire faces deep sofas ranged around a table spread with fresh fruit and the day's (international) papers. A little beyond, the well-patronised bar idiosyncratically features a sunken serving area with armchairs ranged along the bar counter (it works—comfortably). Across the lobby, dinner (and the very generous breakfast spread) is taken in the ochre-walled L'Arancia Mediterranean restaurant—not, for once, in a cellar.

The big well-furnished guestrooms are contemporary and comfortable, in calming beige, brown and linen. Bathrooms are well-equipped, brightly-lit and modish. On higher floors the large shuttered windows give rooftop views.

What really sets the Savoy apart, however, is an exceptional level of service and the solicitude of the thoroughly professional staff. (A frankly trivial problem with my room resulted in dinner on the house.)

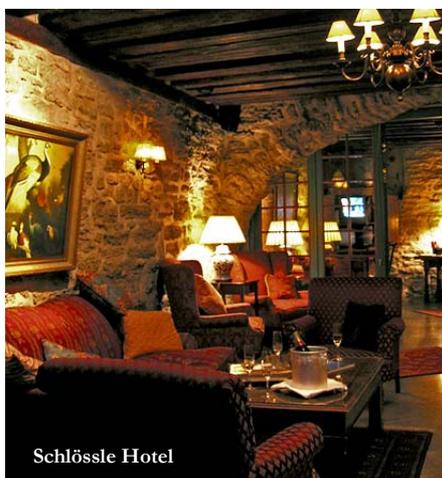
With so much that's good, the Savoy's only real drawback—apart from a strange lack of sauna—is that it stands on one of the Old Town's biggest party streets. Especially at the weekend light sleepers should ask for a rear-facing room on one of the upper stories

Facilities: Restaurant, bar, lounge, terrace, wifi (free), on-street parking (limited, charge).

Savoy Boutique Hotel, Suur-Karja 17/19, Tallinn 10148, Estonia.

Booking—see www.WeekendBlueprint.com

Schlössle Hotel (Premium; 18 rms, 5



Schlössle Hotel

suites). For intimacy, exclusivity and a rich patina of history, the Schlössle remains unmatched as the best hotel in town. However repeated price hikes now make value for money more questionable—although special offers can still yield a relative bargain.

Full of original medieval detail and with interior design in a baronial Teutonic style, the Schlössle sits in a restored Hansa merchant's house on a quiet Old Town lane less than five minutes walk

from Raekoja Plats. Oozing understated luxury, antique heavy oak furniture, rich rugs and oil paintings lend period authenticity, enhanced by the crackling log fire.

Guest rooms are either in an 'annexe' cottage across a cobbled rear courtyard or in the main building. Annexe rooms have a more heavily rustic air, but all are extremely comfortable with magnificent beds piled waist-high with pure white bolsters and deluxe crisp bedding. The cellar restaurant, the Stenhus, has been rated the best in Estonia for its Estonian-influenced French cooking.

From check-in to departure staff in tailcoats and ankle-length skirts deliver punctilious service with Germanic efficiency (the hotel is German-owned), but are also quick to crack a smile given the smallest encouragement.

Although heavily used by VIP politicians and business leaders—from EU Commissioners to Baron Rothschild and George Soros—the ambience is tuned more to the leisure visitor than to business.

Facilities: Restaurant, bar, lounge, library, sauna, massage, room service, wifi (limited coverage), baby-sitting, no parking.

Hotel Schlössle, Pühavaimu 13/15, Tallinn 10123, Estonia.

Booking—see www.WeekendBlueprint.com

Three Sisters Hotel (Premium; 15 rms, 8 suites). Sleek, sophisticated and fully stocked with elegant eye-candy (modern meets medieval head-on), this top-end Old Town boutique, just round the corner from Oleviste Church, has been fashioned out of three adjacent 14th century merchant houses, with a sunny courtyard to the rear (alfresco dining and drinks in summer).

Each of the 23 guest rooms has been individually styled, but most share permutations of bare board floors, sloping eaves, wooden ceilings and/or rough-hewn pillars, wrapped up with billowing drapes, moody lighting and high-tech goodies swirling around a super-soft white bed (as often as not a four-poster).

