

ESTONIA

Country name	Estonia
State title	Republic of Estonia
Name of citizen	Estonian
Official language	Estonian
Country name in official language	Eesti
State title in official language	Eesti Vabariik
Script	Roman
ISO-3166 country code (alpha-2/alpha-3)	EE/EST
Capital	Tallinn
Population	1.3 million ¹

Introduction

Estonia is the northernmost and smallest of the three Baltic States in north-eastern Europe on the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea. It has existed as an independent state c.1918 to 1940 and again since 1990. In size it is similar to Switzerland or the Dominican Republic. It has international boundaries with Latvia and Russia.

Geographical names policy

Estonian is written in Roman script. PCGN recommends using place names as found on official Estonian-language sources, retaining all diacritical marks. Estonian generic terms frequently appear with lower-case initial letters, and PCGN usually recommends reflecting this style.

The **Place Names Board of Estonia**, <http://www.eki.ee/knn/index2.htm>, which has been the responsibility of the Ministry of Finance since September 2015, is the main advisory and coordinating body of the place name standardisation activities in Estonia.

Recommended Sources for Geographical Names

Official Estonian government-produced mapping can be used as a source for geographical names in Estonia. Official maps of Estonia are produced by the **Estonian Land Board**: <http://www.maaamet.ee>.

Map data is also available through the **Geoportal of the Estonian Land Board**: <http://geoportaal.maaamet.ee/eng/>, which has several public map applications, including the Basic Map, address data map, place names register map, cadastral map, and historical maps. The maps can be queried using geographical names and the interface is bilingual Estonian-English. All spatial data on Estonia can also be found in the Estonian National Geoportal: <http://inspire.maaamet.ee/>.

¹ <https://www.stat.ee/en>

Language

The official language is Estonian (*eesti* in Estonian; the ISO 639 language code is *est*), a Finno-Ugrian language most closely related to Finnish, and rather distantly to Saami and Hungarian. The Finno-Ugrian languages are quite distinct from Indo-European, so Estonian grammar and vocabulary have nothing in common (except for numerous borrowed words) with Russian, German, English, Latvian etc. In south-east Estonia, a dialect called Võro (ISO 639: *vro*) exists, which is sufficiently distinct from standard Estonian to be regarded by some as a separate but closely-related language.

The largest linguistic minority speaks Russian. This group forms the majority in Ida-Virumaa county and in the town of Narva.

A substantial Swedish-speaking minority lived on the islands and along the west coast of Estonia until the end of the Second World War; very few remain.

Inventory of characters

Estonian is written in the Roman alphabet, but seven letters are found only in loan words, or to write foreign names etc. Certain other letters (e.g. B) are quite rare in Estonian. Three distinct diacritics are used to create four more vowel symbols plus two consonants which themselves are not often used. Any vowel can be doubled, but there are no other digraphs.

The usual letters of the Estonian alphabet are:

A B D E G H I J K L M N O P R S T U V Õ Ä Ö Ü

C F Q W X Y Z Š Ž are not normally used.

Additional characters inventory

Character	Unicode hex
Õ	00D5
õ	00F5
Ä	00C4
ä	00E4
Ö	00D6
ö	00F6
Ü	00DC
ü	00FC
Š	0160
š	0161
Ž	017D
ž	017E

Alphabetical order

The four vowels with diacritics appear in the order Õ Ä Ö Ü in an Estonian dictionary, after all other letters (i.e. after V). The consonants S Š Z Ž appear in this order in an Estonian dictionary, between R and T.

Territorial issues

Estonia became independent for the first time immediately after the First World War and the Russian Revolution, and was formed from the Russian Imperial provinces of Estland and half of Livland (Livonia). This gave it international frontiers with Latvia and the new Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). The USSR occupied Estonia from 1940-41 and again in 1945, transforming it into the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR). At this time, the north-eastern and south-eastern corners were transferred to the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) and remained part of Russia after Estonian independence in 1991. This includes the town named Petseri in Estonian, or Pechory (Печоры) in Russian.

Transnational features

Some geographical features (rivers, lakes etc.) are shared between Estonia and one or more neighbouring countries. On a map they should be labelled in the appropriate language on each side of the boundary, with no preference given to either name.

Estonian name	Latvian name	Russian name	Note/feature type
Valga	Valka		<i>Town straddling international boundary</i>
Peipsi-Pihkva järv		Псковско-Чудское озеро = <i>Pskovsko-Chudskoye ozero</i>	English: Lake Peipus
Peipsi järv		Чудское озеро = <i>Chudskoye ozero</i>	<i>lake</i>
Pihkva järv		Псковское озеро = <i>Pskovskoye ozero</i>	<i>lake</i>
Lämmi järv		Тёплое озеро = <i>Tëploye ozero</i>	<i>lake</i>

Administrative divisions

According to an administrative reform of 2016, Estonia’s first-order administrative divisions (ADM1s) are the 79 municipalities (*vald* or *linn*). The previous ADM1s, counties (*maa*), are still frequently used for reference (and thus are included in the table below), but no longer have administrative significance.

