

## **Modern Finland - Secrets of the Happiest Country in the World**

Participants will reveal one or more “secrets” to Finnish happiness and facilitate discussion of the topic as it relates to the notion that Finland is the happiest country in the world. Participants are free to pick almost any topic, even if it is not easily identified as a “happy” one. As an example: taxes are unlikely to make anyone happy, but the social benefits they support could be the secret.

Please keep in mind that this is a seminar on *modern* Finland and the concept of happiness. While background historical information will be essential in many of the presentations, it should generally not be the focus.

Here is a selection of sample categories and topics. Most of them are self-explanatory but a few might send you to Google or Wiki! Feel free to choose any topic that reflects your interest - climate change, the environment, vodka, ice swimming. The choices are endless and there are plenty of resources for every level of interest and engagement. As long as you can relate it to happiness in modern Finland, you're good!

There are stars beside a few topics which may best be presented early in the seminar, so please choose accordingly if you have a strong preference for presenting at a later time.

\*Finnish cultural identity - Sisu, Sivistys, Every person's right

\*Finnish stereotypes - then and now

Communication styles

Self deprecation and humor

Kalsarikannit

Racism and Immigration

Finnish DNA

Gender

Social Welfare

Climate and climate change

The Sami and Kale minorities

Globalization - Nokia - an economic miracle?

Festivals and whacky competitions

Finland Food and Drink - roots, Rudolph, Michelin stars

Health and fitness - Nordic walking, Sauna (mindful sweating?)

Finnish authors and their works

Finnish Music - from Sibelius to heavy metal

Finnish Art and Design - Marimekko, Alvar Aalto

Finnish Passions -

sauna, foraging, coffee, tango, libraries, “the nature”

## **Resources for Modern Finland: Secrets of the Happiest Country in the World**

**Essential Reading** - both articles take less than 15 minutes to read

**World Happiness Report:** <https://worldhappiness.report/about/>

**“Main outlines of Finnish history”:** <https://finland.fi/life-society/main-outlines-of-finnish-history/>

### **Highly recommended**

**www.finland.fi** “This is Finland, Things You Should and Shouldn’t Know” A website of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Find information about an endless variety of topics. Browse and follow its links and you’ll be sure to find topics you would enjoy learning more about and possibly presenting to the group. You can also download a page of “official” Finland emojis!

**Modern Finland** by Harald Haarmann. A highly readable comprehensive overview of the land, its people and their place in the modern world.

**Finland, Cultural Lone Wolf** by Richard D Lewis. A guide to understanding everything from the Finnish sense of humor (yes they have one) to how they think, communicate and do business. It includes a discussion of the factors, geographical and historical, which have shaped the Finnish nature.

### **For a deeper dive into Finnish history:**

**How Finland Survived Stalin: from the winter war to the Cold War 1939-1950** by

**Kimmo Rental** A timely look back at a part of Finnish history that illustrates Finnish character and how the country survived against the odds. It may offer the reader some insight into the country’s past and present positions on joining NATO.

**A History of Finland** by Henrik Meinander. This comprehensive history of Finland provides a more detailed discussion of Finland as it moved economically and politically into mainstream Europe

### **If you prefer lighter reading:**

**The Almost Nearly Perfect People - The Truth about the Nordic Miracle** by Michael Booth. Each of the 5 Nordic countries has a chapter in this entertaining book.

**Xenophobe’s Guide to the Finns** by Tarja Moles - a humorous look at Finnish stereotypes.

**Culture Shock Finland - a guide to customs and etiquette.** by Deborah Swallow.

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/innovation/why-are-finlands-schools-successful-49859555/#>

<https://theconversation.com/why-finland-is-the-happiest-country-in-the-world-an-expert-explains-203016>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/04/01/world/europe/finland-happiness-optimism.html>

<https://www.cnbc.com/2024/03/20/happiest-countries-world-happiness-report-2024.html>

<https://www.vox.com/future-perfect/24112787/world-happiness-report-country-rankings>