On the ground floor, a formal dining room overlooks the courtyard, while in the cellar there is a snug wine bar.

Royalty aside (Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip stayed in 2006) the Three Sisters caters for a younger, slightly naughtier class of guest than arch-rival,

Hotels

The Schlössle. (Hence the breakfast service until 6:00pm.)

Like the Schlössle, rack rates have recently climbed to eye-watering levels—for what is basically a hip and smartly comfortable, but not super-opulent stay. But, also like the Schlössle, deep off-peak discounts are often to be found. The Three Sisters is the only Design Hotels member in the Baltic region.

Facilities: Restaurant, wine bar, courtyard dining, terrace, lounge, library, room service, baby-sitting, airport pick-up, no parking.

Three Sisters Hotel, Pikk 71 / Tolli 2, Tallinn 10133, Estonia.

Booking—see www.WeekendBlueprint.com

Uniquestay Tallinn Hotel (*Modest; 75 rms, 2 suites*). Well-run, young, cheerful, budget-chic accommodation with funky contemporary design (most pronounced in the 11 larger and more stylish ‘Zen’ rooms). Breakfast is included—as is wifi access in every room. A few rooms are in a second building further along the street. (nb. There is also a separate hotel, the Uniquestay Mihkli, within the same chain at a different location.)

Be aware that the hotel stands on a busy road junction 10 mins walk from the Old Town. As standard rooms are cramped, book one of the larger ‘Zen’ rooms.

Facilities: Café, courtyard garden, sauna, wifi (free), parking (limited, free).

Uniquestay Hotel Tallinn, Paldiski mnt. 1 & 3, Tallinn 10137, Estonia.

Booking—see www.WeekendBlueprint.com

Vana Wiru (*Modest; 82 rms*). Clean modern lodgings with all the basics taken care of, just inside the city walls. Don’t come looking for design fireworks or local colour, but the Vana Wiru does make a convenient, reasonably-priced base.

Approached either through a quiet courtyard or via the Vana Wiru pub on thronging Viru Street, the light, airy lobby gives access to 5 floors of medium-sized rooms kitted out in soothing greys, browns and creams. Many of the dearer top-floor rooms enjoy views of the Old Town’s rooftops and fortifications. Angling at independent tourists, organised groups and business travellers on a budget, the hotel suffers rather from a lack of atmosphere. Nevertheless, the Vana Wiru comes out ahead of its Old Town competitors at this price point.

Facilities: Restaurant, café-pub, sauna (charge), steam bath (charge), parking (charge).

Vana Wiru, Viru 11, Tallinn 10140, Estonia.

Booking—see www.WeekendBlueprint.com



Radisson SAS Hotel



Uniquestay Hotel



Three Sisters Hotel

N.B.

Amongst the Tallinn hotels that I considered but decided not to feature are the **Baltic Imperial, Barons, Domina City, Meriton Grand, Reval Central, Reval Park, St. Petersburg, Scandic Palace, Scandic St. Barbara, Tallink and Viru Inn**. This is not necessarily an adverse reflection on standards as choices are based on many factors including location, ambience, quality within class, service, facilities and my personal taste.

Hotel prices: Budget: below £60, Modest: £60-£100, Mid Price: £100-£140, Expensive: £140-200, Premium: £200+; prices are per double room at the time of year and type of room (standard unless specified otherwise) recommended. Prices are for guidance only, please check with hotel for further details.

Eat & drink

...authentic atmosphere, local flavours, outright excellence

Terrace, Three Sisters Hotel



Bocca (*Expensive*). A suavely urbane eating space that combines glossy Scandinavian design with big picture windows to throw in the light. Its location more than 3 mins walk from Raekoja Plats keeps tourist numbers down.

