

11 top things to do in Tallinn, Estonia

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Estonia, a small country in Northern Europe borders the Baltic Sea, Russia, and Latvia. Estonia's capital Tallinn is quite famous for its well preserved medieval old town and its cathedrals.

There are many things to do in Tallinn and the city is similar to any other European city. Tallinn was in my itinerary as a part of four country cruise trip (Stockholm — Tallinn — St. Petersburg — Helsinki — Stockholm).

[Pm2am](#) were the organizers and it was their inaugural cruise trip too.

11 things to do in Tallinn

1. Free walking tour

To know any European city, take a walking tour, especially in the old town. The tour guide gives a brief overview of the history, architecture, how the city was affected during war times, and many more insights. They show you places that even google maps can't locate.



Tallinn offers many free walking tours like the one from [traveller](#), [freetour](#). You just need to be on time at the meeting point and they take care of the rest. I also did a free walking tour in [Warsaw](#) and [Belgrade](#).



The tour typically lasts 2 – 2.5 hours depending on your group size. Don't forget to tip the guide at the end.

Travel Tip: Do the tour on your first day and ask the guide for the best local food, things to do in the city, nightlife. It allows you to plan the vacation more efficiently.

2. Tallinn town hall and the square

Located centrally in the Tallinn town square, this town hall is the oldest in the Scandinavia and the entire Baltic region, dating back to the 1370s. The town hall is also known as Tallinna Raekoda and it is the only surviving Gothic town hall in Northern Europe.

Every walking tour of any European city starts at this place, the central old town square. The square is the busiest part of the city filled restaurants, cafes, markets, bars, pubs, street food, souvenirs, and much more. The Christmas market during winter takes place here.



3. Tallinn old town

The old town comes straight from the 14th and 15th-century architecture with the medieval walls, cobblestoned streets, historic statues, museums, churches and old buildings.

It has many attractions like the town hall, viewpoints, St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, Toompea castle. Most of the tourists cover only the old town attractions if they are on a day trip. Walking is the best way is to explore the old town. Try the horse carriage or the mini train if you are short of time.



4. Toompea Castle

[The castle](#) was one of the first things we did on our walking tour. I couldn't enter as we need to book in advance. But still, you can walk around the castle, enjoy the 13th-century architecture.

Currently, the castle is used as the Estonian parliament. There is also a nice park where you can rest.



5. St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral

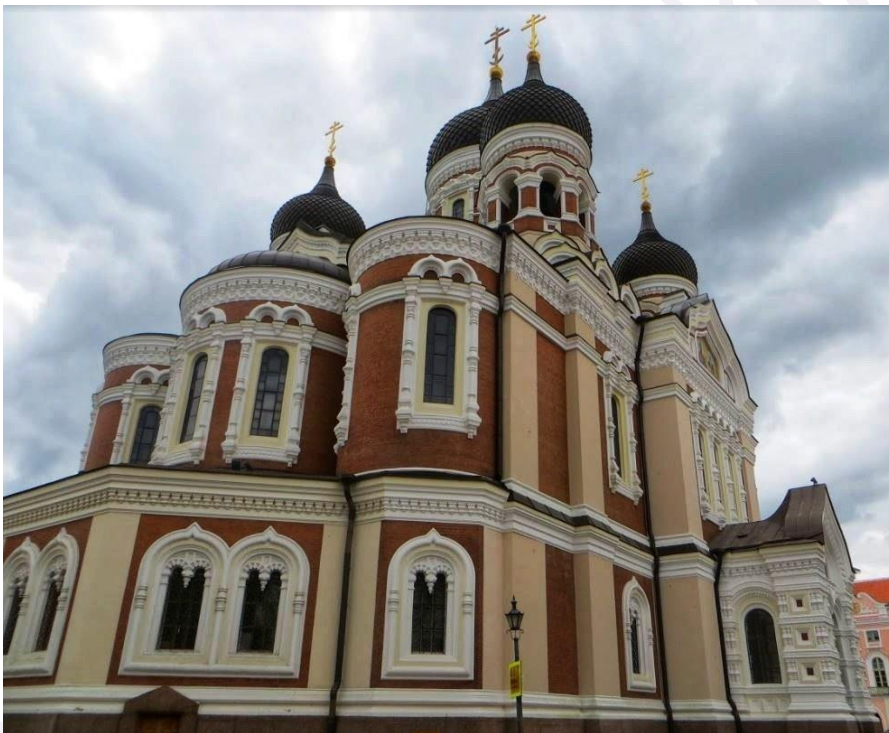
This huge, onion shape domed cathedral dominates the Toompea Hill. It's the country's main [Russian Orthodox cathedral](#) and also a start point to many city tours. For me, this cathedral was the best thing in Tallinn.

The cathedral is similar to the [Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ](#) in [Podgorica](#) and the one in [Sofia](#).

