Transportation

Local transportation and student discount

The public transport is well organised in Finland. The Helsinki region has buses, trams, local trains, a metro and even ferries organised by Helsinki Region Transport (HSL). When planning your journey, HSL’s journey planner helps you find correct routes and best connections.

Please note that you must always have a valid ticket when travelling. There are ticket controls every now and then and travelling without a valid ticket or with a wrong kind of a ticket can cost you a penalty fare of €80.

As a bachelor’s or master’s student, you are entitled to a student discount. Please see the terms of the discount at HSL’s website. You can use the HSL app (or travel card) on the public transport in the whole metropolitan area. It is the cheapest way to travel and fastest way to pay your journey. You can load either season (time period) or value on your HSL app or card. However, student discount is only available on season tickets.

Degree students

To get the student discount, you need to have:

- a personal Finnish identity code,
- a municipality of residence registered by the Digital and Population Data Services Agency.

The student discount for season tickets is mainly available on the HSL app. In order to activate your study discount on the app, you need to have Finnish online banking credentials that allow strong identification, more information at opening a bank account. You can still buy single tickets on the app without strong banking credentials but note that these are full priced.

If you don’t have the required credentials for strong authentication, i.e. can’t activate the student discount on the HSL app, you can exceptionally get the student discount on a HSL travel card. For this, you need a valid student card (e.g. Frank app) or the student discount application form signed and stamped by the student services. The student discount needs to be updated on the HSL card separately for each term.

More information on the student discount on HSL’s website, including instructions on how to activate the student status on the HSL app and the student discount application form.

Exchange and double degree students

In order to purchase a personal travel card, you need to have a student discount ticket application form, which has been stamped and signed by the student services. You can print the document from HSL’s website or get it when visiting the student services. Double degree students are not required to register their municipality for travel card purposes, thus can use the HSL ticket application form for exchange students to get the discount.

More information on tickets is available on HSL’s website.

Facilities for cycling are very good in the Helsinki metropolitan area. During the summer season, there is a comprehensive system of city bikes (shared-use bicycles that can be borrowed for a fee by anyone) available in Helsinki and Espoo. If you want to buy an own bike, check the bike shops for cheap second hand bikes. When cycling, remember to wear a helmet and have a light when it’s dark!

Long distance travelling

In Finland timetables are reliable, and trains and buses do leave on time. Timetables vary slightly on public holidays, weekends and during the summer. There is a nationwide network of train and bus services. The trains and buses are clean and modern. Most of the services providers offer student discounts up to 50 %, but there are also special offers for early bookers which can be even cheaper than the student price.

The long distance bus network in Finland is one of the densest in Europe and the buses are modern and comfortable. With a valid student card you can get a student discount for bus tickets. When purchasing and using student tickets, you must be prepared to show your valid student card (the receipt of the paid student union fee is not accepted). Unfortunately, doctoral students are not entitled to the discount.

Onnibus, Matkahuoitto and ExpressBus are three of the biggest long-distance bus companies in Finland. Onnibus is a cheap option for specific routes, but they don’t offer student discounts.

Finnish State Railways (VR) grants student discounts on train tickets for students with an official student card. When purchasing and using the ticket, you must always be prepared to show your official student card (the receipt of the paid student union fee is not accepted). Unfortunately, doctoral students are not entitled for the discount.

For timetables, route information and bookings, see VR’s website.

Finland’s northern location next to Sweden, Norway, Russia and Estonia offers excellent and exciting travel opportunities. There are good air connections to all the neighbouring countries, daily ferry connection to Sweden and Estonia as well as to Russia in summertime. Russia can also be reached by bus, by boat and by train. Remember to check the visa and other possible permit requirements before travelling.

For information on the validity of foreign driving licences in Finland, please see Finnish Transport and Communications Agency Traficom’s website Ajo kortti-info.fi.

In Finland, you drive on the right and overtake on the left. Main roads are in good condition throughout the year and they are free of charge (no tolls). Headlights are used even during the day. Wearing seatbelts is compulsory, both front and back.
Drinking and driving: Note that driving under the influence of alcohol is strictly forbidden. The maximum permitted blood alcohol level is 0.05%. Breaking this law nearly always results in a penalty in the form of a fine or imprisonment.

Mobile phones and driving: If a mobile phone is used when driving, the use of a hands-free device is obligatory.

Parking

The parking areas in the Otaniemi campus can be found in this map.

How to read the parking traffic signs is explained in the leaflet from the City of Helsinki.