

Tipping

Tipping is not compulsory in Finland and service is included in restaurant bills. Tips are sometimes given when eating in restaurants, but it is not very common when e.g. buying a drink or paying your taxi driver. People usually tip only when the food or service is outstanding. You will not be considered rude if you do not tip.

Smoking

According to Finnish law, smoking is forbidden in all public places, even in bars and restaurants. Normally Finnish people do not smoke inside. This includes both homes and public buildings. Smokers usually go outside, even in the winter. When visiting a Finnish home, smokers should always ask where they are allowed to smoke.

Sauna

The sauna (Swe. 'bastu', Fin. 'sauna') is an important part of Finnish society. There are over 1.7 million saunas in Finland and almost every house has one. Additionally, saunas are especially popular at summer cottages. However, the importance of the sauna differs from one region to another.

A Finnish sauna is usually heated up to 80-100 °C (176-212 °F). Be sure to take a quick shower or dip in the sea/lake before going into the sauna. You stay in the sauna as long as you are comfortable with, and then go for a swim in the sea or a roll in the snow in the winter. Traditionally, you are naked in the sauna, but that is sometimes overlooked when foreigners are present. There are usually separate turns for women and men, but not within the family.

To learn more about the Finnish sauna, health aspects, history and recommended bathing procedures, visit the website of the Finnish Sauna Society www.sauna.fi and most importantly, try it yourself!

13.2 How to Deal with Culture Shock

Culture shock, though not always as dramatic as the term might imply, is a perfectly normal and temporary reaction when adjusting to a new culture. Not everyone experiences a cultural shock. However, for some people the shock may be quite severe while for others it is easier to cope with.

When living and studying in a new culture, the integration period can last for a while. Surrounded by new people, customs, values and environment; one is constantly receiving new information, so it is quite common to feel a bit out of place. Individual expectations affect how one reacts to a new country, so try to be open-minded.

Culture shock is not entirely a negative phase to go through. It can be a significant learning experience, after which you are more aware of aspects of your own culture as well as the new culture you have entered. Realising that you might go through this phase when studying abroad and recognising the symptoms will help you coping with it. Common symptoms include homesickness, depression, difficulty to concentrate and irritability. Culture shock can also cause physical symptoms such as nausea, insomnia and loss of appetite.

Stages of Adaptation

When you are experiencing culture shock there are four basic identifiable stages of adaptation. Not everyone goes through these exact stages, but it is quite common to have these feelings when dealing with the positive as well as the negative aspects of a new culture.

1. Euphoria

The new environment is exciting and you are enthusiastic and curious about the new country and its culture. Your own home culture with its habits is still fresh and active in your mind.

2. Conflict

Feelings of isolation and loneliness are common as you become more aware of the cultural differences. They seem more obvious and may