

**GUIDEBOOK FOR  
NEW STUDENTS**

Xamk Kotka campus

Autumn 2026



South-Eastern Finland  
University of Applied Sciences

## Content

<b>WELCOME TO STUDY IN XAMK!</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>BEFORE COMING TO FINLAND</b> .....	<b>3</b>
Make sure to have all the required documents to enter Finland .....	3
Accommodation in Kotka .....	4
Apartments for rent.....	5
Electricity and internet .....	5
What to pack in the luggage? .....	6
<b>ARRIVING AND SETTLING IN KOTKA</b> .....	<b>6</b>
Travelling to Kotka from Helsinki airport .....	6
Getting around in Kotka.....	8
Shops .....	10
Example living costs in Kotka .....	11
Things to do in Kotka .....	12
Services for immigrants in Kotka .....	14
Important addresses in Kotka .....	14
Coming to Kotka with your children .....	14
<b>STARTING THE STUDIES</b> .....	<b>16</b>
Getting a Finnish sim card for your phone.....	16
Opening a bank account .....	17
Coming to Xamk Kotka campus.....	17
The beginning of the studies .....	18
Registration at the DVV office.....	19
Good to know regarding the studies .....	19
<b>LIVING IN FINLAND</b> .....	<b>19</b>
Finns, Finnish culture, and values .....	19
Nature and the seasons in Finland – and how to dress according to the weather .....	20
Basic Finnish phrases .....	24
Learning Finnish .....	24
Looking for a job in Finland .....	25

## WELCOME TO STUDY IN XAMKI!

In this guidebook, you will find useful and necessary information for settling smoothly in Finland and Kotka. Please read this guide carefully and feel free to have a second glance at it whenever needed!

## BEFORE COMING TO FINLAND

Before coming to Finland, you will need to make sure to

- ✓ have all the required documents to enter the country
- ✓ have bought your flight ticket
- ✓ have booked accommodation
- ✓ have familiarised yourself with the travel to Kotka and the public transportation needed to reach your accommodation
- ✓ have packed all the documents used to apply to the studies
- ✓ have packed your luggage according to the climate
- ✓ have read and started all the necessary procedures described on page 14 in case you come to Finland with your children.

### Make sure to have all the required documents to enter Finland

Before moving to Finland, you need to make sure to have all the required documents to enter the country. The student is responsible for finding out what type of documents are needed to move to Finland, if a residence permit is needed, as well as all the required steps for obtaining one.

Generally, non-EU students must obtain a residence permit to enter the country. The residence permit process might require several months, and you will need to obtain the permit before flying to Finland and starting your studies. Therefore, submit your residence permit application as soon as possible after receiving the acceptance letter to the studies and confirmation of payment of the tuition fee. Make sure to meet all the requirements for your residence permit, such as valid passport, proof of finances, private health insurance, and so on. As part of the process, you will also be asked to personally visit a Finnish embassy or consulate for identification.

***In Finland, most of the services nowadays are done digitally and independently through digital forms, phone calls and email. Face-to-face is not a very common form of customer service in Finland. When making an appointment in a public office, you will be offered the first available time in the calendar. Please do not hesitate to mention if the time offered does not align with your schedule: you will be offered a new time for your appointment.***

It is necessary to obtain a travelling and health insurance before moving to Finland. As a student, you will be personally responsible for covering all the medical bills if you become sick in Finland. You should obtain a private insurance to cover your medical and pharmaceutical expenses during your whole stay. We also advise to check that your travel insurance includes liability coverage throughout the study period.

All degree students (bachelor's and master's degrees) enrolled for attendance in higher education can use the health care services provided by FSHS. Students can use the health care services primarily in the town where the studies are located, but also remote services and consultations are available. Students attending a university of applied sciences must pay a healthcare fee to Kela. The fee must be paid for each term. Kela does not send a bill for the fee, so students must make sure to pay it on their own initiative. You can pay the healthcare fee via Kela's e-service [OmaKela](#) (available in Finnish and Swedish only).

If your family members are also coming to Finland, please make sure to arrange necessary documentation for them as well. Notice that a family member of a student will be granted a residence permit on a different basis than studies, which means requirements and rights might be different. Read the information in Finnish Immigration Services website carefully to find out the process to follow for your family member.

Find more information about entering the country in [the Finnish Immigration Services website](#) and YouTube channel: [Applying for a residence permit in Finland \(youtube.com\)](#).

## Accommodation in Kotka

Accommodation arrangements are at student's responsibility. Therefore, students can freely choose what kind of accommodation suits their needs best. Finding the right accommodation is a process that can take some time which is why you should start looking for an accommodation as soon as you receive the confirmation of payment of the study fee. Therefore, you can start the application process for accommodation immediately.

It is important to find an accommodation and have it confirmed before arriving in Finland. Please note that housing companies have limited availability and existing waiting lists. Therefore, it is not possible to walk in the housing companies upon arrival, ask for an accommodation and expect to get one on the same day.

## Accommodation options in Kotka

### *Kotka Student Housing (Kotopas)*

Kotka Student Housing (Kotopas) is specialised in student accommodation in Kotka. Please submit a housing application on [Kotopas website](#) at your earliest convenience. Kotopas does its best to arrange an apartment for as many students as possible. Kotopas has furnished and unfurnished housing options.

Housing locations closest to the campus and city centre: Kotkansaari, Hovinsaari and Hirssaari.

**Please note when making the travel plans:** You can get the apartment keys only during office hours: Monday—Friday 9 am—3 pm. We recommend double-checking the opening hours from [Kotopas website](#) before arrival for the latest information.

## Apartments for rent

### *Private renters*

One option is to rent from private market. Please read the apartment description as well as rental terms carefully before signing the contract, as they vary depending on the apartment.