Although no longer the hottest table in town, Bocca continues to draw more than its fair share of Tallinn's svelte young media and business elite. The wide-ranging modern Italian menu is inventive, but the reason to come is to admire the setting and rub shoulders with Estonia's future at play. *Open to midnight. Reservations strongly advised.*

Bocca, Olevimägi 9, Tallinn, Estonia

Booking: t (+372) 641 2610

Bonaparte (*Expensive*). One of Tallinn's best-loved restaurants, on the ground floor of a gorgeous restored 13th century merchant's house with leaded windows and other period features. Atmosphere is semi-formal but humanised, cooking is modern French. With attentive service, it's a top choice for a romantic treat. Downstairs, there's a further cellar dining area, while the street-facing café is excellent for snacks. For picnic fare shop at the adjacent deli-patisserie. Bonaparte also runs the café and restaurant at the KUMU gallery and operates the diminutive Tristan & Isolde café within the Town Hall. *Closed Sunday. Reservations required.*

Bonaparte, Pikk 45, Tallinn, Estonia

Booking: t (+372) 646 4444

Café Moskva (*Mid Price*). Prime preening ground for the most beautiful of Tallinn's (very) beautiful young things—bizarrely overlooking a car park. No matter, the metro-Scandinavian interior styling is drop-dead gorgeous; the blonde waitresses are even more so. Upstairs, tasty light Mediterranean food is served in a restaurant setting, downstairs the very

chilled bar flows out onto a pavement terrace in summer. At night, the Moskva becomes a club with guest and resident DJs. Recent feedback suggests service has become patchy.

(A note on the name: in case you hadn't noticed, the choice of moniker is about as appreciated by your average Tallinner as a branch of Planet Hollywood in Baghdad.)

Café Moskva, Vabaduse Valjak 10, Tallinn, Estonia

Booking: t (+372) 640 4694



Maiasmokk Kohvik

Maiasmokk Kohvik. (*Budget*). 'Sweet Tooth' in Estonian, Tallinn's oldest café retains its original heavy wooden Art Nouveau panelling, and, by the look of things, a fair number of the original regulars and staff. The displays of cakes and biscuits are more recent though—definitely Soviet era. Just a short walk from Raekoja Plats, the period atmosphere makes a stop great fun. You'll get a good cup of coffee, but, as regards the baked goods, the café's name has it right on the money.

Next door is a small shop showcasing the local Kalev chocolate and a so-so Estonian restaurant upstairs.

Maiasmokk Kohvik, Pikk 16, Tallinn, Estonia

Olde Hansa (*Mid Price*). I'll admit straight up that themed restaurants don't generally float my personal boat. But for reasons that remain obscure, a visit to Tallinn has come to be regarded as incomplete without over-indulging at least once in a carousing olde-worlde medieval feaste.

So be it. The good news is, that of its kind, the Olde Hansa, just off Raekoja Plats, does a first-class job. Dining on boar-skin covered benches in the candlelit Great Hall, or in summer, outside on a terrace decorated with nasturtium flowers, you can enjoy avowedly authentic dishes such as pork marinated in ale or meat served with braised sauerkraut, all washed down with mead or fruit schnapps.

Service comes with much knavery involving strumming minstrels, swains in bright leggings and tightly-corseted wenches, but still manages to be both efficient and warm. Needless to mention, the atmosphere can at times become fairly raucous. Historically accurate?—I doubt it. But I have to confess, despite my initial misgivings, the Olde Hansa did rather win my sneaking regard.

If you can't get in, the **Peppersack Restaurant**, almost opposite, delivers a similar but slightly less flamboyant proposition. *Reservations strongly advised.*

Olde Hansa, Vana turg 1, Tallinn 10140, Estonia

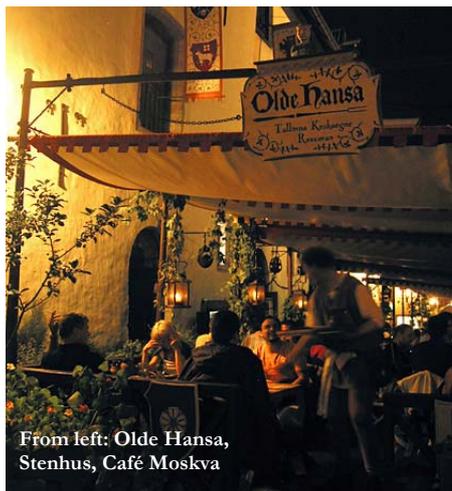
Booking: t (+372) 627 9020

Park Café (*Modest*). Idyllically positioned on a corner of Weizenbergi overlooking Kadriorg Park's elegant Swan Pond, on a sunny morning the Park Café's terrace has to be one of the most civilised places in Tallinn for a coffee and pastry.

