

Tallinn, Estonia



Tallinn is a city where the past and present sit side by side. On the Baltic Sea coast, it is home to one of Europe's most complete medieval walled towns, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Within its Old Town, you'll find cobblestone streets dating back to the 13th century, medieval churches, hidden courtyards, and countless cafés and shops tucked into historic buildings. Adventurous visitors can even explore the underground Bastion Passages — a network of tunnels built centuries ago beneath the city.

Yet Tallinn is far more than a preserved museum piece. Today, it is one of Europe's most digitally advanced capitals. Described by the New York Times as "a sort of Silicon Valley on the Baltic Sea," the city is built on accessibility and innovation. Locals enjoy the redeveloped waterfront with its promenade, port, and modern beachside areas, or gather in Telliskivi Creative City, a buzzing district of shops, restaurants, bars, and event spaces.

Tallinn's charm is all the more striking given Estonia's difficult history. Over the centuries, the country was ruled by Sweden, Imperial Russia, Germany, and finally the Soviet Union, before regaining independence in 1991. The impact of these occupations can still be felt, and the Museum of Occupations and Freedom offers a moving look at this past. Today, however, Tallinn stands proudly as a relaxed, modern, cultural city with a thriving IT industry — a place where medieval streets meet digital innovation.

The population of Tallinn, as of January 2025, was about 456,500, and roughly one-third are ethnic Russians. This strong Russian-speaking community is a direct legacy of Estonia's Soviet past, when Moscow encouraged migration from Russia and other republics in a process often described as "Russification." As a result, Russian is still widely spoken in Tallinn today, not only among older generations but also by families where Estonian and Russian are both used at home. For students, this means there are countless opportunities to hear and practise the language in everyday life, from markets and cafés to cultural events.

Why Study Russian in Tallinn

Tallinn offers a fascinating environment for learning Russian because of its complex history as part of the former Soviet Union. The city has a substantial Russian-speaking population, and Russian remains

widely spoken alongside Estonian. This provides learners with authentic opportunities to practise the language in everyday situations, from shops and cafés to cultural events. At the same time, Estonia's integration into the European Union provides a safe, modern, and accessible setting, allowing students to experience Russian language and culture while enjoying the security and openness of a European capital. The blend of medieval charm, Nordic modernity, and Soviet heritage makes Tallinn a unique crossroads where Russian remains both relevant and practical.

Accommodation

Students wishing to study in Tallinn can choose from a range of accommodation options. These include hotels, private apartments, Airbnb accommodation and homestays (i.e., staying with a host family). Language Link can arrange homestay accommodation. Please see the Accommodation section of the RLUS website for approximate costs.

Visas

Depending upon nationality and length of stay in Estonia, visas may or may not be required. The following is accurate as of the time of writing.

1. Nationals of EU and EEA countries and Switzerland do not require a visa to enter Estonia. The same generally applies to third-country nationals who hold a valid residence permit issued by a Schengen State.
2. Citizens of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (and the following categories of British citizens - British nationals (Overseas), British Overseas Territories citizens (BOTC), British overseas citizens (BOC), British protected persons (BPP), British subjects (BS)) do not need a visa to enter a Schengen area (incl. Estonia) for stays of **no more than 90 days in any 180-day period**.
 - a. Students wishing to study in Estonia for periods longer than 90 days should procure the necessary D-Visa in either their country of citizenship or permanent residency. Students can also procure their visas following their arrival in Estonia. Should this be the case, visa assistance will be rendered by Language Link personnel.
3. If your nationality and/ or affiliation does not figure in the list above, please consult <https://vm.ee/en/who-does-not-need-visa-visit-estonia> for further information.

Syllabus

Language Link follows its established syllabus model, combining the key areas of Russian language study:

1. Grammar – 4 academic hours per week
2. Translation – 4 academic hours per week

3. Reading, Vocabulary, Phonetics or Literature – 4 academic hours per week
4. Conversational Practice – 4 academic hours per week
5. Essay Writing – 2 academic hours per week
6. Integrative Language Experience (ILEx) Project – 4 academic hours every fourth teaching week

The programme follows a four-week cycle. During the first three weeks, students receive 18 hours of classroom tuition. In the fourth week, students receive 14 hours of classroom tuition together with four hours of structured independent study devoted to their ILEx Project.

The ILEx Project gives students the opportunity to pursue an individual area of interest while connecting classroom learning with authentic, real-world experience. Projects may involve research, interviews, visits, observation, engagement with Russian-language sources, or other forms of independent enquiry. While the syllabus provides a consistent framework, teachers may adjust the balance of classes slightly to reflect the needs and abilities of each group. All components contribute toward the overall course fulfilment requirements.

Course Dates and Reading Weeks

Autumn Semester (Programme Start Dates and End Dates)			
My RLUS programme starts in	My programme is	My programme starts on	My programme ends on
August 2027	13 weeks	23/08/2027	19/11/2027
	16 weeks	23/08/2027	10/12/2027
	32 weeks	23/08/2027	10/12/2027
	33 weeks	23/08/2027	10/12/2027
Spring Semester (Programme Start Dates and Finish Dates)			
My RLUS programme Starts/ resumes in	My programme is	My programme starts on	My programme ends on
February 2028	13 weeks	07/02/2028	05/05/2028
	17 weeks	07/02/2028	02/06/2028
	32 weeks*	17/01/2028	05/05/2028
	33 weeks	07/02/2028	02/06/2028

* Oxford 32-week students start their Spring term on 17/01/2028

Reading Weeks

Semester	Programme Length	Reading Week Dates
Autumn term	13-, 16-, 32-, and 33-week students	11/10/2027 – 15/10/2027 (one week)
Spring term	13-, 17-, 32-, 33-week students	13/03/2028 – 17/03/2028 (one week)
	17- and 33-week students	08/05/2028 – 12/05/2028 (one week)

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