

ESTONIAN CHILD- MILD AND WILD



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Estonian child – mild and wild

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Ahoy, boys and girls!

Come and join us on a voyage into the life of Estonian children! There are still some seats left! We are heading towards one of the smallest countries in Europe: Estonia. Once we have arrived, we will look the children over and, step by step, try to get an idea of what they are like and what they enjoy doing. If you accept the challenge and pass all levels of the discovery game, you will find out what kind of children live in Estonia!



LEVEL ONE: THE CHILD'S BIRTH AND NAME

Estonian children are usually born in the hospital's maternity ward. The family has prepared thoroughly for the day. While the baby is still inside the mother's womb, his or her mother and father attend childbirth classes. They talk to the baby inside the womb, and play it some music, just to make the baby happy while still inside the mother.

Maternity wards are like small spas. They have soft lighting, and some are equipped with baths and big gym balls. Many mothers prefer to give birth in water.

As soon as the baby is born, it is laid on the mother's chest for skin-to-skin contact. In this way the baby can be utterly sure that it is welcome in this world!

After the mother gives birth, the family can rest in the hospital's family room. There's even a television set. Of course, the baby doesn't care: it only opens its eyes when it's hungry or the dirty diaper feels uncomfortable.

The family room often looks like a flower shop. Friends and relatives have already lined up outside the maternity ward, waiting to say hello to the arrival. There are usually one or two children in an Estonian family.

Some children already have names when they are born. Not that it's written on the baby's forehead. It's just that after careful deliberation Mum and Dad have already decided on the name they like. And when the baby is born, they look at its face. Does he look like an Uku, for example?

If he does have a face like an Uku, then the baby's birth and name can be registered. Married parents can do this online, so that they don't have to go to an office. They can just lie on the family bed and take care of everything on their computers.

Parents are allowed one month to select a name for their baby. Sometimes it takes a long time to choose the right name and sometimes not. There are so many names to choose from and it all depends on the parents' taste.

Many parents prefer names that are popular all over Europe, names that have an international sound to them, names that work anywhere.

Some parents go back to the roots. They want to give their child a true Estonian name, a name that has a meaning or a long history: for example, Tuul ("wind"), Päike ("sun"), Torm ("storm"), Lill ("flower") or Loits ("spell").

Many children end up with several names. In Estonia you can give your child up to three names. For example, instead of naming a girl Mia, she could be Mia Maria. Or Õie-Ann. Or, if it is a boy, Karl Markus. That can be quite convenient for the child: if they don't happen to like one name, they can choose to go by the other name. Usually children like having several names.

There are parents who let their imaginations run wild coming up with names.



However, there are regulations on names: a name cannot contain numbers or foreign letters. This is so that in the future the child will not have difficulty explaining how his or her name is spelled or pronounced.

Sometimes parents name their children after their favourite singers, actors or athletes. Because of the well-known local actress Mirtel Pohla, there are a lot of Mirtels in Estonia now. Some names are so popular that there may be several children with the same name at kindergarten or school.



PRESENT

Every child born in Estonia receives the book *Small Tree*, containing stories and poems. Then the mother or father just has to wait until their baby is old enough so they can start reading the stories out loud to them!

LEVEL TWO: THE FIRST THREE YEARS

The newborn gets to bathe in attention. For a year and a half, either its mother or father will receive a monthly benefit: the parental benefit. This means that one of the parents will get the same amount of money they received as salary while working and so can relax and concentrate on family life.

Not that the baby knows anything about this. He/she is just thrashing arms and legs, constantly growing. Many parents help their babies develop by taking them to swimming lessons, workouts or creative workshops. From the moment the baby arrives, homes are decorated with photos of babies wearing swim rings and finger painting works of art. Young parents are urged to be creative at home too. Paint smudges on walls appear sweet and artistic in their eyes, so much so that some don't even bother to wash them off. Or they can take out pots and pans from the kitchen cabinets and pour some barley into them. Pouring grain through your fingers is said to help the development of the brain.

The key to raising children is fresh air. The majority of parents would like to keep their children outside all day long. Whenever possible, babies are taken outside – on the balcony or into the backyard – for naps. In the city you often come across a cafe with several baby carriages parked outside the windows. Despite the freezing temperature, babies tucked into wool blankets enjoy their naps while their mothers enjoy their coffee in the warm cafe.

The child usually starts to talk in the first three years. Estonian children master the use of all 14 cases of the Estonian language with astonishing ease, even though it takes years for a foreigner to understand them, and even then mistakes occur. But that's the thing with a mother tongue: before you even notice, you've already mastered it. However, there are children in Estonia whose mother tongue is not Estonian. They learn Estonian in kindergarten and school. Children often learn the words connected with those closest to them first: mother and father. However, Estonian children don't usually use such formal words. For many small children, the mother is "mummy". Maybe later she becomes "mama" or "mum". The father is "daddy", or "pop" or "pops" in some families. Not all children speak the same language at home in Estonia. Mostly it depends on where the child lives. Children in South Estonia, for example, speak the Võro language and even have their own Võro alphabet book. Take, for example, the following line of dialogue. The first is the official Estonian language ("Our nightingale has gone away this year") and the second is in the Võro language. Can you see the difference?

LEELO:
EESTI KEELES ÜTLEN NII:
MEIE ÖÖBIK ON TÄNAVU
MUJALE LÄINUD.

UKU:
VÕRO KEELEN KÕNOLÕ NII:
MI SISASK OM TIMAHAVVA
MUALÕ LÄNNÜ.

Here's a list of the coolest words according to Estonian children:



LEVEL THREE: KINDERGARTEN



MONDAY TUESDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY FRIDAY

7-8.20 am Going to kindergarten

Children usually start kindergarten at the age of three. Before that they can attend nursery school, which receives children from the age of 18 months.

8.20-9 am Breakfast

Eating porridge will give you strength for the whole day! One of the staples is oatmeal porridge. Before eating children must wash their hands. And although we don't go to school, we drink school milk. That means that every child can have a glass of milk free of charge.

9-10 am Morning session, activities and games

Let's get smart! It is during such mornings at kindergarten that children learn the names of weekdays, numbers and letters, how to tell time etc.

10-11.30 am Outdoor activities

The weather can't stop us from going outside! We have cool playgrounds. By the way, we don't always go to our kindergarten playground. Sometimes we wear our reflective vests, arrange ourselves into a line, two by two, and go on a walk or visit the theatre, library or museum.

11.30 am - 12 pm Returning inside. Preparations for lunch

We take off our outdoor clothing and go wash our hands!

12-1 pm Lunch. Preparations for nap time

Every day contains a warm meal. This is when the bigger kids learn how to eat with a knife and fork.

1-3 pm Nap time

No napping without a story! The smaller kids go to sleep, the bigger ones have quiet time in the next room reading books or playing. Here's the deal with napping: when you're a kindergarten kid, it seems annoying, but when you're off to school you think, looking back, that it was a missed opportunity... think about it - taking a nap in the middle of the day every day!

3-4 pm Play time

The best time of the day! Play time!

4-4.15 pm Snack time

There's definitely going to be some healthy fruit!