Park Café, A. Weizenbergi 22, Tallinn, Estonia

Booking: t (+372) 601 3040

Eat & drink



From left: Olde Hansa, Stenhus, Café Moskva



Sisalik (*Modest*). A relaxed, unaffected Mediterranean restaurant, Sisalik is one of the best choices for casual dining in the Old Town.

Down the stairs at the sign of the crawling lizard, cheerful staff serve up easy-to-eat dishes such as seared tuna with grilled courgettes and sweet pepper sauce or, for something lighter, a good range of tapas. Although in yet another basement, this one has pot-plant decked windows giving out on greenery in a rear courtyard—a horticultural theme perhaps taken a little too literally with the slightly eccentric choice of flimsy wrought iron tables and chairs one would guess were snapped up from a garden centre. There's a somewhat cavernous bar at front and indulgent *chocolaterie* in the ground floor shop above. Very popular with expats. *Reservations recommended. Closed Sunday.*

Sisalik, Pikk 30, Tallinn, Estonia

Booking: t (+372) 646 6542

Stenhus (*Expensive*). Accomplished French cooking makes good use of local influences and Estonian ingredients at this intimate gourmet restaurant. For dinner, goose livers prepared three ways might be followed by butter-crusting Estonian *zander* (pike-perch) with pasta and tomato and a selection of Estonian cheeses to finish. Wines are chosen from Estonia's most extensive and varied list

Located in the vaulted cellars of the Hotel Schlässle, crisp table linen and soft lighting contrast with shadowed medieval stonework. Service is formal and perhaps a little overly-solemn: tail coats and theatrics at the start of each course. But it's merely young staff trying hard to be on their best behaviour. Given a little encouragement, they'll gratefully lighten up.

(One amusing post-Soviet echo: when I left some *foie gras* uneaten, the waiter pointed to the plate and, protocol in tatters, checked incredulously that I really wasn't going to finish it. Had I overlooked it, perhaps?)

Stenhus has won Estonia's top restaurant award for the last three years running. *Reservations required.*

Stenhus Restaurant, Hotel Schlässle, Pühavaimu 13/15, Tallinn, Estonia

Booking: t (+372) 699 7700

Troika (*Mid Price*). Fascinating and evocative if you pick the right night. Despite its Raekoja Plats location, Troika is restaurant of choice for many of Tallinn's better-heeled ethnic Russians.

Down a narrow passage, the ground floor tavern is darkly nostalgic with heavy beams, deep red walls and soundtrack of lugubriously melancholic traditional ballads many of the drinkers apparently grew up with—by the end of an evening spontaneous outbursts of singing can get positively tearful.

The cellar restaurant below is more conventionally formal, with linen tablecloths, uniformed waiters, and a wider choice of food. The menu is classic Russian, featuring plenty of *blini*, dumplings, pork, pickles and mushrooms—plus the odd surprise: bear stroganoff anyone? In summer there's also a large terrace on the square.

For those searching for oblivion, there are around 25 varieties of vodka to work through. *Reservations recommended (especially weekends).*

Troika, Raekoja Plats 15, Tallinn, Estonia

Booking: t (+372) 627 6245

Vanaema Juures (*Modest*). For a taste of Estonia's native cooking, look no further than Vanaema Juures ('Grandma's Place').

Descend an easy-to-miss flight of steep stone steps and you are transported to a modest country home of around 80 years ago. Wainscoted walls, heavy country dressers and a clutter of black and white family photos, old clocks and mantelpiece knick-knacks conjure up a simple front room from the first period of independence. Before you fully adjust to the dim basement light, you'll be taken in hand by one of the motherly waitresses and seated at a plain wooden table spread with linen cloth and decorated by a posy of wildflowers.

