

Experience Finland

Helsinki, Thursday June 28, 2007

- 8am Coaches and guides pickup at pier
- 8:15 – 9:45am Helsinki Highlights guided tour (includes short stop at the Sibelius monument)
- 9:45 – 10:00am Finnish National Opera: Dr. Vescu Ruotonen welcomes the guests, welcome speech
- 10:00 – 10:45am Oral introduction and classical recital at the foyer
- 11:00am Direct transportation to the restaurant for lunch
- 11:30am – 1:00pm Lunch
- 1:00pm Direct drive to Ainola Museum, the home of Jean Sibelius
- 1:40pm Arrival at Ainola museum
- 1:45 – 3:00pm Entrance and guided visit of the museum
- 3:00pm Departure from Ainola, direct drive back to Helsinki
- 4:00pm Arrival in Helsinki, ending at pier

HELSINKI HIGHLIGHTS



Depart for a guided true experience, through the city of Helsinki, the “Daughter of Baltic”! Helsinki is first and foremost a city of great architecture and stunning nature. Fabulous buildings are visible all the time, from the historical buildings around the Senate Square to the mighty Parliament House, the world-wide known Finlandia Hall, by Alvar Aalto, the National Opera, the Olympic Stadium — just to mention few of them. You will view Uspenski, the biggest Orthodox Cathedral in Scandinavia, the President’s Palace and the very popular main Market Place by the sea front. You will make a short stop at the Sibelius monument, dedicated to the famous Finnish composer Jean Sibelius. Time permitting, you will also visit (our entrance is subject to availability at the moment of the visit) one of the most important sights in Helsinki, the Rock Church (Temple Square Church), built into solid rock where, among all other Church functions, classical/or other music concerts, may be organized.

WELCOME TO THE FINNISH NATIONAL OPERA!

The year 1993 was a milestone in the history of Finnish opera, marking the completion of the new Opera House on Töölönlahti bay in Helsinki. This was a venue where the Finnish National Opera finally acquired the premises and state-of-the-art technology required for mounting large-scale productions. Today, the Finnish National Opera is held in high international renown.

Regular opera performances began in Finland exactly 120 years before the completion of the new Opera House, with the founding of the Finnish Opera, in connection with the Finnish Theatre by Kaarlo Bergbom in 1873. Prior to that, opera had been performed in Finland sporadically by touring companies, and on occasion by Finnish amateurs, the first such production being *Il barbiere di Siviglia* in 1849. In 1956, the Finnish Opera was taken over by the Foundation of the Finnish National Opera and acquired its present name.

The new Opera House is suave Finnish architecture at its finest, designed by Eero Hyvämäki, Jukka Karhunen, and Risto Parkkinen. It is situated close to the city centre in the proximity of major hotels, yet in a verdant setting. The spacious well-lit foyers offer a view of the bay and the park. The Opera House has two auditoriums, the main auditorium with 1,350 seats and Almi Hall, the studio stage, with 300 to 500 seats.

The Recital Manager will welcome everyone. An oral introduction will be made by the Recital Manager, Vescu Ruotonen (Ph.D. in music, Berlin University, a distinguished and highly-respected personality) who will introduce you to the world of the amazing and eclectic Jean Sibelius!

A delightful (private) classical recital will follow, performed by highly professional musicians of the Sibelius Academy introducing the Romantic and Heroic Jean Sibelius with: *Romance – Rondino – Valse Triste – Finlandia!*

Dr. Ruotonen will join for lunch and will be happy to tell about Finnish music and culture and to answer questions.



RESTAURANT KATAJANOKAN KASINO

This traditional restaurant was opened in 1913 and entirely renovated in 1996. The architecture and decor of Katajanokan Kasino — from the spacious Kenraali dining room to the distinctive and historical private rooms — represents a fascinating aspect of Helsinki's restaurant tradition. Traditions are also upheld by the restaurant's high-quality kitchen! The seaside location and a spacious terrace make Katajanokan Kasino a real jewel of summer Helsinki.

Enjoy a delicious lunch sitting at the beautiful garden of the restaurant (subject to weather conditions). In case of non suitable weather condition, the lunch will be served in private area indoors.



THE WORLD OF J. SIBELIUS — AINOLA MUSEUM

Ainola is the former home of composer Jean Sibelius (1865–1957) and his family, from 1904. This timber-built villa was designed by the known Finnish architect Lars Sonck. Other artists and their families, living in the same area, provided a lively social circle.

Sibelius needed a place where he could concentrate on his music in peace and quiet, away from the diversions of the city. He found a suitable location close to Lake Tuusulanjärvi, where other artists like the painter Pekka Halonen, the author Juhani Aho, and the painter Eero Järnefelt had already settled.

After Jean Sibelius died in 1957, Aino Sibelius lived in Ainola until her death in 1969. Ainola was opened to the public in 1974 as a museum. It has been retained in the condition that it was when Aino Sibelius was still alive. The interiors and furniture are a distinctive combination of inherited items, gifts, and things bought new by the Sibelius couple. The flower garden, enthusiastically taken care of by Aino Sibelius, and the forest around the house are open for the public as well. Location: on the scenic shores of Lake Tuusula in Järvenpää, about 40 minutes drive from Helsinki city center.

Ainola is open to the public during the summer months, from May to September. The guided visit will include the interior of the house. The guests may also visit the garden area by the house.

