

# THE BALTIC SEA: PART 6

## HELSINKI, FINLAND

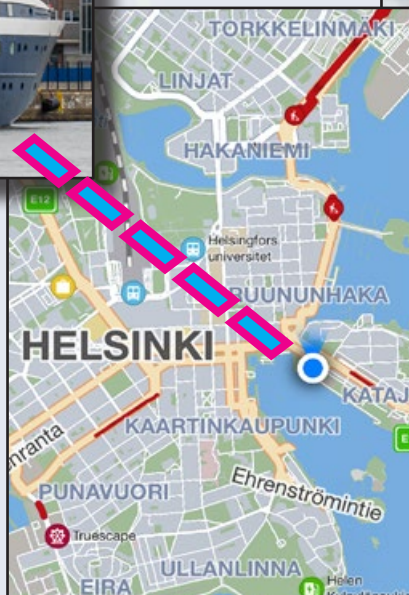
Our next stop was Helsinki, Finland, only about 50 miles (82 km) north of Tallinn. I'm not sure why, but it still took all night to get there. In retrospect, I should have been more curious about that and asked at the time as it only takes two hours to get Helsinki by car ferry from Tallinn. There was no indication that we wandered into Russia or close to any other countries on my cell phone or other devices though. Those devices will generally note when my cell coverage provider switches from one country to another.

The Helsinki metropolitan area has a population of over 1.5 million. Often considered to be Finland's only metropolis, it is the world's northern-most metro area with over one million people and is considered to have one of the world's highest standards of urban living.

We docked right in the center of town so Wendy and I could wander off on our own very easily... which we did.



We were docked backstage of a music venue next door, getting a free early evening concert for the couple evenings we were there.

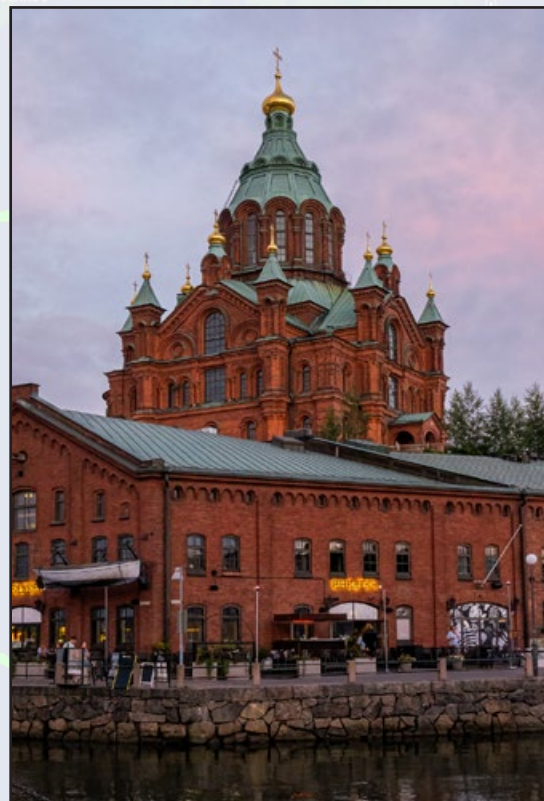


Next to our berth was the opportunity for a sky view via a Ferris wheel (a maailmanpyörä in Finnish) but we didn't take it.

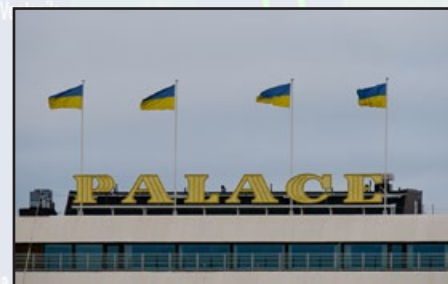


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We saw lots of Ukrainian flags and support around Helsinki as well.





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Icebreaker ships waiting for winter. They will keep the shipping channels open and Amazon packages flowing.



Local passenger ferry that provides service to the many small islands around Helsinki.