You can view rental apartments in Kotka from services such as:

[Kotkan Asunnot](#)

[Oikotie.com – Kotka](#)

[Vuokraovi.com – Kotka](#)

[ASUNTOJA KYMENLAAKSOSTA; ostetaan/ myydään/ vuokrataan/ vuokrata halutaan: A](#)

Facebook group for offering and looking for private rental apartments in Kotka

[Kodisto](#)

[Housingtarget](#)

[Retta](#)

[M2kodit](#)

[VVO & Lumo: Vuokra-asunnot Kotka](#)

[Avara-asunnot Kotka](#)

[Es-Laatuasunnot](#)

Applications for rental housing can be made to associations of owners of rental houses. The largest landlord in Kotka is Kotkan Asunnot Oy. Applications for rental housing are submitted directly to the housing providers.

### *Short-term accommodation*

In case the apartment you have applied for is not available just yet by the time you arrive, booking short-term accommodation might be a good solution. You can check available accommodation options, for example, from [Booking.com](#) or [Airbnb](#).

## Electricity and internet

### **Examples of electricity providers:**

- [Ksoy](#) (local provider in Kotka)
- [Fortum](#)
- [Helen](#)
- [Väre](#)

- [Oomi](#)

### Examples of internet providers:

- [DNA](#)
- [Elisa](#)
- [Telia](#)

To create a contract with any of the service providers you need to call their customer service.

## What to pack in the luggage?

Essentials to pack in your luggage:

- ☑ all required documents to enter the country (passport, residence permit, and so on)
- ☑ all the original documents you used to apply to the studies
- ☑ private insurance policy
- ☑ vaccination certificates
- ☑ PC with charger for your studies (studying in Xamk requires the use of a computer)
- ☑ headset for possible online classes
- ☑ plug adapter for type F or C sockets (if needed)



- ☑ phone with a list of emergency contacts saved on it
- ☑ power bank (optional)
- ☑ basic medicines
- ☑ some cash and your bank card. Payments in Finland are done mostly cashless. Visa and Mastercard are the most accepted cards. Make sure there are no block preventing you from using your card abroad.
- ☑ proper clothes, shoes, and accessories
- ☑ basic hygiene products and other personal belongings
- ☑ basic house essentials, such as a set of bed sheets, pillow cover, duvet cover, a towel. Do not bring too many things, just enough to live until buying these items in Finland.

## ARRIVING AND SETTLING IN KOTKA

### Travelling to Kotka from Helsinki airport

You can travel from Helsinki airport to Kotka by train (VR) or by bus (Onnibus).

**By Train:** to make your travelling smooth, we recommend downloading the VR app on your phone. It is possible to travel without downloading the app. However, from the app you can check the track from where the train leaves, all the train stops during your journey, and live information about possible delays and cancellations. In case you do not have the VR app, you can buy tickets via the [VR](#) website. Remember to buy your ticket online in advance (before getting on the train). Tickets cannot be bought on the train and a fine may apply if you are travelling without a valid ticket.

*On long-distance trains, passengers travel on allocated seats. After entering the train, look for your seat number (you can find it on the train ticket) and sit on that seat allocated to you.*

We recommend buying the ticket as early as possible since trains can get fully booked. Also, long-distance train or bus ticket prices usually are not fixed so they change depending on how early you buy it. The earlier you buy the tickets the cheaper the price will likely be.

If you choose taking the train to Kotka, you will have two (2) train transfers: one in Tikkurila and another one either in Lahti or Kouvola. Please keep this in mind when deciding on how much luggage you will bring with you and/or if you travel with small children (as transfers can be an additional inconvenience).

To travel from the airport to Kotka by train, take the I or P train from the airport to Tikkurila. At Tikkurila, change to a train heading to Lahti or Kouvola. When you arrive in Lahti or Kouvola, change trains once more and take the train to Kotka. Although you will take three different trains, you will need to buy only one ticket/person (Helsinki Airport – Kotka).

Travelling from Helsinki airport to Kotka is easier by bus and will take you approximately 3 hours as you need to go from the airport to the main railway station in Helsinki (Rautatieasema) by train, walk to Kamppi (500 metres from Rautatieasema) or take the subway (one stop) and get the bus to Kotka from there.

**By bus:** to make your travelling smooth, we recommend downloading the Onnibus app on your phone. It is possible to travel without downloading the app. In case you do not have the Onnibus app, you can buy tickets via the [Onnibus](#) website. You can buy bus tickets from the Onnibus bus driver using bank or credit cards only (cash is not accepted). Attention: when you buy an Onnibus ticket from Helsinki to Kotka, make sure to buy additional luggage if you come with more than one large suitcase and a backpack.

If your flight arrives in Helsinki during the late in the evening, we recommend spending the night in Helsinki and travelling to Kotka the next day. Please note that we will not provide pick-up service from the airport or train station.

Also, apps such as Google Maps may help you move around Finland more easily.

## Getting around in Kotka

### On foot

If you live nearby the city centre, it is possible to move around the city on foot. All the important places are in a walking distance. Always walk in the pedestrian designated paths and cross the road on the zebras. More tips here: [Pedestrians in traffic - Liikenneturva](#).

### By bike

Many people in Finland move around the city by bike throughout the year, winter included. In Kotka, you can buy a new bike from shops (such as [Polkupyöräliike Koskenkorva Ky](#), [Tokmanni](#) and [Prisma](#)) or find a cheaper one from physical or online second-hand shops, such as Facebook Marketplace and [Tori.fi](#). It is also possible to use the paid bike sharing service offered by [Kaakau/Donkey Republic](#) in summer.

Wearing a helmet, having a functioning white or light-yellow head light and a red rear light, functioning breaks, and bell, are required by law when biking. Lights must be *on* in the dark. To make you even more visible, it is recommended to wear a safety reflective vest. For winter cycling you need warm outdoor clothes, helmet, reflectors, and studded tires to prevent sliding on the slippery ice.

If you wish to transport a child with the bike, you must take extra precautions on top of the ones mentioned above. The bike must be fitted with two separate braking devices, and the child must sit in a special child seat in the back of your bike or in a special trailer designed for bikes. The child must be under 135 cm and always use a seatbelt.