The homely, unaffected atmosphere is matched by sturdy portions of rib-sticking traditional Estonian food: lamb with blue cheese sauce is the house speciality, but baked pork or Grandma's Roast (bacon, sausage, ham and eggs) give a better idea. Despite a certain celebrity visit by Hilary Clinton, you won't find a more down-to-earth restaurant within the Old Town. *Reservations recommended (esp. weekends).*

Vanaema Juures, Rataskaevu 10/12, Tallinn, Estonia

Booking: t (+372) 626 9080

Restaurant prices: Budget: below £5, Modest: £5-£10, Mid Price: £10-£15, Expensive: £15-25, Premium: £25+; prices are for typical main course at dinner. Prices are for guidance only, please check locally for further details.



Raekoja Plats

Weekend planning

Weekend basics

Break length	3 nights
Off work	2 days
Flight (London)	2 hrs 55 mins
Transfer	10 mins (taxi)
Time zone	UK+2
Currency	Kroon (£1 = 22.5 EEK approx.)
Paperwork	Passport (UK & Irish citizens)

Sample prices Low: £165 per person (easyJet/Uniquestay (Zen room)).
High: £520 per person (Estonian Air/Schlössle).

Departures Gatwick, Stansted, Dublin

Books & maps

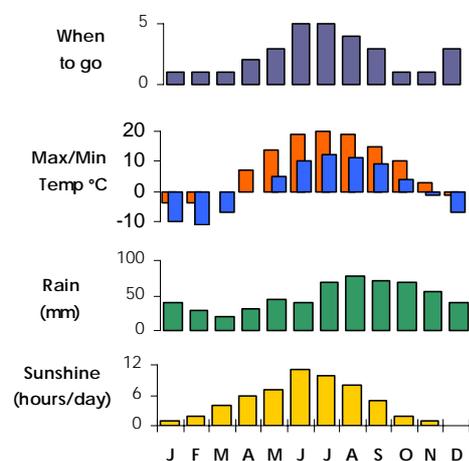
Recd. Guide	Best of Tallinn (Lonely Planet)
Recd. Map	Tallinn Street Plan (Jana Seta/Stanfords)
Weekend Read	Narcissus & Goldmund (Hesse)

Planning checklist

Before departure you will need to arrange...

- Flights (Thurs out, Sun back)
- Hotel (3 nights)
- Restaurant reservations (where advised)

To check prices and build your own weekend:
see www.WeekendBlueprint.com.



Travel choices

For current best prices and to book, see www.WeekendBlueprint.com



London departures

Estonian Air has the best-timed services, flying non-stop from **Gatwick** daily (twice on Thursdays and Sundays). Although little-known, the airline is a reliable carrier (part-owned by SAS), with service standards falling between BA and easyJet and highly competitive pricing.

easyJet is the no-frills alternative, offering daily flights to Tallinn from **Stansted**. However, unless you live close by, the early morning outbound departure and Sunday midday return make this option relatively unattractive.

BA sells through-booked tickets to Tallinn from **Heathrow**, but all flights require a change of plane in Helsinki. London-Heathrow is code-shared with **Finnair**. Finnair operates all legs to Tallinn.

London flight recommendations

LGW = Gatwick, STN = Stansted

Outbound to Tallinn (Thurs)		From	Dept	Arr.
Estonian	OV104	LGW (S)	09:30	14:25
Estonian	OV102	LGW (S)	18:00	22:55
easyJet	EZY3445	STN	06:50	11:35

Return from Tallinn (Sun)		To	Dept	Arr.
Estonian	OV105	LGW (S)	18:15	19:15
Estonian	OV101	LGW (S)	16:15	17:15
easyJet	EZY3446	STN	12:10	13:00

Regional & Irish options

Dublin. Estonian Air to Tallinn direct Friday and Monday (both arriving early morning), returning Sunday and Thursday evenings.