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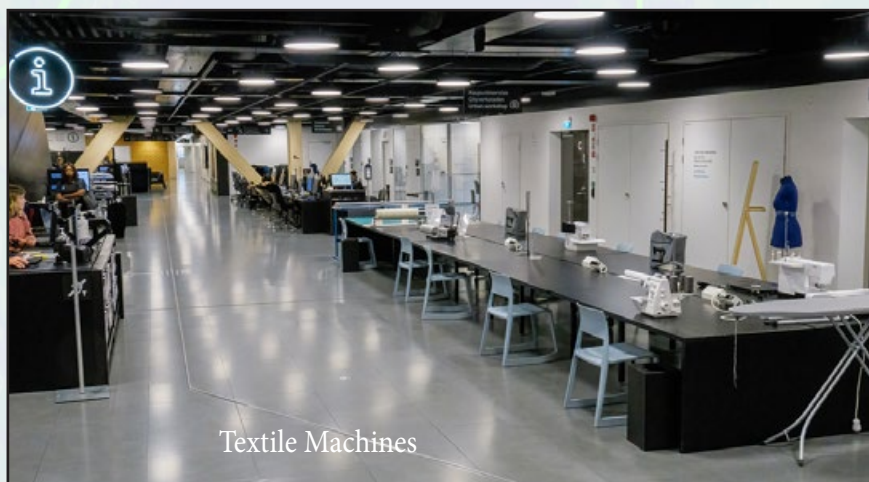
We visited the Helsinki Central Library Oodi, commonly referred to as just Oodi. Opened in 2018, in 2019 the International Federation of Library Associations named Oodi as the best Public Library of the Year. It was quite a library as compared to the ones around us, more like a high-end technical college with a big library incorporated. And it wasn't even the main Helsinki library. We did not get to see the main library.

The second floor of Oodi is what they call the Urban Workshop. It has a laser cutter, to cut and engrave utensils, jewelry and decorations of one's own design, 3D printers to make physical objects from spare parts to miniature models, a vinyl cutter to make window decals and cloth prints, a large format printer, a UV printer and various sewing machines that can be used for anything from repair work to embroidery. There also many audio / visual spaces; three recording studios (each with a control room, studio, and singing booth), a synthesizer studio, a drums / percussion studio, a DJ and karaoke studio, a piano studio, a photography and video studio, a digitizing studio for 'old-school' VHS, Beta, DV, cassette etc, group rooms, working spaces, an immersive space Kuutio (not sure what that is, but the word 'Kuutio' translates into 'Cube'), and a group kitchen.

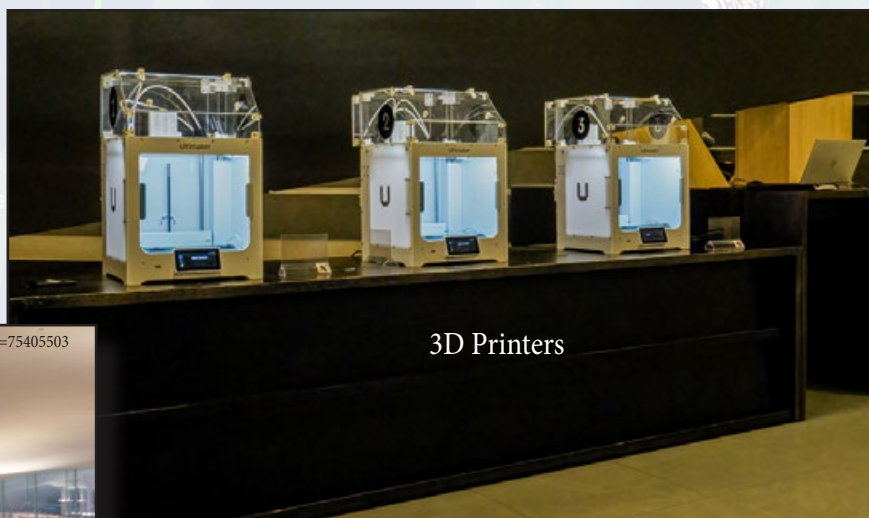
The third floor had books, a cafe, a huge outdoor balcony space, and robots delivering books...