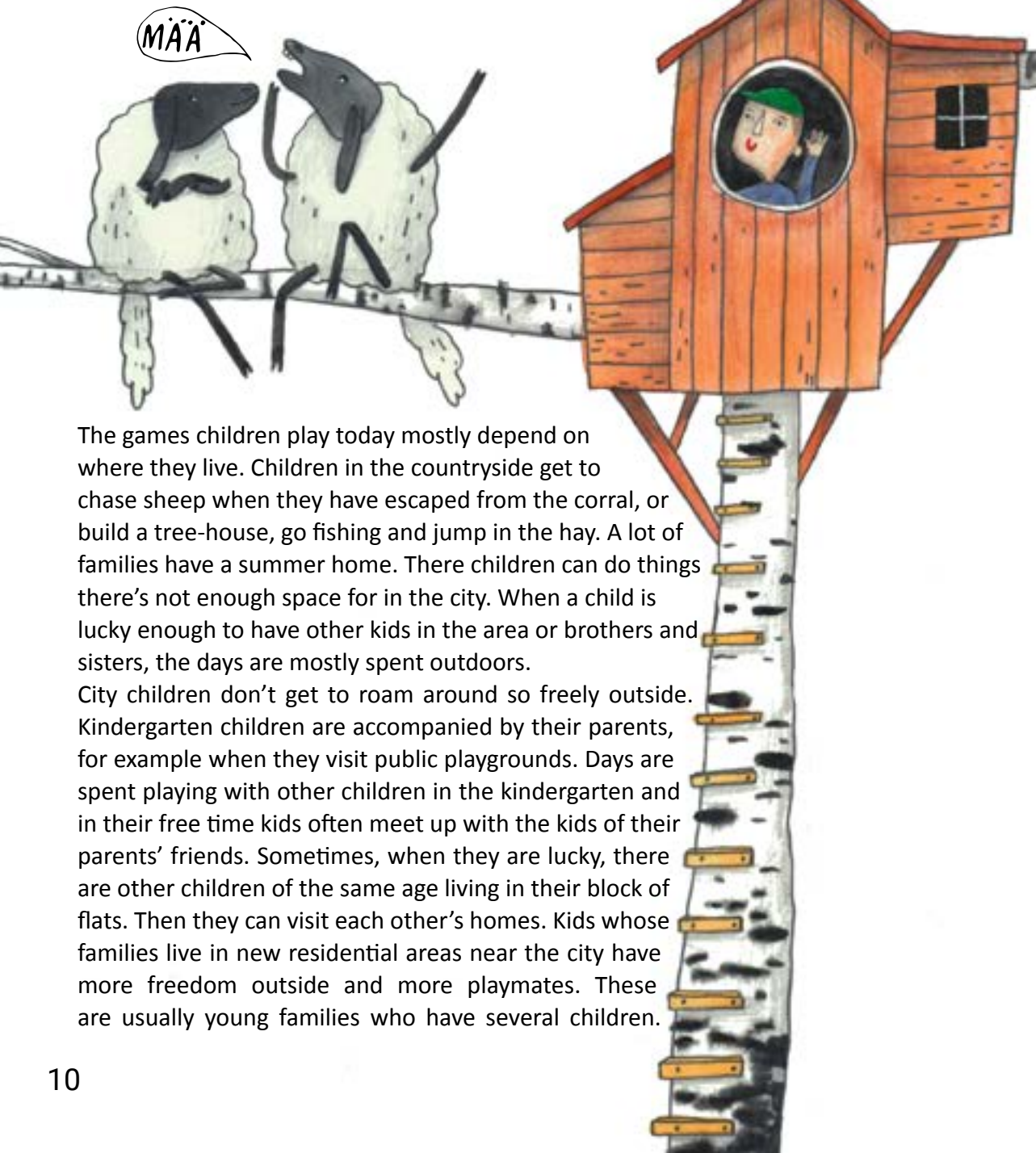
4.15-6 pm Play time and going home

Let's play some more! I hope they don't come and get me just yet. Although I love being at home too, I didn't get to finish my game yesterday...



LEVEL FOUR : PLAYING

They say play is the work of the child and is something children take very seriously. Playing can be divided into indoor and outdoor games, and summer and winter games, games to be played alone and games to be played together and... the list goes on and on.



The games children play today mostly depend on where they live. Children in the countryside get to chase sheep when they have escaped from the corral, or build a tree-house, go fishing and jump in the hay. A lot of families have a summer home. There children can do things there's not enough space for in the city. When a child is lucky enough to have other kids in the area or brothers and sisters, the days are mostly spent outdoors. City children don't get to roam around so freely outside. Kindergarten children are accompanied by their parents, for example when they visit public playgrounds. Days are spent playing with other children in the kindergarten and in their free time kids often meet up with the kids of their parents' friends. Sometimes, when they are lucky, there are other children of the same age living in their block of flats. Then they can visit each other's homes. Kids whose families live in new residential areas near the city have more freedom outside and more playmates. These are usually young families who have several children.

There is more space outside and it is safer than in the city.

Today's children are drawn to screens. Estonian kids usually get their first mobile phone when they start school. Smartphones are exciting gadgets. Looking around there are children everywhere with their eyes glued to screens. However, parents mostly hold the view that children mustn't spend too much time getting lost in screens. It is for this reason that many schoolchildren have timers on their desks or shelves. This doesn't mean that the child is a big fan of the boiled egg: the timer helps the child to remember when it is time to switch off the phone.

Summers are short in Estonia and, if the weather allows, it is smart to pop outside. The summer weather is suitable for games, including running and other athletic activities, hide-and-seek etc. The biggest hit of the last few years is the trampoline. In the summer families often go hiking. There is lots of room to hike in Estonia: forests and the seaside, but why not urban areas such as the Soviet block of flats district of Lasnamäe. You just need a little imagination! Nature lurks in the urban jungle too.

While Estonian grown-ups may complain about the Estonian weather, Estonian children never do. They never say that it's like bad skiing weather all through the year, or that it is cold and dark all the time. Kids welcome winter with open arms. It means they can take out their sledges, skis and ice skates, and have snowball fights. There have been reports of children who, even on the hottest summer day, yearn for the winter so that they can go sledging. Each family makes at least one snowman during the winter.

Families are happy to spend time together. The dark winter days are made for keeping each other company and preparing home-made meals, lighting candles and playing with children. The most popular games among families are card and board games, such as "UNO", "Monopoly", quizzes, "The Circus" and "Travel Around the World". Every family has its own favourites.

ESTONIAN CHILDREN'S FAVOURITE OUTDOOR GAMES:

RUNNING GAMES, FOR
EXAMPLE CHASE AND TAG
FOOTBALL
HIDE-AND-SEEK
"UKAKAS" (OLLY-OLLY OXEN FREE)
ALL SORTS OF BALL
GAMES: DODGE BALL,
BASKETBALL, VOLLEYBALL,
BADMINTON AND TENNIS

ESTONIAN CHILDREN'S FAVOURITE INDOOR GAMES:

PLAYING WITH PETS
BOARD GAMES, FOR EXAMPLE
"MONOPOLY"
CARD GAMES
SCREEN GAMES
LEGOS AND OTHER
CONSTRUCTION TOYS

Instructions for playing "Ukakas" (Olly-olly oxen free)

In the hide-and-seek game "Ukakas", children agree on a tree or some other spot where one of the players – the seeker – will count up to a hundred while the others run and hide.

When the seeker has reached hundred, he or she turns around and starts looking for the others.

The aim of the game is to reach the tree or spot agreed on earlier before the seeker catches you.