**More information:** [Safe cycling - Liikenneturva](#).

### By local bus

You can move around the city by local bus. You can check the digital timetable on [Kotkan Seudun liikenne](#). Tickets can be bought from the Waltti app. We recommend downloading Waltti app ([Android](#) or [iOS](#)) on your phone or buying a physical bus card from the local service point located in Customer service point Ruori at Kustaankatu 2 (check the opening hours from [the service point website](#)). Tickets cannot be bought directly on the bus.

***At the bus stop, wave at the bus when you see it coming to indicate to the bus driver to stop and pick you up. Waving is enough to sign to the bus driver to stop. Show your ticket from your app or punch your bus card on the sensor at the bus entrance when you board the bus. When you are close to your destination, ring the stop bell close to your seat for the bus driver to stop at the next bus stop. Usually, buses do not stop at every bus stop if not necessary or requested. When exiting the bus, thank the bus driver for the service by saying "Kiitos!"***

## By taxi

If you prefer to use a taxi there is, for example, [Kymenlaaksotaksi](#) taxi company operating in Kotka. For booking a taxi, you can call the service number 0100 87227 or use the app.

## By car

Check from this link if you are allowed to drive in Finland with your current driving license: [Validity of foreign driving licences in Finland | Ajokortti-info](#). Also, make sure that all the required driving-related costs (such insurance, car inspection, and taxes) are up to date, as otherwise driving is not allowed.

In Finland, roads are usually wide and quite straight, which can make driving comfortable but also “boring” in longer travels. Therefore, if you are driving a long distance, always remember to take breaks. Also, use seatbelts, drive according to the speed limits, and keep the safety distance from other cars. The use of headlights at all times of the day is mandatory in Finland. It is illegal to drive under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

When driving in the winter conditions you must be extra careful the roads can be icy and slippery. Notice that you must use winter tires, the speed limits are lower, and it is necessary to start using the breaks early enough: as the roads are slippery, the car slides on the ice when hitting the brakes. Do not do fast last-minute stops with the car! Always keep an adequate distance with the car in the front.

When you drive in the night or dark, incidents of moose or reindeer crossing the road and being struck by vehicles can happen. These accidents can cause severe damage to the vehicle and injuries to the people inside the car. Sometimes the accidents can even be fatal. If you end up in such accident or see someone in this situation, call the emergency number 112 and stop to help. Authorities will not only provide help to the people involved in the accident but also take care of the injured animal. This also applies to other types of car accidents: if you see someone alone in difficulty, call 112 and stop to give assistance.

If you are driving with a small child, the child must stay on a child seat. There are different types of child seats according to the age and height of the child. Everyone inside a car must fasten seatbelts while driving.

Traffic rules: [Do you know the rules of the road? - Finnish Road Safety Council \(liikenneturva.fi\)](#)

Road signs: [Road Signs - Finnish Transport Infrastructure Agency \(vayla.fi\)](#)

Basic road rules: [In traffic - Liikenneturva](#)

Finnish Transport and Communication Agency: [Etusivu | Traficom](#)

## Other modes of transportation

During the summertime and months with good weather, it is possible to move around the city with e-scooters: see [Dott](#) website.

## Shops

### Grocery shopping

- K-Citymarket, K-Supermarket, K-Market
- Prisma, S-market, Sale
- Lidl

*In bigger-sized grocery shops you may not only find food but also clothes, electronics, household items, bikes and other sport equipment, and much more.*

### Shopping centres Pasaati and Jumalniemen

Shopping centre Pasaati is located downtown next to Sibeliuksenpuisto (Keskuskatu 10) whereas Shopping centre Jumalniemen is located on Jumalniementie 7. In Pasaati and Jumalniemen you can find a variety of shops for clothing, accessories, sport equipment, and so on. There are also some restaurants, cafeterias, a grocery shop, a bookstore, hairdressers, pharmacy, and more.

### Outdoor clothing, winter gear, and bikes

- **Intersport:** Shopping centre Pasaati
- **Stadium:** Jumalniementie 2 B
- Second-hand shops (Goodwill and Fida)
- Bikes: [Polkupyöräliike Koskenkorva Ky](#), Tokmanni, Prisma and second-hand shops

### Furniture, small house supplies and house decorations

- Second-hand shops: Goodwill
- **JYSK:** Jumalniementie 7
- **Sotka, Masku** and **Asko:** Jumalniementie 7

### Second-hand shops

- **Fida:** Mariankatu 14
- **Goodwill Jumalniemi,** Uittoväylä 10
- **Goodwill Karhula:** Tikankatu 10

*Second-hand shopping is popular in Finland. You can buy from both physical flea markets (kirpputori in Finnish) or online markets like “[Tori](#)” or “Facebook marketplace”. Buying second-hand is a great choice when buying starter items (such as furniture, beddings, kitchen utensils and clothes) or children’s clothing on a budget.*

## Electronics

- **Gigantti:** Jumalniementie 4
- **Power:** Jumalniementie 7
- **Veikon Kone Kotka:** Jumalniementie 6
- [Verkokauppa](#) (online)

## Pharmacies (apteekki in Finnish) nearby the city centre

- **Kotkan Kauppatorin Apteekki:** Kirkkokatu 10
- **Kotkan VII Apteekki:** Prisma, Hakamäentie 1
- **Ankkuriapteekki Metsola:** Koskelontie 11
- **Ankkuriapteekki Karhuvuori:** Tarinatie 2

*In Finland, you can buy basic medicines like vitamins, painkillers, and flu treatments from the pharmacy without a prescription. For other types of medicines, you will need to visit a doctor and get a prescription. The pharmacist will need to check your prescription to give you the right medicine.*

## Other shops

- **Tokmanni** (e.g., food, clothing, hobbies, small furniture, hygiene products, bikes): Suursaarenkatu 3 and Jumalniementie 7
- **Rusta** (e.g., home decor, small home supplies, hygiene products): Jumalniementie 2 B
- **Motonet** (car tools, household goods and home decor, free time equipment, and more): Saukonkatu 3
- **R-kioski** convenience store for smaller purchases (e.g., takeaway coffee, snacks, cigarettes, bus and train tickets): multiple locations, e.g., Keskuskatu 27 and Kauppakatu 3 in the city centre

## Example living costs in Kotka

Below, some examples of **monthly** expenses in Kotka. Please note that the expenses are just **estimations** and have been calculated for one person living in a small apartment.

