TRAVEL



Finnish festivities: Activities in Helsinki's Esplanade Park range from Christmas festivals to sculpture exhibitions in autumn.

New York Tokes Symicate.

Sood many visitors to Helsinki will arrive by boat, skimming into the deep South Harbor on one of the huge pleasure ships that cruise daily between Finland and Sweden, Germany, Poland and

cruise daily between Finland and Sweden, Germany, Poland and Estonia.

A few days — or even hours — later they will reboard and head for Russian waters. The traffic is about as heavy in the opposite direction.

Hélsinki remains a little cousin to St. Petersburg in the minds — and travel patterns — of many foreigners.

Some won't even realize that Helsinki echebrates its 75th anniversary of independence in Decembert, typically, the city has refrained from publicity that might be deemed immodest, provocative or overcommercial. But in let last century the Finnish capital has succeeded in honing an unusual Nordic-Baltie-European identity in its physical look as well as its spirit.

Remnants of Swedish (1550-1869) and Russian (1809-1917) domination now share center stage with Friahand's own styles: National Romanticism (a hybrid of Jugendstil focusing on local materials and myths) and the Punctionalism mode famous by Alvar Aulto.

At this time of the year facules of all kinds are neutralized by flower beds and terrace restaurants filled with ultraviolet-my-loving Finns, whose immediate priority is to sank in every last bit of light before the darkening of autumn.

Events

For a country of only 5 million people Finland's own musical talent is predigious. A revival of the Finnish National Open's production of Levi Madetojals "The Ostrabothnians" opened on Sept. 6, I also plays Sept. 9, 30 and Oct. 6. Tickets: from \$11 to \$10. The box office is at 34B Albertinka-

"30 and Oct, 6. Tickets; from \$11 to \$10. The box othere is at 3413 Albertunka-to (129 255).

The Finnish Radio Symphony orchestra begins its regular season with the conductor Jukka-Pekka Saraste on Sept. 16, in Finlandia Hall, Frank Peter Zimmermann will perform Dovonk's Violin Concerto; also on the program are Debussy and Scriabin. Tickets: \$12.30, \$17.20 and \$20. Just as the rains start to foll and the sun starts to beat its winter retreat, the Fifth Helsinki Film Pestival — Love and Anarchy (446 429) — unreals in air movie houses downtown. This year's festival, Sept. 25 to Oct. 1, will offer more than 100 screenings with emphasis on new Japanese cinema and a retrospective of David Cranenberg's work, Tickets: \$6, or 10 films for \$49.

Finlandia Hall, built in 1971, is not just Helsinki's main concert site but the famous last work of Alvar Aalto, who designed everything from its facade to its furniture. Unfortunately, the white marble exterior has decayed deastically and must be changed.

Helsinki residents soak up last of summer's rays



Island museum: Seurasaari, one of Helsinki's tourist island's, has been turned into an open-air museum with old farmsteads and historic buildings.

Work will begin in January 1994, so these may be the last years to see it its original state. Weekly guided tours in English: \$1.20 and \$2.40. To

in its original state. Weekly guided tours in London.

Across the street stands a monument to the National Romantic style. Across the street stands a monument to the National Romantic style, the Finnish National Museum, 34 Mannerheiminit (40 501), built in 1906, Ris architecture echnes various old Finnish churches and castless and the foyer is decorated with freecoes by the National Romantic artist Akself Gallen-Kallen.

The uniretentious but pleasing permanent collection traces life in Finnish Communication.

Gallen-Kallein.

The unpretentious but pleasing permanent collection traces life in Fin-land from prehistoric times to the present. Open daily from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. (to 3 p.m. after Sept. 1); on Tuesday also 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Admission:

Also nearby, the Temppeliaukio Church, 3 Lutherinkatu, was built di-

rectly into a rocky outerop in 1969; its solar ceiling spreads from coiled copper into panes of glass that let in natural light.

In addition to Lutheran services the church holds fine chamber- and fulk-music concerts. Hours for visiting change weekly, but it is usually apen Monday to Friday from 10 a.m to 6 p.m. Cell 194 698.

On nice days Helsinki's "tourist" islands are places to relax. Seurassari, connected to the mainland by a wooden bridge 3 miles from the city center, has been turned into an open-air museum (84 712) attents with old farmer steads and other buildings transplanted from different parts of Finland.