When the children reach the tree, they tap their hand on the tree and call out "Uka-uka, mina prii!" (Uka-uka I am free!). If the last one reaches the tree before the seeker has caught him or her, he or she can free all of the other children: "Uka-uka, kõik on priid!" (Uka-uka everyone is free!).

However, if the seeker notices you and reaches the tree before you do, he or she can call out your name: "Uka-uka, Leelo kotis!" (Uka-uka, Leelo in the bag!) If you are the first one to be bagged and no one is able to free everyone else, you become the seeker in the next round.

Vanamees, vanamees 66,
poolteist hammast oli suus.
Kartis hürri, kartis rotte,
kartis nurgas jahukotte.

Impele, pimpla, piila, paala.
Saksad sõivad ümber laua.
Kokk oli keskel, jagas praadi,
mamsel pakkus šokolaadi.

ENTEL-TENTEL
TRIHA-TREI
VHITI HAARU HOMMEREI,
TÄNA LAULAME KÕIK NII,
SINA OLED MÄNGUST PRII!

Tag is an ordinary chasing game with many variants (e.g. squat tag, bum tag and wall tag).

Who becomes the first seeker or chaser?

Someone always has to be first to count to a hundred and chase others. But how do you decide who it is going to be? Rock-paper-scissors and other counting-out games come in handy in situations like these.

LEVEL FIVE : BIRTHDAY

Birthdays sneak up on us. The whole family discusses where and how the party should be held. The birthday child is already dreaming of gifts and it takes a lot of tossing and turning to fall asleep on the evening before. Too much excitement!

On the morning of the birthday, the birthday child is woken up with a song. Every family has their own traditions: some start singing outside the door, and others sneak up to the bed and start singing there with or without instruments; some families enter with the candles on the cake already lit, others light them right before the birthday child's eyes. And then it is time for presents and flowers.

It is a custom to bring candies or sweets to kindergarten or school on the day of your birthday. The other children will say their happy birthdays, there will be some more singing and friends will hand out birthday cards that they have drawn themselves.

Every year, a birthday get-together with friends and relatives will be held too. Nowadays birthdays have become such big deals that most people don't hold them at home any more. You can book an indoor playground, a museum, hold it outdoors on hiking trails, at the cinema or the water park. By the time their kids become teenagers, most parents are experienced party planners. Often the whole kindergarten playgroup or school class, or at least half of it, is invited to the party. But there are still people who celebrate birthdays at home. Some families prefer a more relaxed home birthday party with fewer guests.



The menu at children's birthday parties usually consists of finger food. There is a lot to drink, because children like to run and jump around and work up a sweat. Estonian children eat carrots, cucumbers, cauliflower, apples, pears, sandwiches, meat balls, and cheese and crackers at parties, but naturally the highlight is the birthday cake.



The cake has candles sticking out of it, which are then lit and the birthday child has to blow them out all at once and make a wish.

The choice of cakes is endless. You can ask to have whatever picture or design you want on the cake. However, there will definitely be a birthday party with a biscuit cake. The biscuit cake is a classic at children's parties, especially since children can help make it. Every family has their own tricks when it comes to the biscuit cake. Some families prefer a lot of jam, others opt for more chocolate. One thing is certain though: everyone loves biscuit cake!

Biscuit cake recipe

3-4 packets of square biscuits (1 pack 180 g)

1-2 dl of milk or juice

750 g sour cream or unflavoured yoghurt

200 ml whipped cream

Strawberries or jam

For decoration: anything you like - berries, candies, chocolate etc.

Instructions:

Dip the biscuit squares in milk or juice and lay them out, side by side, on a dish. Spread one third of the sour cream or unflavoured yoghurt on them. Then spread a layer of jam or slices of berries.

Dip some more biscuit squares in milk, lay them on top of the jam/berries and cover with sour cream / unflavoured yoghurt. Then another layer of biscuits dipped in milk or juice. Make as many layers as you wish. Whisk up the whipped cream and spread it on the cake.

Put the cake into the fridge for at least four hours.

When it is time to take it out, decorate it as your heart desires.

With the same eagerness as children wait for their birthdays, they wait for **Christmas**. In Estonia, children place one of their slippers on the windowsill at night so that the elves can hide a little treat there. Usually it is a candy or a piece of fruit or a little toy. Some children have frequent correspondence with the elves.

On 24 December the family gathers together to celebrate Christmas. Everyone receives gifts. Sometimes Santa himself brings the presents, but when he can't make it, the Christmas elves leave a big bag filled with presents outside the door. To receive their presents everyone has to recite a poem, sing a song or do a dance. This is a chance for everyone to show what they can do!

LEVEL SIX: SCHOOL

Attention! We have reached the longest phase in the child's life. School time lasts for twelve years!

Level one: grades 1–3

Level two: grades 4–6

Level three: grades 7–9

Gymnasium level: grades 10–12

Estonian children usually start school at the age of 7. Every child in Estonia has the right to go to school. Preparations start even earlier: children learn the alphabet and numbers at home, in kindergarten or in preschool. Preschool is usually once or twice a week. This is where children practice their reading, writing and calculation skills. It is not obligatory to attend preschool, but it gives the child an idea of what lies ahead in school. Children must attend school until they have completed their basic education, e.g. until the end of grade 9 or until they reach the age of 17. But a family can also decide to educate their children at home – this is called home-schooling. For first graders, a lot depends on where they live or what their parents' views on education are. There are schools with entrance exams. Schools such as these offer a more thorough education on a particular subject, such as languages. If a family chooses one of these schools it may happen that the school is far away from the child's home.

However, a lot of families prefer schools that are within walking distance. By law, every child must be accepted into their regional school.

Ordinarily, there are 24 pupils in a class, though there are fewer in smaller schools and more in bigger ones. The number of Estonian language and mathematics lessons is the biggest in the first school years. It is usually obligatory to pick two foreign languages in an Estonian school. According to the national curriculum children can choose between English, French, German and Russian.

Pupils usually need to pass entrance exams to get into grade 10. The national gymnasium system was created recently, meaning that new schools will open in bigger centres, where children can attend grades 10 to 12. City and rural municipalities are responsible for basic schools, and the government, the city or district for the gymnasiums. Still, there are a lot of schools in Estonia where children can attend grades 1 to 12. Entering a gymnasium is voluntary. Instead, it is possible to attain a vocational education at a trade school or even go to work, though the latter is rather rare. Everyone knows education is important!



There are also a lot of private schools in Estonia. These have usually been created by parents who want their children to attend classes with fewer pupils. At private schools there is a greater focus on creativity.

The school day usually starts at around 8 or 9 in the morning. Children go to school by themselves, on foot or by bike. Some take the local bus or some other form of public transportation. Many parents take their kids to school by car. It all depends on where the child lives. In rural areas the school bus picks children up to take them to school.

THE FIVE TOP SUBJECTS, ACCORDING TO ESTONIAN CHILDREN:

Physical education
Mathematics
Art history
Crafts, handicrafts, home economics
woodwork, technology
English

THE FIVE MOST DIFFICULT SUBJECTS, ACCORDING TO ESTONIAN CHILDREN:

Mathematics
English
Estonian
Nature studies
Russian

In Estonian schools performance is evaluated by grading – assigned as letters or numbers – or by formative assessment. The schools are free to determine which method to use. The most popular is evaluation on a scale, for example assigning numbers from 1 to 5, where 5 is the highest grade. First graders aren't usually graded, and the number of schools that postpone grading on a scale is growing. Instead, they use formative assessment, meaning that the teacher writes down how a child is doing in his or her studies.