- Rent: 450-650 €
- [Bus card](#): 40 €
- Grocery: 150-200 €
- Phone internet connection: 20-30 €
- Home internet connection (if not included in the rent): 20-40 €

- Electricity (if not included in the rent, depends on usage): 30 €
- Water (if not included in the rent, depends on usage): 20-30 €/person
- Basic home insurance (if not included in the rent and depending on the m<sup>2</sup>): 15 €
- Extras (such as clothing, free time activities, travelling): 100 €
- (Unexpected expenses: 50 €)

## Things to do in Kotka

### Sports and outdoor activities

- Gyms: [Fitness 24/7](#), [EasyFit](#), [OleFit](#)

*Gyms in Finland may have a smaller exercise room only for women and a bigger room where all can exercise in a shared space.*

- **Parks:** [Parks of Kotka | Visit Kotka-Hamina \(visitkotkahamina.fi\)](#)
- **Swimming:** [Katariina uimala](#) and [Karjulan uimahalli](#)
- **Public swimming beaches and ice swimming sites:** [Uimarannat-Kotka](#)
- **Family fun:** [Families with children](#)

There are many opportunities to do sports and participate in outdoors activities in Kotka. Check the links below for additional information:

- [Visit Kotka-Hamina - Explore the Finnish East Coast \(visitkotkahamina.fi\)](#)

### Culture

- [Movie theatres:](#) Kinopalatsi and Trio 123
- [Museums](#), such as Langinkoski and Merikeskus Vellamo
- [Libraries:](#) Main library is located in the city centre, Kirkkokatu 24
- Theatre: [Kotkan teatteri](#), Keskuskatu 15
- Restaurants, bars, cafeterias: many of them in the city centre

[Kohtaamisten Keittiö](#) (community kitchen) is an open kitchen in Kotka which serves free food on Tuesdays and Thursdays to everyone who arrives between 12:00 and 16:00. It is a space where people eat, chat, play some games and listen to music.

### Places to visit

Kotka is a very green city with many parks spread around its 270km<sup>2</sup>. Some of the most famous ones are listed below.

- **Sapokka Water Garden (Tallinnankatu 12)**

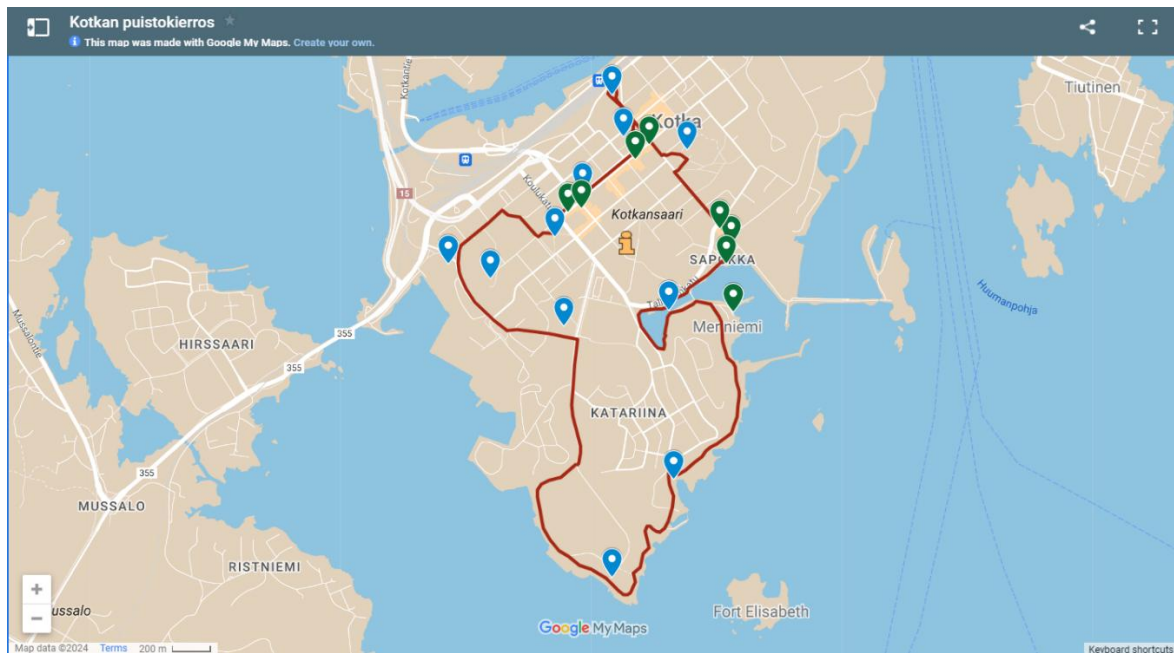
Sapokka Water Garden is an oasis in the heart of Kotka. Located by the sea, this park entices travellers from afar to admire the beautiful views and relaxed atmosphere in Kotka. More information [here](#).

- **Katariina Seaside Park (Puistotie 32)**

Located at the southern tip of Kotkansaari Island, Katariina Seaside Park is a versatile park and recreational area, bustling year-round. At the highest point lies Fort Katariina, the central fortress of the Svensksund fortress city, where Kotka city originated. Besides stunning cliffs and seascapes, the Seaside Park offers plenty to see and experience. More information [here](#).

- **Sibelius Park (Mariankatu 12)**

The park, named after the master composer Jean Sibelius, is an elegant formal park. It serves as the green living room for urbanites with its playgrounds and is a vital meeting point in the heart of Kotkansaari Island. More information [here](#).