Cathedral Highlights

- construction year: 1900 when Estonia belonged to the Russian Czardom.
- Total of 11 bells with the largest one weighing 15 tonnes.
- Intrinsic interior design with mosaic and icons.

Note: Photography is prohibited inside.



6. Viewpoints

Generally, you have to move away from a city for a viewpoint. But in Tallinn, we have the Toompea Hill. Standing right in the heart of the old town, it offers you multiple viewpoints.

1. **Kohtuotsa viewpoint:** city view that includes the town hall square. It's a must view spot during your trip and the best location for pictures.
2. **Patkuli viewpoint:** Also has the view of the old town and its walls.

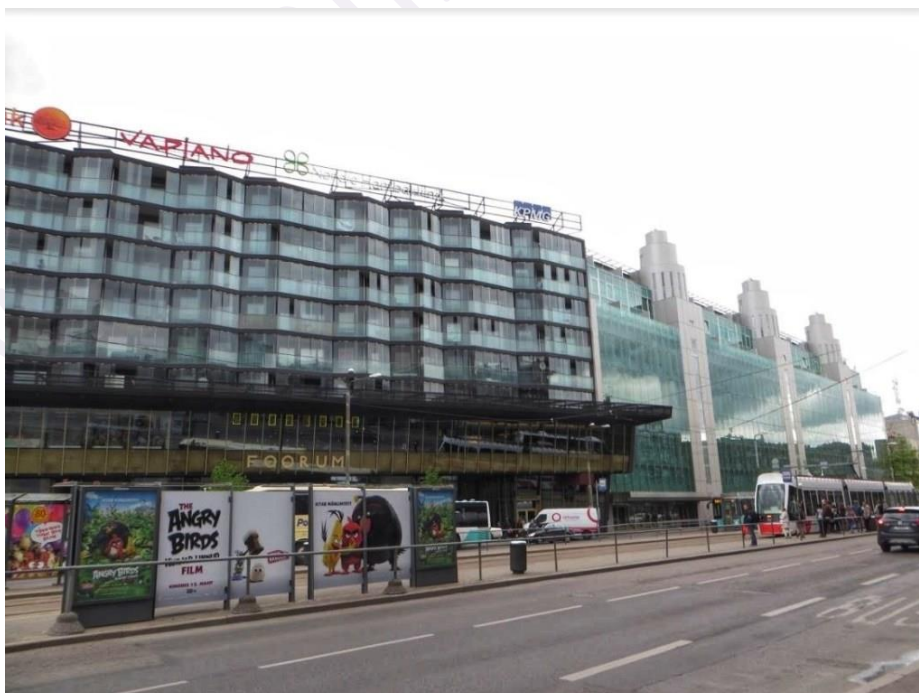
Both these points are close by and it will mostly be a part of your walking tour.



7. Tallinn New town

If you think Tallinn is only about the old town, then you are wrong. Come out of the old town, you will witness a different Tallinn altogether.

Viru Keskus is the main shopping center just outside the old town. They are filled with modern shopping stores with high-end luxury brands. Narva maantee is the main street in the new town. Along this street, you can also take a 2km walk to the Kadriorg district (east of old town).





8. Kadriorg Park

After strolling the old town, your tired legs need some rest. The Kadriorg district has a nice park to get away from the sun. Lots of benches to sit, colorful flowers, plenty of greenery, fewer tourists, it's the best place to escape the busy city.

The coast is also nearby. So a 10-minute walk from the park allows you to witness the beautiful sunset.



9. Kadriorg Palace

An [18th-century palace](#) named after Kadriorg (Katharinenthal in German), built by Tsar Peter dedicated to his wife Catherine I. The palace has a Baroque style architecture. Inside the palace, there is also an art museum exhibiting collections from the 16th – 19th centuries.

The picture-perfect, well laid out gardens outside the palace are a standout feature.



10. The Russalka Memorial

Yet another attraction in the Kadriorg district, the Russalka Memorial is a bronze monument raised in the memory of the Russian warship Rusalka that sank. It was on the way to Finland, 1893. This 16m tall sculpture is right next to the Kadriorg park.



11. Kalarand



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How can you visit a coastal city and forget the beach? Tallinn being a coastal capital has about 5 beaches that are open to the public, the famous one is in the Kalarand. Close to the old town, the area is known for fishing.

Other than that you can also visit the beach near the Kadriorg park and take a tram back to the old town.



What you can expect?

You will enjoy exploring Tallinn if you are new to Europe. But for someone who has visited several other European cities, Tallinn is yet another capital with an old town, museums, parks, cathedrals, and viewpoints. Tallinn doesn't stand out from the rest. So, one day is good enough to see the main attractions and almost every attraction is walkable.

If you happen to spend more time, then try visiting the Estonian History Museum, St Olaf's church, Tallinn city museum, Estonian theatre, and music museum.

Time of visit: May 2016

"I wish I was a postcard. For under \$2 you can travel the world to any location in the world" – Anonymous