All important school information – grades, studying, absences, praise, teacher's notes etc. – can be accessed in e-school. E-school is a web-based school diary used



by pupils, teachers and parents.

School starts on 1 September. It is a festive day: children bring the teachers flowers and there is cake later at home. The school year ends in June, by Midsummer Day at the latest. Children often bring flowers to their teachers at the end of the school year as well. Then follows a long summer vacation, which lasts a little less than three

months. The long summer vacation has remained unchanged ever since children helped out their parents with farm work. In the old days, children spent the whole summer herding cattle, hoeing cabbage plants and helping their parents by doing domestic chores. Even today, children are sent into the countryside for the summer. A lot of schoolchildren attend student work brigades in the summer, where there is farm work to be done as well.

Juku

The most famous schoolboy in Estonia is called Juku. There is a proverb saying that what Juku doesn't learn, Juhan won't know. It means that Juhan's nickname as a child was Juku. But mostly Juku is a staple in popular jokes:

Juku: "Father, help me with my homework!"

Father: "Why don't you try and use your own head first?"

Juku: "I already did!"

Father: "And what did you come up with?"

Juku: "That I need to ask you for help!"

Teacher: "What word do children use the most at school?"

Juku: "I don't know."

Teacher: "That's correct!"

Teacher: "Is this your ball, Juku?"

Juku: "Is the school's window broken?"

Teacher: "Not to my knowledge."

Juku: "In that case it is mine."



LEVEL SEVEN: INTERESTS, HOBBIES, CHILDREN'S CULTURE

SCHOOL IS OVER FOR THE DAY!
AND YET IT SEEMS NO ONE
HAS GONE HOME.

SHH! LET'S SEE WHAT
GOES ON IN THE SCHOOLHOUSE
AND AROUND IT AFTER SCHOOL!



① **SONG STUDIO** The melody of the popular Estonian children's song "Rongisõit" ("Train Ride") can be heard inside the room. The rehearsal is in full swing. Little Mirjam and Martin are rehearsing songs, which they plan to present at the popular song competition "Laulukarussell". The song competition has been broadcast on Estonian National Television since 1992. When "Rongisõit" is finished, the children start singing a lullaby about a little bear who learns how to fall asleep by himself. The song has helped children drift off to sleep for decades. So watch out! Let's move on before we too fall asleep.

② **ART CLASS** There are little boxes and containers lined up on the tables, like little houses. From pencil drawings to building little houses: these are just a few things children do in art class. Today children are creating the model of their dream city. First they draw the city plan and decide on the location of the playgrounds and other exciting places in the city. Then they make a small model. Just like the one they would like to live in in the future.

③ **ROBOTICS CLASS** There are so many children here that they can hardly all fit into the room. It was only last month that a notice was placed on the school wall saying that a robotics class would start soon. A lot of children showed up on the first day of the class, and even more on the second. So they had to organise more robotics classes. The children are so excited, wanting to build their own robots. Soon it will be time for the national competition: wouldn't it be nice to show up with a robot you made yourself? Not to mention seeing what others have done.

④ **LIBRARY** Villem is an avid reader, he borrows several books at once from the library. Sometimes he finishes them all on the same day and returns straight away for new ones. His favourite characters from Estonian literature include Sipsik, Sammalhabe, Kingpool, Muhv, Arabella, Kunksmoor, Nõianeu Nöbinina, Tobias from second B and many others. Ever since he was little his parents have read books to him. His mother especially loves to read books by Astrid Lindgren. They used to be almost every Estonian child's favourite books. For some they still are. Every night Villem turns on the radio to hear a bedtime story. And naturally he has subscribed to the children's magazines Täheke and Hea Laps. Villem does some writing too; his stories have been published in the school's almanac.

⑤ **THE HALL** Today is the theatre class' first rehearsal with costumes and decorations. The show is "The Seven Friends of Jussike", e.g. Jussike and his friends the weekdays. There are many rehearsals ahead, after which

the theatre class will compete at the school theatre festival. The children in the theatre class can't wait. Last year was the first time they took part in the festival. It was the highlight of the school year!

As soon as the rehearsal is over, the stage is taken over by little dancers. They start practising their dance act in order to compete at the School Dance festival. They will have to put a lot of effort into the rehearsals, because School Dance is soooooo cool!

⑥ **GYM** The gym is filled with sounds of thumping, screeching and whistling. Almost never is there a quiet moment here. Football practice is currently in full swing. Jaan, Siim and Oskar are all first graders. They started football practice only a few months ago. They all want to become professional footballers. Children think highly of athletic activities and almost everyone in their class, both girls and boys, do some form of sports. The most popular sports among Estonian children are football, swimming, gymnastics, athletics, basketball, judo, wrestling, tennis, badminton, table tennis, dancing and bike riding. Children can choose from over 80 sports in Estonia.

SCHOOL YARD There's a child under the tree, another one by the bush, a third is searching for something in the mud, a fourth is studying a butterfly. Everyone is holding pens and pieces of paper and they all have magnifying glasses hanging around their necks. This is the outdoor session of the nature class. The children have to note down the animals and plants they come across in the school's vicinity. They have already spotted several animals and birds: a squirrel, a starling, a hooded crow and a hedgehog. Children will also have to listen to the sounds in the area. When all have finished taking notes, they start to compare what they have seen. Which one is bigger, the sparrow or the starling, what kind of a root does the dandelion have, what kind of tracks do the animals leave behind?

CINEMA There is a cinema near the school. Looks like those who aren't currently attending a hobby club are going to the cinema. It is children's film week. Some films attract whole families, for example the Estonian classic "Kevade" ("Spring"), which depicts school life, teachers and boys' antics over a hundred years ago. "Kevade" was made decades ago – in 1969 – but it continues to be loved by generation after generation. The programme also includes animated films about Lotte the little dog girl and the latest hit, "The Secret Society of Soup Town", which takes place in a district of Tartu called Soup Town and shows the activities of a gang of friends.



LEVEL EIGHT: SONG AND DANCE CELEBRATION

There aren't that many children in Estonia who haven't had experience with folk dancing or choir music. The majority of children have been in either a dance group or a choir. And those who haven't have at least seen others singing or dancing. Every small singer or dancer dreams of going to the big song and dance festival. The Estonian National Song and Dance Celebration takes place every five years in Tallinn. The Youth Song and Dance Celebration is also held every five years. Smaller festivities and performances are held regularly. Preparations for the big festival start early on. The preliminary round is open to all groups to demonstrate their skills. Those who do well in their singing and dancing get to move on. So practice, practice, practice!

And soon the day of the festival is here, a big adventure, because it is not only about performing! The Song and Dance Celebration is an especially important event for children who arrive from outside of Tallinn. They arrive in the capital in buses and set up camp in schoolhouses. Only in Tallinn can they ride street-cars and trolleys; they will get a taste of independence and spend nights in big school halls on mattresses. This also means big pillow fights.

Rehearsals and performances take place in the daytime. It seems unbelievable, but somehow this giant swarm of children are united when they sing and dance so that it all goes smoothly in the eyes – and ears – of the audience.

First come the dance festival's performances. Sparkly-eyed dancers can demonstrate what kind of wonderful patterns and shapes they can form dancing together. It is especially nice to watch these dance acts from seats higher up, or even on a big television screen. Birds are lucky, because they get the best view of the celebration. After the dancers comes the procession: thousands of people in folk clothing marching through the city cheering and trying to forget about their aching feet. The distance they cover is about five kilometres, or 20 000 steps. There are as many people watching them as there are performers or even more. People greet the choirs and dance groups with cheers and every performer feels special. The procession ends at the Song Festival Grounds, where the Song Celebration Torch is lit.