In September, partly open with no tours (but the guide booklets are very thorough), Mondays to Fridays 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturdays and Sundays 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission: \$1.20 and \$2.40, Wednesdays, free.

The purchase of a Helsinki Card can be a worthwille Investment since it grants free passage on all metropolitan transport and free or reduced entrance to many sites.

The end can be bought from the Helsinki City Tourist Office, 19 Pohjuisesplanadi (169 3757), and at some hotels and travel agencies. Cost: \$18.40 for one day, \$26 for two days, \$31 for three days; for children ages 7

Where to stay

Where to stay

The Hotel Strond Inter-Continental, 4 John Stenbergin Ranta (39 351), is a world-class hotel with 200 rooms on the waterfront about five minutes from the downtown area. Request a room with a sea view. Doubles cost \$278 weekdays; \$139 weekends.

The venerable Hotel Seurahuone Socia, 12 Kaivokatu (170 441), has 118 2278 weekdays; \$130 weekends.

The venerable Hotel Seurahuone Socia, 12 Kaivokatu (170 441), has 118 carefully appointed rooms, many of them quite large, right across from the beautiful Helainki Railway Station. Downstairs is the city's most formous cafe, resplendent in high-ceilinged Jugendstil and open late hot the night. Doubles cost \$222 weekdays; \$114 weekends.

Budget: Hotel Olympia, 2 Lantinen Brahenkatu (750 801), has 90 order prooms — many overlooking a tree-lined sports field — in a residential area about 15 minutes from downtown. Doubles cost \$39 sel week.

The beds are a bit hard, but the Hotelli Helke, 32 Polyolene Rautatlekatu (440 581), has 161 decent rooms in the city center and is part of the Best Western chain. Doubles in the old part cost \$30 weekdays or \$68 weekends; in the new part, \$149 weekdays or \$107 weekends.

The Theater Inn Omnspohi, 3 Italnen Teatterikujs (666 211), occupies part of a turn-of-the-century building behind the National Theater. Its reception area is truly dramatic, but the 15 bedrooms are austere. Doubles with private shower and toilet cost \$78, doubles with toilet \$68, doubles without either \$61.

Full-service hotels in Helsinki generally have sauna available, but bathtubs and double beds are less certain.

Special agents track down real deals



This summer's low airfares have been tempting but often difficult

but often difficult
to find.
The reason is
simple: The airlines set uside a
limited number of
seats to sell at an

advertised price.

With a computerized pricing system they can monitor, hour hy hour, how many seats have been sold and how meny are left. Often as the demand changes, so do the fares.

The number of such fare hikes is

staggering — as many as 200,000 price shifts per day during the recent airfare wars.

What's a consumer to do? One re What's a consume to do? One re-course is to find a trained travel agent who is equipped with a travel computer network that keeps up, second by second, with the new rates. Preferably that would be a major computer-reservations sys-tem, such as American Airlines' Saabre or United Airlines' Apollo network.

In fact, more travelers are using the services of agents, according to statistics gathered by the American Society of Travel Agents (ASTA), which represents more than 20,000 agencies in 129 countries.

ASTA estimates that 80 percent of all air tickets are now booked by travel agents. So are 40 percent of all hatel reservations and 95 per-cent of all cruise reservations.

But choosing a travel opent can be difficult.

"You should choose a travel agent the same way you would pick a doctor or a lowyer — by asking friends and relatives to recommend one," says Emily Porter, a spickes-woman for ASTA.
"It's important to visit the neency

one," says Emily Forter, a spaces woman for ASTA.

"It's important to visit the agency and to ask questions. Equally important are the questions they ask you, to determine your interests, your budget, where you've been and where you'd like to go.

"Find out if they've been to the destination or taken the cruise line you're considering."

"Travel agencies much as American Express and Carison Travel Net-

work. Some will book anything and everything: others are apecialists, making reservations only, for example, on cruise.

"I always encourage people to appeak with the owner or manager of a travel agency," says Brian Robb, vice president of retail-marketing for Carlson Travel Network, which has 1,300 branches across the United States.

"That first contact is the most important. That person should be able to steer you to the sgent who can best help you, to the one who knows cruises, for example, or re-

"You don't want to find yourself apeaking with an agent who only does business travel and can look a Hyatt or the shuttle, but has never done resorts before."