Carbon Offset

Round-trip CO₂ emissions typically 500 kg pp. Offset cost from £3.75 through The CarbonNeutral Company (www.carbonneutral.com).

On arrival

Airport Transport. Tallinn Airport lies around 3.5 km (2 miles) from the city centre. Much the easiest way to get to and from is by cab. If there are no taxis waiting, ask the airport information desk to call one. Expect to pay EEK 100-150 to the centre. (Note that there are tight traffic restrictions in the Old Town—you may have to walk a short way to your hotel.) See below under *Taxis* for common scams.

City Transport. Walking is the best way to get around the Old Town. Otherwise, city transport is by taxi, tram, trolley-bus and bus. A single ticket (sold at kiosks or, at a surcharge, on board) is good for 1 hour's travel across the entire public transport network. Punch your ticket at the start of each journey to validate.

Taxis. Established companies include **Linna Takso** (t. +372 6 442 442, or with GSM 1242) and **Tulika Takso** (t. +372 6 120 000, or with GSM 1200). Taxis are cheaper if summoned by phone rather than picked up at a rank. Taxis are free to set their own tariffs (prominently posted), with the large operators typically around 25% dearer than one-man-bands. There are, however, a few rogue operators, especially at the airport, on the edge of the Old Town, and outside the major hotels, who post rip-off rates aimed at newly-arrived tourists. Ask for a rough idea of the total fare before getting in: if it sounds out of line, choose a different cab. There is no obligation to take the car at the head of the rank.

Tallinn Card. If you plan to make extensive use of public transport and/or visit a lot of museums, it's worth buying an all-inclusive Tallinn Card, available for 24, 48 or 72 hour periods from the tourist office and most hotels.

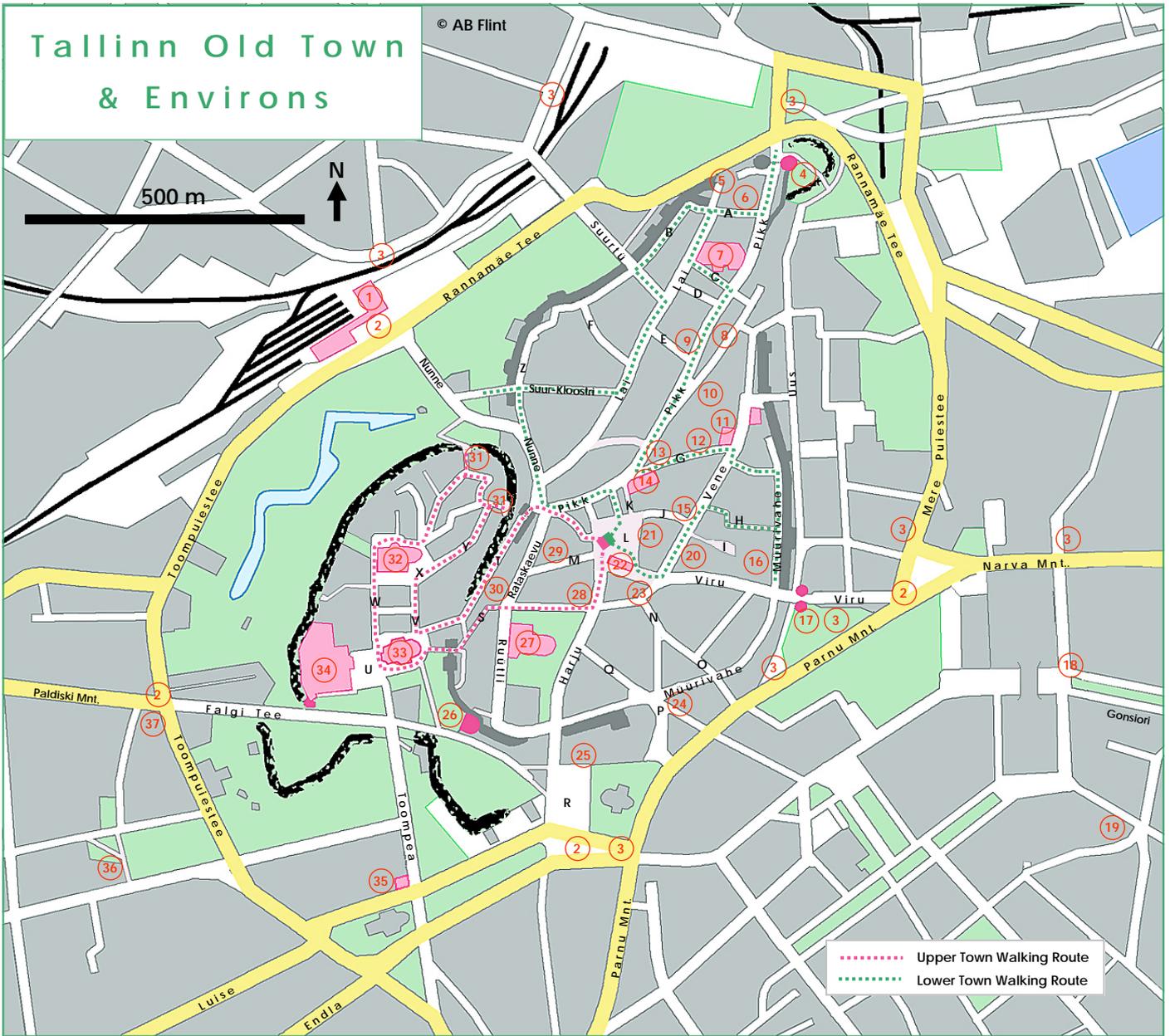
Car Hire. Most major companies are represented at Tallinn Airport (and can organise city centre drop-offs/pick-ups by prior arrangement). No special formalities are required for UK licence holders. Hiring a car makes little sense unless you plan to venture beyond Tallinn.