Singing in unison under the great arch of the Song Festival Grounds is something the children will remember for the rest of their lives.

Other precious memories they will have of the festival is the soup served from huge kettles, the countless ice creams eaten during the festival, and the children's capes tousled by the wind and the rain! By the end of the several-day-long festival the children's faces are suntanned and their voices are hoarse, but there is a grand and powerful feeling in their chests: we did it, and we will be back next time! Why don't you come too?

LEVEL NINE: FOOD



Every Estonian child knows that rye bread is very important: a very Estonian thing.

The Estonian family considers breakfast to be the most important meal of the day. It gives strength for the whole day. A classic choice for breakfast is porridge, boiled with milk. The most popular porridge is oatmeal. But sandwiches, cereal and muesli with milk or kefir are also popular choices.

During workdays children eat lunch at school or kindergarten. It is important for every child to eat at least one warm meal a day. Many kindergartens serve children black bread and have cut out white bread altogether. School cafes are also trying to get rid of pastries and sweet drinks.

By dinnertime, children are home. Everyone tries to make it on time to gather around the dinner table. Parents hold the view that if a family eats together at least once a day, the sense of family is stronger and children are happier.

Families are becoming increasingly aware of what they eat. The best kind of food is anything that grows near the home. Those who can, grow fresh vegetables in their gardens. In August you can even spot red tomatoes and little bunches of green herbs on the balconies of high rises. Book stores sell cookbooks which encourage families to cook together and invent exciting recipes. Meals should be tasty and cooking should be fun! This is the prevalent mentality these days.

ESTONIAN CHILDREN'S FAVOURITE FOODS:

1. PIZZA
2. SPAGHETTI
3. LASAGNA
4. SUSHI
5. PASTA
6. ICE CREAM
7. HAMBURGER
8. MASHED POTATOES

FOODS ESTONIAN PARENTS MAKE THE MOST:

1. Chicken soup
2. Borscht
3. Potatoes with burgers or minced meat gravy
4. Mashed potatoes
5. Meat stew
6. Sauerkraut with oven potatoes

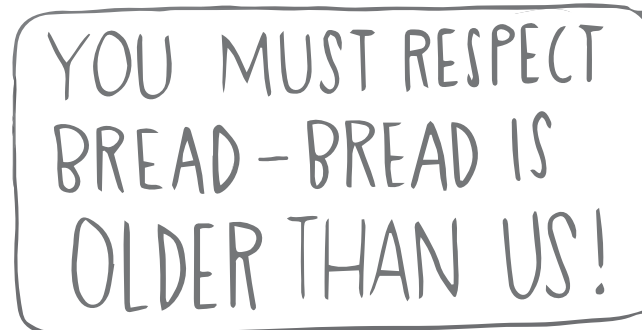
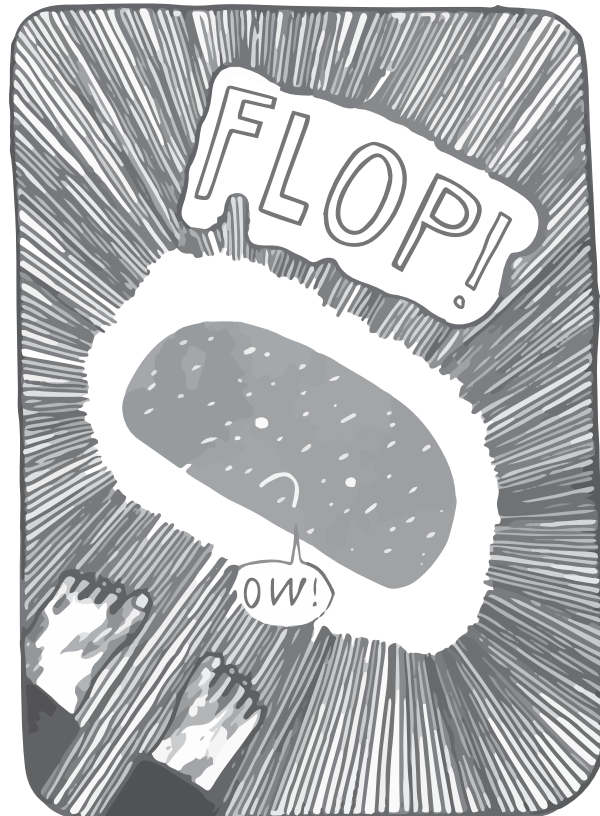
HOLIDAY MEALS

Christmas is the most important family holiday and can never be celebrated without a delicious feast. The Estonian Christmas meal staples are roast pork with sauerkraut and potatoes. Another traditional food during Christmas is blood sausage eaten with cranberry jam.

The menu on Shrove Tuesday is simple and doesn't need a lot of preparation. There is pea soup for lunch, followed by a bunch of whipped cream buns. This is what the cafeterias in kindergartens and schools serve on Shrove Tuesday. And this is probably what awaits children at home too. Estonians consume so much pea soup and buns during the holiday that they get their fill of them for the whole year.

On Midsummer Day, Estonians drink vast amounts of kvass. Some make their own, but most buy it from shops.

No one can envision Midsummer Day celebrations without shashlik. This tradition was introduced in Estonia during the Soviet time and it still persists.



LEVEL TEN: "KAERAJAAN" AND "KAMA"

SPECIAL EDITION OF THE FOLK CALENDAR

"KAMA"

Every Estonian child knows kama is healthy. It is a mixture of ground and roasted legumes (peas) and grain (rye, barley and wheat). Kama is usually eaten or drunk with sour milk, kefir or yoghurt, with a touch of sugar or honey. Kama is also used to make chocolate, cereal, cookies and cake. Kama goes into everything!



"KAERAJAAN"

Even if an Estonian child doesn't know any other folk dances, he or she at least knows the "Kaerajaan". This is a dance they learn in kindergarten. Usually it includes four dancers and people singing along.

The year in the life of an Estonian child passes to the rhythm of holidays in the folk calendar. Every season has its holidays and activities that are still honoured. Children learn about folk customs in kindergarten.

In the autumn, when the days are cold and dark, people had to come up with amusement for themselves. One of these was trick or treating Estonian style: dressing up as mummers and going from door to door on Martinmas and St Catherine's Day. "Mardi mummers" are mostly disguised as men wearing dark clothing and "Kadri mummers" wear light women's clothing. Every Estonian child knows the tradition and it is still followed. Martinmas or "Mardipäev" is on November 10 and St Catherine's Day or "Kadripäev" is on November 25.



MART'S TOES ARE FREEZING

Three Martinmas mummers are standing in a hall in an apartment house and one of them presses the doorbell. As soon as they do this, they break out in song begging the family to let the mummers in because their nails are freezing, their toes are aching etc. They look like true beggars: one of the children is wearing his father's old hat, another one a black ushanka with the flaps waving around and the third one is wearing a black mask. They all have their faces painted black. Steps can be heard inside the house and the door opens. The mummers rush inside. The one who pressed the doorbell grabs a handful of barley grits and throws them on the hallway floor to encourage the growth of crops. Afterwards it is time to sing. One of the Martinmas mummers has a little accordion with him and he starts making music with it. When they have finished singing, they ask the family how they are doing, if the children are hard-working and the animals are in good health. When that part is over, it is time for riddles. The mummers ask riddles of the family, who then try to answer them.