County (<i>maa</i>)	Municipality (<i>vald</i> – rural; <i>linn</i> - urban)	Centre (official list, shown with generic term)	Centre (no generic)	Centre position
Harju	Anija vald	Kehra linn	Kehra	5920N 2520E
Harju	Harku vald	Tabasalu alevik	Tabasalu	5926N 2432E
Harju	Jõelähtme vald	Jõelähtme küla	Jõelähtme	5926N 2506E

TOPONYMIC FACT FILE

<i>County (maa)</i>	<i>Municipality (vald – rural; linn - urban)</i>	<i>Centre (official list, shown with generic term)</i>	<i>Centre (no generic)</i>	<i>Centre position</i>
Harju	Keila linn	Keila linn	Keila	5918N 2424E
Harju	Kiili vald	Kiili alevik	Kiili	5918N 2449E
Harju	Kose vald	Kose alevik	Kose	5911N 2511E
Harju	Kuusalu vald	Kiiu alevik	Kiiu	5927N 2524E
Harju	Loksa linn	Loksa linn	Loksa	5935N 2543E
Harju	Lääne-Harju vald	Paldiski linn	Paldiski	5921N 2404E
Harju	Maardu linn	Maardu linn	Maardu	5928N 2459E
Harju	Raasiku vald	Aruküla alevik	Aruküla	5922N 2504E
Harju	Rae vald	Jüri alevik	Jüri	5921N 2454E
Harju	Saku vald	Saku alevik	Saku	5918N 2440E
Harju	Saue vald	Saue linn	Saue	5919N 2433E
Harju	Tallinn	Tallinn	Tallinn	5927N 2445E
Harju	Viimsi vald	Viimsi alevik	Viimsi	5930N 2451E
Hiiu	Hiumaa vald	Kärdla linn	Kärdla	5900N 2445E
Ida-Viru	Alutaguse vald	Iisaku alevik	Iisaku	5906N 2720E
Ida-Viru	Jõhvi vald	Jõhvi linn	Jõhvi	5922N 2726E
Ida-Viru	Kohtla-Järve linn	Kohtla-Järve linn	Kohtla-Järve	5924N 2713E
Ida-Viru	Lüganuse vald	Kiviõli linn	Kiviõli	5921N 2658E
Ida-Viru	Narva linn	Narva linn	Narva	5922N 2810E
Ida-Viru	Narva-Jõesuu linn	Narva-Jõesuu linn	Narva-Jõesuu	5927N 2803E
Ida-Viru	Sillamäe linn	Sillamäe linn	Sillamäe	5922N 2746E
Ida-Viru	Toila vald	Toila alevik	Toila	5925N 2732E
Jõgeva	Jõgeva vald	Jõgeva linn	Jõgeva	5844N 2624E
Jõgeva	Mustvee vald	Mustvee linn	Mustvee	5851N 2656E
Jõgeva	Põltsamaa vald	Põltsamaa linn	Põltsamaa	5839N 2558E
Järva	Järva vald	Järva-Jaani alev	Järvi-Jaani	5902N 2552E
Järva	Paide linn	Paide linn	Paide	5852N 2534E

TOPONYMIC FACT FILE

<i>County (maa)</i>	<i>Municipality (vald – rural; linn - urban)</i>	<i>Centre (official list, shown with generic term)</i>	<i>Centre (no generic)</i>	<i>Centre position</i>
Järva	Türi vald	Türi linn	Türi	5848N 2525E
Lääne	Haapsalu linn	Haapsalu linn	Haapsalu	5856N 2333E
Lääne	Lääne-Nigula vald	Taebla alevik	Taebla	5857N 2344E
Lääne	Vormsi vald	Hullo küla	Hullo	5859N 2314E
Lääne-Viru	Haljala vald	Võsu alevi	Võsu	5934N 2558E
Lääne-Viru	Kadrina vald	Kadrina alevik	Kadrina	5920N 2608E
Lääne-Viru	Rakvere linn	Rakvere linn	Rakvere	5921N 2622E
Lääne-Viru	Rakvere vald	Sõmeru alevik	Sõmeru	5921N 2626E
Lääne-Viru	Tapa vald	Tapa linn	Tapa	5915N 2557E
Lääne-Viru	Vinni vald	Pajusti alevik	Pajusti	5917N 2625E
Lääne-Viru	Viru-Nigula vald	Kunda linn	Kunda	6000N 2632E
Lääne-Viru	Väike-Maarja vald	Väike-Maarja alevik	Väike-Maarja	5908N 2615E
Põlva	Kanepi vald	Kanepi alevik	Kanepi	5759N 2646E
Põlva	Põlva vald	Põlva linn	Põlva	5804N 2704E
Põlva	Räpina vald	Räpina linn	Räpina	5805N 2728E
Pärnu	Häädemeeste vald	Uulu küla	Uulu	5817N 2435E
Pärnu	Kihnu vald	Linaküla	Linaküla	5808N 2358E
Pärnu	Lääneranna vald	Lihula linn	Lihula	5840N 2350E
Pärnu	Põhja-Pärnumaa vald	Vändra alev	Vändra	5838N 2503E
Pärnu	Pärnu linn	Pärnu linn	Pärnu	5823N 2430E
Pärnu	Saarde vald	Kilingi-Nõmme linn	Kilingi-Nõmme	5808N 2457E
Pärnu	Tori vald	Sindi linn	Sindi	5824N 2440E
Rapla	Kehtna vald	Kehtna alevik	Kehtna	5855N 2451E
Rapla	Kohila vald	Kohila alev	Kohila	5910N 2444E
Rapla	Märjamaa vald	Märjamaa alev	Märjamaa	5854N 2425E
Rapla	Rapla vald	Rapla linn	Rapla	5900N 2448E
Saare	Muhu vald	Liiva küla	Liiva	5836N 2313E