Kotka's park route (source: Kotka-Hamina website)

More tips on the websites: [Visit Kotka-Hamina](#), [Parks of Kotka](#), [Visit Kotka-Hamina \(nature\)](#)

*Also, Xamk offers students things to do on their free time. On Kotka campus, there is a gym and a campus sports hall. Different activities and events are organised on and outside of campus, e.g., by Student Union Kaakko, Student Association Meteli, Student Wellbeing Services, and International Services.*

## Services for immigrants in Kotka

### Multicultural Centre Mylly

[Multicultural Centre Mylly](#) is located less than 1km away from the city centre (Gutzeitintie 14). During its opening hours, Mylly offers walk-in guidance and counselling related to, e.g., everyday life, permits, citizenship, and Finnish culture. Mylly organises group activities, such as groups to practice Finnish or other language skills. Mylly's events, small trips, and visits to different places in Kotka are open for everyone to join.

### Integration and immigration services coordinated by Guidance and Integration Services

[Guidance and Integration Services](#) (Kyminlinnantie 6, 48600 Kotka (sisäänkäynti 3, 7.kerros) gives guidance and does social work and family work that support integration. Their low-threshold services include guidance, group activities, and consultation related to integration. Their services are aimed at quota refugees, asylum seekers with a residence permit, asylum seekers who have been placed in the municipality based on temporary protection, and other immigrants depending on their service needs.

## Important addresses in Kotka

- **Kotka central hospital:** Kotkantie 41, 48210 Kotka
- **Private health centres:**
  - [Mehiläinen](#) – Kirkkokatu 21
  - [Pihlajalinna](#) – Koulukatu 21
  - [Terveystalo](#) – Keskuskatu 10
- [Digital and Population Data Services Agency \(DVV\)](#): list of service points available in Finland
- **Police station:** Ruukinkatu 12
- **Office of Kotka Student Housing - [Kotopas](#):** Naakantie 2 A

## Coming to Kotka with your children

### Child health centre (neuvola in Finnish)

If you move to Finland with your children, it is strongly recommended to be in contact with the local child health centre (neuvola) for guidance on children healthcare. Neuvola is a child health centre for maternity, family, and children health services, where you can receive advice about children's healthcare in Finland. Neuvola workers monitor and promote the physical, mental, and social condition of children under school age, give vaccinations, and support parents in providing secure, child-focused rearing, care and in attending to relationships. Neuvola promotes healthy growing environments for children and healthy family lifestyles. If special support is needed, the family will

be referred to a specialist. All services provided are free of charge. Find more information about neuvola at this link: [Maternity and child health clinics - Ministry of Social Affairs and Health \(stm.fi\)](#).

To find your local neuvola in the Kotka area, call the general phone number +358 5 220 6000 (wellbeing services county of [Kymenlaakso](#)) Monday—Thursday, 07:30 am—15:30 pm, Friday 07:30 am—13:45. At first, you will be put on hold as generally there is a queue of people calling there. Please wait in line until someone answers. When a worker answers, ask to indicate the address of the neuvola you are supposed to visit, based on your home address.

## Schools in Kotka

In Finland, compulsory education is between ages 6—18 years old, meaning that all kids of that age range living in Finland must go to school. You need to fill in an application for all type of schools and daycare to receive a study place for your child. Usually, you will be allocated to the school closest to your home address, if possible. The handling of the application might take up to four months, so it is important to start the paperwork well in advance. Please notify the daycare centre or school if you move out from Kotka.

### Early childhood education and preschool

A child has the right to *early childhood education from the age of nine months until the start of school*. You can apply for an early childhood education place year-round, but the application must be left at least four months before the desired start of the service. Early childhood education is organised in Kotka in the city's kindergartens and family daycare, as well as in private kindergartens.

**More information** about applying for early childhood education services can be found from the City of Kotka's website: [Kotka - Oppiminen](#). Also, the City of Kotka's service coordinator gives guidance relating to early childhood education services and places:

Email [varhaiskasvatus.palveluohjaus@kotka.fi](mailto:varhaiskasvatus.palveluohjaus@kotka.fi) / tel. +358 52347788.

Every child must participate in *preschool* one year before starting school, usually at the age of six years. Preschool education is organised usually in kindergartens. Preschool education by the City of Kotka is free of cost, but you must apply for a preschool education place. For the online application form, you need Finnish banking credentials. In case you do not have those yet, please contact the early childhood education services: email [varhaiskasvatus.palveluohjaus@kotka.fi](mailto:varhaiskasvatus.palveluohjaus@kotka.fi) / tel. +358 5 234 7788 (Tues 13-15, Wed 9-12 and 13-15 and Thurs 9-12) to progress with the application. **Link to the application form:** [Varhaiskasvatus](#).

### Basic compulsory education

Compulsory education in Finland is free of charge. When your child will start school, you might be required to show a proof of vaccinations, so bring all the necessary documents with you when moving to Finland.

A student with an immigrant background is first directed to preparatory education. The goal of

preparatory education is to promote the student's Finnish language skills, help the integration into the Finnish society, and to provide the necessary skills for basic education. Preparatory teaching is organized for approximately one academic year of study in different parts of the city. In the final phase of the preparatory education, the student's grade level is examined. After that, a decision is given on the choice of the nearby school in which the student will be transferred to, to continue the studies.

Children of primary school age are directed directly to the flexible pre-primary and primary education group of their own local school, or they can also be directed to a preparatory teaching group. The situation is examined on a student-by-student basis, considering the child's best interests.

A 16-year-old is directed to preparatory education for basic education unless they have a certificate equivalent to a certificate of completion of basic education. If they already have a certificate equivalent of completion of a basic school, they will be directed to other educations.

**Link to the application form for basic education:** [Perusopetukseen ilmoittautuminen – Kotka.](#)

## STARTING THE STUDIES

Follow the instructions for new students provided on [Xamk's website](#). The time between your arrival to Kotka and starting your studies can be well spent on...

- ✓ visiting the city
- ✓ getting familiar with public transportation and/or buy a bike if you wish to have one
- ✓ practicing how to find the bus schedules
- ✓ getting a bus card if you wish to have one
- ✓ getting a Finnish sim card for your phone if necessary
- ✓ learning how to arrive to Xamk Kotka campus

### Getting a Finnish sim card for your phone

You will be staying in Finland for a long period of time, which it might be a good idea to get a Finnish phone number to be able to use the internet and make calls in the country. You can buy a **prepaid sim card** from **R-kioski**. Depending on the offer type, the average price for a prepaid can be 5-35 €. With a prepaid subscription, you can charge the sim card with an amount of money and use it according to the chosen offer, until the credit runs out and it is time to recharge the card. More information: [Prepaid-liittymät / R-kioski](#).