"Riddle me this, riddle me that, on the inside striped and streaky, on the outside golden-like. Riddle me this, riddle me that, patch to patch without a stitch," the mummers say. When they've finished their little show, the mummers hope to get treats in return. On Martinmas and St Catherine's Day people usually have stocked up on sweets and fruit. The mummers' baskets are filled with all sorts of treats.



After that the Martinmas mummers thank the people and upon leaving wish them good luck with their crops and herds. And off they go, ready to press another doorbell and break into a new song.

When the Mardi mummers have tried every familiar door, it is time to go home. They gather at one of their friends' homes and pour the contents of the baskets on the table in order to divide them fairly. Everyone will get their fair share of apples, candies and money.

The day was a success. Now they can start preparing for St Catherine's Day.

MEET THE KADRI FAMILY!

The most important figure on St Catherine's Day is the Kadri-mother, surrounded by the Kadri-children. The Kadri-mother holds a baby made from rags: the Kadri-baby. It is expected to pee while visiting a family, because that will bring good fortune for the crops. To guarantee this, a little water gun is hidden inside the bundle.

Kadri mummers are dressed in white, making use of bed sheets and tablecloths, scarves and bows: anything they can find at home. The tips of their noses and cheeks are painted red. Some of the Kadri-children's faces are concealed by veils. This is so that they won't be recognized, or to mask the fact that they are boys. Kadri mummers usually have fifes or flutes to make music with. You would be wise to open your door to Kadri mummers, then you can expect good luck next year!



SPORTS

This year the longest slide was achieved by the second grade. The children slid down a slope on a giant piece of plastic. Competing for the longest slide is one of the customs of Shrovetide. Shrove Tuesday, the highlight for sledgers, is an active holiday, held on a Tuesday either in February or March. The slide competition is an old tradition and has to do with foretelling: whoever has the longest slide has the highest flax. May you have high flax, second grade!



NATURE

Don't forget about the fern blossom! You must go and look for that lovely blossom on Midsummer Night on 23 June. Midsummer Day is celebrated all over Estonia. Whoever finds the fern blossom will be rich and happy, and will understand animal speech. People used to go alone in search of the fern blossom, but in recent years it has become a group effort. The one who finds the blossom must take it out of the

forest straight away. And it is better not to tell anyone about it. But because no one ever says anything, it has remained a mystery as to whether the fern blossom really exists and if it does what it looks like. Yet people look for it every year.

WEATHER FORECASTING

Weather is important. The most important question in the minds of children today is whether they can go sledging and skiing in the winter and swimming in the summer. Weather determined the lives of our predecessors. They had to know the right time to sow, and when to make hay. They didn't have the chance to check tomorrow's weather on television or their smartphones. They had to keep a close eye on changes in nature and try to guess.



- When January comes with blizzards and there is no rain, there will be drought in July.
- If it rains in March, it will rain until October.
- If there are sightings of snakes before St George's Day (April 23), it will be a warm summer.
- If the bird cherry blossoms for two weeks in the spring, autumn will last for two months; if it blossoms for three days, it will snow in autumn.
- If it rains on the Day of the Seven Holy Brothers (July 10), then it will rain for seven straight weeks. But if there's even an inkling of sun – enough for a man to get on his saddle – then there will be enough dry days for making hay. A dry and sunny day, however, promises seven dry weeks.
- If the hens go to sleep late, it will start raining on the second day.
- If Mart thaws, then Kadri freezes; if Mart freezes, then Kadri thaws.
- If it is cold during Christmas, it will be dry on Midsummer Day; if there is a thaw, Midsummer Day will be rainy.