TOPONYMIC FACT FILE

<i>County (maa)</i>	<i>Municipality (vald – rural; linn - urban)</i>	<i>Centre (official list, shown with generic term)</i>	<i>Centre (no generic)</i>	<i>Centre position</i>
Saare	Ruhnu vald	Ruhnu küla	Ruhnu	5748N 2314E
Saare	Saaremaa vald	Kuressaare linn	Kuressaare	5815N 2230E
Tartu	Elva vald	Elva linn	Elva	5813N 2625E
Tartu	Kambja vald	Ülenurme alevik	Ülenurme	5819N 2643E
Tartu	Kastre vald	Kurepalu küla	Kurepalu	5820N 2649E
Tartu	Luunja vald	Luunja alevik	Luunja	5822N 2654E
Tartu	Nõo vald	Nõo alevik	Nõo	5816N 2632E
Tartu	Peipsiääre vald	Alatskivi alevik	Alatskivi	5833N 2712E
Tartu	Tartu linn	Tartu linn	Tartu	5822N 2645E
Tartu	Tartu vald	Kõrveküla alevik	Kõrveküla	5825N 2646E
Valga	Otepää vald	Otepää linn	Otepää	5803N 2630E
Valga	Tõrva vald	Tõrva linn	Tõrva	5800N 2554E
Valga	Valga vald	Valga linn	Valga	5747N 2603E
Viljandi	Mulgi vald	Abja-Paluoja linn	Abja-Paluoja	5807N 2520E
Viljandi	Põhja-Sakala vald	Suure-Jaani linn	Suure-Jaani	5832N 2528E
Viljandi	Viljandi linn	Viljandi linn	Viljandi	5822N 2536E
Viljandi	Viljandi vald	Viljandi linn	Viljandi	5822N 2536E
Võru	Antsla vald	Antsla linn	Antsla	5749N 2632E
Võru	Rõuge vald	Rõuge alevik	Rõuge	5744N 2654E
Võru	Setomaa vald	Värska alevik	Värska	5757N 2738E
Võru	Võru linn	Võru linn	Võru	5751N 2700E
Võru	Võru vald	Võru linn	Võru	5751N 2700E

Useful references and resources

Estonia

Place Names Board of Estonia: <http://www.eki.ee/knn/index2.htm>

Place Names Act of Estonia: <http://www.eki.ee/knn/kns2.htm>

Estonia Toponymic Guidelines: http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/ungegn/docs/10th-uncsgn-docs/econf/Toponymic_Guidelines_Estonia_2012.pdf

The **Institute of the Estonian Language** is one of the main research centres for names in Estonia: <http://www.eki.ee>

The **National Place Names Register** is available at <http://xgis.maaamet.ee/knravalik/knr/> in Estonian and English. It is maintained the Estonian Land Board, which ensures the validity and legal compliance of all names entered into the register. The Land Board has integrated the register with its other spatial data, including its Address Data Register, an online handbook for the management of address data, which includes 259 pages of instructions, one third of which relate directly to geographical names.

General

- BBC Country Profile: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-17220810>
- CIA World Factbook
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/en.html>
- FCDO Travel Advice: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/estonia>
- International Organization for Standardization (ISO): www.iso.org
- ISO Online Browsing Platform (OBP): <https://www.iso.org/obp/ui/>
- Languages: www.ethnologue.com; www.omniglot.com
- US Board on Geographic Names GEOnet Names Server (GNS):
<http://geonames.nga.mil/gns/html/>

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