Lahemaa NP. For flexibility hire a car for the day—the drive to Palmse takes a little over an hour along the new motorway. Otherwise charter a taxi or book an all-inclusive trip through the tourist office or your hotel: CityBike runs all-day minibus tours for around £35 pp (no cycling involved).

Paldiski. Most easily reached by regular train service from Tallinn's main railway station. There are approx. 10 departures a day each way with journey time approx. 75 mins. Alternatively hire a car if you want to explore the surrounding countryside.

Tallinn Old Town & Environs

© AB Flint



..... Upper Town Walking Route
 Lower Town Walking Route

Key

Go

- 1. Railway Station
- 2. Taxi ranks (selected)
- 3. Tram stops (selected)
- 18. Airport bus stop

Sleep

- 29. Merchant's House Hotel
- 5. Meriton Old Town Hotel
- 19. Radisson SAS Hotel
- 24. Savoy Boutique Hotel
- 12. Schlössle Hotel
- 15. Telegraaf Hotel
- 6. Three Sisters Hotel
- 37. Uniquestay Hotel
- 16. Vana Wiru Hotel

Eat & Drink

- 8. Bocca
- 9. Bonaparte
- 25. Café Moskva
- 13. Maiasmokk Kohvik
- 23. Olde Hansa
- 10. Sisalik
- 12. Stenhus
- 21. Troika
- 30. Vanaema Juures

See & Do

- 33. A. Nevsky Cathedral
- 36. British Embassy
- 11. City Museum
- 20. Irish Embassy
- 26. Kiek-in-de-Kök tower
- 4. Great Sea Gate

- 27. Niguliste Museum
- 35. Occupation Museum
- 7. Oleviste Church
- 34. Parliament
- 14. Pühavaimu Church
- 32. Toom Church
- 28. Tourist Office
- 22. Town Hall (Raekoda)
- 31. Viewpoints
- 17. Viru Gate

Streets & Squares

- A. Tolli
- B. Laboratooriumi
- C. Oleviste
- D. Pagari
- E. Vaimu
- F. Aida
- G. Pühavaimu