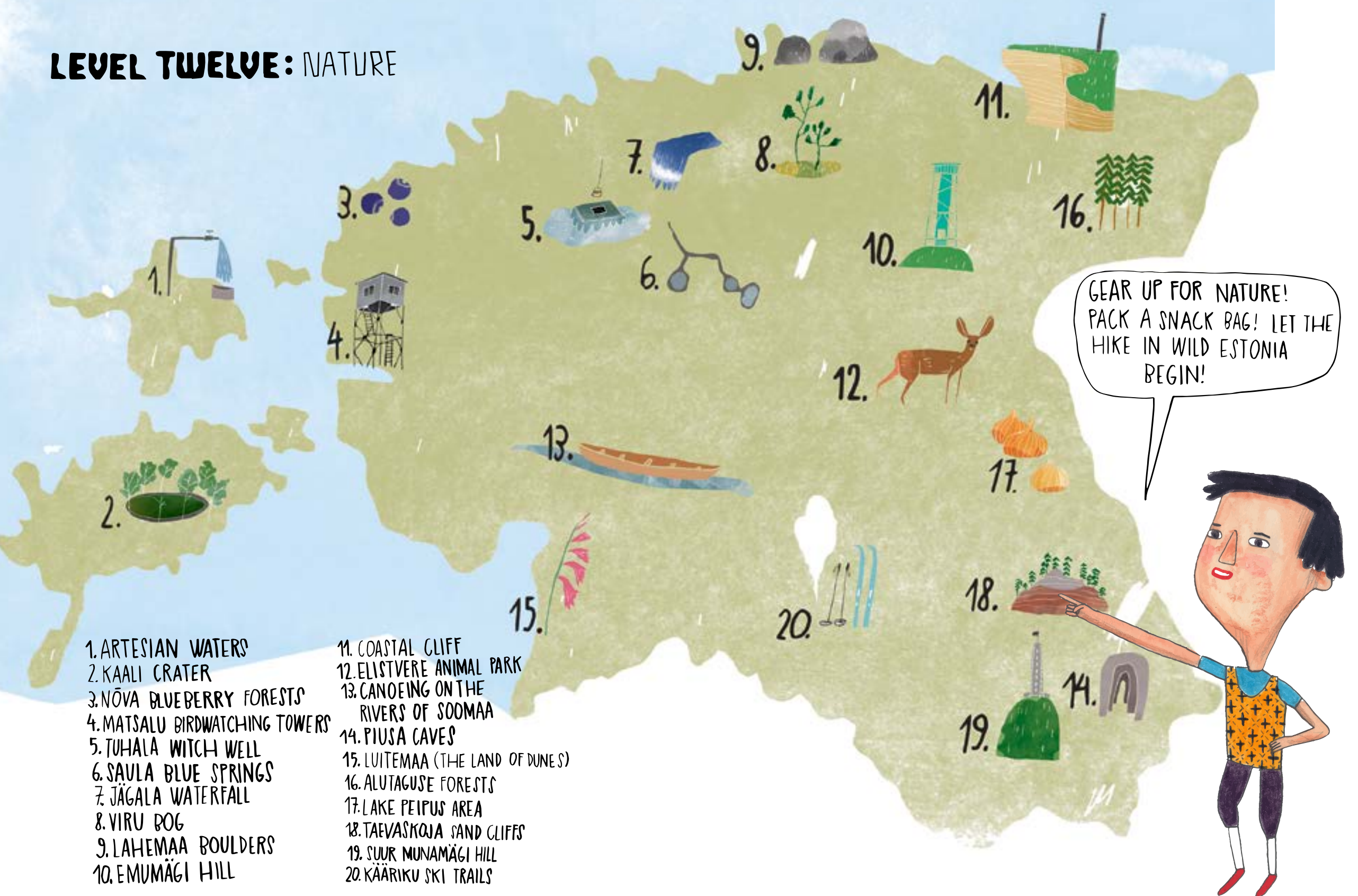
LEVEL ELEVEN: WEEKEND WITH GRANDMOTHER AND GRANDFATHER

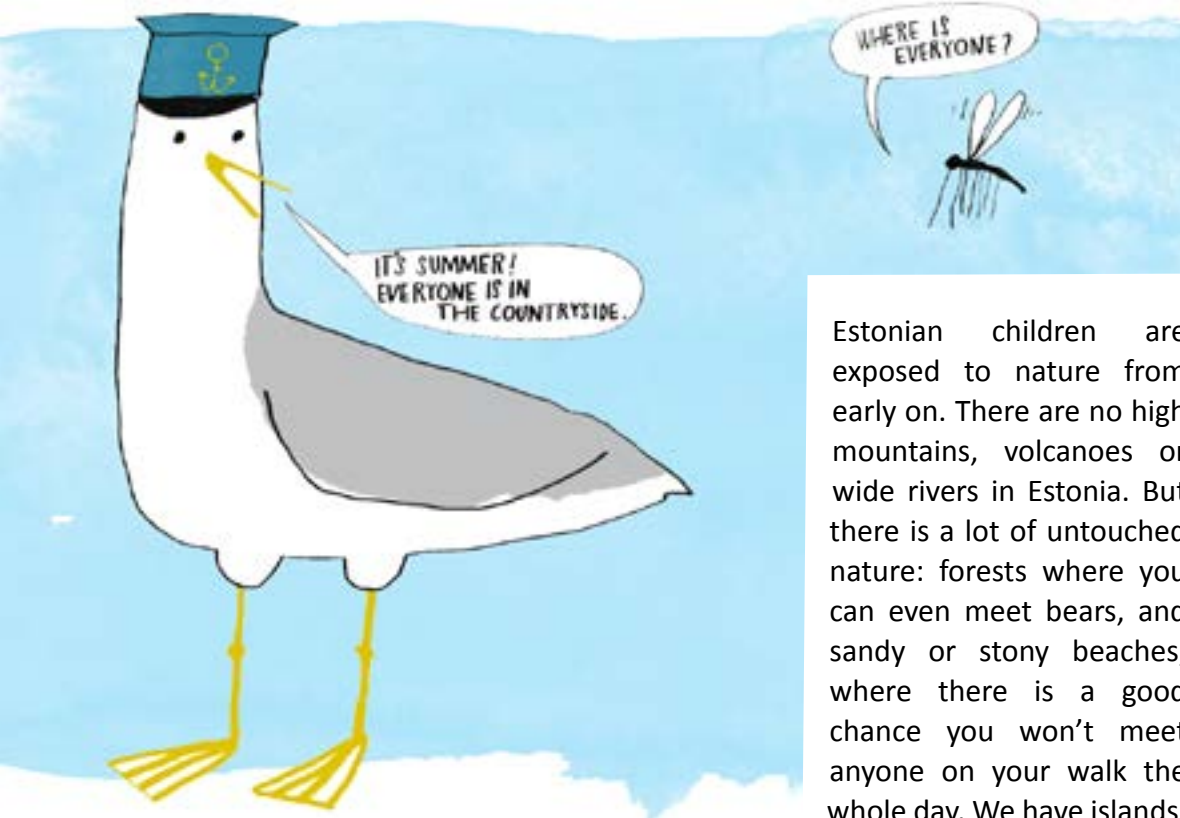
Components of an enjoyable visit:

- Let's take off our shoes. Granny will give us woollen socks that she has knitted for everyone.
- The floors are covered with rugs she made herself.
- There are pancakes on the table with home-made jam, and next to them a glass of milk. Yummy!
- We'll watch a theatre performance on TV.
- Granny and grandpa will play chess and other board games with us, for example "The Circus" and "Travel Around the World".
- Grandpa will tell us stories about the old times.
- Granny will take photos with her phone.
- We'll use Skype to talk to a cousin who lives in England.
- Grandpa will bring a crate full of jam and juice from the cellar.
- Granny tells us not to forget to wear a hat and a reflector.
- The trunk filled with jam and juice, granny will drive us back home.



LEVEL TWELVE: NATURE





Estonian children are exposed to nature from early on. There are no high mountains, volcanoes or wide rivers in Estonia. But there is a lot of untouched nature: forests where you can even meet bears, and sandy or stony beaches, where there is a good chance you won't meet anyone on your walk the whole day. We have islands, each with its own lifestyle

and culture; there are marshes, which are exciting in every season and where you can escape from the city commotion. You can meet various animals when hiking in Estonian forests: hedgehogs, rabbits and on rare occasions wild boar, roe deer or moose.

Years ago most children had grandparents living in the countryside. It was normal to send children into the countryside at the beginning of summer. There they could spend their days outside, ride their bikes, and build huts in the forest. Parents visited at the weekend, and together they made hay and slept in the barn. In the autumn these little rascals with their suntanned and wind-tousled faces and bruised knees were taken back to the city, where they were thoroughly washed and sent to school. These days not a lot of city children get to experience this. Grandmothers and grandfathers today tend to be city people. But as often as possible, parents try to take their city kids out into the countryside, to the forests and the sea. Many families have summer homes, where they can enjoy closeness to nature. And a lot of families live in the countryside all year round. These children can roam about outdoors all day and have the luxury of witnessing all four Estonian seasons.

Estonian families don't just go to the countryside to admire nature. As descendants of an old nature people, Estonians appreciate what forests have to offer: picking berries and mushrooms are traditions that are still very much alive, and no one can deny the superiority of home-made jam. Often whole families go berry picking. They pack snack bags and spend the day together out in the forests.

What do Estonian children do in nature? Read the answers and tick the box if you have done or would like to do the same! At the bottom you can write down what you like to do when outdoors if it is not included in the list. Nature can be a lot of fun if you stay open-minded!

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> BREATHE FRESH AIR. | <input type="checkbox"/> HIKE. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> LISTEN TO BIRDSONG AND SING ALONG. | <input type="checkbox"/> CAMP OUT IN A TENT. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> BUILD BIRDHOUSES FOR BIRDS AND HELP HANG THEM UP. | <input type="checkbox"/> HAVE A PICNIC. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> COLLECT BEAUTIFUL ROCKS OR PINE CONES. | <input type="checkbox"/> WALK A DOG. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PICK MUSHROOMS OR BERRIES. | <input type="checkbox"/> RIDE A BIKE. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PRETEND TO BE ON A TREASURE HUNT. | <input type="checkbox"/> RIDE A HORSE. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> USE A MAGNIFYING GLASS TO LOOK AT THINGS. | <input type="checkbox"/> WATCH THE CHANGES IN NATURE. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> BUILD A HUT. | <input type="checkbox"/> RELAX. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> LOOK FOR TREE LIMBS IN ORDER TO BUILD SOMETHING. | <input type="checkbox"/> THINK ABOUT LIFE. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> TAKE NATURE PHOTOS/MAKE VIDEOS. | <input type="checkbox"/> |