**For Xamk's new international students, Elisa provides a starter kit that includes a prepaid SIM card with €6 of credit (enough for approximately six days of data usage). You will receive your Elisa starter kit, along with instructions, from your Integration Coordinator at the beginning of your studies.**

**Monthly subscriptions** are also offered, however (as you are creating a phone contract) you might need to fulfil certain requirements and be asked for a reliable financial statement, valid ID, and other documents. Here are examples of operators in Finland:

[DNA](#)

[Elisa](#)

[Telia](#)

## Opening a bank account

There are certain requirements such as proving your identity with official identity documents when opening a bank account in Finland. The requirements may vary slightly depending on a bank. Therefore, familiarise yourself carefully with what is needed. General guidelines of some of the most common banks in Finland:

[Danske Bank](#)

[Nordea](#)

[Osuuspankki](#)

[S-Pankki](#)

It is recommended to compare the offers (services, prices, languages offered) so that you will find the best bank for your needs.

## Coming to Xamk Kotka campus

Xamk Kotka campus is located 1 km away from the city centre (approximately 10 min walk).



Kotka campus address is **Salakuljettajantie 4, 48100 Kotka.**

This Google Maps link shows you the way to campus from Kotka railway station: [Xamk, Kotka campus – train station.](#)

This Google Maps link shows the way to the campus from Kotka bus station: [Xamk, Kotka campus – bus station.](#)

## The beginning of the studies

In the beginning of the studies, there will be orientation programme to familiarise you with practicalities such as the campus services, studying environments, and getting acquainted with living in Kotka. The exact timetable of the orientation days for your study programme can be found on [Xamk's website](#).

After the first days, you should:

- ✓ know how to move around Xamk Kotka campus and find different classrooms and offices
- ✓ be familiar with the services available for students on campus
- ✓ know how to activate your Xamk account: after activating your Xamk account, all communication by email must be conducted with your **Xamk email account**
- ✓ know how to login to Xamk digital platforms (Lux, Peppi, Learn, Teams)
- ✓ know how to download, activate, and use the Tuudo app on your phone
- ✓ know how to read the classes timetables and grades
- ✓ be familiar with the structure of your studies (e.g., holidays, breaks)
- ✓ know Xamk rules and regulations
- ✓ know how to download your study certificate from the Peppi system
- ✓ know how to get a student card from the student union Kaakko (optional).

By participating in the beginning of the studies and the orientation programme, you should now know everything you need for a comfortable beginning of your studies in Kotka. However, if you still have doubts, please do not hesitate to visit the Student Affairs office on campus.

***Punctuality is always expected in Finland. If you are requested to be in a place at an exact time, you must be punctual. Otherwise, you might miss your appointment. This applies also to lectures and in-office appointments. If you are late, you will miss the information in the beginning of the session, and it will not be repeated.***

During the first months of the studies, a document check is organised on campus to check the originals of the documents you used when applied for the studies. You will be contacted by email about the date, time, and place of the document check. It is not necessary to bring all the documents to campus before the requested day.

## Registration at the DVV office

After moving to Finland, it is necessary to register at the DVV office. To do so, please follow these following steps:

**Step 1:** Fill the online form available on DVV website: [Registration of a foreign student | Digital and population data services agency \(dvv.fi\)](#).

**Step 2:** Book an appointment at the DVV office: [dvv.fi/reservation](https://dvv.fi/reservation).

**Step 3:** Visit the DVV office in the municipality of your choice at the time of your appointment. When visiting the office, remember to have with you a valid ID or passport, residence permit and study certificate (previously downloaded from Peppi system). Here's the [list](#) of service points available in Finland.

## Good to know regarding the studies

**Schedule for the academic year** goes as follows: Your studies start in September the latest and will end around May. You will have a one-week autumn break on week 43 and a one-week winter break on week 9. Lectures take place during weekdays (Monday—Friday). Regarding **attendance**, each teacher decides which modality to use to deliver their classes and whether attendance is compulsory. If attendance to classes is compulsory, your participation in-person does influence on your final grades. However, please do not come to campus when feeling ill. If you have a class or an office appointment in person, please contact the teacher or staff member in advance to inform about the situation and your unavailability to join in person.

**Bring your own computer and smartphone with you.** Xamk has a BYOD (bring your own device) policy: you need to have a computer to follow the studies at Xamk. Read more about the requirements on [Xamk's website](#). Note also, that Xamk uses multi-factor authentication: remember to make sure your smartphone supports Microsoft Authenticator or Google Authenticator.

## LIVING IN FINLAND

Find general information about moving to Finland, studies, housing, education, health, family, leisure and more, from [infoFinland's website](#).

## Finns, Finnish culture, and values

Finns may seem quiet and introverted, but once you manage to break the ice with them, they are usually very relaxed, honest, direct, and polite people. Finnish people are also huge coffee lovers,

making Finland one of the countries with the highest coffee consumption in the world. Sauna is a big part of Finnish culture. There are over three million saunas in the country – more than cars! Learn more: [Quick guide to Finnish sauna etiquette | My Helsinki](#). Most people in Finland understand and speak English, even if they may be shy to use the language. However, learning Finnish language is essential if you wish to live in the country for a long time.

Finland is a country based on honesty, equality, and respect of human rights. In Finland, all people have the same rights. You are expected to be honest and respect the rules. Punctuality is also expected. For several years in a row, Finland has been ranking as the happiest country in the world thanks to its values such as safety, equality, social supports, and low corruption.

### **Nature and the seasons in Finland – and how to dress according to the weather**

Finland is called the “land of a thousand lakes”: there are around 188 000 lakes. Finland is one of the countries with the cleanest water in the world. It is safe to swim almost everywhere, except in the warmest months if the blue-green algae start spreading. Tap water is clean and drinkable.