Photo: By ThePikachin - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=93603134>



Textile Machines



3D Printers



Photo: By Ninaras - Own work, CC BY 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=75405503>

We were not allowed to photograph or record in the audio / visual studios area, but if you want to see more use this link to the library web site:

<https://360.northmanvr.com/F1utgPQ3E0/10957460p&78.48h&92.59t>

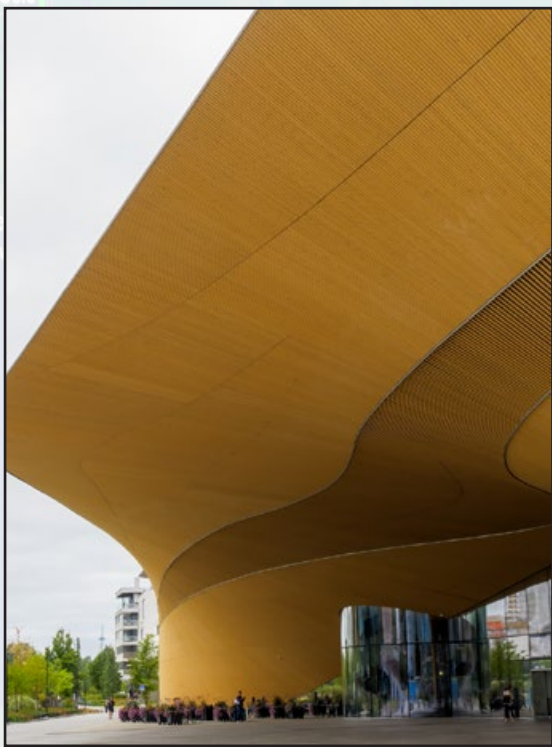
I also added links to the images so you can click on those instead of the link text if you like.



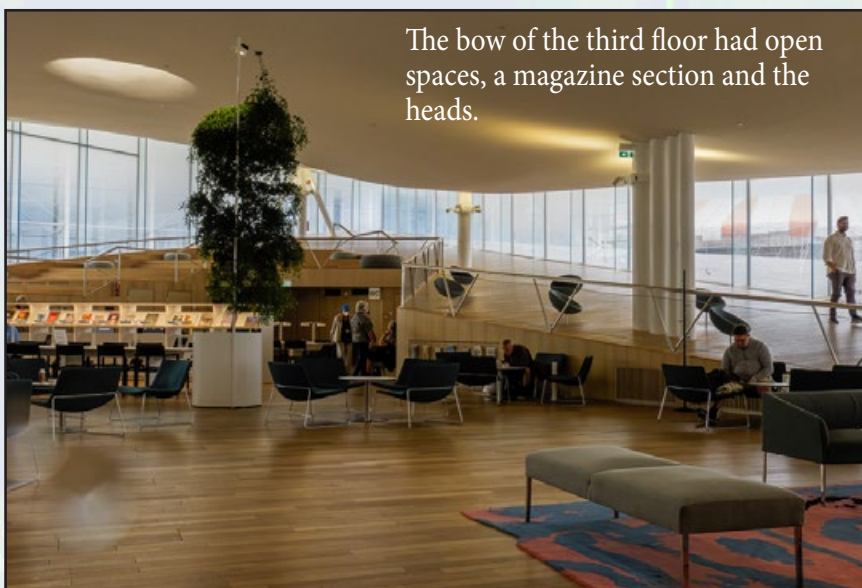
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Except the top floor, Oodi's facade is made entirely from spruce wood, softening the general appearance of the architecture. Below is the main entrance.



If I were to ever end up living in Helsinki, I'm sure it would be very close to Oodi and Oodi would become my de facto Helsinki Situation Room.



The bow of the third floor had open spaces, a magazine section and the heads.

