The Republic of Finland is a country in Northern Europe, bordered by Sweden, Norway, Russia, and the Baltic Sea. The origin of its name is not completely clear, but it probably derives from the ancient Fenni peoples. Finland has been a member of the European Union since 1995, as well as an initial member of the eurozone since 1999, making it the only Nordic state to join the euro single currency. After being a grand duchy of Sweden from the 12th to the 19th century and of Russia after 1809, Finland gained independence from Russia on December 6, 1917, making December 6 its national holiday, Independence Day. Finland’s government operates under a parliamentary republic system which has been led by President Sauli Niinisto since March 2012, as well as his appointed Prime Minister Juha Sipila.

RELIGION

73.8% of the Finnish population identify as part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, 1.1% as part of the Orthodox Church of Finland, and 25.1% as other, including Muslims, Roman Catholics, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and Seventh-day Adventists, or not affiliated. Freedom of religion is mandated by the Finnish constitution. Parents have the right to decide over their child’s religion, until the child is 18 years of age. At this point, persons can decide their religion themselves.

ETHNICITY & DEMOGRAPHICS

Finns make up the by far biggest ethnic group with 93.4% of the population, followed by 5.6% Swedes, 0.5% Russians, 0.3% Estonians, 0.1% Roma, and 0.1% Sami. Finland has a 0.38% population growth rate as of 2016, with the birth rate slightly outnumbering the death rate and a positive net migration rate. Like most European countries, Finland has a more and more aging population, which increasingly puts its renowned social welfare system in danger.

CUSTOMS

In Finland, honesty is highly valued, as it is important to always keep your promises and adhere to agreements. Dishonesty, on the other hand, is the worst vice imaginable. The Finnish style of speech is direct and straightforward, and it is expected that people truly mean what they say. Punctuality and modesty are important, too. Going to the sauna is a big part of Finnish culture. Many Finns use it every week for purification and relaxation.
CONTEMPORARY FINLAND & RELATIONS TO EUROPE

In the 21st century, the key features of Finland’s modern welfare state are high quality education, promotion of equality, and a national social welfare system. It has a highly industrialized, largely free-market economy with a relatively high GDP per capita and a heavy focus on exporting goods. Current challenges Finland faces are reducing high labor costs and boosting demand for its exports, a rapidly aging population, and decreasing productivity in traditional industries that threaten competitiveness, fiscal sustainability, and economic growth.

Finland has been a member of the European Union since 1995, as well as an initial member of the eurozone since 1999, making it the only Nordic state to join the euro single currency. Additionally, it is a member of the border-free Schengen area. Finland possesses 13 seats in the European Parliament and has held the presidency of the Council of the EU twice in the past, once in 1999 and once in 2006. It is scheduled to hold it again in 2019.

FAMOUS FINNS

Among some of the most famous people from Finland are Formula One driver Kimi Räikkönen, musician Ville Valo, architect Alvar Aalto, composer Jean Sibelius, software engineer Linus Torvalds, physiologist Ragnar Granit, and director Renny Harlin.

FINNISH WORDS

Hi ..................................................... Hei
Bye ................................................... …Hei hei
Good morning ..................Hyvää huomenta!
Yes .....................................................Kyllä
No ..........................................................Ei
Please....................................................Ole kiltti
Thank you ..................................................Kiitos!
How are you? ..........................Mitä kuuluu?
I do not understand ..................En ymmärrä
I understand ..............................Ymmärrän
What is your name? .............Mikä sinun nimesi on?
My name is .................................Minun nimeni on...
Where are you from? ............Mistä sinä olet kotoisin?
Do you speak English? .............Puhutko englantia?

FINNS IN THE USA

At the turn of the 20th century, Finnish immigration to the United States skyrocketed during the turmoil of Finland’s struggle for independence from Russia. Between 1890 and 1914, as many as 200,000 Finns arrived. Michigan became, and to this day is, the heart of Finnish Americans. In Hancock, MI there even exists a Finnish institution of higher education, Suomi College. Currently, roughly 650,000 Finnish Americans live in the United States.

USEFUL LINKS

http://www.infopankki.fi/en/frontpage