Around 75% of the Finnish territory are covered with forests. In Finland, people have a deep connection with nature. Nature is always around the corner, even in the bigger cities, and it is everyone’s right to have access to it. Be considerate when spending time in nature and leave the place as you found it: bring your trash back home or to the nearest trash bin. Familiarise yourself with the outdoor etiquette on the [website of Metsähallitus](#).

#### **Autumn - Syksy (September to November)**

Autumn in Finland brings shorter days, wind, and rain. Sunny days are ideal for enjoying the vibrant *ruska* landscapes. Be aware that it can get very cold, and by late October or November, a winter jacket is often needed. Roads may also be slippery due to early ice.

***Always wear reflectors in the dark: they help you to be more visible in traffic. As we say in Finland: “A reflector is a cheap life insurance.”***

#### **Autumntime celebrations in Finland: All Saints' Day – Pyhäinpäivä**



## How to dress according to the weather in autumn?

In the autumn you enjoy the last sunshine before the winter. Autumn can be a very muddy and wet season. It is a good idea to have rubber boots and a raincoat to wear during these months. As temperatures start going colder again, it is time to bring the warm sweaters out from the closet, especially for the mornings and evenings.

In Finland, the weather can change very quickly, and during some days you will be able to “experience all four seasons on the same day”! It is important for you and your family members (including the little ones!) to always be prepared for the change of weather when spending time outdoors. When kids are in school in Finland, they spend a lot of time outdoors during throughout the year. From [Yle's article](#) you can find some tips for how to dress children in Finland.

*In Finland, like in many other Nordic countries, there is a saying: "There is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing".*

## Winter - Talvi (December to February)

Winters in Finland are cold and dark: temperatures are often below 0°C and can drop as low as minus 30°C. The sun rises late in the mornings and sets very early. The likeliness of seeing the northern lights in Lapland (northern part of Finland) is the highest during winter months. If you are lucky enough, you may also get to see them in the south, although it is not very common.

During the wintertime the roads are often icy, so it is a good idea to wear anti-slip accessories. In the dark, it is essential to make yourself visible by wearing reflectors. Also, because of the lack of light during wintertime, our bodies cannot get enough vitamin D from the sun. Vitamin D deficiency can cause osteoporosis, immunodeficiency, and elevated risk for autoimmune diseases, and therefore it is necessary to take vitamin D supplements during the winter. Darkness can also affect mental health for some people. It is a good idea to use small, cosy indoor light sources, such as string lights, in the house. Do things that keep you occupied: start new hobbies, spend time with friends, participate in events organised in the city, explore new places, or try out winter sports. Winter in Finland can be harsh, but it is possible to live your normal life during these months, too. The first winter in Finland can be shocking, but you will get used to the weather with time.



**Wintertime celebrations in Finland:** Independence Day – Itsenäisyyspäivä (6 December), Christmas - Joulukuu, New Year – Uusivuosi, Epiphany – Loppiainen.

### How to dress according to the weather in winter?

When coming to Finland for the first time, many people might have never experienced snow and cold temperatures. For this reason, they might not be aware of how to dress properly for the cold winters in this country. When dressing up in the winter, there are two main rules: wear warm clothes and dress in layers to protect yourself from the cold. In the coldest days it is important to wear all the layers:

**Layer 1:** Base layer of long/thermal underwear for upper and lower body, socks.

**Layer 2:** Wool sweaters or fleece hoodies, pants, wool socks.

**Layer 3:** Warm waterproof winter jacket, outdoor waterproof pants, warm gloves, warm beanie, warm waterproof shoes and reflector.

Watch this [video](#) to learn more about how to dress in winter.

The amount of clothes also depends on how long you will need to be outdoors and how active you will be. When temperatures are close to 0°C, it is usually ok to skip “Layer 1” (see above) if your body feels comfortable.

*Walking on fresh snow is safe but be careful when walking on the ice as it can be very slippery. You can buy ice grippers to attach under your shoes for these days. Always remember to remove the ice grippers when entering indoors! As they are designed for outdoor use, they damage indoor floors.*

### Spring - Kevät (March to May)

The weather is fresh, and days are getting every day brighter and warmer. The ice starts melting – watch out for thin ice! It is very dangerous to walk on frozen waters if the ice is too thin as it might break under your feet, and you can fall in the ice-cold water. Around April, the snow starts melting, nature starts becoming greener and flowers start blossoming.

**Springtime celebrations:** Easter - Pääsiäinen, May Day – Vappu.



## How to dress according to the weather in spring?

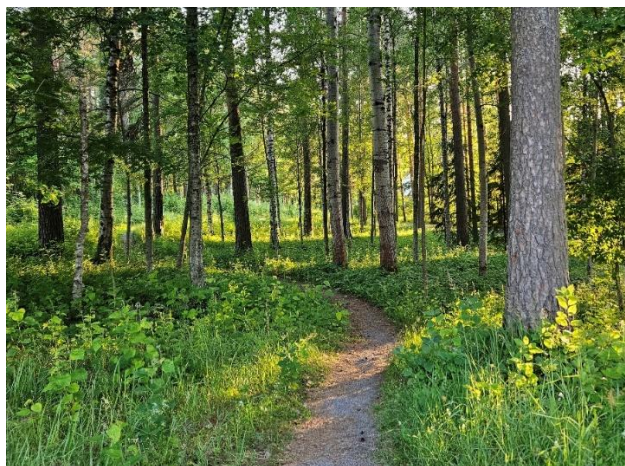
In the springtime, the sun starts shining again in the sky and the temperatures start rising. In the end of the spring, it is time to put your winter jacket back in the closet until the end of the autumn. Streets are usually covered in wet melting snow, so good waterproof shoes are essential when walking outdoors.

