THE ARCHIPELAGO PROVINCE ÅLAND
The self-governing province of the Åland Islands is an autonomous Swedish-speaking region of Finland.

Åland is located off the southwest coast of Finland.
**ÅLAND IN BRIEF:**

- **POPULATION:** 29,900
- **40% LIVES IN THE CAPITAL, MARIENHAMN**
- **AREA (LAND AND SEA):** 13,300 KM²
- **AREA (LAND):** 1,553 KM²
- **19 PEOPLE PER KM²**
- **16 MUNICIPALITIES**
- **ECONOMY BASED ON SHIPPING (40%), TRADE AND TOURISM**
Åland consists of 6,757 islands; 60 of them are inhabited.
4200 BC
The first people, hunters and fishermen, arrive from the East

8000 BC
The highest parts of Åland rise out of the sea

500–800
Åland is populated; dwelling-places all over Åland

900–1100
Åland is Christianised; Åland and Finland become part of Sweden

1714
Great Northern War, population flees to Sweden

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ÅLAND
1809 Åland and Finland are conquered by Russia

1854–1856 Åland is declared a demilitarised zone at the peace negotiations in Paris in 1856

1917 Finnish independence

1921 League of Nations decision on Ålandic autonomy

1922 Act on the Autonomy of Åland takes effect
NATIONAL DAY:
JUNE 9
(AUTONOMY DAY)
Åland was, along with Finland, a part of the Kingdom of Sweden but became part of the Grand Duchy of Finland in 1809 when Sweden was forced to relinquish Finland and Åland to the Russian Empire.

In 1917, when Finland gained its independence, the representatives of Åland’s municipalities decided to seek reunion with Sweden. Finland rejected the Ålanders’ demands and Parliament attempted to solve the problem by adopting an Autonomy Act for Åland in 1920.
Ålanders refused to accept the Autonomy Act, and since the question of Åland’s status seemed to be leading to open conflict between Finland and Sweden, it was referred to the newly formed League of Nations.

The League of Nations granted Finland sovereignty over Åland in 1921. Finland was placed under an obligation to guarantee to the population of the islands their Swedish culture, language, local customs and the system of self-government.
Åland had become demilitarised as a result of the peace negotiations in Paris in 1856 after the Crimean War. When the sovereignty issue was solved by the League of Nations in 1921, the demilitarisation of 1856 was confirmed. The convention also neutralised Åland. The demilitarisation was confirmed in the 1947 Paris Peace Treaty.

The Autonomy Act of 1920 has been completely revised twice, in 1951 and 1993.
Åland is demilitarised. This means that there may be no military presence in the province and the islands may not be fortified.

Åland is also neutralised, and must therefore be kept outside the theatre of war in case of conflict.

Ålanders are exempt from Finland’s military service.
Åland after autonomy

1954: Åland’s flag
1970: Nordic Council membership
1984: Ålandic stamps introduced
1993: Åland’s own postal service
1995: Åland accedes to the EU after national and regional referendums
1996: Åland’s own radio and TV
2002: The euro currency is introduced
Åland’s special status in the EU

Åland’s relationship with the Union is regulated in a protocol containing special provisions for purchasing of real estate and the right to conduct business in Åland.

The Åland Protocol states that Åland shall be regarded as a third territory with respect to indirect taxation, which enables the sale of tax-free goods to passengers travelling between the Åland Islands and other EU Member States (including mainland Finland).
Language rules in Åland

The only official language in Åland is Swedish. This means that Swedish is used by regional, municipal and state authorities in Åland.

Communication between the Finnish State and authorities in Åland must be conducted in Swedish, according to the Act on the Autonomy of Åland.
Right of domicile in Åland is acquired at birth if it is possessed by either parent. Immigrants who have lived in Åland for five years, are Finnish citizens and have an adequate knowledge of Swedish may apply for the status.

The purpose of the requirement of right of domicile is to preserve Åland’s culture and Swedish language, and to ensure that local production resources remain in the hands of the resident population.
Right of domicile is a requirement to:

- vote and stand for election in elections to Parliament
- own and or be in possession of real estate in Åland
- conduct business in Åland

The Åland Government can grant exemptions for those wishing to acquire real estate or conduct business in Åland.
The Parliament of the Åland Islands

Åland’s legislature, the Parliament, has 30 members, elected every four years. Parliament appoints the regional Åland Government.

Parliament passes laws in areas relating to the internal affairs of the region and exercises its own budgetary power. The Parliament distributes the budget for Åland. The income consists of Åland’s own revenues and a lump sum received from the Finnish Government.
The Åland Parliament has the right to pass legislation on:

- education, culture and heritage sites
- health care, hospitals and social care
- environmental issues
- trade and industry
- local transport
- municipal administration
- policing
- postal service, radio and TV
The Åland Government

The Åland Government is appointed by the Parliament, and consists of a maximum of eight members. The administration is divided into six departments:

1. Government Office
2. Department of Infrastructure
3. Department for Social Affairs, Health and Environment
4. Department of Trade and Industry
5. Department of Education and Culture
6. Department of Finance
Finnish state law applies in the areas in which the Åland Parliament does not have legislative powers:

- foreign affairs
- most areas of civil and criminal law
- the court system
- customs, coast guard, civil protection
- state taxation
- the Church Act
Åland’s relationship to Finland

• Åland has one representative (out of 200) in the Finnish Parliament, to ensure that Åland’s interests are taken into account
• The president of Finland appoints the Governor of Åland in consultation with the Åland Parliament
• Constant development of the system of self-government through continuous contacts and an integrated Åland policy
• Dialogue with the Finnish Government and Parliament on language issues, legislative competence and taxation
NEARLY 10 MILLION FERRY PASSENGERS TRAVEL VIA ÅLAND EACH YEAR
Åland’s international relations 1/2

• Representation on the Nordic Council and Nordic Council of Ministers
• Åland does not have a seat in the European Parliament
• Åland participates in the preparation of Finland’s national positions and has the right to be heard in the national Ministerial Committee on European Union Affairs
• Åland has the right to participate as a part of Finland’s delegation in the Council of Ministers and working group meetings in Brussels
Åland’s international relations 2/2

- Åland is represented by a Councillor at the Permanent Representation of Finland to the EU in Brussels
- The Councillor establishes contacts in Brussels, follows cases, and advances Åland’s positions in cases within the competence of Åland or of special interest to Åland
- Åland has a representative in the EU Committee of the Regions
- Åland cooperates with other self-governed regions and areas in matters of common interest