- H. Katariina Käik
- I. Meistrite Hoov
- J. Apteegi
- K. Saiakang
- L. Raekoja Plats
- M. Dunkri
- N. Suur-Karja
- O. Välke-Karja
- P. Karjavärava Plats
- Q. Vana-Posti
- R. Vabaduse Väljak
- S. Lühike Jalg
- T. Pikk Jalg
- U. Lossi Plats
- V. Piiskopi
- W. Toom-Kooli
- X. Kiriku Plats
- Y. Kohtu
- Z. Gümnaasiumi

Tallinn

Go

- Central bus station
- Ferry & cruise terminals

Eat & Drink

- Park Café

See & Do

- Kadriorg Palace
- Kadriorg Park
- Keskting (Central Market)
- KUMU
- National Songbook
- Open-air Museum
- Pirita Sadam (Olympic Marina)
- Soviet War Memorial
- Swan Pond



Weekend Blueprint?

Weekend Blueprint is a small and enthusiastic business designing boutique, ready-planned weekends for travellers to book for themselves using leading online travel agencies and other best-value suppliers. The service saves time and money, and offers a growing range of extraordinary short break experiences.

Hotel prices

Indicative prices per double room. (Based on standard room unless our recommendation is for a specific alternative.)

Budget	Below £60
Modest	£60—£100
Mid Price	£100—£140
Expensive	£140—£200
Premium	£200 +

Weekend Styles

Activity. Get out there and get involved. No prior experience required.

Discovery. Rekindle the explorer in you - culture, history, natural wonders and pure travel.

Getaway. Leave the washing-up behind and grab an easy-going change of scenery away from home.

Hideaway. Magical places to stay. Shut out the world and recharge mind, body and soul.

Who is A.B. Flint?

Some people love cars, others horses, a few even grow marrows. For me, it's travel – always has been, always will be. But it's not enough to go and come back. I need to tell the world what's out there: the smells, the sounds, the adventure. I also want, in some small way, to help people understand other cultures and, in doing so, perhaps to look again at their own. (Go on a long enough journey and the strangest sight you'll see is your own homecoming front door: familiar but strange, you'll notice the number is crooked, but also see anew the prettiness of the fanlight stained glass.)

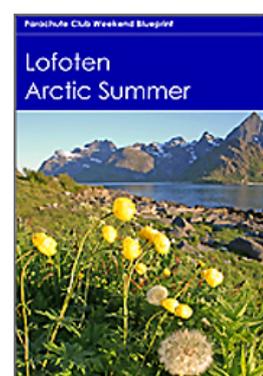
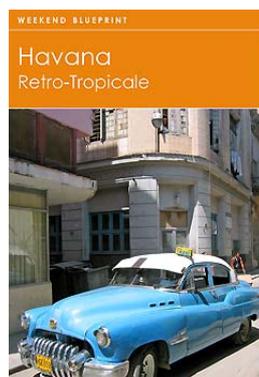
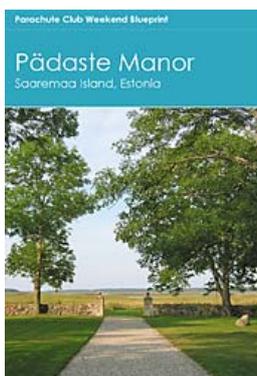
In 25 years and more of travel I've been lucky enough to savour some of the most intense experiences this planet has to offer - whether searching out the Ark of the Covenant on the dusty plains of Ethiopia, watching a jungle sun-rise over Bohol's Chocolate Hills or simply camping on the sands of Britain's remotest beach, I've loved it all. Along the way I've explored around 90 countries on six continents and clocked up over half a million miles on the road. The environment is important, but so is travel's interchange of cultures, peoples and ideas. Since 2006 I've carbon-offset all my flights, but I will continue to set out.

I am a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society and speak French, Spanish, German and Russian. Home is a converted village pub an hour from both Heathrow and Gatwick shared with my wife and two young sons.

A.B. Flint

Alexander Flint

Liked this, why not try...



A.B. FLINT
TRAVEL DESIGN



WWW.WEEKENDBLUEPRINT.COM

SHORT BREAKS FOR INDEPENDENT TRAVELLERS