*Temperatures in the nighttime can still go below zero and will freeze the snow that melted during the day. This becomes very slippery to walk on, be careful!*

## Summer - Kesä (June to August)

The weather gets warmer (average +20°C), days and nights are bright. The summer solstice (Midsummer) signs the brightest day of the year. After that, day light starts getting every day a little shorter again. Sleeping during the summer can be challenging as it is bright during most of the nighttime. People in Finland use blinders or black curtains in their bedrooms, to help making the room darker during the night. Please note that Finnish people usually use their work holidays during the summertime, generally from Midsummer until end of July. Students have quite a long summer break from school too!

**Summertime celebrations:** Midsummer - *Juhannus*.



## How to dress according to the weather in summer?

In the summer, temperatures stay around 15—20°C and the warmest month is usually July. When the sun shines it can get very warm in Finland, too! You can finally wear summer dresses, t-shirts and shorts, but often it is a good idea also to have a light sweater or light jacket for the evenings or rainy days.

## Basic Finnish phrases

English	Finnish
Hello!	Moi!
Goodbye/See you!	Nähdään!
Bye!	Moikka!
Sorry/Excuse me	Anteeksi
Yes	Kyllä
No	Ei
Thank you!	Kiitos!
You are welcome	Ole hyvä
How are you?	Mitä kuuluu?
I'm fine, thank you	Hyvää, kiitos
Welcome!	Tervetuloa!
Exit	Ulos
I don't understand	En ymmärrä
I don't speak Finnish	En puhu suomea
Do you speak English?	Puhutko englantia?
I'm going to Kotka	Menen Kotkain
Where is the train station?	Missä juna-asema on?
Train	Juna
Bus	Bussi
Ticket	Lippu
I am a student	Minä olen opiskelija

## Learning Finnish

Already prior your arrival to Kotka you can use, for example, different language-learning apps and websites, such as [Duolingo](#), [Yle Oppiminen](#) and [Kielibuusti](#) materials to learn Finnish. When in Kotka, you can study Finnish at Xamk. If you are interested in additional Finnish courses or language café activities, you can check the calendar of, for example, [EKAMI](#) to see what they currently offer.

***Participation to the lectures at Xamk should be your priority. Please check this carefully when choosing an additional language course. However, if you have moved in Finland with your spouse, these courses are a great chance for them to learn the Finnish language.***

## Looking for a job in Finland

Looking for a job in Finland can be a lengthy process, not only for foreigners but for Finnish people as well. It is important to keep in mind that finding a job can take time – please do not expect to find a job right after your arrival to the country. However, there are things you can do after or partially even before arriving in Finland to increase your chances on finding employment.

*As a student your studies should always be the main priority. However, if you move to Finland with a spouse, your spouse might be allowed to work in Finland (depending on the type of residence permit obtained).*

### How to boost your employability before arriving in Finland?

#### **1. Make your CV (resume) and LinkedIn profile ready.**

Your CV or resume should include your name and contact information, work experience (relevant for the field or job), educational background, as well as language and IT skills. If you wish, you can also add a picture of you, a short profile text, and references.

A good CV is employer-friendly: informative, clear and concise as well as visually pleasing. It is important to keep in mind that a CV should be one page long only, or maximum two pages in case you have a lot of relevant experience considering the position you are applying for.

When applying for jobs, it is a good idea to slightly customise your CV for each position, so that it first and foremost presents your experience and skills that match with the job advertisement.

[Résumé or CV | Eilakaisla](#) provides tips for making a good CV.

[Canva](#) has a broad selection of CV templates, also in the free-of-cost version.

In addition to CV, having an up-to-date [LinkedIn profile](#) may help you to notice job openings as well as for you to get noticed by employers, and grow your professional network.

#### **2. Familiarise yourself with the working life and job market in Finland.**

In case you are thinking of getting a part-time job or working in Finland, it is useful to have knowledge of the Finnish working life and job market. Good places to start are the websites mentioned below:

- [infoFinland](#) provides information related to different topics of working life in Finland, such as CV and job application, employee's rights and responsibilities, and taxation.
- With [JobMarket Finland](#)'s tips you can get familiar with the job seeking process in Finland.

### **3. It is never too early to start studying Finnish!**

Speaking and understanding Finnish is a huge advantage when looking for a job in Finland. Therefore, learning and practicing the Finnish language as part of your studies but also in your free time is highly recommended. There usually are learning groups around Kotka, usually held by the multicultural centres or churches.

#### **How to boost your employability once you are in Finland?**

##### **1. Some additional certificates and experience that can advance your employability**

- If you want to do certain jobs that require food handling and work on food premises (such as waiter/waitress, kitchen worker, barista and so on), you must obtain a **Hygiene passport** beforehand. To obtain a Hygiene Passport you must pass a national test. The average price for the test is around 54 €. More information on [Finnish Food Authority's website](#).
- If serving alcohol is included in your job, an **Alcohol passport** is also required. More information on [Valvira's website](#).
- **Occupational safety card** training provides basic information about the dangers of the work environment and occupational safety in a shared workplace. Read more about the Occupational safety card and how to obtain it from [The Centre of Occupational Safety website](#).
- **Voluntary work** often is a good addition to a CV, especially if you have developed your career- or industry-related skills while volunteering. In addition, in case you have not yet worked in Finland, voluntary work is a good way to demonstrate that you have experience in operating in a work-like environment in Finland already. You can check volunteering possibilities around Finland [here](#).

##### **2. Networking**

Having a professional network in Finland (and beyond) may increase your chances to find job opportunities. There are different ways of networking: you can, for example, participate in events such as Worklife Boom organised by Xamk, seminars, and activities related to job search. You can also be part of different locally operating organizations, such as student entrepreneurship society [Patteri](#) or [JCI Kotka](#) (latter for people aged between 18—40 years). Remember also online networking platforms such as LinkedIn and different online events!

You can also develop activities related to your own culture that you believe may interest the local community, e.g., food tasting, arts & crafts, music, arts in general, sports. In case you need assistance developing such activities, please contact Xamk's Integration Support Coordinator in Kotka, Valéria Pinto ([valeria.pinto@xamk.fi](mailto:valeria.pinto@xamk.fi)), to discuss possibilities.