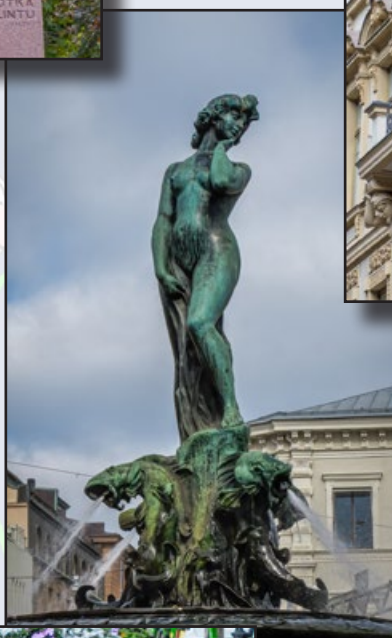
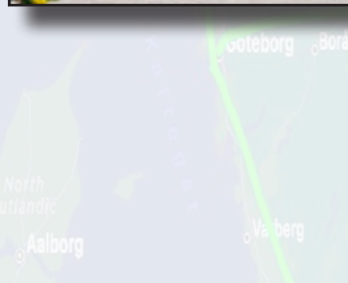
Adjacent to Oodi is the Helsinki Music Center. In the large outside open area they now share is the Song Trees totem by artist Artist Reijo Hukkane. Unveiled in 2012, before Oodi was built, but now visually shared by both, it features a series of highly recognizable visual elements. This playful work offers plenty of opportunities for personal reflection and interpretation. The familiar features – grand piano lids, log piles and a fish head – were intended to resonate with the urban landscape surrounding the Music Centre and the wider Töölönlahti Bay this is near. Song Trees was inspired by The Pike's Song (1928), a poem by Finnish writer Aaro Hellaakoski (1893–1952).



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Amongst the multilevel chaos of the Helsinki streets we did find plenty of street art to enjoy on our walks... and a huge seagull.





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For Design Helsinki, we're delighted to be teaming up with a number of exciting material and textile manufacturers to create an immersive wayfinding installation in Esplanadi Park.

The brands will be dressing a number of trees within the park to create a colourful and vibrant experience for Design Helsinki visitors to see and touch.





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One of my favorite finds was this art installation. I thought this might be the corporate headquarters of Ikea, but I think it actually had something to do with a recycle / second hand store. I still like the Ikea idea better though.

The Sibelius Monument below is by Eila Hiltunen and dedicated to the Finnish composer Jean Sibelius (1865–1957). It consists of series of more than 600 hollow steel pipes welded together in a wave-like pattern. Originally it sparked a lively debate about the merits and flaws of abstract art, for which reason the effigy of Sibelius was included along side the work, (photo with the wreath). I think Sibelius would have been happy with it... and the controversy... as he reportedly said *"Pay no attention to what the critics say. A statue has never been erected in honor of a critic."*

I had read about the Sibelius Monument before the trip and was looking forward to seeing it. I'd also heard that on windy days it can make music but when we visited there was no wind, so no auditory experience to verify that.





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As we were escorted out of Helsinki we passed more interesting sights. Below, the Military Museum of Manège on yet another local island. It was a former Russian armory, but now houses Finnish military history exhibits & weaponry.

Art Nouveau style villa, built in 1899, and now Summer Restaurant Saaristo. Only open during the summer, it is on it's own small island, Klippan, and a short 'two minute' boat ride from downtown Helsinki.

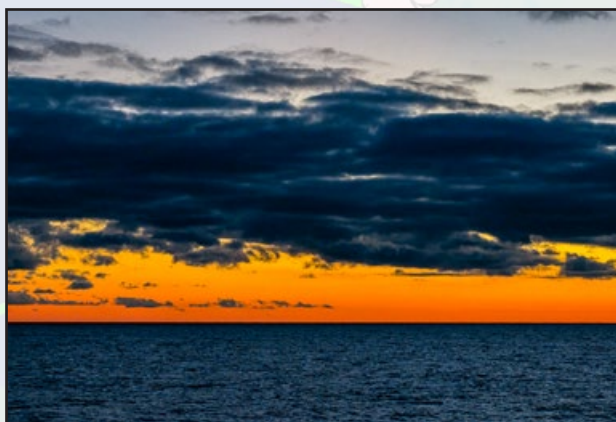


It wasn't long before the landscape and seascape became much more tranquil.



For hours we threaded through a maze of islands and channels until we reached relatively open sea and another spectacular end of the day sunset from our ship Clio Situation Room.

Our next stop, our final stop for the ship portion of the adventure, and the subject of our next travelogue, will be Stockholm, Sweden.



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