LEVEL THIRTEEN: ESTONIAN THINGS

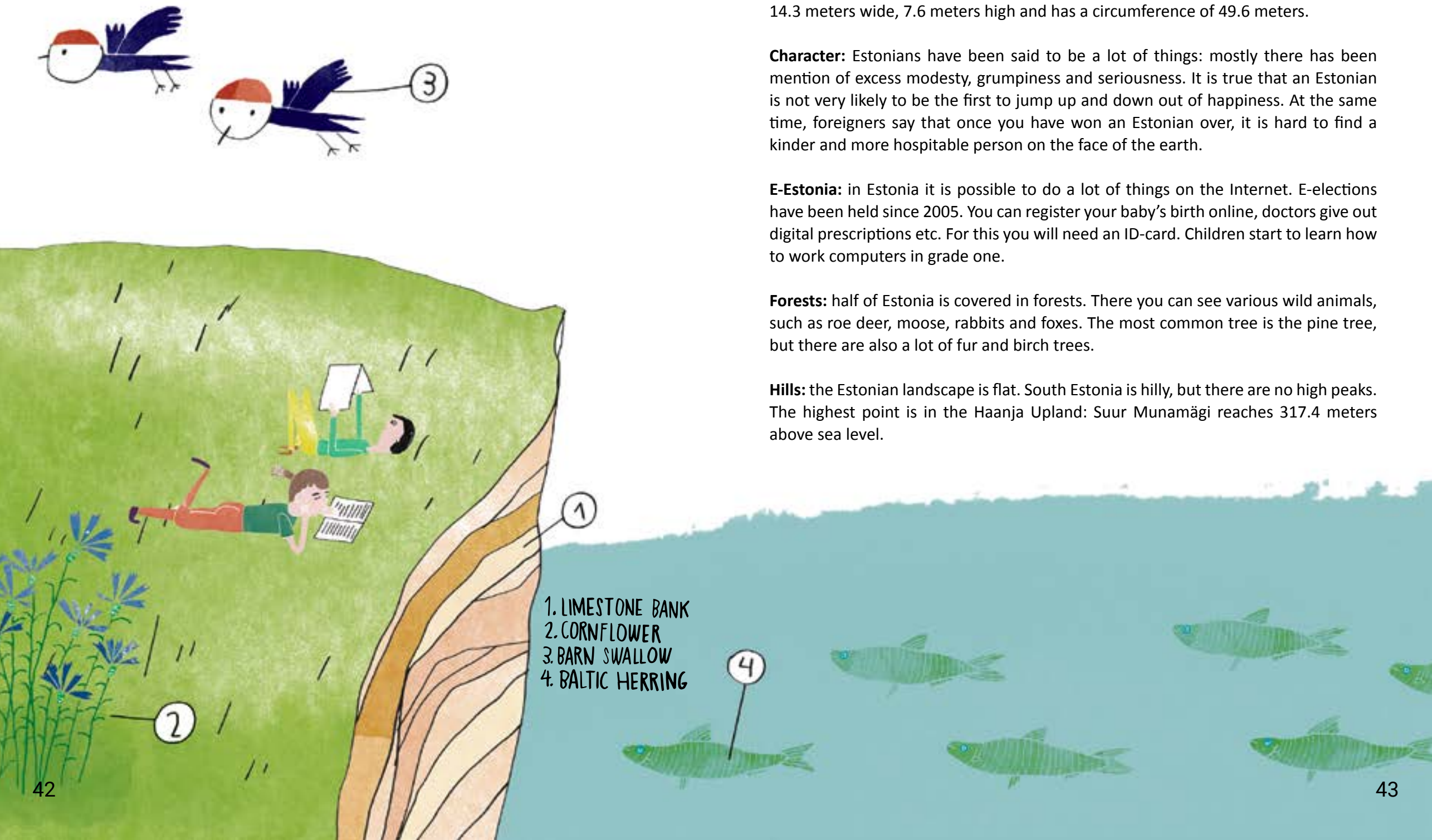
Boulders: the majority of huge northern European boulders are located in Estonia. The largest erratic boulder in Estonia is Ehalkivi near Letipea. It is 16.5 meters long, 14.3 meters wide, 7.6 meters high and has a circumference of 49.6 meters.

Character: Estonians have been said to be a lot of things: mostly there has been mention of excess modesty, grumpiness and seriousness. It is true that an Estonian is not very likely to be the first to jump up and down out of happiness. At the same time, foreigners say that once you have won an Estonian over, it is hard to find a kinder and more hospitable person on the face of the earth.

E-Estonia: in Estonia it is possible to do a lot of things on the Internet. E-elections have been held since 2005. You can register your baby's birth online, doctors give out digital prescriptions etc. For this you will need an ID-card. Children start to learn how to work computers in grade one.

Forests: half of Estonia is covered in forests. There you can see various wild animals, such as roe deer, moose, rabbits and foxes. The most common tree is the pine tree, but there are also a lot of fur and birch trees.

Hills: the Estonian landscape is flat. South Estonia is hilly, but there are no high peaks. The highest point is in the Haanja Upland: Suur Munamägi reaches 317.4 meters above sea level.



Islands: Estonia has 2222 islands in the Baltic Sea.

Kalevipoeg: the Estonian national epic. It's main character is the giant Kalevipoeg. The creation of lakes, hills, springs and rocks have been explained by his actions. It is said that the landscape was formed by his ploughing, sleeping areas and slingshot rocks.

Kiiking: Estonians have always loved swinging. You can find village swings all over Estonia. In the 1990s the Estonian Ado Kosk invented kiiking, where people try to swing over the swing's fulcrum.

Literacy: almost everyone in Estonia knows how to read and write. Estonia has one of the highest literacy rates in the world: 99.8% of adults can read and write.

Marshes: 6% of Estonian landscape is covered in marshes. Vegetation is scant, but cranberries and cloudberries grow there. You must be extra careful when moving around in the marshes. These are not places to play in.

Population density: Estonia has a small population of 1.3 million people. Compared to other European countries, each person in Estonia has a lot of space.

Sauna: Estonians are sauna people. Town dwellers often have small electric saunas in their apartments, but the village people still appreciate genuine wood heating. Smoke saunas are also commonplace. This means that the building has no chimney at all. First of all, the sauna room is heated up, then the smoke is released and sauna-goers enter. At sauna, Estonians like to whisk themselves with a birch whisk. Nowadays, all kinds of spas are very popular where you can find different types of saunas.

Singing: Estonians regard themselves as a singing nation who like to form into choirs and hold song festivals. They say Estonians sang themselves free, which means that before the regaining of independence in 1991 there were a lot of gatherings where patriotic songs were sung. There were even night song festivals. The Song and Dance Celebrations are still held regularly, offering joy and lifting the spirits of children and adults alike.

Skype: a computer programme enabling people to make calls using the Internet. It was created by a group of Estonians.

Tallinn Old Town: with its red tower roofs and its beautiful silhouette from the sea, the mediaeval Old Town is very well preserved. If you want to get in touch with the Middle Ages, take a walk on the cobbled stones that pave the streets. St Olaf's Church, which is also located here, used to be the tallest building in the world (between 1549 and 1625).



And we have reached the end of our discovery game! Or actually not, because it is only the beginning! Why don't you go and say *Tere!* to an Estonian child and let your real Estonian adventure begin!

Get to know one another and why not play "Ukakas" together. Afterwards you can make biscuit cake and go eat it in the backyard, park, forest or by the sea.

So many cool experiences, so much freedom and joy of discovery lie ahead!

Here you can write down your thoughts on Estonia and Estonian children:

notes:





COME FOR A VISIT!

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